Developing a Framework of Dis-domestication:
The Dis-domestication of Furniture in Norwegian Households

Marie Hebrok
University of Oslo
TIK 4011 Science and Politics in Controversies on Nature
2010

Word count: 21066
Marie Hebrok
marie@hebrok.net
University of Oslo
Specialization: TIK 4011 Science and Politics in Controversies on Nature
Supervisor: Prof. Kristin Asdal, University of Oslo
Word count: 21066
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed with their time by participating in interviews and responding to the web questionnaire. A special thank you to my supervisor Kristin Asdal, who has guided and inspired me. Her constructive advice has been imperative to my research process. I would also like to thank Ingunn Grimstad Klepp and Pål Strandbakken, at the National Institute for Consumer Research, for their time and advice.

Additionally I wish to thank my closest friends and family for their support and advice, first on the choice of the ESST master, and later on the topic of my thesis. Thank you for inspiring and supporting me.

Marie Hebrok
Oslo, October 4th, 2010
ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to and further develops the work on *domestication* by STS scholars to include the process of disposal. Based on the study of furniture disposal in Norwegian households I develop what I call a framework of *dis-domestication*. Through developing the framework, I describe the process of disposal by identifying practices and strategies, material properties and perceptions, as well as major social influences and the interplay between these.

The thesis departs from an environmental concern regarding waste production. The increasing production of waste is an environmental issue widely discussed around the world, and the Norwegian government has articulated waste prevention to be a key measurement to address this problem in Norway. Prolonging the life of goods is important to reduce resource depletion, energy use and pollution. It is therefore important to understand the whole process of the life cycle of artefacts. The particular case of furniture is interesting from an STS perspective as they are artefacts that are substantially visible and subjected to social rituals.

I found the properties of furniture to change and get lost through changes both in the materiality of the furniture, and through external influences from the wider social surroundings, where the external influences seem more significant to the process of dis-domestication. Changing life phases particularly affect the dis-domestication of furniture in Norwegian households. I have identified several strategies and practices that are applied to perceptually flawed furniture.

**Key words:** Domestication, Dis-domestication, Waste, Disposal, Furniture, Consumption
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...........................................................................................................I

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................II

1. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................1
   1.1 Theme ..................................................................................................................................1
   1.2 Thesis structure ..................................................................................................................3
   1.3 Literature review ..............................................................................................................3
      1.3.1 STS and media studies ..................................................................................................4
      1.3.2 Anthropology .............................................................................................................6
      1.3.3 Consumer behaviour research .................................................................................10
      1.3.4 Summary .....................................................................................................................13

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..............................................................................................15
   2.1 Domestication ....................................................................................................................15
      2.1.1 The phases of domestication .....................................................................................16
      2.1.2 The moral economy of the household .......................................................................17
      2.1.3 Re-domestication ........................................................................................................18
      2.1.4 Dis-domestication .......................................................................................................19

3. METHODOLOGY ....................................................................................................................20
   3.1 Qualitative research .........................................................................................................20
   3.2 Research questions .........................................................................................................20
   3.3 Interviews and ethnography ..............................................................................................21
      3.3.1 Web questionnaire .....................................................................................................21
      3.3.2 Semi-structured in-depth interviews .........................................................................21
      3.3.3 Ethnography at Haraldrud gjenbruksstasjon .............................................................23
3.4 Validity and reliability ................................................................................................................................................. 24
3.5 Structure of the analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 24

4. ANALYSIS ........................................................................................................................................................................ 26
4.1 Dis-domestication and changing life phases ....................................................................................................................... 26
  4.1.1 The significance of furniture in everyday life .................................................................................................................. 26
  4.1.2 The first and second phase of independence – the temporary nature of the domestication of furniture .................. 28
  4.1.3 Merging households and family life – negotiations and dis-domestication ................................................................. 32
  4.1.4 Divorce and re-domestication ........................................................................................................................................ 33
  4.1.5 Summary ........................................................................................................................................................................ 36

4.2 Dis-domestication and the role of style and trends ........................................................................................................... 37
  4.2.1 The co-production of style and society ............................................................................................................................ 37
  4.2.2 Dis-domestication through categorization ....................................................................................................................... 39
  4.2.3 Style, function and combination – creating a whole ........................................................................................................ 42
  4.2.4 Personal properties and social surroundings .................................................................................................................. 46
  4.2.5 Visibility and relocation .................................................................................................................................................... 49
  4.2.6 Summary ........................................................................................................................................................................ 51

4.3 Materialities – dis-domestication and knowledge .............................................................................................................. 53
  4.3.1 Knowledge about materials, maintenance and durability ............................................................................................... 53
  4.3.2 Motivation, price and convenience .................................................................................................................................. 57
  4.3.3 Patina and the aging of materials .................................................................................................................................... 59
  4.3.4 Authenticity ....................................................................................................................................................................... 61
  4.3.5 Summary ........................................................................................................................................................................ 62

4.4 Emotional and moral influences to dis-domestication ....................................................................................................... 64
  4.4.1 Emotional discomfort and the private nature of disposal ................................................................................................ 64
  4.4.2 The difficult nature of giving – moral values .................................................................................................................... 66
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS ........................................................................................................... 70

5.1 Dis-domestication – Answering the research questions ....................................................... 70

5.1.1 How do the properties of furniture change or get lost on the way out of people’s homes? ................................................................................................................................. 70

5.1.2 Through what kind of strategies and practices are furniture dis-domesticated in Norwegian households? .................................................................................................................. 71

5.2 Suggestions for further research .......................................................................................... 73

6. REFERENCES ......................................................................................................................... 74

APPENDIX 1: WEB QUESTIONNAIRE .......................................................................................... 78

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE - SEMI STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS ......................... 85

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE - HARALDRUD RECYCLING STATION ................................. 86
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1: Web questionnaire population: gender .................................................................................. 84
Table 2: Web questionnaire population: age .......................................................................................... 84
Table 3: Web questionnaire population: education .............................................................................. 84
Table 4: Web questionnaire population: income ................................................................................ 84

Figure 1: "Rank the most important feature you consider when you buy furniture" ..................... 43
Figure 2: "I am concerned with how the furniture fits in with the other furniture I have at

   home" ............................................................................................................................................. 44
Figure 3: "How one decorates ones home is an expression of ones personality" ............................. 46
Figure 4: "If you compare the interior of your home to the interior of the homes of people in

   your circle of friends, which statement would you choose?" ......................................................... 47
Figure 5: "What do you most often do when you think that a piece of furniture no longer fits

   in at home because it is worn, damaged, ugly, out dated etc.?" .................................................... 50
Figure 6: "Where do you go for advice on maintenance and repairs concerning furniture?" .. 54
Figure 7: "it is important that it is possible to maintain and repair the furniture/replace

   parts" ............................................................................................................................................... 55
Figure 8: "How would you describe your level of knowledge when it comes to doing repairs

   to furniture and other household items?" .......................................................................................... 56
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theme

The strong economic growth in recent generations has led to a large increase in the consumption of goods and services, which has lead to a similarly large increase in waste. This increase in waste continues to multiply as society's population increases. In order to manage this excessive waste, more and more landfills are built – which recently has become increasingly difficult due to lack of space – and incineration is used, both of which cause great environmental damage.

This environmental concern is widely discussed around the world, and in Norway waste prevention has become a measure explicitly articulated by the government as a way to address the issue. The concept of waste prevention contains awareness campaigns, environmental taxes, producer responsibility, product standards, green design and Eco Management (NOU: 19, 2002).

One method of preventing waste is by prolonging the life of goods, as this reduces resource depletion, energy use and pollution. According to a Norwegian forecast bureau (Prognosesenteret), Norwegian consumers will spend 53.3 billion NOK (about €426 million) on the refurbishing of their homes in 2010. Norway is on top of the European statistics concerning spending on refurbishing. Home refurbishing is mostly accompanied by a certain amount of disposal. Furniture are, for instance, often disposed of and replaced by new models that fit in with the new design of the home.

In order to address the issue of waste I have thus chosen to investigate the life cycle of furniture in Norwegian households. More specifically, I examine the phase in the life of furniture that concerns disposal (the act of driving the furniture to the landfill, selling the furniture, giving the furniture away, etc.). The phase of disposal contains evaluations and
decisions, emotions and attitudes, materialities, and practices. By investigating the furniture disposal process, I aim to develop a better understanding of the connections between the materialities of furniture, people’s attitudes, emotions and moral values connected to furniture, and the process of making the decision to dispose of furniture.

I find the investigation of the process of disposal in general to be a relevant and important issue in relation to the environmental problems caused by consumption and waste, and the particular case of furniture interesting because furniture are artefacts of durable character, which are quite visible and subjected to social rituals.

The field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) has been increasingly concerned with environmental issues and how to apply STS tools and perspectives to them in order to better understand the challenges the world is facing. In terms of the issue of consumption, STS scholars have focused mainly on the integration of technologies and artefacts in the household, and the mutual production of meaning, routines and rituals, especially through the framework of domestication, with little to no focus on disposal. By drawing on the insights from the fields of anthropology, media studies and consumer research I wish to further develop the work done by STS scholars on the framework of domestication by including the process of disposal, and develop a framework of dis-domestication. I find these fields to address and analyze the issue of consumption in different ways, and the combination of the analytical tools and concepts developed within them to expand the insights of each field. I find it important to fill this gap in the framework of domestication to include the entire lifecycle of artefacts and technologies, and to make an interdisciplinary contribution to the environmental issue concerning disposal and consumption.

I have used the case of the dis-domestication of furniture in Norwegian households in order to develop the framework. The analysis is concerned with capturing both the mental and the material aspects of dis-domestication.
1.2 Thesis structure

The introductory chapter describes the theme of the thesis, and provides a literature review, which describes relevant work conducted by STS scholars, as well as selected interdisciplinary scholars within anthropology, consumer research and media studies. A thorough description of the theoretical framework of the thesis is provided in chapter 2, followed by a description of the thesis methodology in chapter 3. The analysis is presented in chapter 4, and is divided into four sections based on different analytical themes. Chapter 5 concludes.

1.3 Literature review

During the literature review I found that in order to understand the process of disposal one must first gain an understanding of the process technologies and artefacts go through as they are integrated into a pattern of use and meaning within the household. It is this area that the work done by STS scholars is mostly concerned with – the appropriation and integration of technologies and artefacts in everyday life, and in the household. Furthermore, since the STS scholars stated they were inspired by the fields of media studies and anthropology, I followed their source of inspiration to broaden my understanding of their work. However, there was no work done concerning disposal and the whole life cycle of a technology/artefact within these fields. I thus broadened my investigation into consumer behaviour research, which more directly addresses the issue of disposal and the reasons behind the decision to dispose of an item.
1.3.1 STS and media studies

As mentioned above, a strand within the STS field is concerned with studying technology and everyday life. Knut H. Sørensen (2006) names two sources of inspiration that have particularly engaged the field on this issue. The first is actor-network-theory (ANT), which aims to understand technology and science through the mapping of complex relations between actors. It focuses on how heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) build networks where they come together and act as a whole, and the theory treats both human and non-human actors symmetrically (Akrich, 1992; Latour, 1988, 1992; Law, 1992).

The second source of inspiration originates from media studies and the framework of domestication and the moral economy of the household (Silverstone, Morley, & Hirsch, 1992). According to Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch the moral economy of the household refers to not only understanding the household as an economy intertwined with the wider public economy but also as an economy in its own right. Thus, the process of domesticating technologies – meaning the process from the point of purchase through to the implementation of the technology in the home – consists of practices conducted within the moral economy of the household. The aim of the analytical tool of domestication has been to illuminate how routines, rituals and practices evolve around technologies, how these influence the development of technology, as well as how the technology influences the routines, rituals and practices in the everyday life of its owners. I will return to the framework of domestication in its relation to the moral economy of the household in the theoretical framework chapter.

The aim of STS scholars in applying the analytical tool of domestication has been to facilitate the exploration of the complexity in user-technology relations whilst avoiding technological determinism. The analysis of the domestication of the computer for example (Aune, 1996), helps us see how the computer is adapted to everyday life as well as how everyday life adapts to the computer.
Further, STS scholars Merete Lie and Knut H. Sørensen, and the contributing authors of their edited book *Making Technology Our Own?* (1996), draw on the analytical tools of the framework of domestication to analyze the domestication of technologies in relation to parenthood (Vestby, 1996), gender (Hubak, 1996; Lie, 1996; Sætnan, 1996), culture and subculture (Håpnes, 1996; Lamvik, 1996). They argue that one must move away from the traditional deterministic descriptions of the effects of new technologies, which describe users as passive recipients of technology, and promote the framework of domestication to be a key concept when analyzing technology in everyday life.

Additionally, Anne-Jorunn Berg (1996) views users as active actors in the development of technology and therefore finds them important to study. Berg thus applies domestication as an analytical tool to describe how people and technologies shape and adjust to each other in order to coexist. According to Berg, domestication is the cultural integration of artefacts in the household. Like Lie and Sørensen, she wishes to use the framework of domestication to correct the determinist studies of the past.

Another relevant strand from the STS field has been concerned with analytical themes for the analysis of categorizations, standardization's and classifications (Bowker & Star, 1999). The investigation of these phenomena is aimed to illuminate how things migrate from one category to another. In the case of furniture one could for instance imagine a chair travelling through different categories. It might have been "born" a "contemporary style lounge chair", 10 years later it is "a used lounge chair", after another 10 years it is a "50’s retro lounge chair", and 20 years after that it is "waste", "retro", "antique" or "shabby chic" depending on the knowledge and opinion of the observer.
1.3.2 Anthropology

As mentioned, besides media studies, STS scholars have been influenced by the field of anthropology, which has shown a special interest in consumption. I have been inspired by the work of the following contributors:

Arjun Appadurai (1986) addresses the "social life" of an object, focusing on exchange and circulation as culturally and socially regulated processes. According to Appadurai, an object has a phase of commodity in its social life. It is in a commodity situation that it can move in and out of. These movements can be terminal or reversible, fast or slow. The social life of an object include the concepts of (1) commodity candidacy, which concerns the moral, symbolic and classificatory criteria of commodities, and the standards that define exchangeability of objects in social contexts, (2) regimes of value, which address the issue of parties having different perceptions of standards in a situation of exchange; and (3) commodity context, which concerns the social arenas that contribute to linking the commodity candidacy of an object to its present commodity phase.

Igor Kopytoff’s (1986) contribution to Appadurai’s edited book is a proposed framework for looking at the commoditization of objects through a biographical approach. According to Kopytoff the cultural biography of things can be created by asking questions, which are similar to the ones asked about people:

What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its "status" and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the things "life", and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the things use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (Kopytoff, 1986: 66).

Kopytoff’s biographical approach seems to me a potentially fruitful contribution to interdisciplinary life cycle thinking within design and consumption, as it can offer a greater understanding of the different phases of a product’s life.
While Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986) focus on the commodity itself, I find that in order to understand the process of disposal and develop a framework of dis-domestication, it is important to comprehend how goods function as carriers of social meaning in society, as well as how the properties of goods change through time. Two interesting books on the topic are Grant McCracken (1988) and Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979/1996), who present interesting insights concerning the meanings and social rituals embedded in the consumption process itself, as discussed below.

Through combining insights from the fields of anthropology and consumer research in order to further analyze consumer behaviour, and more specifically to address the social meanings embedded in goods explained through rituals, McCracken (1988) develops concepts of four rituals related to the consumption of goods:

*Exchange rituals* direct goods that are embedded with certain meanings towards individuals who are perceived by the giver to be in need or in want of these meaningful properties. The gift is in fact an invitation to extract the properties held by the good.

*Possession rituals* are exercised by the owner to get access to the properties of the good. Through display and use the consumer claims the object as his/her own, and attempts to draw qualities embedded by marketing forces from the object.

*Grooming rituals* are conducted because some meanings given to goods are perishable and it is therefore necessary for the consumer to repeatedly draw new meaning out of the goods. Advertising influences the need for the grooming ritual, through describing which properties the good should contain, creating the need for maintenance to continually keep the properties available.

*Divestment rituals* are necessary because the meanings drawn from goods are often associated with one’s own personal properties, and may cause confusion between the consumer and the good. McCracken describes two purposes to employ divestment rituals. First, when a used good is appropriated, the divestment ritual is used to erase the meanings
embedded by the previous owner. This makes the good "free" of past meanings and available to be claimed by the new owner. Secondly, when the individual is to dispose of a good by selling it or giving it to someone, there will be made an effort to erase the meaning invested. Some find it strange to think about their things being in someone else’s home, belonging to them, being used by them. McCracken argues that this shows the existence of a fear of "dispossession of personal meaning" (McCracken, 1988: 87). McCracken agrees with Douglas and Isherwood (1979/1996) who claim that meaning transfer, meaning confusion and loss of meaning is of concern when goods are changing owners. Thus, goods must be cleared of meaning when changing hands.

McCracken claims that these rituals are used to transfer the meanings embedded in goods to the individual. He describes them as "a kind of microscopic version of the instruments of meaning transfer that move meaning from world to goods. It is their responsibility to move meaning from goods to consumer" (McCracken 1988: 88).

Douglas and Isherwood (1979/1996) argue that what happens to goods after purchase is part of the process of consumption. Social relationships are maintained through material objects and the prime function of consumption is to make sense of the world. Rituals make definitions visible, and material things are used in the more effective rituals. Goods are "ritual adjuncts" and the consumption process is a ritual process, which is to make sense of events such as for instance jubilees, celebrations and holidays.

Douglas and Isherwood define consumption as a ritual activity that uses goods to make particular judgments visible in the classification of events and persons. The consumer is constructing an "intelligible universe" through the choice and discrimination of goods, which make goods visible in culture. Goods are arranged in hierarchies and tied to social purposes, and consumption is a "joint production, with fellow consumers, of a universe of values" (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979/1996: 45). The individual’s dependence on others in the creation of intelligibility is imperative. Others must be involved in ones rituals and one must
also be invited to be a part of theirs. Other consumers are giving their judgment on one’s ability to choose the "right" goods for the right occasions, as well as ones relative position as a judge. According to Douglas and Isherwood, social categories are continually being redefined in the active process of consumption.

Social anthropologist Marianne Lien (1994) challenges the field of consumer research to liberate itself from only seeing the consumer and also include the materiality within consumption. She points out that the meaning and symbolic value in things do not exist detached from the material substance of the thing itself.

Ingunn Grimstad Klepp (2001) applies this argument in her report on why people dispose of clothes. She examines the materialities of the clothes themselves and regards them as sources for information, rather than just black boxed objects that have been assigned certain meanings by consumers. By collecting clothes that were sorted out for disposal by her interview subjects, she was able to analyze the damage on the fabrics through predefined categories, as well as how the garment related to fashion, to compare the materiality of the clothes with the informants relative understanding of wear and tear, and fashion.
1.3.3 Consumer behaviour research

The process of domestication and the process I choose to call *dis-domestication* are clearly connected to consumption. Therefore I wish to draw on insights from consumer behaviour research concerning the disposal of goods.

The field of consumer behaviour research has been concerned with the process of disposal. Scholars have attempted to gain a strong understanding of how and why objects are disposed of.

Antonides (1990) developed a mathematical theoretical model of "scrapping behaviour" to explain how decisions are made concerning disposal. The model not only helps us understand the reasons for disposal, but also to predict the decisions of new appropriation. It is a more economical approach to the issue of disposal concerning the financial benefits of new appropriation.

Another important contribution was made quite a bit earlier by Vance Packard (1960). Packard developed the concepts of *obsolescence of function, obsolescence of quality* and *obsolescence of desirability*. He used these concepts to describe and criticize the conscious marketing strategy invented by industry, which makes products obsolete. Packard’s concepts have been the starting point for much of the later work on the subject (Granberg, 1996, 1997; Hille, 1993; Nord, 1980; Nørgård, 1979; Strandbakken, 1997, 2006).

*The obsolescence of function* concerns new products arriving on the market with improved capacity, usability and/or new features. The decision to dispose of these products is tied to the lack of a specific function or a level of quality that is embedded in the new products on the market.

*The obsolescence of quality* concerns broken, worn and “non-working” objects that are expensive or difficult to repair. Social phenomena influence what the concepts of "broken", "worn out" and "not longer working" constitute, meaning there are social norms to how much wear and tear we accept on the objects we surround ourselves with.
The obsolescence of desirability refers to an owner having tired of an object and wanting something new. This phenomenon has been widely discussed within the moral debate of consumer culture, and is mostly mentioned in regards to the rapid consumption and disposal of clothes and shoes, as well as furniture, home appliances and cars, etc.

Pål Strandbakken (1997) conducted a study on consumer attitudes and behaviour concerning product durability and product culture in Norway. Strandbakken's research is of particular interest here due to his chosen target of analysis: Lounge furniture.

As an analytical framework he applied the three concepts of obsolescence defined by Packard (1960) and added a fourth himself: The obsolescence caused by new consumer needs. This concept refers to changes in the life situation of the consumer. New needs of transportation would for instance arise when transcending from being single to having a family.

Concluding his research, Strandbakken argues that the obsolescence of function does not apply to furniture and that influence from financial income is surprisingly insignificant. Rather, he identifies maintenance and repairs as an important issue concerning the life of furniture, and claims the demand for these services to depend on certain factors, such as how repairable it is, the degree of destruction, the value/price, the quality, and the type of furniture.

Strandbakken also found that the consumer culture is infected with a feeling of shame, because people seem to choose the most "correct" survey answers. Strandbakken refers to McCracken (1988) who describes the common view on consumerism to be something dirty, a seedy mix of selfishness, greed, vanity and irrationality. "We ‘know’ from popular opinion and social scientific study that our materialism is one of the things that is most wrong with our society, and one of the most significant causes of our modern difficulties" (McCracken, 1988: xi).
More recently within consumer research, interesting investigations have been conducted on 'second hand cultures', looking into the issue of disposal as a way in which artefacts travel to second hand markets (Gregson & Crewe, 2003). Gregson and Crewe investigated value transformation within regimes of value in regards to consumer goods. According to Gregson and Crewe, design, style and taste are factors as significant if not more significant than functionality regarding the potential "cast off" of an artefact. They also revealed traditional conventions concerning gender to be present in regards to disposal.

Gregson and Crewe identified four disposal dispositions: Making Space, Philanthropy, Political and Economical Critique, and Money Making. Making Space disposal practices are determined by spatial considerations, both concerning the judgments on where to dispose of things and as a means to make space in the household, where the latter is seen to be the primary strategy by which artefacts are disposed of, because making space is considered a matter of good housekeeping. Philanthropy refers to individuals who would not participate on the second-hand market themselves but who wish to donate their discarded belongings to help others. Political and Economical Critique is when a critique of the first cycle consumption causes individuals to desire to contribute to the second-hand market by donating their discarded belongings. Finally, Money Making refers to individuals who wish to profit from selling their discarded belongings through the second-hand market.

Gregson and Crewe focused on the significance of non-material influences to disposal, such as taste and style and identified motivations within these areas for disposing of possessions through second-hand donation. They did not include the influences from human factors of emotions, moral values and change, or the wider social context of influences, nor did they focus on the preceding process that occurs before the decision is made to dispose of something.
1.3.4 Summary

The focus of the STS field concerning technology and everyday life lies in analyzing the two in a perspective that presupposes a mutual development of the social and the technical, avoiding technological or social determinism. STS is concerned with the active user and with giving agency to both human and non-human actors. The field of STS has adapted the framework of domestication from media studies and has applied it in its research on socio-technical issues.

The work done within the field of anthropology concerning objects and consumption has emphasized the social life of a commodity and an approach to create biographies of things as they are created of people (Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986). Scholars have further been concerned with rituals applied to objects related to consumption and the meaning of goods in social relations (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979/1996; McCracken, 1988). However, one is reminded to take into account the materialities of goods, as they cannot be considered to be detached from their meaning (Lien, 1994).

The research within the field of consumer research is more concerned with issues directly related to the economy and financial interests (e.g. Antonides, 1990), and directly addresses the issue of disposal through focusing on durability and obsolescence (Packard, 1960; Strandbakken, 1997, 2006). These contributions also include the materialities in a more direct way, addressing for instance function and quality in relation to needs and wants (Klepp, 2001; Lien, 1994; Packard, 1960; Strandbakken, 1997). The work of Gregson and Crewe (2003) focuses on motivation in regards to disposal rather than on the process leading up to it.

I have used the different insights and perspectives from the different fields to establish a platform to base my analysis on. The inquiry into the work of the fields of media studies, anthropology and consumer research have given me insights into the meanings of goods in a socio-technical context. I specifically draw on the field of consumer research to further develop the insights produced by STS scholars by including the issue of disposal in the
process of domestication. The issue of disposal is an issue that consumer research has taken seriously, but that the STS field has neglected. I also find the STS approach to domestication to be a valuable contribution to the field of consumer research in terms of the issue of disposal, as it captures a deeper and wider social context co-produced with the materialities of consumer goods.

The analytical framework of domestication (Silverstone, et al., 1992) that is applied and further developed by STS scholars (e.g., Lie & Sørensen, 1996), is the point of departure for my analysis of the process of disposal, and will be described more thoroughly in the chapter Theoretical Framework.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Domestication

The framework of *domestication* was developed by Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992), and is an analytical tool to describe how artefacts are defined and placed within the household, and how this influences routines, rituals and practices. Domestication is thus the process artefacts go through when they are appropriated and integrated into everyday life, and how they, through that process, are given meaning. An important point is that artefacts must be integrated both practically and symbolically. The practical integration concerns the local routines that are constructed around the artefact when it is in use. The symbolic integration concerns values and meanings within the household and social surroundings.

The framework of domestication has mainly been applied to technologies, such as computer technologies and other media technologies. Sørensen (2006) points out that the domestication framework has been employed for different purposes by the field of STS and the field of media studies, because the two fields have pursued different problems and looked to different intellectual resources. STS emphasizes not only the enactment of technology but also the simultaneous changes in socio-technical relations. STS scholars are concerned with the co-production of the technical and the social, and are careful not to give primacy to either.

Likewise the analysis of furniture will concern the concrete appearance, materiality and functionality of the furniture as an object, as well as the meanings and symbols embedded in it, and the social rituals and routines it is involved in. However, I will focus on the relevance of these issues concerning the process of its disposal, or *dis-domestication*. 
2.1.1 The phases of domestication

As I have described in the literature review, the traditions of anthropology, consumer research, STS and media studies have all been concerned with creating analytical concepts through the definition of different phases in the existence of goods. In the case of the domestication framework, Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992) developed four phases, which the process of domestication can be analyzed through. Lie and Sørensen (1996) remind us that the process of domestication is not an *a priori* linear one, but a process simultaneously shaped by the different phases:

The phase of *appropriation* refers to the artefact being purchased and coming into the possession of a household or an individual. It has left the commodity world and is now *owned*. It is through the process of appropriation that artefacts gain significance.

The phase of *objectification* focuses on how the artefact expresses style, taste and values when it is on display. How the spatial environment of the home is constructed, and how the values and aesthetics, of those who identify with them, are objectified. The structure and the arrangement of the physical environment in the home. The space of the household is mostly differentiated into private, adult, child, female, male etc., which influences objectification, is seen to be containing the inner workings of the moral economy of the household. Usage expresses the objectification and involves how and where it is positioned in the household, and when it is used.

Whereas the phase of objectification focuses on display and a spatial aspect of domestication, the phase of *incorporation* is concerned with the temporal aspect within the everyday use of the artefact, and how it is incorporated into everyday routines. Visibility and invisibility, age, and gender are elements that affect incorporation.

Whereas the phases of objectification and incorporation focus on the internal workings of the moral economy of the household, the phase of *conversion* focuses on the adjustments the household attempts to make to the symbolic content of the artefact in order to align with
the values present in the `wider´ social and cultural surroundings, such as neighbourhoods, work colleagues and peer groups. It is about the connection between the outside world and the household.

According to Silverstone (2006), objectification and incorporation are the strategies or tactics of domestication. These involve timing and placing, and can demand a restructuring of the existing household.

In Silverstone’s review of the framework of domestication (2006), he argues that commodification is a more accurate framing of appropriation and conversion as the concepts both links what is "inside" the household to the "outside". According to Silverstone the macro social and the micro social is connected through the framework of domestication. The boundaries of the household are no longer as clear. The abundance "out there" influences strongly the acquisition of skills, material resources, social competences and values "in here".

2.1.2 The moral economy of the household

Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992) argue that the process of domestication happens within the moral economy of the household.

The household is a moral economy because the economic activities of its members within the household and in the wider world of work, leisure and shopping are defined and informed by a set of cognitions, evaluations and aesthetics, which are themselves defined and informed by the histories, biographies and politics of the household and its members. These are expressed in the specific and various cosmologies and rituals that define, or fail to define, the household’s integrity as a social and cultural unit (Silverstone, et al., 1992: 18).

Silverstone (2006) describes the notion of the moral economy to be concerned with how households create personal and private cultures that affect the use and valuation of technologies. Expectations of behaviour, codes and patterns coherent with the values inherent in the household as well as the ones sought to preserve are established. According to
Silverstone, the moral positions grounded in ideals for appropriate values and behaviours sustain culture and identity.

Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992) argue for a way to explore and reveal the "particular quality" of the moral economy of the household through the conceptualization of the biography of things (Igor Kopytoff, 1986). They state that the life of things is not just about transformation and change, but about what those transformations and changes reveal about the environments that are inflicting them.

2.1.3 Re-domestication

Lie and Sørensen (1996) argue that the analytical tools of domestication enable a fruitful grasp of the relations between users and technologies/artefacts in a world where meanings embedded in artefacts are rarely stable, and the distribution of practice and meaning connected to the artefact seldom reaches closure. Since needs change and routines are broken, Lie and Sørensen acknowledge that artefacts can be re-domesticated within the original household. STS scholars have in the case of communication technologies shown that the process of domestication and re-domestication is a continuous process of embedding new meanings and involvements into new routines and rituals (Aune, 1996; Håpnes, 1996; Vestby, 1996).

The domestication of artefacts begins with appropriation. Later in its life cycle it can be re-domesticated. The term re-domestication is important as it concerns the durability and life span of an artefact. STS scholars only describe the re-domestication of technologies within the original household, meaning technologies that have been given new roles within the household. Concerning the re-domestication of old furniture it will not just occur within the original household. The re-domestication of furniture means that it is being reintroduced either to the original household in a changed fashion or with attributed new purpose or
function, to a new location but with the same owners (for instance when moving), or to a completely new household with new owners.

2.1.4 Dis-domestication

If an artefact gets worn out, obsolete, or broken and is subsequently of no interest to the owner, a process of dis-domestication or divestment can be initiated (Lie & Sørensen, 1996).

While the term dis-domestication is thus briefly mentioned by Lie and Sørensen, they do not develop the concept further. Neither does McCracken (1988), who is concerned with the divestment ritual which is performed when artefacts change hands. Thus, in order to properly develop the framework of dis-domestication I am going to explore the process of disposal as a complex heterogeneous process, which concerns both social and material aspects and contains properties that are not static – such as embedded meanings and symbols, appearance, materiality, purpose, functionality, significance, perceptions, emotions and values.

As introduced earlier I have chosen the case of furniture in Norwegian households. I analyze the process of dis-domestication of said furniture through data collected from interviews and observations.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods are focused on studying the complexity and richness of social life, and are widely applied in social sciences. The methods aim to explain, as well as describe, the phenomena that are studied. In some cases it is argued that one will be able to obtain a deeper and more complex understanding of the target of analysis through qualitative research methods than if quantitative research methods are used. The nature of the target of analysis is decisive in this matter and must be evaluated accordingly (Punch, 2005). Since my aim is to describe, as well as to explain the process that I have called *dis-domestication*, I have engaged in qualitative research methods such as interviews and ethnography. The next sections will describe these methods, as well as my analytical strategy.

3.2 Research questions

By answering the two research questions below I seek to develop a framework of dis-domestication, and a deeper understanding of the process of disposal of consumer goods in Norwegian households through the case of furniture disposal.

- Through what kind of strategies and practices are furniture dis-domesticated in Norwegian households?

- How do the properties of furniture change or get lost on the way out of people’s homes?
3.3 Interviews and ethnography

To be able to grasp the complexity of both the social and the material aspects of the process of *dis-domestication*, I have collected analytical data through three different types of interviews: A web questionnaire with 204 respondents, 7 semi-structured in-depth interviews, and ethnography including 14 on site interviews with people disposing of furniture at the biggest recycling station in Oslo, Haraldrud gjenbruksstasjon.

### 3.3.1 Web questionnaire

The web questionnaire was distributed through the Internet. It consisted of 28 questions about attitudes, skills, emotions and practices concerning new and old furniture, general attitudes concerning environmental and social issues, and general information such as gender, age, etc. (see appendix 1). The questions were developed based on the framework of *domestication*, and inspired by the work mentioned in the literature review, particularly the work of Pål Strandbakken (1997/2006) due to its direct relevance to furniture. Strandbakken was also kind enough to give me some input prior to distribution.

204 persons responded to the questionnaire. However, because I conducted the questionnaire through my personal network I did not manage to get a balanced population of respondents. The respondents are mostly those living in a city, with a slight majority aged 25-45 and female (see appendix 1). This imbalance must be considered when reading the analysis and conclusions.

### 3.3.2 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

I interviewed seven people from my personal network. Most of the interviewees were acquaintances from my wider social network, such as former colleges, whilst a few were close friends and relatives. I chose the interviewees based on diversity concerning gender, age and profession. Though the interviewees’ relationships with me may have influenced their
responses in some ways, I expect them to have been quite honest considering the "innocence" of the theme they were interviewed about. It is, however, important to note that disposal and wastefulness are environmental concerns that are frequently debated, and are inflicted with some degree of shame. This may have caused the interviewees to " beautify" their answers, or to leave out some elements of their story. Since I was aware of this potential problem, I made an effort to focus mostly on concrete actions and concrete pieces of furniture in the beginning of the interview, and to focus on emotions, values, etc. approaching the end of the interview, to avoid the conversation to be coloured by the interviewee's "environmental conscience".

The interviews were conducted with an interview guide of 23 questions (see appendix 2), and my aim was to engage the interviewees in conversation making them reflect, remember and associate around their relationships and practices concerning furniture. They were gently guided to talk about events, thoughts, actions, interests, knowledge, skills and values they have in connection with furniture, as well as to talk about material aspects and features connected to furniture. The interviews were conducted mainly in the homes of the interviewees.

Persons mentioned and quoted by name in the analysis are interviewees from the seven semi-structured interviews. The interviewees’ anonymity are kept by using fictitious names. I provide you with a brief description of the interviewees:

- Elizabeth and Tom: Married, in their late twenties and early thirties.
- Eric: Divorced, early forties.
- Sarah: Married with two children, mid-forties.
- Ann and Karl: Married, mixed family, in their late fifties and late sixties.
3.3.3 Ethnography at Haraldrud gjenbruksstasjon

The ethnographic approach aims to understand symbolic and cultural aspects of behaviour in a context. The researcher can be a participant, just an observer, or both, while conducting ethnography. The extent of intrusion into the situation influences the reactivity level in the data collected (Punch, 2005).

To gain a deeper understanding of disposal behaviour I conducted three field trips to Haraldrud recycling station, which is the largest station in Oslo and receives a large variety of materials for recycling or incineration. The first two visits were shorter, with the aim to observe and talk to the employees on site. The last visit was longer, with the aim of observing and interviewing people disposing of furniture.

Prior to visiting the station, I had prepared an interview guide of 11 questions (see appendix 3), and had obtained consent from the administration to conduct the interviews while people were waiting in line in their cars to enter the station. During the seven hours I was present, 410 cars visited the station, of which 303 contained only men, 27 contained only women, and 80 contained couples. The clear majority of male drivers indicates the physical act of disposal to be “a mans task”. The issue of gender is not emphasized in my thesis, but would be a dis-domestication issue that would be interesting to investigate separately.

Much of the waste disposed of was waste from building sites and garden waste. Some of the cars I stopped where transporting furniture on behalf of other parties, which made them unfit to interview. I approached cars with identifiable loads containing furniture in the back, the top, or on a trailer, and for those whose load were unidentifiable (due to closed trailers or vans for instance) I first asked the drivers if they were bringing any furniture. When I found drivers who fit my requirements and who were willing to answer a few questions, I asked them questions mainly focused around the concrete furniture they were bringing. For instance, how it had been used, its age, what they thought about it when they first acquired the furniture and what they thought of it now, why it was being disposed of at
the station, and if they had explored other options of disposal. I applied the same strategy as when conducting the in-depth semi-structured interviews, asking the most emotionally loaded questions towards the end of the interview, and conducted 14 interviews. My presence at the station was surprising to the interviewees, and the majority were curious about my questions, answering them willingly.

3.4 Validity and reliability

According to Punch (2005), in order to determine the validity of the collected data one can ask “how well do the data represent the phenomena for which they stand?” The interviews have, as I described above, been conducted through my personal network. Due to social media such as Facebook, I managed to get a substantial number of respondents to the web questionnaire. As mentioned, since both interviewees and respondents are in my wider social network there is some imbalance related to age, gender, demography, etc. As the results are inevitably a reflection of the population investigated, the same questionnaire distributed to a population representing, for example, the country of Norway would contribute a result that could be more firmly generalized and diversified concerning age and demographic differences. I have thus chosen not to focus particularly on diversities concerning gender, age, residence and income, but rather on creating a broad understanding of the process of dis-domestication.

To ensure reliability I have sought to describe my strategies and analytical tools thoroughly, and have included the web-questionnaire and the interview guides in the appendix.

3.5 Structure of the analysis

After a thorough review of the data collected from the web questionnaire, the in-depth interviews and the ethnography conducted at Haraldrud recycling station, four themes presented themselves as especially interesting for further analysis. I continued by sorting the
collected data according to these themes, which constituted the starting point for my analysis, as well as created the structure of the analysis by dividing it into four sections.

The first theme concerns the different phases we go through in life, the situations and changes that occur, the routines and rituals tied to these and how the dis-domestication of furniture is affected by these phases.

The second theme concerns the world of style and taste, and how particular knowledge is needed to navigate through it; how symbols and meanings embedded in furniture are communicating with the social surroundings and influencing social rituals, and how this affects the dis-domestication of furniture.

The third theme concerns how the materialities of furniture matter in the process of dis-domestication, and how skills and knowledge about materials, maintenance and repairs influence the process.

The fourth theme concerns how emotions and moral values, such as family ties or shame, colour the perception of specific furniture and influence its dis-domestication.
4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Dis-domestication and changing life phases

A person's life divides itself into different phases, which mostly seem to transcend gradually but sometimes quite abruptly. My interviews indicated a strong connection between the current phase of life people are in, including the routines, practices and rituals which constitute this phase, and their perception and evaluation of the worth and usability of their furniture as well as their attitudes towards furniture concerning appropriation and disposal. Aspirations concerning the properties demanded of the artefacts seem to change throughout these phases.

In this section I will analyze the different life phases I have identified through my research and their influence on the dis-domestication of furniture. I have called the phases: The first and second phase of independence, the merging of households and divorce. I will use these four phases to illustrate how the phase one currently is in and how one anticipates the future influences the dis-domestication of furniture.

4.1.1 The significance of furniture in everyday life

First I wish to make visible the significance of furniture in everyday life. There are many physical elements, or tools, that are needed to create the reality of the different life phases. We surround ourselves with these tools to help facilitate events, comfort, relationships, routines, rituals and prosperity. These are materialities that we sometimes take for granted in the developed world, and are even flooded by.

For example, it is difficult to imagine a birthday party without a table and chairs, an office without computers, a kindergarten without toys, a school without desks, playing tennis without a racket, having a dinner party without plates, etc. Social relationships are maintained
through material objects, and "goods are ritual adjuncts" (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979/1996:43). The physical artefacts in our homes, workplaces, schools and in society in general, are the tools through which we create our activities and our lives. Different things are needed for different activities. As we journey through the different phases by creating different events and relationships, we need different tools at different times. It can thus be seen that furniture are essential to create certain events. Some examples from my interviews illustrate this:

Elizabeth and Tom told me about a Christmas Eve a few years back, where they had invited their families to dinner but had not yet gotten around to buying a new sofa as planned. This resulted in a panic drive to IKEA, as they knew they could bring one home immediately. It was a purchase made on impulse to facilitate an event, and today Elizabeth only partially likes it, so has thrown a blanket over it.

Another example of the significance of furniture in routines and rituals from the home of Elizabeth and Tom is their dining room table. They have a big table, which in everyday life is placed in the kitchen. When they invite guests for dinner, they move it into the living room. The table is thus facilitating an array of routines, rituals and events. The morning breakfast together, dinners for two in the evening, kitchen activities such as baking, cooking etc, having tea with a friend dropping by, and dinner parties with friends and relatives. It is a simple wooden table, but it provides the material tool to create the activities which social relationships rely upon. A comment from the web questionnaire illustrates a similar case:

| Question: | Do you have furniture which are ‘on their way out’ and in storage, for example in the basement or the attic? |
| Comment: | I have a dining room table in the attic which is only there to be used for occasions where I need a long table for many guests; that occasion has not arrived yet. |
This shows that even though the event has not yet occurred, the dining room table still symbolizes the event in itself or her opportunity to create the event. It is the meaning she has embedded in the table.

4.1.2 The first and second phase of independence – the temporary nature of the domestication of furniture

Question: Do you have furniture which are ‘on their way out’ and in storage, for example in the basement or the attic?

Comment: Temporary furniture that have been acquired by necessity pending finding/being able to afford something of better quality and a design which fits my life style and personality. For example: A cheap IKEA dining room table imposed on me by friends is being replaced this year by a Bolia dining room table and chairs designed by Hans Brattrud.

Comment: Furniture I have grown tired of and want to replace with something new, or furniture I have put to use temporarily (for example after moving into an empty apartment one takes everything one can get of the most necessary items, like a chair that doesn’t fit in, but if one gets it for free one takes it until one can afford to buy new nice ones.

(Excerpts from web questionnaire)

This shows that the transition to independence in life promotes the re-domestication of furniture. When people first move out of their parents’ home they often receive used family goods that have been stored in attics and basements. These are used to create the first independent home, and are often substantial elements. The aspirations concerning the properties of re-domesticated furniture as well as domesticated new furniture tend to be quite low both on the individual level and within the social surroundings due to limited financial resources during this phase; one is building a home from scratch and thus many things need to be bought on a very limited budget. Elizabeth describes the first phase like this:
Elizabeth: Yes, some of the things I bought when I had just moved out from home I could not have now. There were so many rash decisions made because I had just moved into a large new apartment. As it was just about inhabiting it fast there were many things that were not very thought through. But I still that sofa we bought ten years ago (not the one mentioned earlier), and the first bed we bought together. And also the dining room table, and... No, I don´t think my taste has changed much really. But I might be past that `to buy something just to buy something at IKEA´ phase. Maybe I have refined my taste in a way.

In the second phase of independence, meaning the phase where one becomes financially independent, the re-domestication of old furniture from the previous phase can be difficult. New financial status opens up new possibilities to create ones surroundings after one’s own preferences. As ones own aspirations are heightened so are often the aspirations of the social surroundings. The old furniture which have fulfilled their function so far in the social roam of student life now have to be adjusted to fit into the new phase with its new routines, rituals, symbols and meanings, and to correspond with the properties within the new phase which are considered valid by the wider social surroundings.

It seems that during the transcendence from the first to the second phase of independence, re-domestication is not the most preferred option due to the old furniture being heavily embedded with symbols and meanings originating from the previous owner as well as the previous life phase of the current owner.

To understand the second phase of independence and its influence on the dis-domestication of furniture I wish to use the interviewee John as an example for analysis. John is a single man in his thirties who is carefully evaluating every investment in furniture, as the thought of transporting it the next time he moves puts him off.

John: I´d rather not have too many things. It´s a lot of hassle transporting stuff around, disposing of it as well. If you own too many things the things own you... That sounds like a cliché, but I think it is true. One has to spend time on the things, care for them, etc. There are few things that are so nice that you would want
them forever. It is difficult to keep it tidy as well when you have too much stuff.

John’s apartment is very sparingly decorated with only the most necessary furniture. The living room table is an old used table taken from the last shared apartment he lived in. It was considered ugly and was going to be disposed of. The thought was to replace it when he found the table he really wanted, but after three years he has gotten used to it and it might just stay. The bedside tables are remnants from an ex-partner. He finds them ugly as well, but considers them to serve their function. The Stress Less chair in the living room was supposed to be borrowed from his parents until he bought a sofa, but it stayed. He finds this ugly too, but enjoys its comfortableness.

John seems to be in a phase of his life where the current material setting feels temporary. Even if he has an interest in, and an awareness of, what he likes concerning furniture, he surrounds himself with many pieces of furniture he perceives as ugly. He condones them because they are temporary, and because the appropriation was convenient and cheap. The furniture he owns fulfil their function and support his routines and relationships to an extent he is satisfied with, but they do not seem fully domesticated according to the description of the domestication process by Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992). They seem to be partially domesticated and intended to serve a temporary function. Though all furniture could be regarded as temporarily domesticated due to the nature of their perishable material as well as the changing life phases, the awareness of the temporariness seems especially strong within the two phases of independence.

Though John has of now no furniture to dispose of because he has been careful only to possess furniture that serve a specific function, there are however some skeletons in the closet – at his parents’ house. He tells me about how he helped his parents empty their house of “stuff” during the redecorating of their home recently. Much of the stuff was furniture that had belonged to John when he lived at home. After he had moved out, there was no real use
for it, and he did not want or need it in his new apartment. The furniture were then no longer a part of the current phase in the life of its owner, and no longer part of events, routines, rituals and relationships, and therefore no longer fulfilled a purpose. The dis-domestication of this furniture started when John moved out from home. In the time between him moving out and him driving them to the landfill they had existed without a definite purpose as they had not been assigned new purpose by his parents. It was therefore decided they were to be disposed of.

In the two phases of independence, people seem to be especially aware of the temporary nature of the domestication of furniture. The dis-domestication of furniture during these phases is often caused by the only partial domestication of furniture received for free or bought cheaply, and the choice not to re-domesticate furniture appropriated in the first phase of independence into the second phase, where furniture which have not been assigned new purpose after the last has been fulfilled are not re-domesticated. Dis-domestication thus seems to depend on the potential purpose of the furniture as well as their embedded meanings and symbols.
4.1.3 Merging households and family life – negotiations and dis-domestication

If a couple is entering this phase in life directly from the first phase of independence they might not bring much of their old furniture into the new house to be re-domesticated. The furniture from the previous phase could have been only partially domesticated in the previous household, and regarded to be unsuitable for re-domestication into the new household. Most of this furniture is dis-domesticated at this point.

On the other hand, if each of the individuals in the couple already have complete households with fully domesticated furniture, the two households have to be merged into one, and rarely both can fit in their entirety. A process of negotiation begins and the properties of the furniture are evaluated to create the right fusion. The couple must agree on the preferred symbols and meanings embedded in the furniture, and the furniture selected must support the routines and rituals which the couple wants to exercise in their new life together. These negotiations are necessary to eventually agree on a set of symbols and meanings that are to be displayed through the choice and use of objects. Pieces of furniture that do not fit in within the negotiated specifications can be dis-domesticated. Responses from the web questionnaire illustrate issues that can arise when merging households. Two examples follow:

Question: Do you have furniture which are 'on their way out' and in storage, for example in the basement or the attic?

Comment: Yes, there are antiques (1700-1900) and carpets I had during a period of my life which do not go with the rest of the furniture my girlfriend brought with her when we moved in together."

Comment: I disposed of an old bed when I got married. I wanted only my husband and I to have used our bed.

A significant phase in life for most people is when they have children, and it certainly demands much of their material surroundings. There is a jungle of equipment and furniture that need to be acquired, as well as new routines and rituals to be exercised. Children use
furniture in a different manner than adults, and thus there is a significant increase in wear and tear on furniture during this phase. This requires special properties in the furniture which might not have been as important in earlier phases of life. Thus, furniture which have been domesticated in earlier phases might not be suitable for this new phase and can be dis-domesticated.

Furthermore, many parents with small children describe some of the interior of their households to be temporary during the phase were the children are still small. However, the furniture are not just partially domesticated. This is because they communicate the symbols and meanings valid of that life phase as well as support the rituals and routines that apply. Some choose the strategy to domesticate strong durable furniture during this time, while others choose cheap furniture to be dis-domesticated when transcending into a new phase.

The phase of life involving children makes especially visible the temporality of furniture as well as the changing aspirations and needs concerning the materialities of furniture such as durability, appearance and functionality.

4.1.4 Divorce and re-domestication

A phase which some experience in life is the time after a divorce. The household that was created together is broken up. Either one of the parties keep it and only some of the artefacts need to be dealt with, or the home gets sold and every artefact in the house needs to be handled. The artefacts are often mostly divided between the parties, but in some cases there are artefacts that are not wanted by either, which need to be disposed of. Negotiations are initiated about who has the right to which artefact. This ‘right’ can be measured through for instance emotional bonds, family ties, money, etc. The process of negotiations reveals the objects that do not have the needed properties to be re-domesticated by either party. If both do not perceive the artefact to fulfil a needed function in their new existence and claim it, the artefact is left without purpose and dis-domesticated.
My interviewee Eric got divorced a few years ago and moved into a small rented apartment. He does not see himself living in this apartment for many years, and the current material setting feels temporary to him. He has brought some furniture from the past relationship, and has added a few new pieces.

The new furniture is black and white. When I ask him about what he likes about them he tells me he finds them "cool and masculine". The two sofas have followed him from his past household. He likes them, and they are good quality sofas and in good condition, but he still plans on selling them. He wants something new, to "get rid of the old stuff". Talking about disposal he tells me that he would have a hard time disposing of his new furniture because he has chosen them himself. He realizes that maybe it was easier to dispose of furniture earlier because he himself had not chosen them.

The furniture he now owns are embedded with several different meanings. The old sofas represent the past, his ex-wife and the future he had imagined they would have, while the new pieces of furniture represent his independence, a new start, a new phase in life – a new phase he is in complete control of.

The sofas underwent the process of domestication in a past phase of the owner’s life. As the owner moved on, the sofas were transported into a new phase for which they needed to be re-domesticated. In such cases it is the appropriation phase – the phase where artefacts are purchased, and introduced into a household, as well as gain significance – that can be difficult to complete successfully. This is because when an artefact is being re-domesticated, the artefact is not being purchased ‘new’ or transferred to a new owner, but is rather being introduced into a new household and into a new phase of life by the original owner. This kind of re-domestication requires an artefact to go through the phases of appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion again in its new setting. As the sofas are already filled with past meanings and connected to old relationships, routines, and rituals that do not apply to the new phase, the re-domestication of them can be difficult.
Unlike what Aune (1996), Håpnes (1996) and Vestby (1996) have shown in the case of communication technologies, where the process of domestication and re-domestication is described as a continuous process of embedding new meanings and involvements in new routines and rituals, the re-domestication of furniture is a "reboot" of the whole process of domestication. Thus, similar to when artefacts change hands, the divestment ritual completed when goods change owners could become a significant ritual within the re-domestication of furniture. The owner would through this ritual erase the meanings embedded in the good from the earlier life-phase. However, it could be challenging to complete this ritual when the meanings to be divested were embedded by oneself; thus just changing the appearance of the furniture through i.e. refurbishing it may not always be enough.

Eric: When I got divorced we hired a container and threw everything we didn’t want into it.
Marie: Things that were still usable?
Eric: Yes. Today I think it was stupid to throw some of the stuff away. I threw away a whole golf set for example. We were holding up every object asking - do you want it? No? Me neither. So then we tossed it. But later when I came here I was thinking, oh this and that would have been good to have, so it was a pity, but most of the furniture we actually sold. The 50’s furniture was still popular, so we sold mostly all the furniture. I just think we were so tired of everything. We had been living together 6 months after we got the divorce, so we just wanted to get rid of the stuff. It didn’t really matter if you’d only get 200kr for it, we just wanted it to be gone.

The example above shows that symbols and meanings embedded in furniture which are very strongly connected to one life phase can make re-domestication undesirable to the current owner, as they act as barriers to move on to a new phase. Emotions influence the nature of dis-domestication in this situation.
4.1.5 Summary

The crossroads and changing phases in people’s lives substantially influence the decisions to domesticate, re-domesticate and dis-domesticate furniture. The complexity of aspirations, symbols, routines, meanings and rituals which constitute each phase must be reflected in the furniture through adjustments if it is not to be dis-domesticated.

The temporary nature of furniture is especially present in people’s awareness through the phases I have analyzed, and the anticipation towards the materiality, routines and rituals of future phases is significant in the decision processes concerning furniture. For example, negotiations and conflicting preferences concerning the embedded meanings and symbols within furniture influence the dis-domestication of furniture in the phases of life where one is merging two households. These negotiations decide if furniture are re-domesticated or dis-domesticated in the process.

In general, the process of people moving from one home to another is a critical point concerning dis-domestication of furniture, and often results in disposal of only partially domesticated furniture as well as furniture which have already been initiated into the dis-domestication process through storage.

I find the framework of domestication to be most fruitful in investigating dis-domestication in the perspective of life phases. The approach reveals the complexity of the process of disposing of furniture and allows looking deeper into the layers of human lives and behaviour to see the connections between materialities, behaviour, symbols and meaning.

When comparing the framework of domestication applied to the investigation of dis-domestication to the concept of obsolescence by Vance Packard (1960), which concerns the process of disposal, the latter seems somewhat superficial. Packard’s description seemingly fails to include the influences of the events, emotions and symbols that constitute people’s lives. Strandbakken (1997) corrects this somewhat by adding his fourth category of obsolescence caused by new consumer needs.
4.2 Dis-domestication and the role of style and trends

As discussed in the section above, furniture are important tools in creating social rituals and routines. In this section I go deeper into how the process of dis-domestication is influenced by taste, trends and style.

To introduce the theme I start with a section connecting the phenomena of style and trends to the wider society. Further, I analyze the significance of style categorization, the combination of furniture, and its visibility in the household.

4.2.1 The co-production of style and society

The issue of taste in the case of furniture is connected to the categorization of style. Different styles have been categorized historically. Renaissance, Baroque, Art Deco and Modernism are examples of such categorizations. I will return to the issue of categorization in the next section.

Different styles can be embedded with different symbols and meanings. Today different styles exist together in the world of trends, and every piece of furniture is subjected to a style and a trend in some way. Even furniture which one might not associate with a style or a trend have been given a shape, colour, texture and function which is influenced by the conventions of the time of production, and inspired by styles and trends. The dictionary definition of a trend is as follows:

- **trend**  n. 1 a general direction in which something is developing or changing. 2 a fashion. v. (especially of a geographical feature) bend in a specified direction. ➤ change or develop in a general direction.
- **trendify**  v. (trendifies, trendifying, trendified) informal, chiefly derogatory make fashionable.
- **trendsetter**  n. a person who leads the way in fashion or ideas.
- **trendy**  informal adj. (trendier, trendiest) very fashionable or up-to-date. n. (pl. trendies) a very fashionable or up-to-date person. DERIVATIVE **trendily**  adv.
There seems to be several ways in which to understand the word trend depending on what one is applying the word to. Regarding furniture, the word trend is often associated with a very up-to-date style, with something "fashionable". When talking about different aspects of society a trend is more likely to be considered "a general direction in which something is developing or changing". Even if trends within furniture seemingly are created by designers, architects, artists and manufacturers who are mutually influencing and inspiring each other, they are still for the most part very influenced by their time. Thus, trends within furniture are part of the general direction in which society is moving.

The most substantial change in the history of furniture making in recent time occurred during the industrialization in the nineteenth century. With new machines, materials and ways of production new styles emerged, and mass production made them available to the masses. Watching the trends through the years and looking back at trends of the last century it seems they react to each other. For instance, during the 1920’s a new modern style emerged within architecture, which in Scandinavia was later called "funksjonalisme". One wanted to strip off unnecessary decor that had been connected to the symbols, meanings and values of preceding times, and concentrate only on shapes that would support function. "Form follows function" (Sullivan, 1896) was the mantra of the new time. The legacy of this transition in society and in design is to a great extent visible in the design of furniture today.

My visit to a trend seminar, held by the much recognized Danish trend company Pej two years ago, illustrates a more contemporary example. The trends within design, furniture, architecture and fashion of the previous year had been very much influenced by light shades of gray, beige, etc., combined with graphic white and black. What they presented as one of the new trends was an explosion of colour and unusual shapes and textures. The story they told with the slides they showed us was how the new colourful trend would look, and that it emphasized the new optimism emerging in society after the recession in 2008; that this optimism was expressed through the explosion of colour in the new trend.
Another contemporary example is how the current focus on environmental issues within society today is influencing design. The eco-trend, utilizing eco-materials and considering the environmental impacts of the production of furniture, has caused a new style to emerge. Thus, in this case the currents in society are influencing design, and the objects that are created through this influence are again influencing people’s awareness of issues concerning the environment, such as waste, reuse and natural resources.

Trend companies who are working to predict trends analyze not only what happens in the creative sphere of designers, manufacturers, artists, and architects, etc., but also what happens in society as a whole. One could say that design is co-produced with society and technology (Jasanoff, 2004). Thus, changes and innovation in technology development and social surroundings influence the valid symbols and meanings that are embedded in furniture. The styles that are co-produced with society are reinforcing as well as affirming the changes and the new times that emerge. The lack of this reinforcing and affirming property within furniture that do not "fit in" with the new time might result in the dis-domestication of that furniture.

4.2.2 Dis-domestication through categorization

Bowker and Star (1999) argue that categories are omnipresent and connected to what people do and to the social worlds they belong to. They are grounded in different communities of practice. I find the categorization of style to influence the process of dis-domestication. Categorization is a way to make sense of the world. This also applies to the world of style and trends, which builds on demarcating styles by embedding different symbols and values for them to appeal to different people. People seem to choose the styles they feel comfortable and are familiar with.

Style is categorized and classified through different processes. Design, age, materials, quality, state, and performance are evaluated to define the style and price of a piece of
furniture. Categories of style which I find most common in the Norwegian society and the design world today are *Modern, Modernism, Shabby Chic, Retro, Funkis¹, Antique, New antique, Kitsch, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, Vintage* and *Loppis²*.

Marie: When you say that design is important, what is it that you look for?
Eric: Well... Something which is in line with the style of the present time.
Marie: So you are paying attention to trends?
Eric: Yes, I am a little, but my ex-wife did most of it even if I picked out the sofas. The whole house was in the style of 50’s style modernism, so we bought old furniture from the 50’s for the whole house. It was quite in style at the time we decorated the house.
Marie: But these sofas are more modern wouldn’t you say?
Eric: Yes, but we had a teak lounge table and a matching table for the TV.
Marie: So you where mixing modern furniture with the 50’s furniture?
Eric: Yes.

In this case, the category of style of the house guided Eric and his ex-wife in their process of domesticating, re-domesticating and dis-domesticating furniture. There was an oak dining room table for instance, that they had brought from their previous apartment, which Eric’s ex-wife was terribly annoyed with, because she found it not to fit in with the 50’s furniture. They were planning to dispose of the table for that reason, and appropriate a more modern table that would make a better combination with the modernistic furniture. This is a simple example of how style and categorization can cause dis-domestication.

To illustrate the importance of categorization concerning style one could take the extreme example of the style called *Kitsch*. The dictionary definition of kitsch is “*garish, tasteless, or sentimental art, objects, or design*” (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary,* 2008). Within art and design, kitsch often refers to imitations and copies of cultural icons. The objects are cheap and often of low quality. Kitsch is a difficult exercise in taste and style, as

¹ The Scandinavian word for a version of modernism.
² The Norwegian word for objects bought at flea markets.
one has to find the right items to combine for it to "work". If one does not possess the right knowledge on how to combine the items, one risks creating an arrangement of "bad taste". Strangely, placed and combined in the right way kitsch objects are considered good taste.

Kitsch objects are both loved and hated. In the case of the following excerpt from the interview with John, a simple kitsch object, such as a match box, is greatly cherished:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John</th>
<th>You should have been at &quot;Bob&quot; and &quot;Will´s&quot; place. They have a very nice apartment. It is like entering a hotel lobby.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Luxurious?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Yes, Gucci wallpaper on one wall for example. In one of the living rooms I remember they were having a party and in the ashtray lay a really nice box of matches with a picture of the Swedish king and queen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Oh, that is quite kitsch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Yes, very kitsch, but on purpose of course. They were very fond of it. During the party they realized that they had forgotten to hide it away so no one would use it – that would have been a total disaster. It is not for use, of course, just for show.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples of 50’s furniture and kitsch make the point of combination very clear, but this would also apply when combining other objects and styles. To successfully place and combine objects one needs certain knowledge to be able to create a totality that communicates the intended symbols and meanings. This knowledge comes from interacting with ones social surroundings and the valid communication channels of those surroundings. Such channels could be Internet sites, magazines, restaurants, bars, stores, films, music, and travel destinations, etc.

The constructed categories of style are tools in the process of domestication as well as the process of dis-domestication, in that they help people decide what furniture to appropriate and what not to, as well as what furniture to dis-domesticate.
4.2.3 Style, function and combination – creating a whole

Marie: What do you consider when you are buying new furniture?

Elizabeth: I think I am most concerned about whether it looks nice. If it fits in. If I buy something I know exactly where it is going to be placed. I know how big or small it has to be, I know how it has to fit in. So it really has to fit in.

As I have pointed out earlier, to understand the process of dis-domestication it is crucial to understand how the furniture was domesticated in the first place. Before the furniture is appropriated (purchased and introduced to the household) its potential for further domestication is evaluated. How these evaluations are made seem to have great significance in the life of furniture and can influence future dis-domestication. To grasp this evaluation process I wanted to learn about the features people consider when buying new furniture, and especially what the most considered feature is. I therefore asked the respondents of the web questionnaire to rank the features of design, function, quality and price. Two factors might have influenced the results of this question: A technical flaw3, and the respondents’ interpretation4. However, I find the result to be interesting as it indicates a strong concern amongst the respondents regarding design and function.

---

3 The question had a technical flaw which permitted the respondents to check the different ranking boxes No.1 (most important), No.2, No. 3 and No. 4 (least important) on more than one feature. Several respondents have thus failed to rank each feature with a different number as it was intended. The result therefore reflects the percentage of the respondents choosing each number, but not as was intended – the percentage of what the respondents would choose as most or least important if they were forced to make a definite choice.

4 The terms can have been interpreted to contain slightly different meanings by different respondents.
The design of a piece of furniture is the element that makes it belong to a style. The dictionary definition of the word style is as follows:

**style**  ■  **n.** 1 a manner of doing something. ➤ a way of painting, writing, etc. characteristic of a particular period, person, etc. 2 a distinctive appearance, design or arrangement. 3 elegance and sophistication.  ■  **v.** 1 design. Make or arrange in a particular form. 2 designate with a particular name, description or title.

_style_ ■ **suffix** (forming adjectives and adverbs) in a manner characteristic of: family-style.

**stylish** ■ **adj.** having or displaying a good sense of style. ➤ fashionable, elegant.

DERIVATIVES **stylishly** adv. **stylishness** n.


Thus, style is not only present within the design of an object, but also in the way the object is used, "in the manner of which one is doing something". Style and function are closely bound together, as style seems to serve a function by itself. Furniture play a part in creating events according to social norms and practices, and style is a communicator and a storyteller that contributes to the rituals furniture are involved in.
The respondents showed to be very concerned with the appearance of their furniture. 62% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I am concerned with how the furniture fits in with the other furniture I have at home". This suggests that the majority of the respondents are concerned with the overall design of their home. The new piece of furniture would preferably have to fit into the already domesticated community of furniture in the household, which also might be a part of its function. It has to fit in to "work". Thus, function is not only about the physical aspect such as sitting, storing, sleeping, etc, but also about the function of social rituals.

Figure 2: "I am concerned with how the furniture fits in with the other furniture I have at home"

The totality created through the combination of furniture and artefacts is perceived to set an atmosphere within the home. My interviewee Elizabeth comments on this in her reflections on what she thinks about the homes of others:

Elizabeth: I often think it is more about the atmosphere somewhere than about the specific furniture. Maybe it is also about how much love has been put into making a home. I think you notice quite fast if it has become a home or not. It might not be about the type of furniture, but about how warm it is, the atmosphere or... the love... I also find that even if we are visiting very nice people, if they do not have a nice home, I can´t seem to be able to enjoy
myself in the same way as in a nice and cozy home. I’m not proud of this, but if people have the wrong lighting, if it is too bright when we are having dinner for instance, I can’t relax at all, it really affects me. I wish that didn’t bother me so much.

Marie: Is there something else you can think of that makes you uncomfortable?

Elizabeth: Maybe if everything is new. If one has just gone and bought a style, and everything is brand new, it’s not been personalized, one has just looked in the magazines and bought it all to be done furnishing for the next ten years."

Sarah emphasizes the same point:

Marie: When you are visiting someone, what kind of thoughts do you have about how they have decorated their homes?

Sarah: I might look mostly at the totality. I find it interesting when the household interior is put together by many different things but still "works". I am more impressed by those who have many different things than those who look like they have cut the interior right out of a catalogue.

Marie: Why?

Sarah: Because it is so easy to just decorate after a catalogue. It doesn’t demand any aesthetic sense really."

Thus, it appears it is not only important to choose the furniture embedded with the symbols and meanings valid in the social surroundings, but the way in which the furniture create a whole contains in it self a power of communication. For the furniture to "function" it is important that it fits into the totality of domesticated furniture because the combination of artefacts matters. Pieces of furniture that are embedded with symbols and meanings which are not contributing to, or are disrupting, the totality of the household interior are in danger of being dis-domesticated. This does not mean that all items need to communicate the exact same symbols and meanings, it is the combination of items which in the end creates the totality and is communicated to the social surroundings.
4.2.4 Personal properties and social surroundings

The previous sections have focused on the external influences of style, social surroundings and social developments. However, through communicating with the world outside the household, consumers are concerned with expressing their inner properties, their personalities, through their consumption. This section will explore this issue.

The interviewees and respondents to the web questionnaire recognize a connection between furniture and the owner, in that furniture expresses or communicates some inner properties of the owner. 48% of the respondents partially agree and 28% strongly agree with the statement "How one decorates ones home is an expression of one’s personality”.

Figure 3: "How one decorates ones home is an expression of ones personality"

As previously mentioned, the phase within the process of domestication labelled conversion by Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992), relates to the adjustments the household makes to the artefact in order to embed symbolic contents that are coherent with the values of the social and cultural surroundings. How furniture is designed as well as which style and trend it belongs to, and how it is combined with other furniture and is placed within the household, influences the communication of symbols and meaning to the social surroundings. The arrangement and choice of furniture communicates the owner’s personality. Judging from the
importance the respondents and interviewees have attributed the feature of design when appropriating furniture, I assume that design is a significant communicator of personality to the social surroundings of the household.

Figure 4: "If you compare the interior of your home to the interior of the homes of people in your circle of friends, which statement would you choose?"

The majority of the respondents perceive their social surroundings to contain several different styles and different tastes, which suggests that many different expressions of symbols and meanings are condoned simultaneously. This might relate to how personality is expressed through style and taste in furniture. Individuality and diversity seems to be accepted and sometimes even admired as long as the symbols and meanings embedded are recognizable and valid within the social surroundings.

Eric has experienced interesting reactions from his social surroundings to how he displayed taste and style through furniture:
Eric: We had an unusual taste in our circle of friends. One of the couples we knew were imitating us quite a lot. They decorated their home similar to ours.

Marie: They were inspired by you?

Eric: Yes, that is a nice way of putting it.

Marie: Did they admit to that openly?

Eric: No, if we bought something new they would just buy something similar, but more fancy and expensive.

Marie: Did you feel like they were trying to outmatch you?

Eric: Yes. Other than them I think we were the only ones in our circle of friends to decorate in this style.

John is especially occupied with his individuality concerning his choice of furniture:

John: I don’t like everyone to be the same. It doesn’t have to be super fancy, but I almost never shop at IKEA because then everybody has it. Take my sofa for instance, I bought that at Bolia. It was not very expensive, but I think that not many people have that exact sofa. I don’t think one can see right away that I bought it there.

In addition to revealing aspects of the owner’s personality, the design of the furniture and their style also seem to reveal the phase of life the owner is currently in. Certain styles, colours and materials can also be associated with gender. Due to the fact that households often consist of both genders, negotiations are necessary. According to my interviews, a common opinion is that it is the woman who is most concerned with the issue and that she is holding most of the power through the negotiations. This is how Eric put it:

Eric: If you walk into a 30 year old man’s home and look at his apartment, it is very often a typical bachelor pad. Mine was anyway. I didn’t have curtains, nothing really. Concerning couples I think that in nine out of ten cases you can see who decides how the home is going to look. Often it is the woman who decides.

Marie: How can you see that?

Eric: I don’t know, I just do. If you know the persons you might know what kind of taste the man has, so if it doesn’t look like his taste, you know that he is not deciding. I think men are quite insecure about these things. It is easier to let the woman make the decisions. When I visit my friend "Daniel" I can see that his home is furnished just like homes usually are furnished after a divorce.
You just put together what you are left with. Maybe nothing is brand new.

The assumption that women are more concerned with furniture than men seems to be contested by a significant percentage of the male questionnaire respondents meaning they have a clear conception of what they like when they go to the store or search online for furniture (76% agree to that statement). Male respondents are also concerned with how the furniture fits in with the other furniture at home (84% agree to this statement). Although female respondents show slightly more interest in their home interior, this suggests that male respondents are significantly conscious on the matter as well.

4.2.5 Visibility and relocation

As discussed in earlier sections, the process of dis-domestication can be initiated when the meanings and symbols embedded in the furniture are no longer valid, wanted or fit in with the totality of the home’s interior. When the furniture is perceived to lack the right meanings and symbols due to flaws in its appearance, the owners apply different strategies. One strategy I have identified is relocation. The furniture is moved to a less visible place such as a basement TV lounge or a cabin in order to keep it from "cluttering" the totality of the household interior that is visible to the social surroundings. The interviewee Sarah talks about furniture that with a little paint would fit in at the cabin, and an old kitchen that was moved into her studio when they bought a new one, for instance. The phase of relocation is often initiated when the furniture is not subjected to the phase of disposal due to for instance emotional ties or moral concerns. Strandbakken (1997) addresses the issue of visibility in his report on product durability, and argues that the more "socially visible" an object is the more it will be subjected to the obsolescence of desirability (Packard, 1960).
To address the question of relocation I asked the web questionnaire respondents what they do when they think that a piece of furniture no longer fits in at home because it is worn, damaged, ugly, or out dated, etc.

Figure 5: "What do you most often do when you think that a piece of furniture no longer fits in at home because it is worn, damaged, ugly, out dated etc.?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>% of 204 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I put it in the attic/basement until I find a solution</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sell it/give it away/drive it to the landfill as soon as possible</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I leave it where it is until I have found a solution</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take it to the cabin or to another place where it is not so visible</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the respondents relocate the furniture to a place where it is no longer visible to the social surroundings, while only 6% relocate the furniture to a less visible place. This suggests that relocation mostly puts the furniture in a place of no visibility\(^5\).

The action of relocating furniture could be tied to a feeling of shame. According to my interviews the experience of being perceived to have bad taste is feared. Since taste is communicating ones personality to the social surroundings, having bad taste would express an unfavourable image. Even if John claims not to be very concerned with furniture and keeps his possessions to a minimum, he is quite concerned with not being perceived to have bad taste:

Marie: Are you concerned about what people think when they are visiting your home?

John: Yes, I think a lot about that. Especially when friends visit who are very up-to-date. I wonder what they say when they are talking about my apartment.

Marie: What are you afraid they might say?

\(^5\) However, considering that 50% of the respondent population is in the age group of 25-35, it could also just be a reflection of the fact that the respondents within this group might not own a cabin or a house where the relocation to a less visible place is possible.
John: That I have bad taste. It’s hard to explain why, but I don’t want anyone to think that I have bad taste.

4.2.6 Summary

Design and style are significant factors in the process of dis-domestication due to their strong communication of symbols, meanings, values, personal properties and social affiliation. In regards to personal properties and personality, displaying good taste is important to the interviewees. Good taste seems to be a proof of a certain status in its own right. This concurs with Strandbakken’s (1997) hypothesis about consumption: That expressing cultural capital is more important, and explains more than the expression of financial capital.

Knowledge about how to combine artefacts within the home’s interior in a certain way to create a whole seems imperative to be able to communicate the meanings and symbols intended. For objects to function as contributors to the communication of the whole, much is demanded by the properties of the furniture. Small deviations in the design or in its state might cause dis-domestication through relocation or disposal.

Styles are made intelligible through categorization, which is important in terms of communication within the social surroundings. The categorization of style is a tool through which consumers are navigating the world of trends, and choosing which furniture to domesticate, re-domesticate and dis-domesticate.

However, the large availability of furniture and different styles makes the process of domestication a complicated undertaking. Errors are easily made, and furniture which later show unanticipated deviations in their communication to the social surroundings may thus be subjected to dis-domestication.

Seen in a macro perspective, the mutual development of style, technology and society influences the symbols and meanings embedded within the design of furniture, and substantial technological and social changes can cause dis-domestication of furniture.
Applying the framework of domestication to furniture and focusing on how their domestication may fail due to the influence of style has helped me identify the style related causes for dis-domestication as well as the strategy I have called relocation. Relocation may prolong the process of dis-domestication, and postpone the phase of final disposal. According to the interview results, the relocation strategy is quite common.
4.3 Materialities – dis-domestication and knowledge

Furniture can often be experienced as a "black box". Hidden constructions and moulded materials can make it difficult to recognize the potential in maintenance and repairs, meaning it can be difficult to know how to repair something, or how a certain material should be maintained due to the construction and complexity of the material. In this section I analyze the significance of knowledge about materials, durability and maintenance, and how this knowledge influences the decisions made concerning the dis-domestication of furniture.

4.3.1 Knowledge about materials, maintenance and durability

Literature on the issue of maintenance and repairs of furniture has been widely available through the last centuries. However, the channels of knowledge diffusion have changed remarkably during the last decades, and especially with the emergence of the Internet, which has revolutionized the flow of information. Thus, not surprisingly, the majority of the respondents state they seek advice on maintenance and repairs concerning furniture either over the Internet or through friends and relatives. Today, with the availability of knowledge concerning maintenance and repairs being as high as it is, the question arises regarding whether this availability influences the decisions made concerning the domestication, re-domestication and dis-domestication of furniture.
According to the interviews conducted at Haraldrud recycling station, much furniture is dis-domesticated not due to the decline in its physical performance, but due to properties perceived as flaws. Furniture can for instance be worn on the surface while still being in a functional state. Properties often considered flawed are worn surfaces and undesirable designs and styles. As described in the previous section, the design and style of furniture can be perceived as undesirable if it is not communicating the right set of symbols and meanings. Perceived flaws in furniture are a significant factor in the process of dis-domestication.

The web questionnaire respondents seem mostly concerned with durability, where 72% agree to the importance of durable materials. However, knowledge about the durability of materials seems to be generated from experience, and moving into unknown territories may cause people to make errors in the appropriation phase. Additionally, if the price is low and the purchase convenient, people seem to pay less attention to the durability of materials and the potential effort needed to maintain them.

My interviewees Elizabeth and Tom, for instance, bought their garden furniture quite cheaply. It was the first time they bought garden furniture, and they felt insecure about the new genre. They bought it cheaply because they found it hard to evaluate the different qualities of garden furniture. Now they find it to be aging quite badly, and realize they either
have to sand and surface treat the furniture every year or purchase new furniture which ages more gracefully if they are to be content with its appearance. Thus, their garden furniture is soon to be replaced due to this unanticipated flaw, as they lack the motivation to do maintenance. This motivation for maintenance is affected by the cheap price of the furniture. Their weak motivation for maintenance was not considered in the phase of appropriation because they lacked the knowledge about the kind of maintenance and effort required to keep the original appearance of the furniture. This lack of knowledge in the appropriation phase will result in the dis-domestication of the furniture.

To reveal the attitudes amongst the respondents of the web questionnaire concerning the importance of maintenance and repairs I asked them to which degree they agreed to the statement "it is important that it is possible to maintain and repair the furniture/replace parts". 48.5% agree, 25.5% disagree and 26% are indifferent to the question. This response indicates a weak focus on the matter amongst the respondents. Less than half of the respondents consider the potential for maintenance and repairs in furniture important. If one does not consider this property to be important, the level of skills required may not then have a strong influence in the appropriation phase.

Figure 7: "it is important that it is possible to maintain and repair the furniture/replace parts"

![Bar chart showing responses to the statement: 48.5% strongly agree, 25.5% agree, 26% indifferent, 7% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree.]

When stating their level of knowledge concerning repairs and maintenance of furniture, the majority of respondents feel they are able to repair simple damages as well as do surface
treatment. There seems to be a significant difference between male and female respondents, as 37% of the male respondents confidently state they are quite good with their hands and can fix most things, versus 7% of the female respondents, and 76.5% of the female respondents more modestly state they are able to repair simple damages, versus 51% of the male respondents.

Surface treatment seems to be the most common form of maintenance and repairs. 57% of the respondents have surface treated furniture and 23% have had furniture upholstered; 17.5% have never refurbished any piece of furniture.

Further, when asked if they considered refurbishing the furniture they disposed of prior to disposal, 76% state that they had not done so. This indicates a weak connection between skills, knowledge and action.

Figure 8: "How would you describe your level of knowledge when it comes to doing repairs to furniture and other household items?"

My interviews reveal motivation as a key factor in applying possessed skills and knowledge in the maintenance of furniture. Thus, the possession of skills and knowledge itself does not necessarily result in the act of refurbishing. In addition, motivation, convenience and price are important factors concerning the potential use of the possessed skills and knowledge. Eric comments on the issue of motivation:
Eric: I especially find wooden counter tops to become very ugly with time – you have to sand them a bit.

Marie: How do you feel about such activities?

Eric: It depends on how I feel that day really *laughing*. Concerning the sanding, I woke up one morning and thought: Today is the day. Then I just pulled out the machine and got on with it, but it took me six months to get around to it.

Marie: How did it feel when you had completed it?

Eric: Well it is similar to the feeling I have when I have cleaned the house. Then I can lie on the sofa, look around and think ‘god, this is nice’. So it is actually a very nice feeling. But here... Well I don’t do anything here because I don’t want to put money into it considering that I won’t live here for long. But it feels good when you have done it. It’s like with working out. It is a hassle before you do it, but when you have done it feels really good.

4.3.2 Motivation, price and convenience

I wish to further elaborate on the factors of motivation, price and convenience concerning the potential use of possessed skills and knowledge in terms of furniture maintenance.

There have been significant changes through the last decades in the ways family life is organized, and in how time is valued. Households where both genders pursue a career are common, as are single households. Leisure time is highly valued and often preferably spent on family activities, hobbies and travel. Activities that contribute to personal development and maintain the emotional bonds to the people in ones social surroundings are considered important. The motivation to dedicate more than the necessary amount of time to activities that do not concern these priorities seems weak.

The presence of low priced furniture additionally influences the motivation to spend time on maintenance and repairs on old furniture. When considering the time and effort put into repairs against the cost of appropriating new furniture, the latter often seems to be the most preferred option. It is a question of priorities and convenience.

My interviewees Elizabeth and Tom tell me about their living room sofa from IKEA which is quite worn, and has flat back cushions. They have replaced the cover a couple of times
already, and now Elizabeth has tried to find out if it is possible just to purchase new back cushions. She found out that one has to purchase a whole set of back cushions and seating cushions, and thus this option became less interesting for Elizabeth and Tom who only need the back cushions. They are therefore now considering replacing the whole sofa. They like the sofa, and would have kept it if they were able to replace only the parts they wanted at the time they wanted it. Thus, the lack of convenience and availability of replacement parts is causing the dis-domestication of the sofa.

At Haraldrud recycling station I asked people if they had made an attempt to sell or give away the furniture they were disposing of. Some of the interviewees found it to be a hassle to sell them. They did not consider the effort to be worth it. I also asked them if they had considered refurbishing the furniture, which most had not. The most common reason not to refurbish the old furniture was that it did not need refurbishing (due to being in a good state), and that it had already been replaced. Refurbishing was also considered to be too time consuming and too expensive.

However, 58% of the web questionnaire respondents disagree with the statement "it does not pay off to repair old furniture"; 27% are indifferent to the statement while 10% agree to it. There seems to be a disparity between the attitudes displayed through the results of the web questionnaire, and the actions observed and communicated at Haraldrud recycling station. This may be explained by the influence of the focus on environmentally friendly behaviour in the media and in general in society today. The web questionnaire respondents might have responded according to what they think they "ought to" mean and do, but their actual actions might be more influenced by the desire to communicate properties such as taste and personality.

The different ways in which one disposes of furniture, such as driving it to the landfill/recycling station, selling it, giving it to charity, etc., are not always influenced by the state or physical performance of the furniture. Furniture of the same state and physical
performance might be subjected to different actions. The evaluations people make in order to decide on the appropriate action seems only partially to rely on knowledge and maintenance skills. Again, motivation and price seem to be more significant factors.

4.3.3 Patina and the aging of materials

The look of wear and tear is not only considered a flaw in the structure of furniture. Some furniture gradually achieve a property called "patina", which is associated with antiques, the "Shabby Chic" trend, quality materials and a sentimental view of old times. It is a "right" way in which objects can be worn. According to Packard (1960), social norms determine how much wear and tear is accepted.

McCracken (1988) describes the significance of patina during the Elizabethan era in the sixteenth century where honour was the most precious possession of a family. To transcend from ungentle to gentle status was a process of five generations. Since patina occurs over time it became a visible indicator of where the owners were positioned in the process of gentrification. This perception of patina is no longer valid in our time as the embedded symbols and meaning of it has changed. To display the right kind of patina on ones furniture is considered to communicate a certain good taste connected to certain styles.

Take for instance the Antique style or the Shabby Chic style. The relatively new style called Shabby Chic embraces all the symbols and meanings embedded in patina. Furniture are treated in a manner which imitates patina. The style offers a mixture of furniture imitating patina and furniture with "real" patina created by use. The style is very particular in how the patina is presented. The patina often presents itself through chipped and worn paint of light shades, as well as rough and worn wooden furniture with a "country" like feel. There are no references to financial status. It is more a sentimental tribute to simple country life. This style offers a different function of patina. The patina is not achieved by the wear and tear by five
generations of ones own family, but is appropriated in a ready-made fashion. In this case the function of patina is merely an element of style that is used to communicate a certain taste.

The era of mass production has reduced the occurrence of "natural" patina, as people tend to replace their furniture when they begin to look worn. Most of the mass produced goods do not have the properties that promote patina. We find the new materials not to age as gracefully as the old ones did. Patina is still valued in old wooden furniture, which are mostly categorized as antiques. Wood is in general regarded as the most receptive material for patina, a material that ages with grace.

John: If I had found a real massive dining room table I think I might want to have it no matter how ugly it was.

Marie: Why?

John: Because I think it’s quite cool.

Marie: Why is it cool?

John: I don’t know. Dining room tables are special. They can be a bit worn. Maybe there is something about wooden furniture, that they are worn differently than other furniture.

Wear and tear on furniture can thus both cause dis-domestication and add value to furniture, depending on the nature of the wear and tear. If it is categorized as patina it adds value to the object. The nature of wear and tear is judged by the material and the style of the furniture. Even if the furniture possesses the "right" kind of patina it can still be subjected to dis-domestication because the evaluation of patina demands certain knowledge. Patina connects the materiality of furniture to the notions of style. Special knowledge is needed to evaluate the state of the wear and tear of furniture to be coherent with a style such as for instance Shabby Chic or Antique.

The potential re-domestication of furniture with patina in a new household depends on the manner of which it has been dis-domesticated. Furniture with patina have a good chance of being re-domesticated if disposed of through sale or charity. In this way it is located in a place where it can be found by someone who will embed new symbols and meanings in it, and who will possess the knowledge to combine it successfully in a new household.
4.3.4 Authenticity

The new materials of industrialization have created a divide between authentic and unauthentic materials. Imitations of wood and stone are widely used in household interiors. As mentioned above, these new materials are not considered to age as gracefully as the natural ones. However, due to their effective mass production and low prices they are in high demand. The way in which these new materials age, and the lack of knowledge, skills or potential for maintenance and repairs, is causing dis-domestication of furniture.

Furniture materials are often connected to the property of quality. Therefore I asked the interviewees about their perception of quality concerning furniture. In addition to the wish for furniture to be durable, many answered quality to be inherent in "real" materials. Real materials are described as natural materials such as wood, cotton, leather, stone and wool. Artificial materials mentioned are cardboard, veneer and materials that are imitating natural materials.

Some also speak of the importance of the furniture being of a known brand. A brand that is known for its quality, and with which they are acquainted and trust:

Marie: When you say that you think that furniture should be durable and solid, how do you evaluate that, are you considering the materials it is made of?

Elizabeth: I think perhaps it is more about knowing what brand I buy rather than about the materials. If it comes from a serious brand known for its quality I'm not so worried about the material. Then I trust that the materials are treated in such a way that they are durable. I would trust the manufacturer. We have for instance one of those Eames Vitra rocking chairs. It is perhaps the only plastic furniture I own, but it still feels like my most durable piece of furniture. Because it's the most expensive piece of furniture in the house. I am expecting it to be durable for a very long time, although it is quite a fragile piece of furniture.

Materials and furniture that are regarded as authentic seem to have more perceived value than those that are regarded to be imitations. This suggests that it is the manner in which
furniture of artificial materials age, as well as their lack of authenticity, which influences their perceived durability and the initiation point of the dis-domestication of them.

4.3.5 Summary

Perceived flaws in furniture often cause dis-domestication. These flaws are mostly connected to the appearance of the furniture, its design, and its state in terms of wear and tear. However, one owner can perceive the properties of the furniture to be flawed, while another can perceive the same property to be for instance patina. How this evaluation is made depends on the possessed knowledge about style, and the nature of the ongoing work of creating a totality in the household interior. Furniture which disrupt the totality of the interior are often perceived as flawed and thus dis-domesticated.

Natural materials seem to be regarded to be the most durable and to age more gracefully than new artificial materials. Thus, furniture made out of artificial materials can be more often subjected to dis-domestication through disposal at a landfill than furniture made out of natural materials. Furniture made out of natural materials seem to have a better chance of being re-domesticated into the original household or into a new household. Re-domestication into the original household often demands surface treatment of the furniture.

It seems that for knowledge and skills to matter in the processes of domestication and dis-domestication of furniture, motivation, convenience and price are important factors. Convenience and price are factors that influence motivation and decisions. Motivation seems in general to be more important than the concrete knowledge of maintenance and the durability of materials concerning decisions to dis-domesticate or re-domesticate furniture. Time is highly valued in the modern family, which influences the motivation for maintenance and repairs independently of the possessed skills and the potential of the furniture.
Analyzing the knowledge of materials and maintenance has emphasized the dimension of materialities within the processes of domestication and dis-domestication, which is important in order to grasp the complexity of these processes. However, concrete materialities and maintenance skills seem less important within the process of dis-domestication than I had anticipated.
4.4 Emotional and moral influences to dis-domestication

During my research on the issue of dis-domestication of furniture I have found emotions and moral values to be significant factors. In this section I wish to discuss different situations that I have uncovered concerning furniture, where emotions and moral values are especially influential in the process of dis-domestication.

4.4.1 Emotional discomfort and the private nature of disposal

As mentioned, in order to get closer to the act of disposal itself I conducted three field trips to the biggest recycling station in Oslo, the Haraldrud recycling station. I wanted to see what people dispose of there and talk to them about why they were disposing them. I began with a preliminary field trip to make some overall observations. As there was quite a long line of cars going into the station, it took me about 20 minutes to get in. When I drove into the area, I pretended to be there for the same reason as everybody else, to dispose of something; I wanted to observe before I revealed myself. On this first trip I brought my camera, which seemed to make people nervous and was therefore perhaps not such a good idea. As I took a few photos, not of people as they threw things into the containers, but only of what was already down there I heard someone whisper behind me. The situation was a bit uncomfortable, like I was there to expose someone and that people felt “caught in the act”. I was reluctant to ask someone for an interview because of the discomfort I felt. I was struggling with the feeling of getting too close to people, like I was disturbing them in a private matter. No matter how I rephrased my opening line, I felt like I was raising my finger at people, accusing them of something. There was a stressful atmosphere at the station and people were running back and forth between their vehicles and the containers.

After a while one of the staff approached me and told me that people were wondering what I was doing, since I was taking pictures. To my surprise the recycling station was not
publicly owned and I had to clear the matter with a woman at the office. If not, I could risk being "thrown on my head into one of the containers". I decided to come up with a new strategy before talking to the right people. The discomfort I felt, and the discomfort I sensed within the people who were there seemed to me to be an expression of the shameful position the disposal of goods holds in society. Shame seems to be an emotion often tied to the act of disposal, as Strandbakken (1997) also concludes in his research on consumer attitudes.

On my second field trip, which was cleared with the right people, I had another talk with the staff. I had observed many usable objects being disposed of in the waste containers instead of placed in the Fretex container for potential re-domestication, and asked the staff if they enlighten people on the location of the Fretex container. Their reply was interesting. They did not want to interfere in the "private" decision of something to be terminally disposed of in the container or to be placed in a location for potential re-domestication. It could seem that the staff was shielding people from being exposed in doing something that is considered shameful by defining their actions of disposal as private. The interference of the staff at the recycling station would for instance implicate the disposal of usable objects in the containers to be "morally wrong", thereby exposing the person’s immoral action. The possible publication of the photographs I had taken on my previous trip could do the same, provided someone would recognize the objects on them.

I did not conduct any interviews on this fieldtrip either, as people were not willing to talk to me while working to dispose of their discarded belongings in the containers. To make the interview situation more comfortable for the interviewees as well as for myself I decided to return on a Saturday when the station is full to interview people whilst waiting inline in their cars to enter the station. This strategy turned out to be much more successful.

---

6 A social recycling enterprise owned by the Norwegian Salvation Army.
According to the interviews at Haraldrud recycling station as well as the in-depth interviews, there is often a feeling of discomfort when disposing of usable objects, because the action is considered to be an immoral contribution to our materialistic culture. However, this discomfort seems to be regarded a necessary evil in the process of inventing and reinventing the symbols and meanings embedded in the household. The majority of the interviewees at Haraldrud recycling station said they feel a sense of relief when disposing of things there. In this regard emotions and moral values seem to be in conflict with actions. The convenience of disposal at the recycling station makes the discomfort preliminary and relief comes quickly. After disposal the object is out of sight and out of mind.

Relocation is often a strategy used to postpone the discomfort of final disposal. Much of the furniture brought by the interviewees at the recycling station had been stored for several years in attics and garages before being disposed of.

4.4.2 The difficult nature of giving – moral values

John: I find people to give away a lot of useless stuff. It is stupid to believe that others want something you don’t want yourself. That might be the reason why people don’t put stuff in the Fretex container. I only give away clothes that I could have worn myself for instance. If I find them to be too ugly to wear myself, I don’t want to give them to someone else either. Many people give away useless clothes to charity – broken jackets and such. No one wants to wear that.

Disposing of furniture through giving it to charity, friends or relatives seems to be a process that some people find morally challenging. Offering used objects to someone could implicate several different meanings. The biggest challenge might be to give something to someone in ones closest social surroundings. The person offering the object might not like it anymore because it is embedded with symbols and meanings now found to be unsuitable. By offering a used object to someone the giver communicates a perception of the symbols and meanings found to be represented in the receiver’s personality and position - meanings and symbols
that are rejected by the giver. Thus, it seems that many people are reluctant to offer used things to their closer social surroundings and therefore choose to give to charity or drive it to the landfill/recycling station.

McCracken (1988) captures this phenomenon in the rituals of exchange, which direct the goods embedded with certain meanings towards the individuals who are perceived by the giver to be in need or in want of these meaningful properties. He argues that the gift is in fact an invitation to extract the properties held by the good.

4.4.3 Inheritance, emotions and dis-attachment

The emotional ties and moral values embedded in furniture by a previous owner might influence the process of dis-domestication and cause the phase of disposal to be postponed through relocation.

63% and 70% of the respondents to the web questionnaire stated they have inherited and been gifted used furniture from family or friends, respectively. Thus it can be seen that most people at some point in life inherit or receive furniture previously owned by relatives or friends, which leads to re-domestication or dis-domestication of furniture.

Furniture inherited are often imbedded with so much meaning by the past owner, that the re-domestication of it is difficult and the dis-domestication is emotionally painful. For example, Elizabeth has inherited from both her grandmother and her grandfather as she was their sole heir. Parts of the inheritance were furniture, of which a substantial amount were valuable antiques:

Elizabeth: We neither have the room nor do I think that they suit our home, but they are heirlooms; I don’t know how old we have to get before they fit in. It is quite expensive to store it as well, but it seems to be the only option.

Marie: You do not want to sell it?

Elizabeth: No, we sold much of it when I inherited my grandmother. We gave away some as well, modern stuff, because some of the old
things are things that have been in the family for such a long time, so it feels more difficult to sell it.

Marie: What are you planning to do with it eventually then?
Elizabeth: Start liking it *laughing*.

In this case the inherited furniture is embedded with symbols and meanings that are too different from the ones the new owners prefer and wish to communicate, and would disrupt the totality of the interior of the household. It is a paradox that these symbols and meanings are also properties that keep the furniture from being disposed of. The furniture are in a special state of "limbo" because they have been dis-domesticated from the home of the grandparents, but only been relocated pending the decision of re-domestication or disposal. The meanings and symbols embedded by the grandparents and memories of the routines and rituals the furniture were involved in, tie the furniture emotionally to Elizabeth although she has no use for them. So though re-domestication is not an option at this point, neither is disposal, because of the emotional connection to her grandmother. The solution is therefore relocation through storage.

I asked the web questionnaire respondents if they owned furniture which were "on their way out" and put in storage, for instance in the basement or the attic, and if they could describe something, a piece of furniture or another object, they had disposed of which they had a special relationship with. There was a substantial amount of comments relating to inherited furniture, storage, lack of space, memories and emotions. Many respondents describe the relationship with inherited furniture as emotional and tied to memories. Due to the emotionally painful nature of the dis-domestication of inherited furniture, much inherited furniture is subjected to a phase within dis-domestication that I will call the phase of dis-attachment. The phase of dis-attachment is the time needed to be able to part with the furniture and process the emotions tied to it. Dis-attachment is mostly achieved by relocation through storage.
4.4.4 Summary

The emotional ties to furniture and the emotional discomfort of disposal influence the process of dis-domestication as it affects decisions made concerning the nature of disposal as well as the temporal aspect of disposal – how and where something is disposed of and how long the process of dis-domestication is stretched in time.

Disposing of furniture is often connected to a feeling of shame and discomfort, especially when disposing of the furniture without allowing for the possible re-domestication of it. To shield ourselves and others as much as possible from exposure, the act of disposing of something is considered a private matter.

Moral values influence the way people are disposing of furniture. Some furniture are considered so gravely flawed that one does not want to offer it or sell it to someone else. One would be ashamed to express the expectation that something which is not good enough for oneself would be good enough for others. By offering flawed furniture to others one is offering them the symbols and meanings embedded in the furniture, symbols and meanings one has rejected oneself.

People interviewed during my research often find the re-domestication of inherited furniture difficult. The alternative, disposal, is also emotionally difficult. Symbols and meanings embedded by a loved one, as well as emotions and memories attached to the furniture demand a phase of dis-attachment before the furniture can be disposed of. This phase is often conducted through relocation of the furniture to storage. Some hope, as in the case of Elizabeth, that during this phase changes in taste will make the re-domestication of the furniture possible after all. The furniture is then in a state of "limbo" where the continuation of its life biography is highly uncertain.
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have used the framework of domestication developed by Silverstone, Morley and Hirsch (1992) and applied by STS scholars as a starting point in order to grasp and concretize the process in which furniture are disposed of. I have sought to build an extension to the framework of domestication, in order to include the process of disposal.

In my effort to answer my research questions, I have found the process of the dis-domestication of furniture in Norwegian households to be a complex process simultaneously influenced by many factors. I wish to return to my research questions in order to summarize my findings.

5.1 Dis-domestication – Answering the research questions

5.1.1 How do the properties of furniture change or get lost on the way out of people’s homes?

The properties furniture possess are to a great extent connected to categorizations of style and taste, the embedded symbols and meanings which communicate affiliation with the owner’s social surroundings, an expression of self, different perceptions within different life phases, technological and social developments, as well as convenience, price, motivation, knowledge, emotions and moral values.

Since much of the properties of furniture are related to their materiality but are not in themselves material, they are very much exposed to changing perceptions. For instance, the design of a piece of furniture is expressed through its shape and the material it is built from, but the perceived design property is influenced by taste, social surroundings, changing life phases and technological and social developments.
Thus, the properties of furniture change and get lost through changes both in the materiality of the furniture (for instance through wear and tear), and through the outer influences described above, where the outer influences seem more significant to the initiation of dis-domestication.

5.1.2 Through what kind of strategies and practices are furniture dis-domesticated in Norwegian households?

Several different strategies and practices are applied in the process of dis-domestication of furniture in Norwegian households.

After discovering a perceived flaw in a piece of furniture, which disrupts the totality of the interior of the household, the furniture containing this flaw is subjected to an evaluation phase where it is categorized according to its appearance and functionality, and where wear and tear as well as style are judged. In a household with more than one person, negotiations are often necessary to agree on the categorization and the following dis-domestication or re-domestication of the furniture. If dis-domestication is selected, two strategies are most common: The strategy of disposal and the strategy of relocation.

The strategy of disposal embeds several choices of practice: Sale, gifting it to friends, relatives or strangers, giving it to charity, or bringing it to the landfill/recycling station. The first three choices will in most cases lead to the re-domestication of the furniture in a new household by new owners, while the choice of bringing it to the landfill/recycling station means the end of life for that particular furniture. However, the process is not linear and the furniture might fail to be re-domesticated into a new household even if it is disposed of through one of the first three practices. This might depend on the location it travels to and the people it comes in contact with as well as their knowledge, preferences and perceptions. Furniture can at any moment be subjected to new evaluation, categorization and negotiation, which might lead to disposal, relocation or re-domestication.
The strategy of relocation is often chosen in order to postpone disposal. By moving the furniture to a less visible space, such as for instance a cabin or the TV room, it is less visible to the social surroundings, and thus weakened in its communication of symbols and meanings. By moving it to a place of no visibility, such as for instance the attic or the garage, one avoids any communication to one’s social surroundings. Furniture which are relocated are in the process of dis-domestication, but can either be disposed of or re-domesticated in the original household later in time. If they are re-domesticated into the original household they are removed from the process of dis-domestication and reinitiated into the process of domestication. If the furniture is especially attached to emotions through for instance the memories of loved ones and the furniture’s place in those memories, the strategy of relocation is often applied to have time to *dis-attach* oneself from the furniture.
5.2 Suggestions for further research

The process of disposal and the framework of dis-domestication is a field important for further research within STS, in order to address the environmental concern of waste production. I agree with Pål Strandbakken (1996/2006) who argues for an interdisciplinary network to study the issue of durability and consumption from different angles. The STS field should tap into and contribute to the fields of anthropology and consumer research on the issue of waste production as well as look to contribute to other disciplines such as design, which are involved in the earlier stages of the concrete and material shaping of technologies and artefacts.

Suggestions for further research would be to analyze the process of dis-domestication with special focus on for instance particular practices, material properties and social influences in order to further deepen the understanding of the process. Important angles to study the process of dis-domestication from are for instance the issue of emotional and moral influences, the gender perspective, the temporary nature of artefacts and the issue of re-domestication. Concerning policy implications I find the issues of motivation, convenience and price to be interesting for further research.
6. REFERENCES


Berg, A.-J. (1996). Digital Feminism: Norwegian University of Science and technology


**APPENDIX 1: WEB QUESTIONNAIRE**

**ENGLISH TRANSLATION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1. What kind of evaluations do you do when you buy new furniture? (Strongly agree - partially agree - neither agree nor disagree - partially disagree - strongly disagree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1-1. &quot;I am concerned about whether the furniture fulfils the function I am looking for in the best possible way&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-2. &quot;I am concerned with how the furniture fits in with the other furniture I have at home&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-3. &quot;I always look for low priced furniture&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-4. &quot;I often buy furniture on impulse&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-5. &quot;I usually plan purchases of furniture well in advance&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-6. &quot;I find it important that the furniture is made of durable materials&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-7. &quot;I have a clear conception of what I like when I go to the store or search online for furniture&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1-8. &quot;It is important that it is possible to maintain and repair the furniture / replace parts&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2. Rank the most important feature you consider when you buy furniture (No.1 most important – No. 2 – No. 3 – No. 4 least important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3. How often do you update your interior at home? Choose one option.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Several times a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately 3 times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately 6 times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Every other year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More seldom than every other year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4. Do you read interior design magazines and/or interior design web pages? Choose one option.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Yes, I read interior magazines and/or interior web pages regularly (every month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yes, I read interior magazines and/or interior web pages sometimes (less than every month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q5. If you compare the interior of your home to the interior of the homes of people in your circle of friends, which statement would you choose? Choose one option.

- We have quite similar taste in furniture
- We have quite different taste in furniture
- We have quite mixed taste in furniture
- I am more interested in furniture and am updating my interior more often
- I feel insecure when it comes to interior decorating and try to mimic the taste in furniture which is popular in my circle of friends
- I admire how many people in my circle of friends have decorated their homes and wish my home could be like theirs
- I don’t notice the interior in peoples homes
- Other

Q6. Have you ever bought used furniture? Choose one option.

- Yes
- No
- I don’t remember

Q7. Why do you not buy used furniture? Choose one or more options.
(Respondents answering no to the previous question were directed to this one)

- I don’t like that the furniture has been used by other people
- I want the furniture to be perfect without traces of use when I bring it into my home
- I don’t like the design of old furniture, I prefer today’s modern design
- I don’t see any reason to buy old furniture when I can afford new furniture
- It feels kind of pitiful to buy used furniture
- Other

Q8. Have you ever been given/inherited used furniture from friends/family? Choose one or more options.

- Yes, been given
- Yes, inherited
- No
- I don’t remember

Q9. Can you describe something that you have disposed of, which you had a special relationship to, for example something there were special memories or emotions attached to? (Open ended text answers)
Q10. Think back and try to remember the last piece of furniture you disposed of (discarded, sold, gave to someone). What was the primary reason you disposed of it? Choose one option.

- Because it was broken
- Because it was worn and ugly
- Because there was no longer room for it
- Because it did no longer serve a function in my interior
- Because I wanted something new
- Because it did not fit in with the rest of my interior
- Because my taste had changed
- Other

Q11. Did you consider refurbishing the furniture you disposed of?

- Yes
- No

Q12. How would you describe your level of knowledge when it comes to doing repairs to furniture and other household items? Choose one option.

- I am quite good with my hands and can fix most things
- I can repair simple damages such as fixing loose parts and do surface treatments such as painting etc
- I have little knowledge and have never repaired anything in my home
- Other

Q13. Have you ever refurbished an old piece of furniture? Choose one or more options.

- Yes, I have surface treated an old piece of furniture
- Yes, I have gotten an old piece of furniture reupholstered
- No, never
- Other

Q14. Where do you go for advice on maintenance and repairs concerning furniture? Choose one or more options.

- The Internet
- Furniture stores
- Books
- Friends
- Spouse
- Parents/relatives
- I never seek advice about this
- Other
Q15. What have you done with the furniture you have disposed of? Choose one or more options.

- I have given them to flea markets
- I have given them to Fretex
- I have sold them online
- I have given them away online
- I have sold them to friends/relatives
- I have given them to friends/relatives
- I have driven them to the landfill
- Other

Q16. Please rate how you agree to these statements concerning furniture.
(Strongly agree - partially agree - neither agree nor disagree - partially disagree - strongly disagree)

- "Furniture were of much better quality back in the days"
- "It is good that the cheap furniture stores enable most people to afford having a nicely furnished home"
- "It is good that there is produced so much nice cheap furniture so that one can renew the interior of the home more often"
- "It is good that the cheap furniture stores enable most people to afford having a nicely furnished home"
- "It is good that there is produced so much nice cheap furniture so that one can renew the interior of the home more often"
- "Antiques and old furniture are just old rubbish and nothing to hold on to"
- "To have nice furniture around me in my home gives me a feeling of joy in everyday life"
- "I rather save money to buy something of a durable quality rather than buying something cheap and temporary"
- "I get quite quickly tired of my furniture"
- "How one decorates ones home is an expression of ones personality"
- "It does not pay to repair old furniture"
- "It is complicated and time consuming to dispose of furniture"
- "I postpone the act of disposing of furniture as long as I can"
- "I feel discomfort and/or have a bad conscience when I dispose of furniture"

Q17. Please rate how you agree to these statements concerning society and the environment.
(Strongly agree - partially agree - neither agree nor disagree - partially disagree - strongly disagree)

- "A high level of production and turnover of goods is vital to the welfare of society"
- "The environmental problems are highly exaggerated"
- "The consumers have the responsibility to adjust their consumption to environmental concerns"
- "Consumers have a responsibility to inform themselves about products in order to make the best purchase decision"
- "Extra taxes on goods and services which cause harm to the environment are necessary"
- "Products which harm the environment should be illegal"
- "The polluter should pay"
- "I am willing to reduce my consumption in order to protect nature"
• “I think it is difficult to act environmentally friendly in everyday life”
• “I believe that science and policy can solve the environmental problems without people having to alter their way of life drastically”

Q18. What do you most often do when you think that a piece of furniture no longer fits in at home because it is worn, damaged, ugly, out dated etc.? Choose one option.

| Option                                                                 | Description                                                                 |
|                                                                      |                                                                            |
| I put it in the attic/basement until I find a solution                |                                                                            |
| I sell it/give it to a flea market/give it away/drive it to the landfill as soon as possible |                                                                            |
| I leave it where it is until i have found a solution                  |                                                                            |
| I take it to the cabin or to another place where it is not so visible |                                                                            |
| Other                                                                 |                                                                            |

Q19. Do you have furniture that are “on their way out” on storage in the basement or in the attic for instance? If yes, what kind of furniture is it? (Open ended text answers)

Q20. What kind of facilities to you have access to in your community? Choose one or more options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flea markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fretex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landfill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non of the above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q21. How long have you owned your lounge furniture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q22. Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q23. Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q24. What is your highest completed level of education?

| Option                                                                 | Description                                                                 |
|                                                                      |                                                                            |
| Primary school/high school/vocational school                          |                                                                            |
| 1-3 years at a University (or another same level institution)          |                                                                            |
- 4-5 years at a University (or another same level institution)
- 6 years or more at a University (or another same level institution)
- PhD at a University (or another same level institution)

Q25. How big is your household’s total gross annual income?

- Under 200.000 NOK
- 200.000 – 399.999 NOK
- 400.000 – 599.999 NOK
- 600.000 – 799.999 NOK
- 800.000 – 1.000.000 NOK
- Over 1.000.000 NOK

Q26. Zip code

Q27. Do you live in a city, big city/metropolitan area, village or smaller village?

- City
- Big city/metropolitan area
- Village
- Smaller village

Q28. Do you have other comments to the questionnaire? (Open ended text answers)
### Table 1: Web questionnaire population: gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Web questionnaire population: age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Web questionnaire population: education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school/high school/vocational school</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years at a University (or another same level institution)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years at a University (or another same level institution)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years or more at a University (or another same level institution)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD at a University (or another same level institution)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Web questionnaire population: income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 200 000 NOK</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200.000 - 399.999 NOK</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400.000 - 599.999 NOK</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600.000 - 799.999 NOK</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800.000 - 1.000.000 NOK</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1.000.000 NOK</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE - SEMI STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

### APPROPRIATION

- What are you considering when you buy new furniture?
- What are you thinking when I say “quality”, when it comes to furniture?
- What kind of furniture do you like?
- Has your taste changed much with time?
- What do you think is the most important feature of furniture: function, quality, price or design?
- How conscious are you about trends? (Do you up-date your interior much, grow tired of you interior often?)
- Have you bought furniture on impulse? (If yes, what did you buy and why?)
- Do you plan furniture purchases carefully? How?

### SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS

- If you compare the interior of your home to the interior of the homes of people in your circle of friends, what would you say?
- What are you thinking about other people’s homes when you visit them?
- What do your surroundings in your home mean to you?
- Have you any furniture stored somewhere because they are on their way out?
- Have you moved any furniture to less visible places, within the house or outside the household?
- What do you most often do when you think that a piece of furniture no longer fits in at home because it is worn, damaged, ugly, out dated etc.?

### USED FURNITURE / EMOTIONS

- Have you ever bought used furniture? (What, why/why not?)
- Have you ever been given used furniture by friends?
- Have you ever inherited furniture?
- Can you remember something that you have disposed of which you had a special relationship towards, for example something there were special memories attached to? (How was it to dispose of it?)
- If you think back on furniture you have disposed of, why did you dispose of them? What did you do with them?

### KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS

- If the furniture was broken did you consider repairing it?
- How would you describe your level of knowledge when it comes to doing maintenance and repairs to furniture?
- Have you refurbished any furniture? (How did it go / how was it?)
- How do you find disposing of furniture both emotionally and practically? (easy, hard, difficult?)
- Do you feel any discomfort by disposing of furniture?
1. Are you bringing any furniture today? (What?)
2. Why did you buy it back in time?
3. How long have you owned it?
4. Has it been moved around?
5. How has it been used? (for what? By whom?)
6. Why is it being disposed of? (Who has decided to dispose of it?)
7. Is it going to be replaced by something else?
8. Have you considered selling it or giving it away? (Why not?)
9. Do you have a special relationship to it? Memories?
10. Is it difficult to part with it?
11. Do you think it is complicated to dispose of things? (Time consuming etc.?)
12. Did you consider refurbishing it? (Was it possible?)
13. Do you feel any discomfort when disposing of things?