

# REDEFINING RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION DECENT WORK: INSIGHTS FROM THE SECOND-HAND INDUSTRY IN UZBEKISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to examine how the practices of small businesses engaged in acquiring, repairing, and reselling second-hand goods in Uzbekistan can contribute insights for shaping policies related to responsible consumption and decent work. Employing Gibson-Graham's method of reading for difference, this project aims to portray the diversity of the second-hand industry in Tashkent and reframe the narrative on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to render them more inclusive and performance-oriented. Data for the paper were gathered through a focus group and structured interviews with Uzbek entrepreneurs in four neighborhoods of Tashkent. The interview findings reveal that, beyond income and job security, entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan's second-hand industry highly value being self-employed and the connections their work allows them to establish with their customers. Moreover, this article underscores that responsible consumption is a dynamic concept primarily reliant on accessibility, creativity, and connectivity with one's surroundings and social network.

**Keywords:** decent work; diverse economies; responsible consumption; sustainability; Uzbekistan

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## INTRODUCTION

Eight years after their adoption, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have not prevented the publication of increasingly alarming reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The most recent of these reports, for example, warns that current efforts are unlikely to prevent an increase in global temperatures of

1.5°C and might even be unable to stop a rise above 2°C (IPCC, 2023).

The reasons for this lack of success are multifold. Some commentators have pointed to the lack of ambition of the SDGs compared to the Millennium Development Goals (Easterly, 2015; Hickel, 2015; Pogge and Sengupta, 2015). Others have asserted that the goals are not sufficiently binding (Pogge and Sengupta, 2015), and still

others have expressed dissatisfaction with constituent definitions (Easterly, 2015) or have identified gaps, contradictions, and misalignments with them (Battersby, 2017; Hickel, 2015). For example, a senior expert on water, the environment, and climate change in Kazakhstan, Yessekin (2021), has asserted that

the SDGs are inadequate with respect to landlocked countries such as his own. Similarly, in 2018, the Republic of Uzbekistan, a doubly landlocked country, adopted 16 out of 17 SDGs, leaving out only SDG 14, Life Below Water (see Table 1).

Table 1. SDG adoption in Uzbekistan

ADOPTION STATUS	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS			
YES				
				
				
				
NO				

Source: authors

In an attempt to offset these problems, this paper adopts J. K. Gibson-Graham’s (2008, 2006b) methodology of reading for difference, a project developed by the feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (who write under the formerly cited pen name) in the 1990s. This approach seeks to shift the economic narrative from pessimistic to hopeful by taking a non-essentialist and post-structuralist point of view to address issues such as surplus creation and management (Gibson-Graham, 2006b), the ethics of work (Gibson-Graham, 2020) and collective survival (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). What Gibson-Graham and their colleagues have been proposing is a change in the perspective on how societies live together by choosing to consider the “economy as a site of decision, of ethical praxis, instead of as the

ultimate reality” (Gibson-Graham, 2006b). Drawing from this movement, we look at the SDGs as the base from which to build a more sustainable society rather than as goals with an expiration date, in a drive to make them more performative and inclusive in the fight against climate change.

Consequently, building on this scholarship and many others that have sought to bring ethical considerations to the forefront of socio-economic analysis (Cameron et al., 2014; Fickey, 2011; Gritzias and Kavoulakos, 2016; Holmes, 2018; Kondo, 2021; Machado, 2018; Roelvink et al. 2015; Wilkinson, 2017), we have analyzed the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of the second-hand industry in Uzbekistan in contributing to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible

Consumption and Production) (United Nations, 2023a). By second-hand industry, we are referring to a diverse group of businesses involved – entirely or only to some extent – in the acquisition, repair, and/or selling of used goods. The second-hand industry, which is especially prevalent in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, includes a varied set of professions and enterprises that extend from individual cobblers to used appliance and furniture hawkers (A&FH), even encompassing conventional businesses, such as dry cleaners, opticians, and seamstress workshops that offer repair services.

Indeed, as highlighted by Vakulchuk et al. (2023), research in English about climate change in Central Asia is quite scarce. In addition, studies in English about the SDGs in Central Asia so far have mainly focused on government policy (Erdogan et al., 2021; Huan et al., 2019), gender equality (Millier & Bellamy, 2014), land (Jiang et al., 2022), and water use (Kulmatov et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2022; Hao et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Hamidov et al., 2022). For Uzbekistan, only a few studies are interested in urban settings (Filimonau et al., 2022; Veckalne & Tambovceva, 2023). Another neglected field is that of SMEs, which contribute to around 57% of Uzbekistan's gross domestic product (UzStat, 2019). As a result, in this paper we adopt a more urban perspective on the SDGs in Central Asia by looking at business practices around the acquisition, repair, and resale of second-hand goods in Tashkent, a topic only briefly touched upon when it comes to Central Asia and the and the Commonwealth of Independent States (Demidova et al., 2021; Tskhay, 2023).

This research project employed a mixed methods approach, primarily involving random focus groups and structured and semi-structured interviews conducted in four neighborhoods of the Uzbekistan capital. The findings from interviews and field observations were subsequently integrated into a map using a geographical information system (GIS).

With this data in hand, the following analysis describes the diversity of urban initiatives and transactions related to the acquisition, repair, and resale of second-hand products to shift the narrative on the SDGs – more specifically, SDG 8 and SDG 12 – and make them more inclusive and performative. As such, the main research question informing this study is: How can the

practices of SMEs in Tashkent be used as a base on which to promote decent work and responsible consumption? We then break this research question down into three sub-questions inspired by an essay written by Gerda Roelvink (2020): How do the SMEs of the second-hand industry in Tashkent manage to survive well? How do they encounter others as they seek to survive well? What is consumed?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

These questions seek to fill the gap in the literature about SDG 8 (Cammarano et al., 2022; Chatzistamoulou, 2023; Govindan et al., 2020; Hsu, 2023; McDonald et al., 2021; Mozas-Moral et al., 2021; Nwokocha & Nwankwo, 2019; Okolo et al., 2023; Opoku et al., 2022; Staupoulou et al., 2023; Soegoto et al., 2022; Vinuesa et al., 2020; Walker & Pekmezovic, 2018) and SDG 12 (Bjelle et al., 2021; Ivanova et al., 2016; Magda et al., 2019; Palakshappa & Dodds, 2020) where Sustainable Development Goals are treated as requirements to comply with, sometimes almost as a regulation, rather than as a base on which to build a more sustainable world. On the contrary, we look at SDGs as elements that could become part of the identity of business, which could lead to systemic change.

Therefore, the methodology employed for this study adopts a mixed methods approach developed in three stages. The initial step encompassed a six-month field observation in Tashkent, focusing on geolocating various small businesses engaged in the repair and/or resale of second-hand goods. Subsequently, this data was mapped using GIS software alongside cartographic and historical information about Tashkent. Cartographic data, including public and private structures, gardens, squares, and roads, was sourced from the OpenStreetMap geographic database. Simultaneously, historical insights into building construction in Tashkent were obtained from Age Tashkent, an online project by the Department of Digital Development of the Tashkent City Hall. Combining this urban and historical data with field observations offered crucial insights into the urban dynamics and practices associated with second-hand industry businesses in the Uzbekistan capital. Through GIS mapping, several business "hubs" involved in acquiring, repairing, and reselling second-hand goods were identified in five Tashkent neighborhoods:

Chilonzor 1-2 and 9A, Mirzo Ulug'bek, and Yakkasaroy.

Subsequently, as seen in Table 2 below, approximately 20 micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses in these areas were subjected to random interviews. Due to language barriers and

the busy schedules of the study subjects, the only criterion for these interviews was the involvement of the respondent in the acquisition, repair, and resale of used goods, predominantly clothing and shoes, appliances, and small technology.

Table 2. Interview and focus group summary

#	First name	Last name	Birth date	Place of Origin	Gender	Experience (years)	Current Location	Employment type	Main occupation	Products repaired
<b>Cobblers</b>										
1	Nuralle	S.	Not available (NA)	Ferghana Valley	M	25	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & Accessories
2	Jurabek	A.	1980	Andijan	M	10	Mirzo Ulug'bek	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & knives
3	Akhmadali	K.	1991	Andijan	M	13	Mirzo Ulug'bek	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes
4	Kahramon	T.	1988	Surkhanyo	M	10	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	No	Leather goods
5	Feruzbek	B.	1997	Surkhanyo	M	10	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & Accessories
6	Mansur	Q.	1987	Samarkand	M	24	Yakkasaroy	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & Accessories
7	Vatily	NA	NA	Russia	M	15	Chilonzor 2	Self-employed	Yes	Leather goods
8	Qutbillo	K.	1983	Andijan	M	8	Chilonzor 1	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & Accessories
9	Bekzod	T.	1983	Qashqadaryo	M	10	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	Yes	Shoes & Accessories
<b>Subtotal</b>										<b>9</b>
<b>Appliance &amp; Furniture Trade: Interviews</b>										
1	Ramiz	E.	1989	Bukhara	M	5	Yakkasaroy	Self-employed	Yes	Appliances & Furniture
2	Rafik	NA	1989	Bukhara	M	3	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	Yes	
<b>Subtotal</b>										<b>2</b>
<b>Appliance &amp; Furniture Trade: Focus Group</b>										
6	NA	NA	NA	Miscellaneous	M	5-10	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	No	Appliances & Furniture
<b>Subtotal</b>										<b>6</b>
<b>Seamstresses</b>										
1	Shakhlo	NA	NA	Bukhara	F	16	Yakkasaroy	Self-employed	Yes	Womenswear
2	Nafisa	A.	1980	Bukhara	F	12	Yakkasaroy	Self-employed	Yes	Womenswear
3	Diyora	B.	NA	Samarkand	F	5	Yakkasaroy	full time	No	Garment (unisex)
4	Odina	N.	1986	Khorezm	F	16	Chilonzor 9A	Self-employed	No	Garments & accessories
5	Nadejda	B.	1968	Ukraine	F	20	Chilonzor 1	full time	Yes	Garment (unisex)
6	Marbuba	E.	2002	Bukhara	F	4	Chilonzor 1	Self-employed	Yes	Garment (unisex)
<b>Subtotal</b>										<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>										<b>23</b>

(Source: authors)

Structured interviews were conducted covering three main aspects: the respondents' educational and professional background, their relationship with customers, and the repair and resale process. Questions were formulated in English, Russian, and Uzbek to cater to the linguistic diversity of the interviewees. Additionally, a focus group comprising six A&FH, recruited on-site during field observation, was organized. The interview grid for this focus group was pre-prepared in three languages and took the form of a semi-structured interview, mirroring the categories used in individual interviews.

Finally, the results from the interviews and the focus group were subjected to qualitative data coding. Specifically, axial coding was employed to identify dominant patterns within the participants' responses (Gibbs, 2007). These dominant patterns were then categorized by theme and collectively analyzed for their content (Krief & Zardet, 2013).

**RESULTS**

First of all, according to field observation, a significant number of SMEs based in Tashkent are active in the promotion of SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production - and SDG 8 - Decent Work - through their involvement in the acquisition, repair, and re-use

(or resale) of second-hand goods. In particular, this study shows that Tashkent constitutes an ideal ground for the achievement of SDG 12 Target 12.5, 'By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and re-use' and SDG 8 Target 8.4, interested, among other things, in resource efficiency in the field of production (United Nations, 2023).

The identified SMEs play a pivotal role in advocating responsible consumption and resource efficiency by participating in what we have termed the second-hand industry. As illustrated in Table 3 below, the services offered by professionals in this industry vary based on business size, longevity, and owner interests. For example, cobblers in Tashkent primarily provide shoe repair services, but as their workshops grow and they acquire more tools and knowledge, their services often expand to include clothing repair and even knife sharpening. Similarly, sewing workshops with a single seamstress typically concentrate on a specific type of clothing, usually women's wear repair or creation. However, as these workshops hire more employees, they tend to diversify their activities to include men's wear creation and repair, sometimes extending services to home decor and car accessories.

Table 3. Responsible-consumption-related services provided by SMEs of the second-hand industry in Tashkent (Source: authors)

SERVICES & ACTORS	COBBLERS	SEAMSTRESSES	USED APPLIANCES	USED FURNITURE
Most performed	Shoe Repair	Womenswear	Repair	Repair
Often performed	Clothing repair	Menswear	Parts re-use	Parts re-use
Occasionally performed	Accessory repair	Accessories	Sold to landfill	Sold to landfill
Least or never performed	Knife sharpening	Home Decor Automobile accessories		

On the other hand, the services provided by professionals active in the acquisition, repair, and reselling of used furniture and appliances are more complex to describe. Even though most of these micro-entrepreneurs will repair the acquired goods, different fates might await these products depending on their state. Damaged

furniture, for example, might be entirely dismantled so that the material, wood or medium-density fiberboard (MDF), can be re-used to make new furniture. Appliance pieces can also be resold separately. Indeed, according to one focus group participant, 'If the appliance cannot be fixed, we give it to scrapyards. By



doing so, we can at least make a little money.' From the point of view of these professionals, all the parts of second-hand goods are valuable in some way.

Second, the popularity of the services provided by these SMEs has increased throughout the years in Tashkent and the regions of Uzbekistan, hence contributing to SDG 8 Target 8.5, which is concerned with full employment (United Nations, 2023b). All the professionals interviewed came from the Uzbekistan region and found a secure position and income in the capital city. While seamstresses around Tashkent have, on average, five or six clients a day, cobblers are even more popular. On their best days, some have declared receiving up to 15 customers per day. Interview participants have provided several reasons for this popularity. The first reason cited was work ethics; these entrepreneurs are popular because they provide quality work and are punctual. A second characteristic mentioned was interactions; most cobblers and seamstresses said their clients liked their personalities or the fact that they showed passion in their work.

Regardless of the reason, all micro-entrepreneurs have noticed an increase in their activity since their first establishment in the city. As a result, most of them have been able to move from employment to self-employment or to open more extensive workshops with employees. As an example, a cobbler from Andijan, Jurabek A., first exercised his profession for six years in Gazalkent, Tashkent Region, before moving to Tashkent and opening a small office in Mirzo Ulug'bek District, where he has been working for ten years. Similarly, a young seamstress from Samarkand, Diyora B., has built a good reputation and client base while working as a seamstress in her hometown, which allowed her to find work in a workshop in Yakkasaroy, Tashkent, to finance her studies at the local literature university.

As described in Table 2, residents of Tashkent mostly use the services of cobblers and seamstresses to repair or tailor their accessories, clothes, and shoes. These services can be provided either on the go for small repair tasks or for a longer period for more complex problems or more structural tailoring services. These businesses' clients come from various backgrounds. A seamstress practicing in Chilonzor 9A explained that her workshop is

situated near a student dormitory and that she receives its residents in need of repair services, however, more complex and expensive services, such as garment creation, are likely to attract older clients, with more specific needs.

These findings reveal that the professionals interviewed are quite dependent on client needs. Kahramon, a 34-year-old cobbler, indeed declared that he tries to arrive at work around seven in the morning, sometimes six, to accommodate customers. A rush of clients might even lead him to stay in his workshop until midnight. Similarly, Ramiz E., a micro-entrepreneur collecting and repairing appliances and furniture, also in his thirties, explained that he had no set schedule and depended on the calls of his clients. For sewists, a similar scenario unfolds, with a seamstress from the province of Khorezm testifying that her workshop sometimes stays open until midnight to accommodate the nearby student dormitory, where residents need repair services at every hour of the day and night.

The situation slightly differs in the field of second-hand furniture and appliances. Indeed, professional trajectories seem to have followed a reverse dynamic. While Ramiz, a reseller from Bukhara mentioned earlier, with a well-established business in the periphery of Yakkasaroy District, not every professional in this field portrays a stable situation. For example, one focus-group reseller, posted at the entrance of Farkhad Bazaar, explained that, while being from Bukhara, he had taken this appliance and furniture reselling job after coming back from Russia during the pandemic.

In addition, while some entrepreneurs interviewed declared that they were working a regular 9:00 to 17:00 day, especially seamstresses who have to take care of duties at home after work, most testimonies are representative of unpredictable and long working hours. During the focus group of six men active in the purchase, repair, and reselling of used furniture and appliances, most of the interviewees declared working without breaks from 9:00 to 17:00. Even though some of the participants appreciated not having a line manager, the risk of missing out on an opportunity while taking a break seems to lead to a need for a continuous working schedule. That these entrepreneurs' workspace is the street reinforces this pattern.

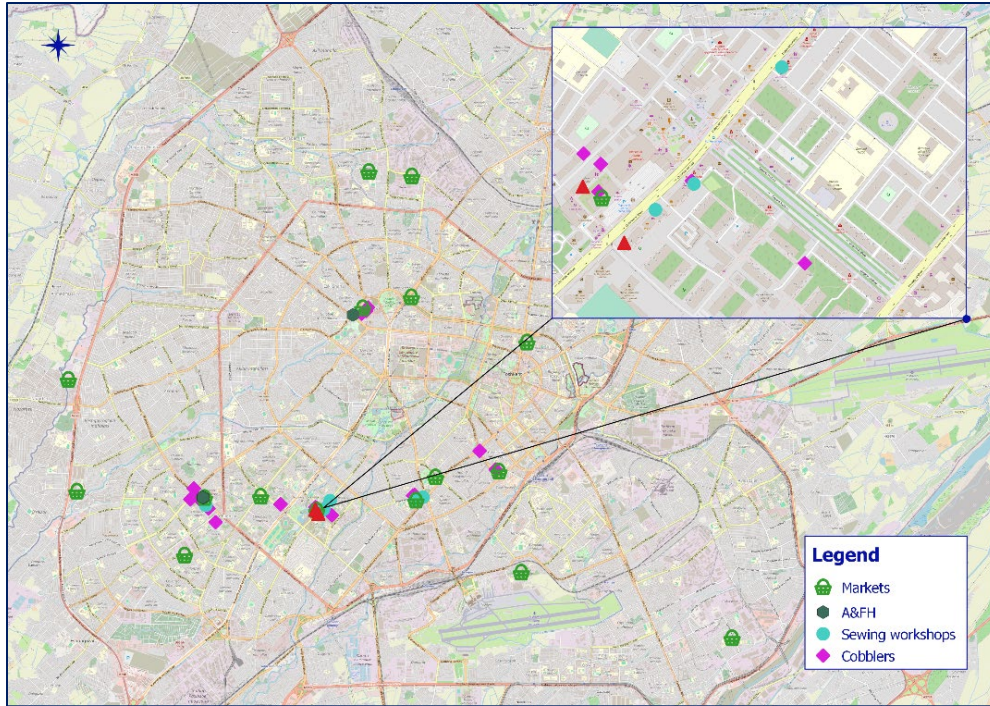
The precarious and uncertain working patterns of these resellers might explain the following declaration of a focus group participant: 'As a matter of fact, we are not interested in [this profession]. We are only doing this to make a living.' While many entrepreneurs interviewed showed interest and even passion for their profession, unstable and sometimes unhealthy schedules might be a reason for this bitter confession. As a result, the second-hand industry in Tashkent is not always a factor in the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, as aspired to by SDG 8 Target 8.8 (United Nations, 2023b).

The clients of these appliance and furniture resellers also differ from those of cobblers and sewists. According to members of that focus group, a good day will see around three to five clients, while bad days are described as periods with no clients at all. Indeed, the acquisition of such goods mainly depends on Tashkent residents who are currently renovating their homes and wish to get rid of their previous furniture to make space for new ones. Nonetheless, acquired goods are then resold to residents in the regions of Uzbekistan, where the demand is high, according to many entrepreneurs interviewed.

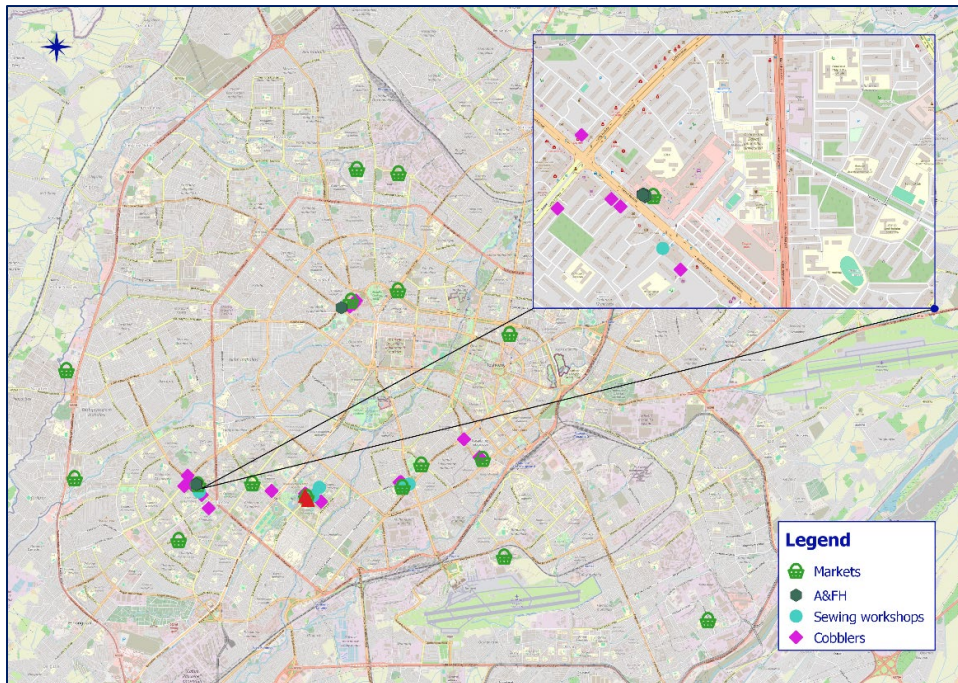
Interview results have revealed that, in this trade, the most prized products are late 20<sup>th</sup>-

century appliances – focus-group members talked frequently about 'Soviet refrigerators' –, as well as bed frames. These exchanges of used furniture and appliances seem to be facilitated by bazaars, where these entrepreneurs are based.

A third finding of this research project reveals that responsible consumption in Tashkent occupies a specific geography. As seen in Figures 1 and 2, SMEs of the second-hand industry in Tashkent seem to be particularly active within residential areas consisting of three-story buildings and higher, built from the 1930s and 1970s. As a result, downtown Tashkent, northern regions with vast administrative buildings, residential areas with individual houses, as well as new real estate developments are devoid of second-hand services, while historical parts of Tashkent have become a real hub for these practices. Cobbler workshops usually take the form of narrow vertical one-room removable offices situated at the extremity of an apartment building or at the corner of a residential park. These workshops are rarely made of brick and mortar but make extensive use of metal, wood, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Seamstress workshops, on the other hand, more often take the form of brick-and-mortar one-story buildings located on busy streets or in bazaar buildings. Micro-entrepreneurs in this field can also occupy small PVC buildings.



**Figure 1.** SMEs interviewed in the sectors Chilonzor 1-2 (Source: data retrieved from Open Street Map and shaped by authors)



**Figure 2.** SMEs interviewed in the sector Chilonzor 9A  
Source: data retrieved from Open Street Map and shaped by authors

Another essential characteristic of the second-hand industry in Tashkent is its connection with the city's bazaars. Second-hand-industry entrepreneurs seem to be a necessary element of bazaars. As indicated by Figures 2 through 4, regardless of the district surveyed, each

exploration shows a concentration of cobblers, sewists, and sometimes used appliance and furniture resellers around markets. In Farkhad Bazaar, in Chilonzor 9A, for example, an entire building floor is dedicated to the cobbler trade..



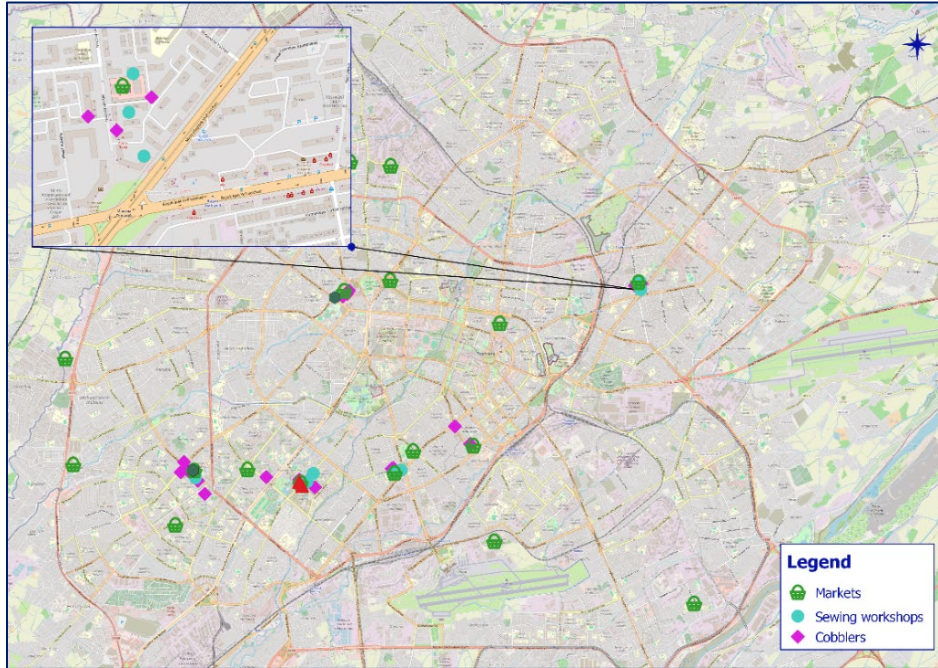


Figure 3. SMEs interviewed in Mirzo Ulug'bek District

Source: data retrieved from Open Street Map and shaped by authors

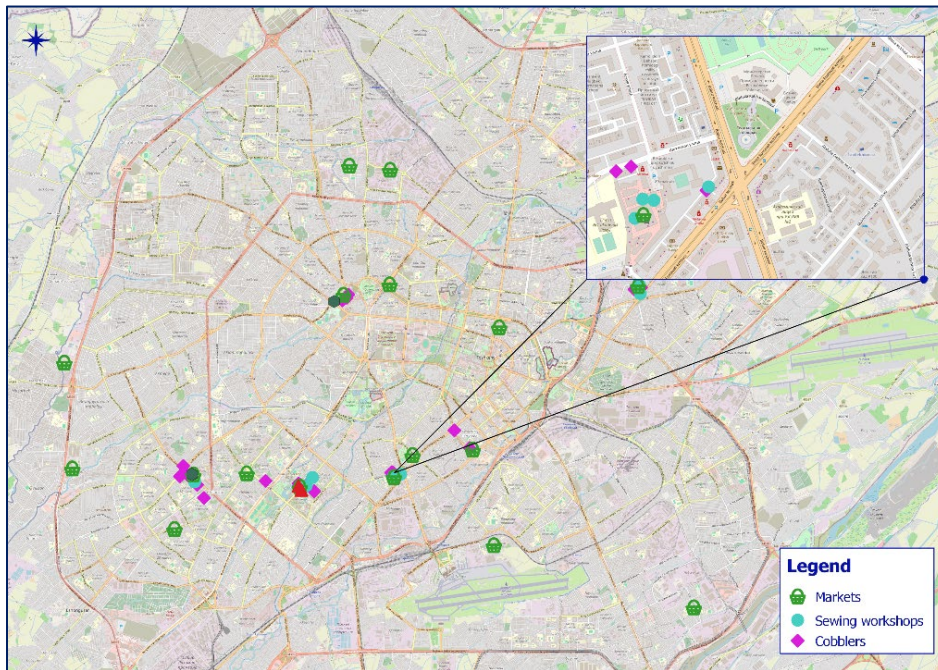


Figure 4. SMEs interviewed in Yakkasaroy District

Source: data retrieved from Open Street Map and shaped by authors

In Askia Bazaar, on the other hand, seamstress workshops are situated in and around the market's clothing sector, while cobbler workshops remain at the entrance of the market

Sometimes, moving away from the bazaar might indicate the success of a business or an

increase in self-determination, as defined by Blustein et al. (2016) in their description of decent work and as aspired to in SDG 8 Target 8.8 (United Nations, 2023a). Nuralle S., a cobbler from Ferghana Valley now operating in Tashkent, indeed testified that after having worked in

Farkhad Bazaar for four years, he was able to acquire his own workshop not far from the bazaar. Now, the cobbler is responsible for training three apprentices. Similarly, Odina N., a seamstress from the province of Khorezm, moved her business from her hometown to Farkhad Bazaar to her own brick-and-mortar workshop in Chilonzor 9A, hiring five other seamstresses.

In contrast, for appliance and furniture resellers, the entrance or vicinity of bazaars constitutes a strategic position from which to attract clients or send off acquired products. The bazaar, especially Farkhad bazaar, is also the first point of contact between incoming entrepreneurs from the regions and the city of Tashkent. For example, many focus group members have declared that they are currently renting an apartment around the Farkhad bazaar because it is a region with a lower cost of living and is ideally situated for the trade and transport of used products.

Still, in an effort to tackle SDG 12 and SDG 8, these interviews with entrepreneurs of the second-hand industry in Tashkent give us clues on finding solutions for Target 12.5 and Target 8.4. According to interview participants, regardless of the profession, new goods are more accessible to fix than old ones. This is so because they usually have fewer problems. Televisions from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, are impossible to repair and will hence end up in scrapyards.

Nonetheless, many entrepreneurs are interested in used products, regardless of their state. Indeed, many of the witnesses interviewed during this project have declared that second-hand products can be reused and repurposed in different ways depending on their state. Products in the best shapes will be fixed, while damaged furniture made out of wood or MDF will be taken apart to make new furniture. Finally, appliances that cannot be repaired will be taken to the scrapyards to be dismantled for parts, all of this in exchange for money. For these entrepreneurs involved in the promotion of responsible consumption, used products retain value down to the last step of their life cycle.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that an examination of SMEs within the second-hand industry can assist in providing a more

comprehensive understanding of ambiguous concepts such as decent work and responsible consumption.

Concerning decent work, we can see that this concept closely corresponds to the definition provided by Blustein et al. (2016) as a 'human right central to mental health and wellbeing through its ability to meet three basic needs: survival and power, social connection, and self-determination.' Indeed, by observing the trajectories of entrepreneurs within Tashkent's second-hand industry, it becomes evident that the professions mentioned earlier serve as a means of survival and empowerment for many individuals. Beyond mere job security, numerous entrepreneurs leverage their professions as tools for social advancement, prompting them to establish businesses in the capital city of Uzbekistan or in more robust and permanent workshops. The exception lies with appliance and furniture vendors, as their access to survival and empowerment is somewhat mitigated, with many viewing this trade as a temporary solution until they secure better opportunities within Uzbekistan or abroad. Nevertheless, the majority of SMEs interviewed during the project emphasized the importance of cultivating positive relationships to bolster their sense of survival and empowerment. According to these entrepreneurs, a passion for their work fosters strong and enduring connections with clients, facilitating business evolution and growth.

Another aspect associated with decent work, as highlighted by scholars in psychology, is self-determination and the cultivation of meaningful jobs (Blustein et al., 2016), who characterized these as features that offer opportunities for autonomy, relatedness, and competence-building—elements also emphasized in Arnsperger and Bourg's (2016) definition of sustainability. By delving into the perspectives of entrepreneurs in Tashkent, we gain a deeper understanding of how these principles manifest in practical terms. Many of the businesses interviewed for this paper are indeed conventional enterprises that offer supplementary services, including fixing, repairing, replacing faulty components, dismantling, and remaking. These services, which engage creativity and ingenuity, can be identified as one of the primary reasons these entrepreneurs are passionate about their work. Entrepreneur testimonials underscored that a

love for their work and honed skills have become a means to establish and sustain positive relationships with their customers. According to these professionals, craftsmanship and punctuality are highly valued by clients, traits most discernible through repeated interactions.

Furthermore, this know-how can also help satisfy the desire for updates, and novelty can be sustained by craftsmanship and creativity. This paper reveals that home renovations organized by Tashkent residents initiate a transfer of second-hand appliances and furniture to the regions through intermediaries such as A&FH. For example, region residents are interested in swapping their ko'rpacha – the traditional Uzbekistani floor mattress – with an off-ground bed with a frame or acquiring appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines. This portrays a desire from both sides for change, a desire that micro-entrepreneurs of the second-hand industry undertake to satisfy through their repair, refurbishing, and transport activities. Hence, these professionals not only salvage goods that would otherwise go to waste but also create new products – mainly from second-hand materials – that cater to different needs and tastes.

In conclusion to the question of decent work, even though job security and comfort might not be the strongest characteristics of work in the second-hand industry in Tashkent, decent work in this field is mainly fueled by freedom for creativity and solid social connections, as well as the varied portfolio of skills and competencies that this industry helps nurture, practice, and develop. These form the base on which entrepreneurs in Tashkent acquire more self-determination and power. Hence, we can assert that decent work encompasses various facets of a worker's life and should be viewed as a foundation upon which to establish favorable working conditions rather than a mere and ambiguous objective.

When it comes to responsible consumption, the study's findings reveal that the second-hand industry in Tashkent facilitates its implementation due to its easy accessibility. Take, for example, seamstresses, whose primary focus is creating new clothes but also extend their services to on-the-go repairs with a longer turnaround time. This availability is further reflected in the spatial distribution of other SMEs in the second-hand industry, notably cobblers

who are prominently active in markets and widely present in densely populated residential areas developed between the 1930s and 1970s. Lastly, A&FH, primarily situated in and around markets, contributes to the overall accessibility of responsible consumption practices.

Moreover, the ease of access to responsible consumption in Tashkent is intricately linked to the integral role played by its actors within the urban structure of the city. The survival and sustenance of the second-hand industry in Tashkent are contingent upon its close connection to the urban environment. While residential areas characterized by individual houses and newer real estate developments awaiting occupancy may not constitute a sufficient client base for these SMEs to thrive, older, more established apartment buildings emerge as crucial territories for second-hand transactions. Indeed, these real estate developments from the 1930s-1970s facilitate the integration of small economic activities into residential areas, as they are often constructed around small parks and pedestrian zones, providing suitable spaces for small businesses to emerge.

Furthermore, results from this paper show a concentration of entrepreneurs in the second-hand industry around bazaars. Unlike temporary European markets, bazaars have always constituted a permanent feature of cities established on the territory that is now Uzbekistan. For example, the origins of Chorsu Bazaar, the biggest market in Tashkent, can be traced back to the establishment of peasant trade in the region in the 9th-7th centuries BCE (Znyaev, 2008). Today, these centers of trade constitute an essential part of the lifestyle in Tashkent and also play an important role in the promotion of responsible consumption. Indeed, except for Chorsu Bazaar, which now offers many imported goods, bazaars in Tashkent are drastically different from conventional supermarkets and provide mainly local, fresh, seasonal, and unpackaged products. They also constitute the headquarters of many professions of the second-hand industry, using this trading hub as an opportunity to propose their repair and broker services.

Finally, this need to be well-connected to the urban environment shows that, similarly to decent work, responsible consumption heavily relies on social connections. These social

connections are maintained not only locally but also in the regions of Uzbekistan. In fact, many second-hand professionals are using their networks from their hometowns to support their businesses. Be it the student seamstress who first started her trade in Samarkand or the resellers who are sending goods acquired in Tashkent to their hometown, all of them have nurtured strong connections locally and in their region of origin to keep their business running. Hence, responsible consumption is empowered not only by the development of various competencies but also by exchanges between different actors and territories. Second-hand industry specialists will come from the regions to practice in Tashkent, but these, in turn, will also appeal to experts based in the areas to fix appliances and furniture that will end up being sold there.

To conclude on responsible consumption, just like the ship of Theseus in Plutarch's philosophical thought experiment (Plutarch, 1914 [translation]), objects will never be immortal and will have to be replaced at some point. As a matter of fact, actors in the second-hand industry also admit that newer products are easier to fix. Nonetheless, as proposed by Arnsperger and Bourg (2016), to reach SDG 12 and even go further and contribute to the building of a more ethical and sustainable future (Roelvink, 2020), responsible consumption should be developed with concepts such as temperance, accessibility, and lifestyle in mind. This means that responsible consumption is not a static concept but also involves social, economic, and territorial dynamics, regardless of the period (Charpy 2002). Responsible consumption and production entail systemic changes rather than perpetuating the economic status quo with vague SDGs.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this paper sought to present the diversity of the second-hand industry in the city of Tashkent to shift the narrative on Sustainable Development Goals – specifically SDG 8 and 12 – and make them more inclusive and performative. It has revealed that the flourishing of business activities around the second-hand industry in several districts of Tashkent can constitute a wealth of knowledge to grasp better the nebulous concepts that decent work and responsible consumption constitute.

As a result, we can deduce that, far from being solely a question of revenue and stability, decent work is about the connections and skills created within and outside a business. These connections are essential to support an enterprise's evolution, as well as how workers feel about their profession and, ultimately, their lives. Furthermore, the various skills needed and developed in the second-hand industry boost the autonomy and satisfaction of the professionals studied here.

Second, it is mainly thanks to these diverse skills and social connections that responsible consumption is allowed to happen in the city of Tashkent. The creativity and ingenuity portrayed within the second-hand industry in the capital city of Uzbekistan allow for used goods to be repaired, refurbished, and even reshaped, and provide a sense of novelty to new customers in Tashkent and the regions of Uzbekistan. On top of being creative, responsible consumption should be dynamic, as shown by the flexibility characteristic of entrepreneurs of the second-hand industry who are well-connected to their city of residence and hometown and provide on-the-go as well as more time-consuming second-hand services.

Two main limitations were identified in this research. First, the language barrier constrained the range of methods applicable to the project. Instead of employing unstructured interviews, the research team opted for structured and semi-structured questions to enhance comprehension. Second, due to the busy schedules of interview participants, only a limited number of interviews could be conducted. A larger sample size would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of decent work and responsible consumption. This understanding is pivotal for fostering an ethical and sustainable decision-making process in the realm of sustainable development. A more extensive study of the second-hand industry in Tashkent holds the potential to catalyze the development of community economies (Gibson-Graham et al., 2020). Consequently, it is recommended that the next phase of this research allocates additional attention to the surplus production, appropriation, and distribution (Cameron, 2020) of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the second-hand industry in Uzbekistan and other relevant contexts.

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