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Kazakh Sharing Practices: a critical inquiry into Sharing Economy models from the vantage of ownership in collective societies

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Abstract:	<p>The Sharing Economy (SE) is often promoted as a sustainable and inclusive model for resource provision, increasingly so for Bottom-of-the-Pyramid (BoP) contexts. However, dominant SE frameworks ground in individualistic and commodified understandings of ownership may misalign with values in collectivist societies. This article presents a case study from rural Kazakhstan to examine how ownership is conceptualized and enacted through Kazakh linguistic and cultural traditions that draw from the physical steppe ecology. Our findings reveal a relational understanding of ownership that privileges shared access and social obligation over individual control or exclusion. These principles generate forms of social value that extend beyond efficiency and economic utility. By highlighting how sharing practices are shaped by embedded ownership norms, this study challenges the universal applicability of mainstream SE models. It calls for greater attention to culturally situated ownership understanding to develop SE strategies that are ethically grounded and contextually responsive to BoP settings.</p>

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Abstract

The Sharing Economy (SE) is often promoted as a sustainable and inclusive model for resource provision, increasingly so for Base-of-the-Pyramid (BoP) contexts. However, dominant SE frameworks ground in individualistic and commodified understandings of ownership may misalign with values in collectivist societies. This article presents a case study from rural Kazakhstan to examine how ownership is conceptualized and enacted through Kazakh linguistic and cultural traditions that draw from the physical steppe ecology. Our findings reveal a relational understanding of ownership that privileges shared access and social obligation over individual control or exclusion. These principles generate forms of social value that extend beyond efficiency and economic utility. By highlighting how sharing practices are shaped by embedded ownership norms, this study challenges the universal applicability of mainstream SE models. It calls for greater attention to culturally situated ownership understanding in order to develop SE strategies that are ethically grounded and contextually responsive to BoP settings.

Key words: Sharing Economy, Ownership, Resource, Kazakh, Hospitality, Base of Pyramid

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3 Over the last fifteen years, the Sharing Economy (SE) has generated new mediums for the
4 exchange of goods and services to modify how resources are consumed and owned (Frenken et
5 al., 2015; Puschmann & Alt, 2016). The body of literature examining the SE broadly defines it as
6 any borrowing, lending, renting, sharing, bartering and swapping exchanges of goods or services
7 with such exchanges largely mediated by digital platforms (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Notable
8 themes and features of SE in the literature include access-based, collaborative consumption, and
9 enhanced supply-demand matching (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Qureshi et al., 2021). Often touted
10 as lowering barriers to accessing goods and services, the Sharing Economy is commonly framed
11 as enabling more sustainable and equitable use of resources (Prothero et al., 2011).
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25 Embedded in these discussions are ideas of how the conventional model of exclusive and
26 privatized ownership is becoming less significant for resource distribution and, the very nature of
27 what motivates people to share (Baumeister & Wangenheim, 2014; Demirdag & Shu, 2020).
28 However, research on the Sharing Economy, alongside related analyses of ownership vis-à-vis
29 resource sharing motivations, have predominantly occurred within marketized, Western consumer
30 contexts (Attri & Bapuji, 2021; Konieczny, 2020; Mahadevan, 2018).
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40 Providing access to exchange products and services SE models have been given growing
41 consideration as a strategy for addressing resource constraints in “bottom of pyramid” (BoP)
42 environments (Qureshi et al., 2021). Classified as earning less than \$2USD/day, the BoP term
43 refers to roughly four billion people living in extreme poverty (Frykholm, 2016; Prahalad &
44 Lieberthal, 2003). From the utilization of surplus or idle assets, cost-saving opportunities, and
45 reducing risks associated with exclusive ownership of a resource, many studies suggest SE can
46 overcome resource inequalities (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2023; Barbu et al., 2018; Dabbous & Tarhini,
47 2019; Hamari et al., 2016). Yet BoP populations occur across diverse social and institutional
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3 contexts, many of which are outside Western, individualist societies with well-structured market
4 economic systems. Similarly, with SE research primarily conducted in middle-class, western
5 consumer societies, it will be important to identify key structural differences to ensure that SE
6 investments are justified, and that SE applications remain appropriate to enable desired outcomes.
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13 To address this practical and theoretical gap, this article traces the key features embedded
14 in the notion of ownership to ask: ***“How do sharing practices challenge and provide alternative
15 insights into SE models from the vantage of ownership in collectivist contexts?”*** In doing so, this
16 article explores the relationship of social understandings of the ownership concept with sharing
17 practices and resource distribution patterns occurring in a collectivist society.
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26 We use language as a starting point for unpacking the notion of ownership in an exploratory
27 case study of rural Kazakhstan. Providing conceptual tools, language itself affords insights into
28 how common understandings can be transmitted and reached at a collective scale (Bonvillain,
29 2020). Situating this study in a BoP setting of rural Kazakhstan, this research examines the
30 relationship between ownership and sharing within a collective-based society, which is notably
31 distinct from Western individualist settings where the majority of SE research has taken place. In
32 the case of the Kazakh language, ownership – “менің иелігінде” (menin ieliginde) – translated
33 directly as “at my disposal,” carried cultural functions for coordinating labor activities and
34 reinforced a sense of shared endeavors around livestock production for collective survival. By
35 conveying meanings other than designating boundaries or exclusivity, this study shows how
36 ownership principles located in a particular BoP context predisposes resource allocation in ways
37 that may be more fit for purpose in broader BoP settings.
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Literature Review

Sharing Economy: From Access to Ambiguity

The Sharing Economy (SE) has been widely conceptualized as a model enabling temporary access to underutilized assets, often mediated through digital platforms (Belk, 2014; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). Early accounts framed the SE as a progressive, post-ownership alternative promising efficiency, sustainability, and democratized consumption. However, a growing body of research critiques this optimistic framing, highlighting its neoliberal underpinnings, and the commodification of previously social or moral practices (Buhalis et al., 2020; Murillo et al., 2017). In resource-constrained contexts, particularly in BoP context, these platform models often clash with prevailing moral economies and relational systems of reciprocity (Attri & Bapuji, 2021). Much of the resource sharing and justification embedded in contemporary SE models derive their understandings from particular sociocultural contexts that are not universal. Namely, the assumption that users behave as rational actors who price access to private assets frequently fails in collectivist societies, where relationships, not efficiency, underpin exchange.

While the sharing of products and services is not a new phenomenon (Belk, 2014; Price, 1975), research shows how the SE encompasses new types of interactions between consumers and providers by modifying ownership and consumption patterns. The rise of the SE as a formal concept and area of academic research is generally associated with the emergence of digital technologies (Attri & Bapuji, 2021; Parthiban et al., 2021). Early research of the SE primarily focused on affluent consumer segments (Qureshi et al., 2021). In particular, younger, wealthier, urban residents with reliable access to smart technologies and ICT infrastructure were the most predominant participants in SE and populations of study (Mont et al., 2020; Sutherland & Jarrahi,

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3 2018). More recent scholarship, however, has highlighted the need for SE research in non-affluent
4 and non-Western social settings where SE applications could have particularly significant effects
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6 (Qureshi et al., 2021). Some scholars note how SE research originating in consumer research and
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8 marketing results in a focus on lowering transaction costs, individual consumer psychology and
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10 technical coordination of resource provisioning, leaving many social factors and processes
11
12 underexamined. Indeed, the tendency of promoting entrepreneurial benefits and business-oriented
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14 aspects of SEs without a broader consideration of diverse social motivations and cultural factors
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16 has generated critical inquiry by scholars (Clausen & Velázquez García, 2017; Liebe & Beyer,
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18 2021; Mont et al., 2020; Peticca-Harris et al., 2020; Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2018). Some studies
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20 suggest that access-based consumption has enabled innate desires for sharing, framing
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22 conventional SE (what we refer to as CSE) as inherently community-minded (Botsman & Roo,
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24 2010; Gansky, 2010). Yet many scholars describe how overlooking the persistent role of propertied
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26 ownership in generating financial value within prevailing global power structures results in
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28 assertions which are too simplistic for addressing equitable resource use (Chatterjee, 2016; Quershi
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30 et al., 2021). For Slee (2017), CSE introduces problematic free market practices into communities,
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32 often under the guise of friendly language of trust, and sharing. We refer to SE as *Conventional*
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34 *Sharing Economy* (CSE) in this study given its origin in digitally mediated exchanges, research in
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36 consumer affairs, and commercial emphasis.
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49 *Base of Pyramid*

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52 The Base of the Pyramid (BoP) literature is concerned with how to address poverty issues for a
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54 large portion of the global population. While early BoP research focused on market inclusion
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3 through innovation (Prahalad & Hart, 2002), more recent studies have reoriented towards issues
4 of institutional voids, social intermediation, and culturally situated practices (Bhatt et al., 2022;
5 Grimm, 2022; Kolk et al., 2014). The idea of sharing, from its effects on resource distribution
6 patterns to its local understandings, is increasingly being explored within the recent BoP literature
7 (Mannan & Pek, 2021). Yet an important cultural feature that remains largely overlooked within
8 both the SE and BOP literature is the distinction between individualist and collective societies. In
9 such settings, sharing is often less a voluntary lifestyle choice than a moral imperative. Rather than
10 relying on contracts or formal pricing mechanisms, actors navigate resource access through
11 informal rules, trust-based networks, and adaptive governance arrangements (Kistruck et al., 2013;
12 Mair & Reischauer, 2017).

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27 Intermediaries – including elders, kinship leaders, and religious authorities – often structure
28 informal markets and negotiate institutional legitimacy (Bhatt et al., 2022). These actors translate
29 external rules into local frames of meaning and enforce norms in the absence of state capacity. In
30 parallel, grassroots enterprises employ bricolage, recombining available resources and practices to
31 respond to volatility and marginalization (Hota et al., 2019; Sutter et al., 2017). Yet, these practices
32 are not free of ethical complexity. Bhatt (2022) demonstrates that social innovators navigate
33 entrenched inequities and moral conflict, often shifting from recognition to collaboration in their
34 institutional work.

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46 These institutional, culture-related factors operating at a macro-level, influence specific
47 motivations, societal attitudes toward learning and perceptions around the value of sharing of
48 information (Konieczny, 2020). Those attitudes are often framed around values encouraging doing
49 good for other people and the environment, through sharing resources to aid others, and engaging
50 in sustainable behavior (Prothero et al., 2011). Pfeil et al. (2006) noted that there are cultural

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3 differences in the styles of contributions on sharing platforms that correlate with Hofstede's
4 dimensions of cultural diversity (1991).
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9 One of Hofstede's six dimensions of cultural diversity explores the extent of individualism
10 to collectivism along a continuum. The collectivism-individualism dimension describes the degree
11 to which members of a culture either rely on themselves or the group (Hofstede, 1991). In
12 individualist societies, typified by Western-consumer contexts, "ties between individuals are
13 loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family"
14 (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51). For collective societies, there is early integration, and a long-standing
15 commitment fostered to an "in-group... where everyone takes responsibility for and protects fellow
16 members of their group" (The Culture Factor Group, 2023).
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28 Hofstede introduced the Individualism Index (IDV), which describes how much a country
29 tends to be individualistic by emphasizing individual identity over "we". Referencing Kazakhstan
30 on the IDV reveals a low score of 20, owing to social being community based with loyalty
31 structuring societal rules and expectation. In contrast, individualistic societies tend to rate 50 or
32 higher and promote self-actualization, as well as freedom and relationships that support private
33 opinion, rather than harmony and consensus, are given greater value (Hofstede, 1991).
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43 The hallmarks of collectivist societies are well-expressed in Kazakh communities with
44 cultural histories in pastoral nomadic life ways which instill deeply held beliefs about sharing and
45 sense of group responsibility (Berman, 2022; Darmenova, 2020; Darmenova & Koo, 2021). We
46 describe how these beliefs can be understood by exploring the notion of ownership and associated
47 principles and concepts affecting resource use patterns. Furthermore, we introduce how these
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3 beliefs derive their logic from the geographical settings, which necessitated collective organization
4 and labor inputs in order for humans to survive in the steppe grasslands.
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11 *Ownership within the Sharing Economy*

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15 The rise of Sharing Economies has shifted the focus of traditional business and transaction models
16 based on individual ownership (Gansky 2010; Belk 2014; Eckhardt & Barhdi, 2015). Through
17 enhanced supply-demand matching of underutilized assets, CSE has been seen as transforming
18 traditional market behaviors and values of exclusive ownership into models of short-term
19 consumption for more efficient and sustainable use of resources (Barbu et al., 2018; Lawson et al.,
20 2016). In broad terms, providers grant temporary access to goods or assets they own but which
21 may be underutilized (Pasimeni, 2021). Typically, in exchange for a fee, consumers use the same
22 good at different instances (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Frenken & Schor, 2017).
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35 Ownership has been shown to be an important determinant of social status and
36 demonstration of consumer desire (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021; Baumeister & Wangenheim,
37 2014; Chen, 2009). As such, ownership moderates a variety of societal structures and individual
38 behaviors, from legal regimes and economic systems to psychological understandings of wealth
39 and status (Atasoy & Morewedge, 2018; Michie & Lobao, 2012). Under short-term use
40 arrangements characterizing CSE, there is no legal transfer of ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt,
41 2012; Frenken & Schor, 2017; Pasimeni, 2021). Indeed, some scholars have suggested this
42 contributes to an unequal distribution of wealth and inequality by polarizing wealth concentrations
43 to benefit certain classes of CSE users over others (Acquier et al., 2017; Murillo et al., 2017).
44 Some studies have challenged perceptions of community-making between CSE users highlighting
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3 how more of the trust and relationship-building develops between users and a platform brand,
4 rather than directly between peers (Pelgander et al., 2022). Other scholars present CSE as affording
5 fractional forms of ownership to extend the benefits of and ability to access a resource through
6 better cost-sharing, particularly for luxury goods such as vacation homes and yachts where
7 individual ownership would not be possible for many (Hastings et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2019,
8 Lawson, 2016). A key underlying theme within these strands of ownership considerations in CSE
9 literature is an enhancement of the ability to consume and individual benefits of temporary access
10 to a resource (Pasimeni, 2021). This perception of ownership under CSE is distinct from feelings
11 engendered around ownership or use of a resource within collective societies which emphasize a
12 sense of “ours” and contribute to social bonds and feelings of collective responsibility (Pierce et
13 al., 2003).

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30 Despite growing scholarly interest in the SE, the literature remains underdeveloped in its
31 theorization of ownership, particularly in contexts where property is not understood as individual,
32 commodified, or absolute. In response, this study foregrounds the concept of *relational ownership*:
33 a culturally sedimented perception of ownership as socially embedded, morally structured, and
34 collectively negotiated. Rather than seeing ownership as a right to exclude, this relational view
35 emphasizes the social obligations and moral claims that emerge from shared use and customary
36 stewardship. Indeed, framing ownership in these terms better represents social values and
37 processes of collective societies and their notable distinctions with individualist cultures. We
38 introduce the concept of relational ownership to describe a culturally embedded form of ownership
39 that cannot be fully captured by either legal definitions or contemporary access-based models. We
40 conceptualize ownership not as a right to exclude, nor merely as access, but as a socially
41 sedimented relationship involving stewardship, moral obligation, and culturally-informed
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3 responsibility. In the Kazakh context, relational ownership emerges from the layering of traditional
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5 nomadic ethics and collectivist norms with modern institutional practices. It reflects a fusion of
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7 values that shape how individuals understand the use, distribution, and social meaning of
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9 resources. Framing in these terms allows us to account for practices that fall outside dominant
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11 market or legal paradigms but are nonetheless coherent, legitimate, and durable within the local
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13 context. We argue that language offers a powerful means for exploring local meaning-making
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15 processes which have direct bearing on sharing impulses and resource distribution logics. These
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17 understandings are still present in customary norms, such as “Asar”ⁱ, “Koghendik”ⁱⁱ, “Keusen”ⁱⁱⁱ.
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19 While these additional concepts fall outside the scope of our primary research interest of exploring
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21 the term *ownership*, we highlight these enduring cultural ethics to showcase how the implications
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23 of the indigenous concepts remain underexamined within the SE literature in the hope they may
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25 serve as the basis for future research. This will be particularly important to consider given the
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27 diverse sociocultural realities of BoP settings.
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34 Taken together, the SE and BoP literatures have highlighted how market logics are adapted
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36 in resource-constrained environments. Yet few studies have explicitly integrated the perception of
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38 ownership into analyses of SE models. Even less attention has been paid to how culturally
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40 embedded ownership frames might contest or repurpose SE interventions. This article contributes
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42 to the emerging agenda in two ways. First, it theorizes ownership as a relational institution
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44 characteristic of collective societies, rather than strictly a legal or economic arrangement. Second,
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46 it shows how such relational ownership both enables and/or constrains sharing practices.
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Methodology

Our study explored the diverse factors motivating sharing practices and the effects of ownership structures and understandings on resource sharing outcomes. We also explored how daily life practices and understandings surrounding social exchange were reinforced by native language concepts and creating relationship to the allocation of idle resources.

The methodology employed in this study follows the principles of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2017), which is well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena through an inductive approach. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, enabling an iterative process where initial observations and interviews informed subsequent rounds of inquiry. Constant comparison allowed for continuously comparing data across interviews and observations to identify emerging patterns and conceptual relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). To this end, we carried out qualitative research which relied on observations, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Concepts were treated as dynamic and emergent, evolving through the research rather than being predefined or fixed, in line with the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006).

Study Site

With a population of roughly 1.1 million people, Shymkent is the third largest city in Kazakhstan. Although it was designated a “city of republican significance”, it supports numerous rural communities and remains one of the most significant areas for the agriculture sector (Sauranbayev, 2018) which justified its use as our study site.

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3 Today, while Shymkent has a GNI per capita of 7,830 (USD) and is classified as upper-middle
4 income according to World Bank data, there is considerable wealth disparity between urban and
5 rural populations (UNDP Kazakhstan, 2008; World Bank Group, 2020). Poverty is recognized as
6 multidimensional and goes beyond income levels to include a variety of factors such as market
7 access, inequality, and savings levels (Aaberge & Brandolini, 2015; Asselin et al., 2009). Due to
8 the absence of consistent and reliable income data for rural populations in Shymkent, alternative
9 socio-economic indicators were employed to support the selection of the study area. Rural
10 households in this region typically exhibit minimal financial reserves, allocating approximately 97
11 – 98% of their income to immediate consumption needs. Economic activity is largely concentrated
12 within informal or non-institutional markets, with a strong reliance on self-employment and
13 subsistence production derived from household land plots or extended family networks (UNDP
14 Kazakhstan, 2008). Rather than attributing these patterns to deficiencies at the individual or
15 community level, we interpret them as outcomes of broader structural transformations and
16 systemic shifts that have taken place across the region over the past three decades. In this context,
17 the distinct socio-economic dynamics of rural Shymkent are highly relevant to BoP studies.
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42 *Sampling and Study Participants*

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45 Our primary objective was to gather information that would deepen our understanding of
46 ownership effects on local sharing practices. We applied Eisenhardt's principles (Eisenhardt, 2021;
47 Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) of careful case selection (i.e. theoretical sampling), selecting cases
48 where the focal phenomena – ownership understandings and sharing practices – were most likely
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3 To recruit respondents, the authors used predefined criteria, and purposive snowball
4 sampling techniques (Smith et al., 2008). Introductions and networking assistance by local
5 community members ensured participant comfortability with interviews and willingness to engage
6 honestly with the questions posed. For unstructured interviews, we contacted local historians,
7 linguistic experts, and individuals knowledgeable about local culture and traditions. For semi-
8 structured interviews, participants had to possess general familiarity with the SE concept to ensure
9 the researchers were not directly introducing SE as an entirely new concept, potentially biasing
10 responses. Second, participants had to be contactable for follow-up discussions. Third, they needed
11 to have connections to the study area of rural Shymkent and to possess knowledge of cultural
12 context. Fourth, because it is generally accepted that traditions are better preserved and adhered to
13 by older generations, all of the study participants were over 40 years old, to ensure that they could
14 reflect on traditional understandings of sharing. This approach aimed to mitigate the risk associated
15 with the younger generation's shift towards a more modern lifestyle. All respondents were raised
16 by or spent significant time with grandparents who either experienced a nomadic lifestyle or were
17 direct descendants of nomads.
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42 *Data Collection*

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45 The data were collected during three rounds of fieldwork in Kazakhstan spanning from November
46 2022 to July 2023. Qualitative methods, including observations, in-depth, and semi-structured
47 interviews, were employed to gain insight into the dynamics of local sharing practices. The
48 fieldwork was organized into several rounds to allow time between cycles for establishing contacts
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3 and building rapport with participants. The interval also facilitated refining the research questions
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5 as new themes emerged after initial observations and in-depth interviews.
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9 For the data collection, the field researcher utilized the Russian^{iv} language to engage with
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11 the local participants. The decision to use Russian was influenced by the preference of most of the
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13 respondents for communication in Russian. Even when referring to Kazakh traditions or
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15 terminology, Russian was still the preferable option to provide explanations^v. Speaking the same
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17 language proved to be advantageous for qualitative interviewing (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). As a
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19 Kazakhstani national and native Russian speaker, the field researcher had an advantage in
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21 conducting observations and interviews without the need for an interpreter. This insider status
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23 facilitated a more natural and open exchange, enabling the researcher to gain valuable insights into
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25 the sharing practices in Kazakhstan.
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31 The field researcher translated all data from observations and interviews into English to
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33 ensure contextual meanings were captured accurately. While the second author was not directly
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35 involved in the fieldwork, they actively participated in the data analysis, and theory development.
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37 This collaborative approach provided a complementary perspective to the field researcher's
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39 firsthand engagement with the study participants.
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43 **Observations.** Observations were recorded from November 2022 to July 2023. In line with
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45 grounded methods, we employed an immersive and iterative approach to observe and understand
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47 the nuances of local sharing practices. The iterative nature of the observations allowed the
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49 researcher to continuously refine their understanding based on emerging insights to capture the
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51 complexities and evolving dynamics of the studied phenomenon. To gain firsthand insights, the
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53 field researcher participated in community gatherings, social events, and informal conversations
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3 with local community members. This direct engagement facilitated a deeper understanding of the
4 lived experiences and perspectives locally. Emphasis was placed on observing sharing practices
5 during social events, where the researcher witnessed the intricate dynamics and prevalent customs
6 surrounding the act of sharing, including how sharing happens, what motivates people to share,
7 how they explain their sharing behavior, and how they relate it to local mindset.
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15 ***Unstructured and Semi-structured interviews.*** With the literature giving attention to CSE
16 in non-western contexts only recently, alongside a lack of studies on SE in Kazakhstan, conducting
17 in-depth unstructured interviews was necessary for identifying local sharing habits which may not
18 be considered within CSE literature. For the unstructured interviews, we reached out to local
19 historians, linguistic experts, and individuals knowledgeable about local culture and traditions.
20 The purpose was to proactively identify and map ideas and processes of exchange shaping local
21 understandings of “sharing”. Data from the unstructured interviews informed the semi-structured
22 interview questions and revealed initial insights into disparities between CSE theory and local
23 practices.
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37 We conducted 8 in-depth, unstructured interviews. The unstructured nature of the
38 interviews meant that discussions were not tied to a specific set of questions, but rather focused on
39 the understanding of the sharing tradition in Kazakhstan in a broad sense. With sharing often
40 occurring in rural areas without internet access, researchers opted to omit online platforms as a
41 determinant for participating in sharing to avoid potential respondent misunderstanding by
42 qualifying sharing based on the presence of online mediums. The interview would start with a
43 question about “how do you understand the sharing economy and how is it represented in
44 Kazakhstan?”. The conversation would then proceed according to the participants' line of
45 reasoning. In other words, the interviews would be guided by the participants' narratives. While
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3 not asked overtly, several respondents referred to the lack of ownership (in the exclusive sense) by
4 way of explaining local sharing characteristics. Following the unstructured interviews, a discussion
5 guide for semi-structured interviews was developed according to these themes (see Appendix A).
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11 Following Eisenhardt's (1989) identification of saturation points of newly gained
12 knowledge at 8 interviews, a total of 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted and deemed
13 sufficient for the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research in order for them
14 to situate their experiences and understandings in a relevant manner with the study. The semi-
15 structured interview format allowed interviewees to respond to aspects within the research
16 question while also highlighting overlooked or mis-conceptualized elements. All interviews were
17 recorded and transcribed to code key terms and themes for further analysis.
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31 *Data Analysis*

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34 We organized each set of interviews and observation notes into a case study, treating each data
35 source as complementary parts of a single narrative. Integrating these data sources allowed for
36 triangulation, enhancing the depth and reliability of the findings by comparing perspectives from
37 different methods (Yin, 2018). For example, interviews provided direct insights into participants'
38 experiences while observations added contextual understanding of behaviors in real-time. The data
39 then were organized thematically around local perceptions of sharing practices (SP), exploring
40 their interconnectedness or divergence from conventional sharing economy (CSE) theories, as well
41 as participants' understanding of ownership and its relationship to sharing practices. Our goal was
42 to capture participants' perspectives, progressively narrowing in on the meaning they attributed to
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3 their sharing activities. We then examined how their understanding of ownership transformed or
4 remained unchanged and how these perceptions shaped sharing behavior.
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9 We performed our data analysis following the Gioia approach (Gioia et al., 2013) involving
10 a multi-step process that progressively builds from participant perspectives to more abstract
11 theoretical dimensions.
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17 The first phase of our analysis focused on identifying 56 *first-order codes* (informant-
18 centric). These codes remained close to the language and perspectives of the participants to avoid
19 imposing external interpretations too early in the process. For example, participants frequently
20 discussed themes such as “Sharing as a social obligation and cultural heritage”, “Ownership linked
21 to resource utilization, not accumulation”, and “Traditional hospitality as part of sharing”, which
22 were coded without the influence of pre-existing theories. These codes represented the key
23 dimensions of local sharing practices (SP) as described by the participants and served as the
24 foundation for further analysis and development of second-order themes. Oftentimes during
25 interviews, respondents would turn to seemingly unrelated topics, such as the significance of
26 personal introductions, sense of vulnerability when not able to fulfill a favor, lack of trust in online
27 platforms or organizations, etc. Situating these topics within a consideration of larger historical
28 development processes in the region allowed the authors to map how such topics were connected
29 through a wider constellation of reciprocal relations which ensured group survival.
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47 In the second phase, we transitioned to identifying *second-order themes* (researcher-
48 centric). At this stage, we connected the first-order codes to uncover broader patterns and
49 theoretical insights. For instance, codes such as “Local language and conceptualization of
50 ownership” and “Ownership linked to resource utilization, not accumulation” were combined to
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3 form the theme of “Traditional understanding of ownership in shaping sharing practices”. We
4 developed 7 second-order themes (Sharing, Mutual Assistance, Mutual Responsibility,
5 Community Connection, Reciprocity and Circularity, Traditional understanding of ownership in
6 shaping SP, and Local SP vs CSE models), which we then merged into 3 higher-order aggregate
7 dimensions (Sharing Practices (SP), Ownership, and CSE: Challenges in local context). This
8 interpretative step allowed us to make sense of the participants' responses in a more concrete way,
9 contributing to the development of emergent concepts.
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20 Next, we created a *data structure* (Appendix B) to visually represent the progression from
21 first-order codes to second-order themes and, finally, to the *aggregate dimensions*. This structure
22 illustrated how, for example, concepts like “Sharing as a social obligation and cultural heritage”
23 and “Ownership as a shared access rather than individual possession” were all interconnected and
24 linked to broader theoretical dimensions such as “CSE: Challenges in local context”.
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33 The data coding was conducted by two researchers, both of whom have expertise in
34 qualitative analysis and familiarity with the cultural context of the study. The field researcher is a
35 Kazakhstani national, bringing essential cultural insight to the interpretation of the data. This
36 cultural specificity was crucial, as it ensured that the nuanced meanings embedded in participants'
37 responses were understood within the proper social and cultural framework. The coding process
38 was collaborative, with frequent discussions to reconcile interpretations and maintain consistency
39 (Miles et al., 2014). To balance cultural involvement and analytical objectivity, the second
40 researcher adopted an outsider's role, helping to prevent any risk of the field researcher becoming
41 overly immersed in the cultural context (Louis & Bartunek, 1992). This dual approach allowed for
42 more rigorous thematic analysis, with the second researcher providing critical inquiries and
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3 ensuring analytical distance. Together, both researchers identified key thematic insights, allowing
4
5 for a theoretical perspective to emerge through collective engagement.
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9 In the final step of our analysis, we developed a conceptual framework based on our data,
10
11 elaborated in Discussions and Figure 1. This framework provided a grounded explanation of how
12
13 traditional Kazakh sharing practices challenge and provide alternative insights into contemporary
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15 Sharing Economy models, offering fresh insights into the dynamics of sharing practices in the
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17 socio-cultural context of rural Kazakhstan.
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24 **Findings**

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27 This section presents the empirical findings derived from semi-structured interviews, unstructured
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29 interviews, and field observations. These findings are structured around second-order themes
30
31 developed through the Gioia's methodology (Gioia, et al., 2013). The themes include: 1) Sharing,
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33 2) Mutual Assistance, 3) Mutual Responsibility, 4) Community Connection, 5) Reciprocity and
34
35 Circularity, 6) Understanding of Ownership in Shaping Sharing Practices, and 7) Local Sharing
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37 Practices in contrast to CSE models (Summarized in Table 1 below). In order to preserve the
38
39 integrity of participants' perspectives on the local meanings of sharing and ownership, we draw
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41 extensively on direct quotations to illustrate each theme.
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48 The findings reveal a set of contextual sharing practices that diverge from the principles
49
50 underpinning CSE models. Whereas CSE typically emphasizes monetized, platform-mediated
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52 exchanges between users who remain socially distant, sharing in the study context is embedded in
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54 culturally rooted norms of access, obligation, and relational accountability. These contrasting
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3 logics – such as personalized versus depersonalized exchange, reciprocity versus transactionality,
4 and communal responsibility versus individual utility – are foreground throughout the analysis.
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7 Taken together, these address the central research question: “*How do sharing practices challenge*
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10 *and provide alternative insights into SE models from the vantage of ownership in collectivist*
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12 *contexts*”?

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19 Table 1 about here
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24 *Sharing (as a Social Ethics)*

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27 Participants consistently described sharing not as a discretionary or charitable act, but as a socially
28 embedded expectation. Sharing practices were governed less by institutional frameworks or formal
29 agreements and more by enduring interpersonal obligations shaped by trust, proximity, and
30 cultural norms. The logic of sharing was relational, not contractual – an obligation, not a
31 transaction.
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40 The respondent recalled everyday sharing practices during the Soviet period, where access
41 to personal goods was structured through informal reciprocity rather than ownership or payment:
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46 *“...I remember how one of our neighbors got the first colored TV – and because no*
47 *one else in a neighborhood had it we would all gather once a week at their place*
48 *to watch a movie. Or one of my relatives got a car and he would give us a lift on*
49 *weekends to get to our dacha (summer house)... We offered, but he always refused*
50 *to take any compensation, even for fuel.” (R1)*
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3 These examples highlight how access was mediated through social ties. Sharing was part
4 of ordinary life, and failing to engage in it could result in subtle social exclusion. Importantly,
5 participants did not describe these past practices in nostalgic terms, but as normative benchmarks
6 that continue to inform present behaviors.
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13 The same ethos was evident in contemporary contexts. Participants emphasized that the
14 impulse to share remains widespread – even in urban settings – where charging neighbors or family
15 members for shared goods or assistance was considered inappropriate. One participant remarked:
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21 *“Even now, in the city, if a neighbor needs something and we have it, we do not*
22 *charge. You just give it, because one day you will need help too.” (R14)*
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26 Such accounts illustrate a system in which sharing is maintained through cultural
27 continuity, reputational accountability, and moral interdependence. It is not simply the act of
28 transferring resources, but a way of reproducing social cohesion and mutual recognition. Sharing,
29 in this view, is a mode of relational maintenance – a practice sustained not by rules or prices, but
30 by embedded expectations and the anticipation of future need. Such interactions were not
31 exceptional acts of generosity but normative social practices, expected and morally reinforced.
32 These recollections, far from being nostalgic anecdotes, continue to shape current behaviors,
33 reinforcing an enduring practice of sharing.
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45 These accounts reveal that sharing is embedded within a historical memory of communal
46 provision, where access to private resources (e.g., cars or televisions) was governed not by
47 ownership or price, but by mutual aid and honor-based reciprocation. This model, developed under
48 conditions of material scarcity, continues to inform present-day practices of sharing, offering a
49 striking counterpoint to the depersonalized, commodified exchanges prevalent in CSE platforms.
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7 *Mutual Assistance (as an Embedded Expectation)*
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10 Mutual assistance emerged as a deeply embedded, normalized expectation, constituting a moral
11 obligation rather than a discretionary act. It was not framed as a favor, nor offered with anticipation
12 of immediate return, but rather as a culturally instilled response grounded in a long-standing ethic
13 of relational duty and collective care:
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20 *“If I see someone struggling, especially someone from the family or neighborhood,*
21 *I do not even think twice. We just do it. You grow up seeing this, and it becomes*
22 *part of you.” (R6)*
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26 *“This is basically not a question, but people know that you will never refuse. This*
27 *is more of a must.” (R2)*
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31 This comment reflects a broader sentiment that support is neither conditional nor
32 contractual. Rather, it is internalized from early life, enacted through embodied practice, and
33 expected by one’s immediate social environment. The obligation to assist was so well established
34 that failing to do so would incur significant social consequences, particularly through reputational
35 damage. Another participant remarked:
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43 *“... everyone remembers who helped whom. If you are known for turning away or*
44 *ignoring people, it stays with you. Even if you try to explain later, people won’t*
45 *forget.” (R15)*
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49 This informal social memory acts as a regulatory mechanism, ensuring that acts of
50 assistance are not only performed but continually expected, maintaining cohesion and shared
51 responsibility. In this context, trust and reliability are forms of symbolic capital with real social
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3 and economic consequences. These dynamics were especially salient during communal events
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5 such as weddings or harvests, where mutual support is ritualized. As one respondent explained:
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9 *“Whenever there is a wedding, everyone contributes in some way (e.g. food, labor,*
10 *or even money sometimes). It is not written anywhere, but no one questions it. You*
11 *would be ashamed not to help.” (R9)*
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15 *“I remember as a child during harvest season, neighbors would come to help my*
16 *grandparents. There was no talk of payment—it was just the way things worked.”*
17 *(R10)*
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21 These events crystallize the broader logic of assistance as a shared, unquestioned duty,
22
23 sustained by collective values and moral expectations rather than formalized systems. Here, the
24
25 absence of monetary exchange is not accidental, but ideologically meaningful. Assistance is not
26
27 commodified; it operates as a socially embedded act tied to histories of cooperation, scarcity
28
29 management, and interdependence.
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32 33 34 35 36 37 *Mutual Responsibility (as a Social Imperative)* 38

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40 Mutual responsibility extended beyond moments of visible need to a more enduring sense of being
41
42 accountable to others, especially within family and community networks.
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46 *“You cannot say no, especially when someone asks you for something important. It*
47 *is not okay. People will remember, and they will not ask again, but not in a good*
48 *way.” (R4)*
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52 This statement captures how refusal is not a neutral act; it carries lasting moral weight and
53
54 may lead to silent exclusion or reputational loss. Mutual responsibility here is not enforced by
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3 written rules, but by culturally sanctioned expectations and the threat of diminished social
4 standing. The stakes are personal and relational: failing to respond is tantamount to violating
5 shared values. Participants often explained that responding to requests is not dependent on one's
6 capacity to help, but on one's obligation not to refuse:
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13 *“If someone asks for a favor, especially if they are close, it is very hard to say no.*
14 *It is not really done, even if it is inconvenient. You just adjust.” (R13)*
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18 This expectation to comply (even under difficulty) demonstrates that responsibility is
19 relationally embedded. It is a culturally normalized form of responsiveness, derived from enduring
20 social bonds rather than convenience or efficiency. Mutual responsibility also functions across
21 time. The anticipation of future reliance renders refusals morally loaded, creating a circulating
22 system of social accountability. As one participant noted:
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30 *“When people ask, they trust that you will help. Because one day, it will be you*
31 *asking. That is how it works.” (R6)*
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35 This quote captures the reflexive nature of social responsibility, where today's compliance
36 secures tomorrow's assistance. It reflects a circular ethic of mutual care, not defined by symmetry
37 of exchange but by the persistence of obligation.
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42 *“Even if someone helped you last time, it does not mean you help them back right*
43 *away. But you must help others when they need it. This way, it continues.” (R7)*
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47 This emphasis on continuity and unspoken reciprocity marks a significant departure from
48 contract-based forms of exchange. Here, social trust and informal responsibility replace the logic
49 of calculated returns. Individuals are morally obligated not only to support others, but to do so
50 without requiring explicit justification, because relationships, rather than rules, structure what is
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3 due. Mutual responsibility is a central organizing principle in the local understanding of sharing;
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5 it serves to preserve relational legitimacy, regulate social conduct, and ensure the long-term
6
7 sustainability of communal life. In contrast to the opt-in, often depersonalized structure of CSE
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9 platforms, the model participants describe is marked by moral expectation, social embeddedness,
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11 and a low tolerance for refusal.
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19 *Community Connection (and Collective Value Creation)*

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22 Participants often framed sharing as a means of maintaining and reinforcing community ties.
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24 Rather than functioning as isolated acts of help, sharing practices were described as integral to
25
26 relational continuity, embedded in the broader effort to sustain long-term social cohesion.
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30 *“For Kazakhs this is about maintaining the established relations, which is*
31 *important.” (R3)*
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35 This perspective reveals that sharing is less about the object exchanged and more about the
36
37 relational process it affirms. To share is to act upon a pre-existing connection and to signal one’s
38
39 continued participation in a social network. As one respondent explained:
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42 *“We often say that it is not about the thing itself but about staying close. If you stop*
43 *sharing, and reciprocating, you slowly disappear from each other’s lives.” (R7)*
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47 The act of sharing thus is not prompted solely by need, but by the desire to remain
48
49 connected, to reaffirm bonds that might otherwise erode through neglect. In this sense, sharing
50
51 operates as a cultural infrastructure for belonging, reinforcing who is counted within the moral
52
53 community. Another participant reflected on this as a form of reciprocal presence:
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3 *“Even if I do not need help right now, I still help others because this is how we stay*
4 *part of each other’s lives. You cannot just appear when you need something.”* (R5)
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7 Such statements highlight the anticipatory and performative dimensions of connection: one
8 shares not merely to address present needs, but to preserve access, trust, and recognition within
9 the group over time. In this view, social networks are not only sources of material support but sites
10 of moral identity and social memory. Participants frequently referenced the fragility of connection
11 when sharing breaks down:
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18 *“When people stop helping, they also stop visiting, and soon they stop caring...”*
19 (R11)
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23 This illustrates that disconnection is not merely logistical but existential: being excluded
24 from a sharing network is to lose social visibility and relevance. Maintaining ties through sharing
25 is therefore as much about sustaining communal life as it is about accessing resources.
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30 In contrast to the transactional rationality of CSE models, which prioritize efficiency, and
31 user independence, participants in this study described sharing as a mechanism of ongoing
32 inclusion and mutual recognition. It is through these acts of connection that social worlds are not
33 only navigated but reproduced.
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41 **Hospitality.** Local Kazakh hospitality customs of accommodation embody multifaceted
42 functionalities of resource redistribution through sharing and fostering of social bonds. In the
43 Kazakh context, sharing is fundamentally rooted in the concept of reciprocity-driven sharing,
44 engrained as mutual responsibility and mutual assistance. One respondent connected hospitality
45 motives to a social code, underscoring how this code was felt collectively:
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3 *“...Thinking about hospitality and its parallels to Sharing [economy] – this is*
4 *definitely not the new invention for Kazakhs, while these for-profit transactional*
5 *economic interactions are. If you look at how long the history of sharing is*
6 *compared to 30 years of our transition to a market economy, the sharing and*
7 *collective access tradition is definitely longer than 30 years.. Maybe this is why it*
8 *is not under consideration whether I stay at a hotel, or AirBnB. And this is not*
9 *because I cannot afford paying for a hotel, but because they will not understand*
10 *why I did not stay with them... this would be an offence. Staying at someone’s place*
11 *is still a very common thing... at that time Kazakhs did not have internet, but they*
12 *perfectly managed and continue nowadays.” (R2)*
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21 The interview draws attention to the cultural significance of hospitality in Kazakhstan. It
22 is not merely a matter of financial capability but a deeply ingrained social norm. Choosing to stay
23 with relatives or friends rather than in a hotel is not a matter of affordability, it is a cultural code
24 and expectation. Refraining from staying with one's acquaintances would be viewed as offensive.
25 This highlights the strong cultural emphasis on communal bonds and the ability of the host to be
26 able to provide for guests. Moreover, with the expressed investments in maintaining extensive
27 social networks, the ability to introduce someone to a host is another amplifying factor in the chain
28 of social bond formation.
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41 When discussing Airbnb in terms of similarities and differences with Kazakh sharing and
42 hospitality, another respondent offered the following observations:
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46 *“So, what I say that this is very similar to modern [internet based] sharing economy*
47 *in terms of what we consume and how we consume too. The only difference in favor*
48 *of our Kazakh style AirBnB [referred to CSE] is that we never pay for that”.* (R3)
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3 The practice of offering hospitality in Kazakh culture is not driven by profit but by the
4 values of reciprocity and mutual support. Another respondent echoed the significance of
5 hospitality in terms of social value creation through enhancing social bonds:
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11 *“For nomads hosting people is not only about sharing food and shelter, but it is*
12 *also a social event. We exchange news, we maintain our connection and*
13 *relationships, which is as important as the sharing itself. This is an important part.*
14 *Today I stay at your place, tomorrow you stay at mine...” (R2)*
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19 20 21 22 *Reciprocity and Circularity: Non-Monetary Social Contracts*

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25 Participants described reciprocity as a moral expectation embedded in social life, not as calculated
26 exchange, but as part of a circulating, non-monetary contract. Help or resource sharing happen not
27 for immediate return, but with the confidence that support will be reciprocated when needed.
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33 *“Yes, I do expect that should I ask for a favor I will also not be refused. This is not*
34 *ok for Kazakhs to refuse if they ask. Refusals will be denounced.” (R5)*
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38 This statement underscores that refusal is not merely discouraged – it is morally condemned. It is
39 not the return that matters most, but the continued willingness to respond.
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44 *“In our culture, when someone helps you, you are expected to help them in return,*
45 *not right away, but whenever they need it. This... keeps us connected.” (R9)*
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48 The reciprocity thus sustains social cohesion over time, functioning as a relational contract.
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50 Circularity – not necessarily symmetry – defines these exchanges, reinforcing long-term belonging
51 rather than transactional balance. In contrast to the individualized and monetized logic of CSE
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3 platforms, reciprocity here is informally regulated and collectively maintained. It is through these
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5 diffuse yet binding obligations that social networks remain durable, inclusive, and coherent.
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9 These non-monetary social contracts are underpinned by a distinct understanding of
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11 ownership – one that departs from individualized and exclusionary models. In the local context,
12
13 ownership is often framed in terms of access, social legitimacy, and communal use rather than
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15 private control or legal title. The following section explores how this alternative conceptualization
16
17 of ownership shapes and enables the sharing practices described above.
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24 *Traditional Understanding of Ownership in Shaping Sharing Practices*

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27 Traditional life in rural Shymkent is defined by a cultural history of mobile lifeways and
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29 pastoral/nomadic practices. Interviews revealed how the region’s physical geography of abundant
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31 grasslands required livestock production as the primary means for human habitation. The
32
33 necessary collective labor inputs for the livestock economy accreted into shared experiences
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35 spanning centuries and communal understandings rooted in shared principles of common-pool
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37 resourcing and value for the collective (Manzano et al., 2021).
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43 In terms of resources, interviews revealed the logic of individual possession over resources
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45 – whether in use or idle – had no bearing in pastoral/nomadic settings. With the pastoral/nomadic
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47 lifestyle requiring flexibility and high mobility, accumulation of personal belongings was
48
49 disincentivized. As a result, ownership conceptualizations came to mean “access to”, or
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51 “belonging” – “менің иелігінде” (menin ieliginde) – of a said resource rather than outright
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53 possession. The themes that emerged in relation to ownership are summarized in Table 2 below.
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Table 2 about here.

In the subsequent sections, findings will be presented through direct quotes to capture and highlight the primary concerns and perspectives underscoring the enduring nature of sharing practices in the study area.

Modernity and Foreignness of Private Ownership. The term “private ownership”, expressed as “Жеке меншік” (zheke menshik), is a direct translation from Russian language. This linguistic adaptation can be traced back to the systematic introduction of the Russian language to Kazakhstan during the era of the Soviet Union. With the Russian language introduced to Kazakhstan under the Soviet Union for the purpose of enabling largescale industrialization, Russian language became an important linguistic and conceptual resource for engaging with emerging modernization processes, such as legal structures and institutions connected to property enforcement. Thus, “Жеке меншік” arose to meet the needs of modern and industrial life. Respondents emphasized how “Жеке меншік” lacks any indigenous linguistic roots in the Kazakh language:

“The word ‘private ownership’ in Kazakh is ‘Жеке меншік’ (zheke menshik), translated as private ownership. But this is a just a modern legal term.” (R5).

“The term ‘zheke menshik’ is just a literal translation from Russian, actually, understanding of private ownership for Kazakhs (before Russian colonization) is not exactly what you mean by that now.” (R11)

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3 The term of “менің иелігінде” (menin ieliginde), which was described as more consistent
4 with local sentiments, gives a more nuanced interpretation of the notion of ownership. “Menin
5 ieliginde” reflects a distinctive perspective on ownership that deviates from conventional notions
6 of absolute possession. It indicates the ability to access and utilize resources or assets when needed,
7 rather than extract value from it through outright ownership or control:
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16 *“Term ‘менің иелігінде’ (menin ieliginde), can be better described as – at my
17 disposal, it is not exactly the same as ‘I own it.’ As I think, there was no such a
18 thing as individual ownership. There were no things in someone’s individual
19 possession. A family (tribe, aul) could own land in a meaning that they could use
20 it. Kazakhstan is mainly steppes, and the point of ‘owning’ land is to use the grass
21 it produces to feed cattle, which was owned again by a family but not an individual
22 privately.” (R11)*
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29 “Menin ieliginde” highlights the importance of cultural nuances in comprehending
30 ownership from a practical perspective, alongside the communal dimensions and resource
31 management it brings from its nomadic origins. Local meaning of “менің иелігінде”, centered on
32 “the ability to access”, was not formalized through written documentation. Instead, it relied on
33 practical demonstrations of one's contributions to the livestock production system and was socially
34 validated:
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44 *“There was no specific agreement or any document which would fix the ownership
45 of one for a land (for nomads). There was an unwritten understanding that this
46 piece of land is used by one family or another. As well there were no fixed borders
47 but at the same time everyone knew that this is a land where the cattle of one’s
48 family is grazing. I think this is a very sustainable way of ‘ownership’. You could
49 not just own land and not used it. So, the ‘ownership’, or better say ‘belonging’
50 was defined by the natural necessity.” (R8)*
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“When I was a kid we all knew which piece of land belonged to whom. But I now understand that these land in mountains did not actually belong to anyone, it was the state’s lands, but people used those lands, year by year and would just call it ‘my lands’, ‘our lands.’” (R4)

“It’s not the land itself but what it could produce (grass, etc.) was worthy. How you could make use of it was important.” (R9)

Rather than a tool for establishing exclusivity or demarcating physical boundaries, belonging’ evolved to coordinate labor activities, distribute resources, and make unused resources available to others. Belonging here underscores the seasonal fluidity of human populations and multidimensional considerations of resource use. Rather than working to extract an abstract monetary value from unused resources, the logic was in preserving access to resources on an on-demand basis as a means for survival, as the local ecology required mobile communities connected through the shared need of collective labor inputs to support a livestock economy.

Ownership as Access/Usage. Indeed, the concept of individual ownership offers little practical advantage. Instead, the practicalities of one’s survival depended on collective survival. In this sense, the greater ‘resource’ to be sustained becomes social bonds:

“... in the nomadic conditions (severe weather, and other difficulties) the right of ‘private ownership’ would not add much to improve a nomad’s life, but it was the access to recourses which played a crucial role for survival. For example, when you are in a long-distance journey, having private land would not save your life, but a shelter provided by someone, and food would do. This is why I see the tradition of hospitality (for nomads) as a rational survival strategy rather than just a peculiar feature.” (R14)

Respondents articulated that what made land valuable was not the land itself, but its productive capacity for livestock and the social connections forged through a shared existence.

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3 Thus, 'belonging' to the land transforms into an understanding of 'belonging' with all those in
4 relation with the land.
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9 The concept of ownership in nomadic societies was consistently defined as access and
10 usage rather than exclusive possession by respondents. This understanding was derived from the
11 practical realities of nomadic life where individual resource possession or exclusive ownership
12 provided little benefit. This alternative conceptualization of ownership emphasizes mutual
13 assistance for communal survival strategies.
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21 **(De)incentivizing Owning.** The vastness of the steppe environment and low population
22 densities negated any incentive for territorialized and individualized land ownership. There was
23 collective recognition that the primary interest was in resource utilization, rather than amassing
24 land for the sake of possession. The notion of 'more is better,' has no rational basis in the Kazakh
25 pastoral/nomadic psychology. Instead, the incentive structure revolved around sustaining labor
26 forces and utilizing enough land and water resources to maintain a herd. Furthermore, owning
27 surplus land would have imposed additional responsibilities, such as the need for defense, thereby
28 increasing risks and burdens:
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41 *"Nomads got just enough lands for their herds, and there was no need to strive for*
42 *extra. Probably, having extra land (not used) also meant that you would have to*
43 *defend it, associated with greater risks and burden."* (R14)
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47 *"The steppe is endless, so there was no point and incentive to own it. The principle*
48 *the more the better did not have a point, because it was enough for everyone."* (R9)
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51 For nomads, ownership was defined not by legal or territorial rights but by practical, on-
52 demand access to resources. The idea of accumulating land for individual possession was
53 impractical. Excess land, which could not be actively used for grazing, would require defense and
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3 additional labor resources, amounting to a burden rather than a benefit. The expansive geography
4 of the region and the migratory nature of pastoralism facilitated a fluid understanding of
5 ownership, where access to resources was shared and prioritized in lieu of territorialized
6 boundaries.
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13 **(De)privatized Ownership.** Because management of livestock herds moving across vast
14 pasture lands required collective labor input, all who participated in the maintenance of this
15 nomadic system were understood to have earned access to land and water resources. This
16 overarching Kazakh communal structure supported ownership understandings as shared access
17 and usage of family or communal land.
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26 Through one's continuous and demonstrated contributions to upkeep of the system, one
27 was ensured continued access and belonging to such land and/or water resources (Masanov et al.,
28 2000). Rather than substantiating this information through private property institutions or legal
29 regimes, it was validated and transmitted orally across associated grazing communities (Frachetti,
30 2009).
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38 *“Because people used to live in big families/extended families there was no such a*
39 *case that there would be one owner – the ownership/access was a collective thing.*
40 *All the family members would have an access/use to this family land.” (R8)*
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44 *“There was no individual ownership, but a family (or extended family) ownership*
45 *– it belongs to a family.” (R10)*
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49 *“There were things in individual possession, but they were just really personal*
50 *things, like weapons, or a horse you ride, the rest was a collective ownership and*
51 *at a collective disposal. Ownership is more related to cattle, but again it was a*
52 *family but not individual ownership.” (R18)*
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3 *“Because all Kazakhs living together and dealing with things like lands, and cattle,*
4 *were relatives – extended family, there was no such a question. You knew people*
5 *personally and they were your relatives, of course trust was there. Maybe that is*
6 *why there was no need to somehow fix ownership for lands on papers. Kazakhs did*
7 *not use papers to agree about things.”* (R19)
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12 Property, particularly family land and resources, was managed collectively within extended
13 families, with all members having equal access and usage rights. Personal possessions were limited
14 to items like weapons or horses, while key resources such as land and livestock were shared. This
15 trust-based system, embedded in close-knit family relationships, eliminated the need for formal
16 ownership documentation.
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25 **Irrationality of Individual Accumulation of Possessions.** Pastoral/nomadic life, by its
26 very nature, entails constant movement and seasonal migration. In such a lifestyle, owning
27 numerous personal possessions becomes impractical and counterproductive. The need to transport,
28 and maintain an abundance of belongings during frequent relocations poses a logistical challenge,
29 as emphasized by the interviewee:
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37 *“Having many personal possessions means that one would have to keep, maintain,*
38 *and carry a lot of things when moving from one place to another, which would be*
39 *a challenge for nomadic lifestyle. This is I think why, getting and accumulating*
40 *possessions could be a burden.”* (R22)
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46 This nomadic lifestyle inherently discouraged the accumulation of material goods, viewing
47 excessive possessions as a hindrance rather than an asset. The nomadic aversion to material
48 accumulation shaped a culture that valued mobility, flexibility, and the collective over the
49 individual. These cultural norms, rooted in the physical environment, contrast sharply with
50 sedentary societies where wealth accumulation and property ownership are central.
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7 *Contrasting Logics of Sharing: Local Practices vs. CSE Models*
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10 The preceding findings illuminate a coherent system of sharing practices grounded in moral
11 obligation, communal trust, and socially embedded norms of reciprocity. Taken together, these
12 practices present a challenge to the assumptions underpinning CSE models.
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17 Across themes – from sharing as a social ethic to mutual responsibility, hospitality,
18 reciprocity, and locally situated conceptions of ownership – an alternative logic emerges: one in
19 which exchange is shaped not by efficiency, price, or market rationality, but by social legitimacy
20 and resource use that emphasizes the collective. In this system, value is not extracted or
21 accumulated but created and (continuously) circulated through social networks. Access to
22 resources is enabled not by payment or platform membership but through social relationships,
23 shared memory, and reciprocal obligation. Ownership, likewise, is not (historically) framed as
24 exclusive entitlement but as flexible with access and use legitimized socially that supports the
25 group.
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39 In contrast, CSE platforms tend to prioritize standardization, scalability, and
40 depersonalized transactions mediated by technological infrastructures. Reciprocity is reduced to
41 user ratings; obligation becomes optional; and ownership is framed either as private property or
42 its monetized inverse – temporary access under contractual conditions.
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49 These contrasts are not merely functional but ontological: they reflect fundamentally
50 different understandings of what sharing is, what it is for, how it manifests, and how it ought to be
51 governed. Privatized ownership characteristic of individualistic, consumer societies represent
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3 social and economic arrangements that facilitate particular resource outcomes. The findings
4 suggest that when viewed through the lens of local practices, CSE models risk misrepresenting
5 and even eroding existing cultures of communal exchange. The following discussion unpacks the
6 theoretical and practical implications of these contrasts, positioning local sharing practices not as
7 pre-modern residues, but as embedded in systems with well-developed rationalities with their own
8 internal coherence, ethical infrastructure, and relevance for considering how sharing is rethinking
9 the current manifestation and the future of sharing economies.
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24 **Discussion**

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27 This section interprets the empirical findings in relation to the question on how local sharing
28 practices challenge, and offer alternative insights into, prevailing SE models when viewed through
29 the lens of ownership?
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35 The data reveal that practices of ownership and sharing in rural Kazakhstan are governed
36 not by rights backed by a rule of law or market logics, but by a deeply embedded set of moral
37 expectations and cultural routines. These practices do not fit neatly into existing Sharing Economy
38 (SE) models that equate sharing with efficient access, peer-to-peer exchange, or monetizable
39 surplus. Instead, ownership here is enacted through what we term relational ownership: a culturally
40 sedimented, morally infused, and socially negotiated form of access that privileges responsiveness
41 to others over exclusion or control. However, relational ownership is neither wholly celebratory
42 nor coercive. It is marked by a felt obligation to be available to others, sometimes accompanied by
43 pride and satisfaction, but at other times by quiet tension. Participants described the importance of
44 sharing resources with others as a sign of moral integrity and community standing. At the same
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3 time, this was not always freely chosen; it was underpinned by powerful expectations about what
4 it means to be a good neighbor, relative, or community member. By foregrounding these nuances
5 and complexity, our study contributes a more situated understanding of sharing that challenges
6 assumptions in dominant SE narratives, particularly those applied to BoP contexts. It cautions
7 against framing sharing solely as voluntary access or entrepreneurial efficiency and instead calls
8 for closer attention to the relational, and cultural dimensions that shape how people live with and
9 through resources.
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20 Drawing upon the three aggregate dimensions – Sharing, Ownership, and Challenges in
21 the Local Context (summarized in Table 3 below) – the discussion articulates how local Kazakh
22 practices diverge from dominant CSE assumptions rooted in individualism, monetization. In doing
23 so, it highlights a distinctive economy of sharing characterized by obligation, reciprocity, and
24 relational access to resources. The analysis situates these findings within broader theoretical
25 discussions on social processes in collectivist societies and how ownership understandings interact
26 with resource uses through sharing acts in such settings.
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Table 3 about here.

Reframing Sharing: From Transaction to Obligation

The findings suggest that local sharing practices in Kazakhstan constitute a system structured around obligation, trust, and long-term relational ties, values common to collectivist societies (Hofstede, 2011; Hui et al., 1991; Ianole-Călin et al., 2020). Unlike CSE models that frame sharing

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3 as an optimized transaction enabled by digital platforms, Kazakh sharing is embedded in social
4 structures that confer rights to resources through demonstrated responsibility. Rather than being
5 governed by market rationality, sharing here operates as a form of “moral economy” (cf. Offer,
6 1997), where value is relational, obligations are socially embedded, and the refusal to share is
7 ethically censured. Participants do not choose to share in the economic sense; they share because
8 to do otherwise would violate communal expectations. This reframing is analytically significant:
9 it reveals that SE literature, by privileging instrumental rationality, fails to capture forms of sharing
10 grounded in normative commitment and moral accountability (cf. Mauss, 2002). Consequently,
11 platform-based sharing risks eroding the very communal logics it seeks to scale, by reducing
12 reciprocal acts to monetized services.
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27 Hospitality exemplifies this embeddedness. As echoed across interviews, the act of hosting
28 is not a commodified service but a public performance of relational responsibility – one that
29 affirms status, reciprocity, and moral worth. This finding resonates with recent critiques of
30 platform-mediated hospitality services (e.g., AirBnB, VRBO), which often reduce hosting to one-
31 off, monetized transactions devoid of enduring social ties (Mahadevan, 2018; Paulauskaite et al.,
32 2017; Priporas et al., 2017). Such platforms typically generate user loyalty to the brand rather than
33 to the host (Wang & Jeong, 2018; Yang et al., 2018), thereby depersonalizing the experience and
34 severing it from the cultural logics of place and relationship (Eckhardt & Barhdi, 2015; Pasimeni,
35 2021). From this perspective, CSE in terms of accommodation and hosting essentially acts as a
36 technical instrument, a collection of disconnected individual transactions unified under a digital
37 platform and brand name. As a result, it has more resemblance to individual profit maximization
38 rather than collective value. Moreover, the local Kazakh system of verification or vouching which
39 amplifies social value processes is missing in CSE. While online user AirBnB or VRBO profiles
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(of both host and guest) are a central tool for enabling overnight stays, the CSE literature reveals how they are primarily a means for assessing one's money's worth and/or safety of personal property rather than generating a relationship based on non-monetary elements (Banerjee et al., 2022; Fagerstrøm et al., 2017; Tong & Gunter, 2022; Tussyadiah & Park, 2018). In contrast, nomadic hospitality encompasses the practice of sharing vital resources of such as food and shelter among community members and travelers. This resource sharing is undertaken without the expectation of financial compensation. Indeed, while these hospitality customs long predate mass circulation of finance, interviewees unequivocally cited the notion of accepting payment for hosting guests, or trying to offer payment on the part of the guest remains strange, or even uncomfortable. Instead, the emphasis centers on mutual support and the sharing of essential resources for the common good, rather than commercial transactions. Reciprocal hospitality in the Kazakh context is not solely about the circulation of tangible resources, such as food and accommodation. It extends to shared moments where participants engage in meaningful conversations and information exchange in each other's homes. Closely associated with hospitality practices, local customs akin to an 'open-door policy' remain a common feature of daily life for residents. With the intention of letting others know that guests and visitors are welcome without necessarily being invited, neighbors and family would frequent the homes of others unannounced. Often for exchanging news and local developments, this "open-door policy" custom signified relations were an important means of information exchange. Indeed, this information exchange went beyond daily pleasantries and carried historical significance as exchange of information regarding environmental conditions made it possible to identify and to use resource in the first place (Berman, 2022; Darmenova, 2020; Darmenova & Koo, 2021).

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3 In contrast, cost minimization is cited as a common motivator for CSE users in Western
4 affluent societies (Akbar & Tracogna, 2018). While cost reduction for a good or service was not
5 disregarded as an outcome of sharing practices (such as staying with relatives rather than hotels)
6 it was never a motivating factor in and of itself for the study participants. Instead, it was an
7 unconscious by-product of maintaining or expanding one's social network. Undoubtedly, the
8 continuity of hospitality, as a resource sharing tradition, in modern Kazakhstan underscores the
9 effectiveness of these communal practices in meeting the needs of local individuals and
10 communities, regardless of the presence of modern digital platforms. This distinction points to a
11 deeper ontological divergence: whereas the CSE operates on the basis of calculated reciprocity,
12 Kazakh sharing is premised on circular and open-ended social exchange.
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27 Overall, the idea of CSE was seen as a modern concept representing traditional ways of
28 interacting by study participants. Whether in the context of local hospitality customs providing
29 accommodation or mutual assistance, such acts did not represent something new. Instead, it was
30 merely the for-profit, financial aspects of CSE activities which were the new feature to sharing
31 practices which had been in existence locally, long before digital connectivity and online sharing
32 platforms.
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45 *Ownership as an Enabling Structure for Relational Sharing*

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48 To unpack how ownership arising under pastoral-nomadic land use inform Kazakh sharing
49 practices, we provide a brief overview of the region's physical geography and how human
50 habitation required mobile communities. The physical ecology of Kazakhstan substantiates how a
51 nomadically organized system was necessary and from which ownership understandings, values
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3 and sharing practices emerged. Kazakhstan lies within a region physically dominated by the largest
4 unified area of flatlands in the world (Christian, 1994). Isolation from climate moderating oceanic
5 influences gives the vast Eurasian heartland a continental and semi-arid climate with extreme
6 temperature fluctuations. This precluded the emergence of extensive rain-fed or irrigation-based
7 fixed-field farming and large-scale crop agriculture (Christian, 1994; Shahgedanova, 2003; Taaffe,
8 1990; Zhong et al., 2018). Instead, the abundant steppe grasslands provided necessary elements
9 for a thriving food system/economy based on pastoral herding and nomadism (Khazanov, 1984;
10 Lusigi W. J. & Glaser, 1984).
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23 The historic nomadic economy in Eurasia was based on multispecies breeding of livestock
24 (Masanov, 1995). Zones of varying dominant vegetation types were exploited as grazing grounds
25 through a system of seasonal rotation according to their optimal forage times. This required
26 residential mobility either of the whole population, or in sequences where some members travelled
27 at different moments to attend to other elements of the nomadic system, such as supporting product
28 production from animal derivatives, sowing of crops, supplementary food sourcing such as fishing,
29 etc. (Petrov, 1975; Shahgedanova, 2003). Groups of people became affiliated through shared goals
30 of livestock production. A minimum number of human groups required to meet the necessary tasks
31 of a given herd in one moment was consistently in flux. In general, the logic of labor within the
32 nomadic system followed the principle that, “investments in animals creates larger herds that
33 require greater spatial circulation to access sufficient pasture” (Honeychurch, 2014, p. 290). The
34 majority of labor operations were only possible with close integration with pastoral groups - from
35 shearing sheep to harvesting crops, to regular herd maintenance or food sourcing, such as fishing
36 (Masanov, 1995). The complementarity between labor and livestock meant that ownership
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3 functioned more as a domain of social relations, rather than as an economic category with an
4 associated legal regime.
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9 Given the seasonal use of pastures according to their optimal productivity for livestock
10 grazing, this varying use of lands meant there was no practical value for outright, consistent or
11 exclusive ownership of a resource. Indeed, the historical record shows that virtually no groups or
12 communities possessed a monopoly either on land or water (Abdullaev & Rakhmatullaev, 2015).
13 Under nomadic conditions of harsh weather and daily challenges, the right of individual private
14 ownership would not improve a nomad's life. For example, possessing land privately in which you
15 were not physically located would not offer benefit in a long-distance journey. As such, this created
16 a distinct incentive structure in which the concept of ownership came to be based.
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28 The relationship between sharing and ownership should not be essentialized according to
29 one sociocultural context. The nature of sharing is dependent on understandings and logics around
30 how, why and for whom a resource should be owned that are particular to each social system. In
31 the case of rural Kazakhstan, the very ability to own a resource (or to have at one's disposal), is
32 gained through maintenance of social obligations, rather than through financial or market means.
33 Resource distributions follow the practice of communal sharing, where resource access is provided
34 within an established social group (Nettle et al., 2011). Distribution of resources is guided not by
35 individual ownership but by shared ownership principles and the practice of communal sharing,
36 where access is available to everyone within the social circle (Nettle et al. 2011). This is in stark
37 contrast to societies with well-developed market economies which follow the logic of individual
38 ownership and, in the case of CSE providing on-demand access to a resource based on market-
39 mediated needs, rather than social needs. In other words, it is the need for social connectivity to
40 sustain mutual aid and support across group networks that facilitates exchanges as opposed to a
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3 clear material or service-based need that is facilitated through propertied ownership institutions.
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5 Even with Kazakhstan having been introduced to a market economy following the dissolution of
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7 the Soviet Union in 1991 and increasingly consumer culture through Western influences, this did
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9 not dismantle the longstanding social fabric and centuries of accreted understandings around
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11 sharing and resource distribution. This sense of materials and resources belonging to a group,
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13 rather than to individuals echoes finding across Aboriginal collective based societies (Østergaard
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15 et al., 2000).
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20 Individual ownership provides owners with the exclusive right to regulate or deny access,
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22 to use, and possess benefits generated from a resource's use (Snare, 1972). Leveraging ownership
23
24 to draw boundaries or exclude was seen as inappropriate, even shameful, in this case study area.
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26 Several participants expressed unease with ideas of charging for resources, noting that such
27
28 practices would "feel wrong" (R4). For collective societies, the ability to belong and to remain a
29
30 member of a group is contingent upon demonstrating particular social requirements. For the study
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32 participants, these perceptions drew from ancient shared labor needs to ensure the upkeep of a
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34 mobile livestock-based system and sustained the moral foundation for granting resource
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36 "ownership" was granted. These responses revealing shame by extracting individual benefits from
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38 a resource suggest that introducing transactional SE platforms risks dis-embedding sharing from
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40 its moral foundations, potentially undermining the very social fabric that enables resource sharing
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42 and resource circulation in the first place.
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49 In the case study area in Kazakhstan, there was no incentive for individualized and
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51 exclusive ownership. Instead, more members of the collective benefited from distributional
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53 resource flow patterns as groups moved across the steppe landscape. Under CSE ownership
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55 conventions, potentials for financial gain establish incentive pathways which favor resource
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3 accumulation. The logic for such accumulations had no bearing under nomadic-pastoral
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5 conditions.
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9 Figure 1 builds from the dimensions identified from in-depth analysis of interview data and
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11 contrasted with prevailing themes concerning social exchange practices and motivations found in
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13 CSE literature. Directly translating the term ownership, this research addressed the question of
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15 how ownership structures arising in the collectivist society of rural Kazakhstan leads to resource
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17 sharing outcomes that offer alternative insights into SE models.
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25 Figure 1 about here
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31 *Broader applications of this study*

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34 With pastoral-nomadism, or mobility-based forms of livestock cultivation, found in over 100
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36 countries, the significance of this study is its findings may be relevant to diverse BoP populations
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38 (Manzano et al., 2021). Occurring across diverse and harsh terrains and varying in livestock
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40 species (sheep, goat, water buffalo, horse, camel, reindeer and cattle), nomadism-pastoralism
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42 represents a system of unique social-ecological practices and ancient form of collective existence
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44 and remains the most widespread form of land use in the world today, many of whom are located
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46 in resource-constrained BoP contexts (Nori & Davies, 2007).
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51 Despite this significant temporal and spatial range, there are no studies within the SE
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53 literature which consider mobility-based communities or pastoral-nomadic practices located in
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3 BoP environments. A lack of analysis of local variables and social practices within BoP research
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5 may limit successful application of SE strategies across the diverse socio-cultural contexts in
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7 which BoP populations are located (Qureshi et al., 2021).
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14 *Limitations and Future Research*

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17 The study focused on how nomadically-derived collective values and enabled resource
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19 distribution, rather than concentration as evident in CSE literature.
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23 However, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the study's findings are based
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25 on qualitative data from a single region, limiting its generalizability to other contexts as
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27 Kazakhstan's blend of nomadic heritage and contemporary economic development may not fully
28
29 represent the broader diversity of BoP populations. To address these limitations, future research
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31 should consider broadening the scope to include comparative studies across diverse BoP
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33 populations. Finally, future research should incorporate a more diverse age demographic,
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35 especially focusing on younger generations who may have different perspectives on ownership
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37 and resource-sharing compared to older cohorts. Longitudinal studies that track changes in sharing
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39 practices over time, as younger generations shift towards more contemporary, digitalized
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41 lifestyles, could provide valuable insights into the sustainability and evolution of sharing practices.
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Conclusion

The findings suggest that sharing in the Kazakh context functions not as one-off voluntary act for enhanced consumption, but as an embedded social infrastructure organized for maintaining social bonds and distributing resources. Understandings of these resource sharing practices are revealed through the term of ownership, “менің иелігінде” (menin ieliginde), which emphasizes being available for collective benefit. The rationale of this ownership concept is verified by the physical ecology itself, which necessitated particular modes of human organization around mobile livestock production to survive in the steppe landscape. Moreover, the ability to access resources is contingent upon one’s proven engagement in joint labour, whereas participation in the CSE requires financial transactions and lacks this collaborative dimension (Eckhardt & Barhdi, 2015; Pasimeni, 2021).

With consumers increasingly attracted to accessing products, rather than owning them outright, consumption based on access has received growing attention in CSE literature and been treated as enabling more responsible social and ecological behavior (Lawson et al., 2016). While perceptions and framings of collaborative consumption and pro-social behaviors abound in CSE literature, many studies omit or overlook social processes which motivate and sustain sharing impulses, particularly those arising in collective societies. Without considering the role of ownership within these emerging consumption arrangements, positing CSE as a poverty reduction strategy in BoP contexts may erode well-functioning sharing ways or result in unnecessary investments.

Given the centrality of the financial element of CSE activities, our study reveals that there are risks if CSE is deployed as a tool for addressing BoP issues while remaining predicated on

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3 narrow propositions of expanding digital platforms. These concerns are rooted in issues of resource
4 accumulation and restricting access to capital highlights the risk of privileging economic value
5 creation as a path for social value creation (Chatterjee, 2016). With many BoP populations residing
6 in remote and/or resource-scarce environments, engaging with ownership structures to understand
7 the particularities of resource flows are crucial to consider for developing effective strategies. CSE
8 is largely a product of the digital age, facilitated by online platforms and apps for coordination,
9 booking and payments. The pastoral/nomadic sharing customs described by Kazakhstani residents
10 specifically arose to develop resource ways which enabled collective survival. By considering
11 under-utilized or surplus resource usage within these larger value creation processes, this study
12 brings insight to how resource practices can result in wider social benefits, and offers a basis for
13 innovative poverty alleviation strategies which may not require substantial external
14 investment. Locating sharing practices within a more comprehensive analysis which unpacks
15 ownership structures to better represent resulting sharing practices, SE models can be made more
16 inclusive and hold more meaningful promise for social needs in BoP contexts.
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36 This study makes four key contributions to research on the Sharing Economy (SE) and
37 Base-of-the-Pyramid (BoP) contexts:
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42 First, it introduces and develops the concept of *relational ownership* – a morally grounded,
43 socially embedded form of ownership that contrasts sharply with the legalistic and individualized
44 models underpinning much of SE theory. Drawing on empirical evidence from rural Kazakhstan,
45 the study shows how access to resources is governed not through commodified exchange or
46 platform-mediated logic, but through systems of reciprocal obligation and communal
47 responsibility. This contributes a novel institutional logic to SE scholarship, offering a culturally
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3 rooted alternative to prevailing assumptions that equate sharing with market efficiency or
4 consumer rationality. Uniquely, we demonstrate how this cultural alternative derives its rationale
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6 from humans' distinct relationship with the steppe landscape where necessary forms of mobile
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8 existence led to shared understanding of mutual support and reciprocity.
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14 Second, the study offers an empirical contribution by documenting sharing practices in a
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16 collectivist, under-researched BoP context. It reveals how ownership and access are shaped by
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18 customary norms, historical memory, and relational ethics – factors often ignored in mainstream
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20 SE research. This account enriches the empirical base of the field by situating sharing within
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22 indigenous systems of moral economy rather than platform-driven models.
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27 Third, the study provides a critical corrective to universalizing models of SE application in
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29 BoP settings. It cautions against the uncritical transfer of commercial sharing models into contexts
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31 where monetization may disrupt existing social cohesion. Instead, it calls for policy and practice
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33 that support rather than displace local logics, recognizing their potential for inclusive and
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35 sustainable access.
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40 Finally, this article advances a conceptual reframing of ownership as a relational and
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42 institutionalized practice. It demonstrates how relational ownership operates as a governance
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44 mechanism, a principle of resource allocation, and an ethical infrastructure. This
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46 reconceptualization invites scholars and practitioners alike to foreground cultural specificity and
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48 embedded social dynamics when designing and assessing SE interventions in resource-
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50 constrained environments.
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Table 1: Synopsis of Sharing Features in Kazakhstani Context

Contextual Sharing Features	Representative Quotes
Sharing	“Even now, in the city, if a neighbour needs something and we have it, we do not charge. You just give it, because one day you will need help too.” (R14)
Mutual Assistance	<p>“If I see someone struggling... we just do it. You grow up seeing this, and it becomes part of you.” (R6)</p> <p>“This [sharing/performing a favour] is basically not a question, but people know that you will never refuse. This is more of a must.” (R2)</p>
Mutual Responsibility	“I do not need a specific reason to agree. But to refuse providing a favour, I need to have a really solid ground. In reality, refusals never occur.” (R1)
Community Connection	“For Kazakhs this is about maintaining the established relations, which is important.” (R3)
Reciprocity and Circularity	<p>“Yes, I do expect that should I ask for a favour I will also not be refused. This is not ok for Kazakhs to refuse if they ask. Refusals will be denounced.” (R5)</p> <p>“In our culture, when someone helps you, you are expected to help them in return, not right away, but whenever they need it. This... keeps us connected.” (R9)</p>
Understanding of Ownership	“The word ‘private ownership’ is just a modern legal term. We use a different term – <i>menin ieliginde</i> , which is closer in meaning to – ‘at my disposal’.” (R3)
Local SP vs CSE	<p>“What they call sharing in these apps is just buying and selling. There is no relation – only money.” (R8)</p> <p>“Here, sharing is about helping one another, because tomorrow you might be the one who needs help. It is not a service. It is how we live.” (R12)</p>

Table 2: Synopsis of Ownership Notions in Kazakhstani Context

Contextual Themes	Representative Quotes
Modernity and Foreignness of “private ownership” notion	“The word ‘private ownership’ is just a modern legal term. We use a different term – ‘менің иелігінде’ (menin ieliginde), which is closer in meaning to – at my disposal.” (R3)
“Ownership” as access/usage.	“Having access to resources (e.g., land) reflects understanding of ‘ownership’ for nomads. You could not just own land and not used it. So, the ‘ownership’, or better say ‘belonging’ was defined by the natural necessity.” (R8)
(De)incentivizing “owning”	“The steppe is endless, so there was no point and incentive to own it. The principle the more the better did not have a point, because it was enough for everyone.” (R9)
(De)privatized ownership	“People used to live in big families/extended families there was no such a case that there would be one owner – the ownership/access was a collective thing. All the family members would have an access/use to this family land.” (R10)
Irrationality of individual accumulation of possessions	“Having many personal possessions means that one would have to keep, maintain, and carry a lot of things.” (R21)

Table 3: Contrasting Local Sharing Features and CSE Models: Dimensions, and Resulting Implications

Local Dimensions of Sharing		Implications	
		Local Sharing Practices	CSE
Sharing Practices	Sharing	Personalized	Depersonalized
	Mutual Assistance	Community focus	Individual focus
	Mutual responsibility	Community focus	Individual focus
	Community connection	Maintaining social bonds	Transactional and immediate exchange
	Reciprocity and Circularity	Facilitating factor: reciprocity creates a continuous cycle of resource sharing. Resource distribution; Social value creation	One-off for-profit transaction rather than long-term social relationships. Recourse accumulation. Monetary benefits creation
Ownership	Understanding of Ownership	Ownership is based on access, use, and communal legitimacy rather than exclusive control. Property is socialized and relational	Ownership is legalistic, individualized, and often exclusionary. Property is commodified and individualized
CSE: Challenges in Local Context	Sharing Practices	CSE is seen as unnecessary where strong informal sharing systems already exist. Local practices emphasize obligation, trust, and social continuity over market expansion	CSE is perceived as a monetized reinterpretation of pre-existing sharing practices

Figure 1

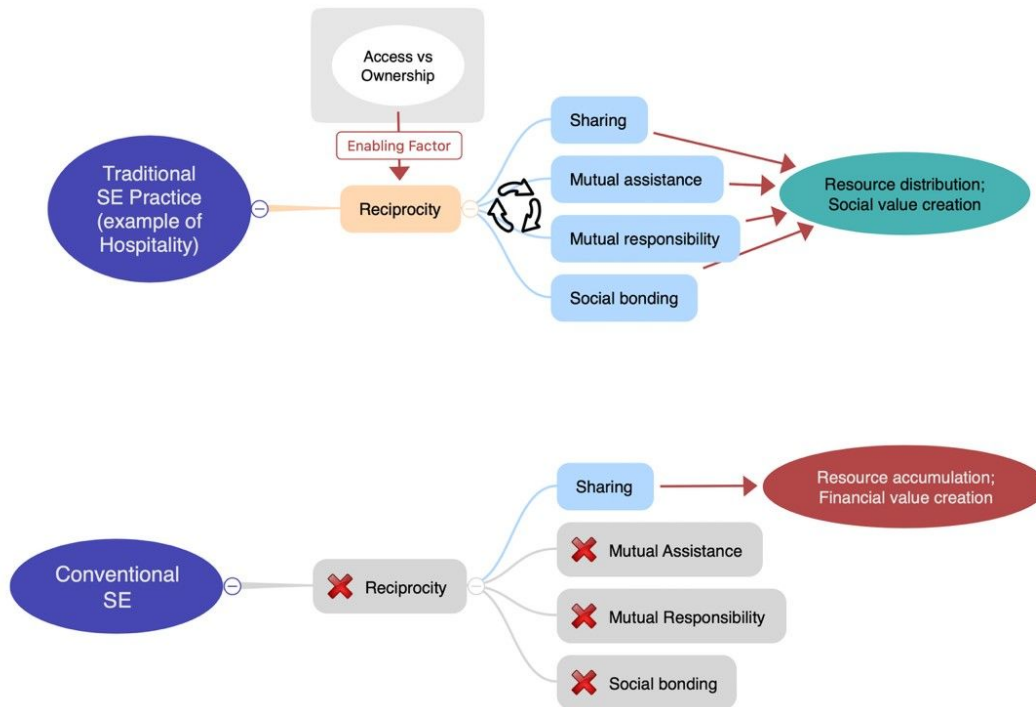


Figure 1: Central elements and processes of sharing within Conventional Sharing Economy models (CSE) and case study area in rural Kazakhstan. The proposed model accounts for critical differences in ownership structures which shape Kazakhstani sharing practices and those constituting CSE in distinct ways. It serves as a visual representation of the distinct characteristics and outcomes of each and highlights the significant roles played by ownership meanings and their effects on resource outcomes.

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Appendix A: Discussion Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

We are exploring local sharing practices, ownership, and resource allocation in Kazakhstan. Your insights will help us understand how these practices function in contemporary society.

Section 1: General Understanding of Sharing Economy, Sharing Practices, and their interconnectedness

- Can you explain your understanding of the Sharing Economy and the concept of sharing practices within it
Probe: In what ways do you believe sharing practices are integrated into the Sharing Economy, and how do they influence its overall functioning?
Can you give examples of sharing practices you have experienced or are familiar with?
- Can you describe how people in your community share resources with each other?
Probe: Are these resources shared freely or is there an expectation of something in return?
- What motivates you, and people in your community to share with others?
Probe: Is it driven by tradition, religion, or other factors?
- Do you, and people in your community rely on networks or relationships for sharing?
Probe: How important are family and community networks in sharing practices?

Section 2: Ownership and Resource Allocation

- How is private ownership understood traditionally?
Probe: Is ownership viewed as an exclusive possession, or is it more about access?
- How does the concept of private ownership in Kazakh traditions affect the way people share resources?
Probe: How does the understanding of “ownership as access” influence resource allocation?
- Can you explain any differences between private ownership and shared access within the nomads?
Probe: Are there situations where ownership of resources is collective rather than individual?
- How was individual wealth accumulation viewed in nomadic traditions?
Probe: Are there cultural, social, practical, or other factors that discouraged nomads from accumulating individual possessions?

Section 3: Reciprocity and Mutual Support

- In what ways do people expect reciprocity when sharing resources?
Probe: Do people share expecting something in return or is it an unspoken social norm?
- Can you give an example of how mutual support works in your community?
Probe: Is it based on social or economic needs?
- How important is the concept of reciprocity in Kazakh hospitality, and how does it contribute to the cycle of resource sharing?
Probe: Do you think reciprocity in hosting and being hosted is a central factor in preserving communal ties?

- How have changes in lifestyle, such as digital platforms, affected traditional hospitality in Kazakhstan?
Probe: Do you think these modern developments have changed the cultural significance of hospitality, or do the traditions continue to retain their importance even today?

Section 4: Community Connection and Cultural Preservation

- How does sharing reinforce or maintain community ties?
Probe: Are there cultural or other elements that encourage people to continue these practices?
- How important is it for you or your community to preserve these traditional sharing practices?
Probe: Do you sustain these traditions?
- What role do mutual support, and the sharing of resources play in maintaining social bonds within your community?
Probe: Can you give examples of how sharing practices strengthen relationships, beyond just the exchange of tangible resources?

Section 5: Tradition vs. Modern Practices

- How have modern technologies or ideas, such as the Sharing Economy, impacted traditional sharing practices?
Probe: Has technology changed the way people share or own resources in your community?
- Do you think there is any conflict between modern and traditional values around sharing and ownership?
Probe: How do you, and people in your community resolve these differences?

Closing:

Challenges and Future Outlook

- What are the challenges in adapting traditional sharing practices to modern economic frameworks, like the Sharing Economy?
Probe: Are there difficulties in maintaining traditional values within a modern context?
- How do you see the future of sharing and ownership in your community?
Probe: What changes do you foresee in the way resources are shared or owned?
- Ask the participants if they have any additional comments or anything else they would like to share.

Each question should be asked to provide flexibility, encouraging the interviewee to express their perspective openly. Probes should serve as gentle prompts, guiding the conversation to ensure a deeper exploration of key themes and providing clarity or additional insights where needed.

Appendix B: Data Analysis Process

First-order Codes	Second-order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
1) Sharing as a social obligation and cultural heritage 2) Sharing practices sustained since nomadic times 3) Preservation of traditional hospitality in modern contexts 4) Role of historical practices in shaping modern sharing 5) Influence of local customs on sharing practices (and sharing economy) 6) Historical roots of sharing practices and Kazakh hospitality in nomadic life 7) Traditional hospitality as part of sharing 8) Hospitality as non-commercial sharing 9) Hospitality as an expression of surplus allocation 10) Sharing motivated by religious or ethical values 11) Trust as a key factor in sharing practices 12) Sharing as a sustainability practice 13) Nomadic resilience through sharing 14) Influence of physical geography on sharing practices 15) Integration of sharing customs into modern life	1) Sharing 2) Mutual Assistance 3) Mutual Responsibility 4) Community connection 5) Reciprocity and Circularity	1) Sharing Practices
16) Mutual assistance as a core element of sharing 17) Sharing as a means of survival 18) Sharing as a way of managing scarcity 19) Sharing as a mutual social responsibility 20) Sense of obligation to support the less fortunate through sharing 21) Interdependence in resource allocation and survival 22) Sharing within extended family or community networks 23) Sharing to reinforce community ties 24) Reliance on networks for sharing 25) Importance of maintaining social bonds through sharing 26) Kazakh sharing as value creation process 27) Community approval of sharing behavior 28) Kazakh hospitality as social bonding 29) Social networks as a buffer against precarity 30) Reciprocity as a driving force for sharing 31) Circularity in sharing practices 32) Reciprocity as a continuous cycle in social exchanges	6) Understanding of ownership in shaping sharing practices	2) Ownership
33) Local language and conceptualization of ownership 34) Local meanings of ownership 35) Perceptions of ownership shaping sharing behavior 36) Ownership tied to land 37) Ownership as a shared access rather than individual possession 38) Shared ownership as a collective norm 39) Ownership in nomadic traditions 40) Ownership linked to resource utilization, not accumulation 41) Resource allocation based on communal needs 42) Absence of exclusive private property in nomadic cultures 43) Nomadic mobility negating the need for accumulation 44) Economic rationality of not owning idle resources 45) Sustainability and efficiency through collective access to resources	7) Local SP vs CSE models	3) CSE: Challenges in local context
46) Sharing in absence of internet or technology 47) Confusion over modern SE terminology 48) Perception of SE as a Western concept 49) Distinction between local sharing and SE models 50) Challenges in adopting modern SE frameworks in local context 51) Conflict between traditional and modern values 52) Local resistance to commodification of sharing practices 53) Sharing economy for benefit exchange 54) Exchange and sharing of resources without monetary benefit 55) Non-monetary exchanges as central to sharing 56) Social exchange versus commercial exchange in sharing practices		

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ⁱ “Asar” is a traditional Kazakh practice of mutual assistance and neighbourhood cooperation – reflects the cultural principle of working collectively toward a common good. Its core value lies in mutual help and care that extends beyond the immediate household to include the wider community. Asar is understood as a call for collective effort, whereby individuals voluntarily contribute their labour to support a member of the community, particularly in labour-intensive tasks (Ospanuly, 2009).

ⁱⁱ “Koghendik” is a tradition rooted in charity and mutual assistance. At the core of this practice lies the principle of equitable wealth distribution through fair sharing and care for the poor, disabled, and elderly. Those who were more affluent were expected to share food and resources with those less fortunate (Ospanuly, 2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ “Keusen” involves giving a portion of a farmer’s harvest to disadvantaged members of the local community (Ospanuly, 2009).

^{iv} The Russian language is officially used alongside the Kazakh language in Kazakhstan (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

^v Many respondents had received education in the Russian language during the Soviet time, which explains their inclination to use Russian when discussing socio-cultural heritage. Also, in Kazakhstan many ethnic Kazakhs consider Russian to be their first language.

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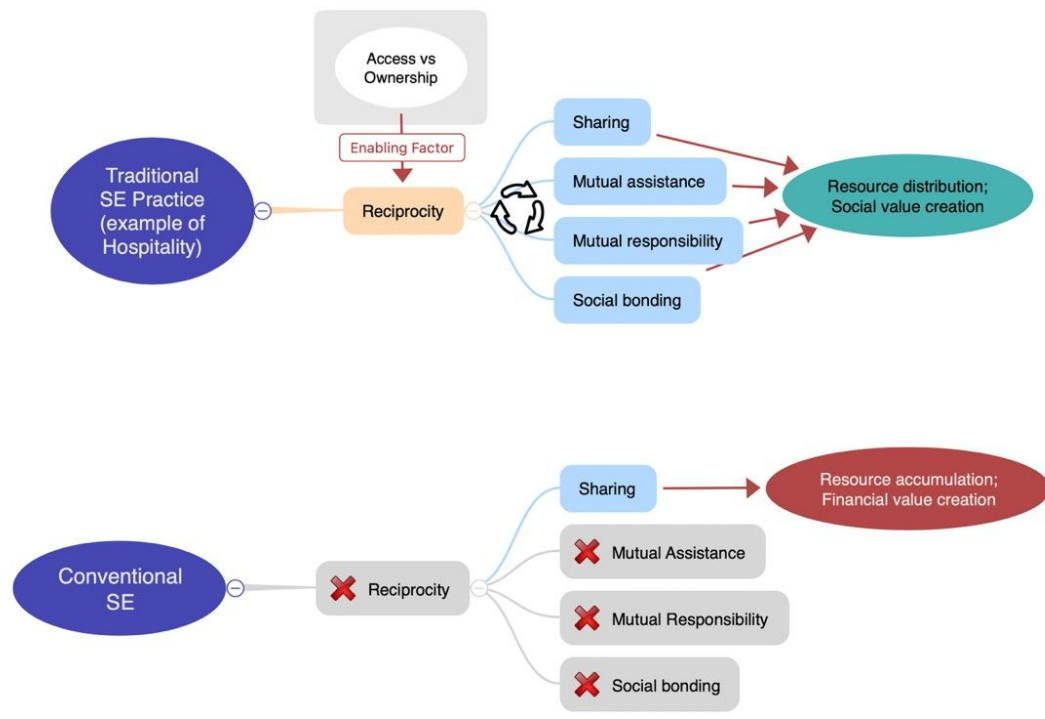


Figure 1: Central elements and processes of sharing within Conventional Sharing Economy models (CSE) and case study area in rural Kazakhstan. The proposed model accounts for critical differences in ownership structures which shape Kazakhstani sharing practices and those constituting CSE in distinct ways. It serves as a visual representation of the distinct characteristics and outcomes of each and highlights the significant roles played by ownership meanings and their effects on resource outcomes.

Table 1: “Synopsis of Sharing Features in Kazakhstani Context”

Contextual Sharing Features	Representative Quotes
Sharing	“Even now, in the city, if a neighbour needs something and we have it, we do not charge. You just give it, because one day you will need help too.” (R14)
Mutual Assistance	<p>“If I see someone struggling... we just do it. You grow up seeing this, and it becomes part of you.” (R6)</p> <p>“This [sharing/performing a favour] is basically not a question, but people know that you will never refuse. This is more of a must”. (R2)</p>
Mutual Responsibility	“I do not need a specific reason to agree. But to refuse providing a favour, I need to have a really solid ground. In reality, refusals never occur.” (R1)
Community Connection	“For Kazakhs this is about maintaining the established relations, which is important” (R3)
Reciprocity and Circularity	<p>“Yes, I do expect that should I ask for a favour I will also not be refused. This is not ok for Kazakhs to refuse if they ask. Refusals will be denounced.” (R5)</p> <p>“In our culture, when someone helps you, you are expected to help them in return, not right away, but whenever they need it. This... keeps us connected.” (R9)</p>
Understanding of Ownership	“The word ‘private ownership’ is just a modern legal term. We use a different term – <i>menin ieliginde</i> , which is closer in meaning to – ‘at my disposal’.” (R3)
Local SP vs CSE	<p>“What they call sharing in these apps is just buying and selling. There is no relation – only money.” (R8)</p> <p>“Here, sharing is about helping one another, because tomorrow you might be the one who needs help. It is not a service. It is how we live.” (R12)</p>

Table 2: “Synopsis of Ownership Notions in Kazakhstani Context”

Contextual Themes	Representative Quotes
Modernity and Foreignness of ‘private ownership’ notion	“The word ‘private ownership’ is just a modern legal term. We use a different term – ‘менің иелігінде’ (menin ieliginde), which is closer in meaning to – at my disposal”. (R3)
‘Ownership’ as access/usage.	“Having access to resources (e.g., land) reflects understanding of ‘ownership’ for nomads. You could not just own land and not used it. So, the ‘ownership’, or better say ‘belonging’ was defined by the natural necessity”. (R8)
(De)incentivizing ‘owning’	“The steppe is endless, so there was no point and incentive to own it. The principle the more the better did not have a point, because it was enough for everyone”. (R9)
(De)privatized ownership	“People used to live in big families/extended families there was no such a case that there would be one owner – the ownership/access was a collective thing. All the family members would have an access/use to this family land.” (R10)
Irrationality of individual accumulation of possessions	“Having many personal possessions means that one would have to keep, maintain, and carry a lot of things.” (R21)

Table 3: “Contrasting Local Sharing Features and CSE Models: Dimensions, and Resulting Implications”

Local Dimensions of Sharing		Implications	
		Local Sharing Practices	CSE
Sharing Practices	Sharing	Personalized	Depersonalized
	Mutual Assistance	Community focus	Individual focus
	Mutual responsibility	Community focus	Individual focus
	Community connection	Maintaining social bonds	Transactional and immediate exchange
	Reciprocity and Circularity	Facilitating factor: reciprocity creates a continuous cycle of resource sharing. Resource distribution; Social value creation	One-off for-profit transaction rather than long-term social relationships. Recourse accumulation. Monetary benefits creation
Ownership	Understanding of Ownership	Ownership is based on access, use, and communal legitimacy rather than exclusive control. Property is socialized and relational	Ownership is legalistic, individualized, and often exclusionary. Property is commodified and individualized
CSE: Challenges in Local Context	Sharing Practices	CSE is seen as unnecessary where strong informal sharing systems already exist. Local practices emphasize obligation, trust,	CSE is perceived as a monetized reinterpretation of pre-existing sharing practices

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		and social continuity over market expansion	
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For Peer Review