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Decomposition of ownership:

what makes people ready to give up their property?

(long abstract, 1400 words)

Introduction

The institution of property rights has always been in the center of the economic debate. It has been analyzed mainly in the context of the scarcity of goods, which often forces difficult decisions to be made, including to whom we should assign ownership rights. For many centuries ownership of key goods has been treated as both the source and the effect of wealth. However, in the contemporary economy, the role of ownership is changing very fast. We observe the growing importance of intellectual property, which based on completely different economic mechanisms. It also concerns the decomposition of the classical Roman Triad of Property Rights that are included in ownership (to own, to use and to receive benefits).

In the contemporary economy, more and more entities have got just the right to use things. Other elements of ownership are controlled by corporations (which are service providers). This is the effect of the popularization of business models where goods are not selling but companies grant users only some access rights - in the subscription model or in payments for a certain use. This applies to even to such categories of goods that recently were the subject of individual property (houses, cars, music collections, software, etc.). This applies to consumers (e.g. access to music, carsharing), entrepreneurs (e.g. software as a service, outsourcing) and public entities (e.g. ordering the Amsterdam airport lighting service by Phillips instead of the traditional purchase of light bulbs).

Methodology

The research base on a computer-assisted telephone survey (CATI). The interviews were made in June and July 2021 on a representative group of 1,000 people living in Poland. The questionnaire consisted of three parts based on Likert Scale answers and demographics questions. First, the respondents were asked about their previous experience with the right of access (video and audio subscription, car and bicycle rentals). Then, responders were asked about their attitude towards state actions concerning the ownership of selected categories of things (their transfer) or sharing (lending them). The questions included: textbooks for students, equipment for distance learning, educational toys for children, apartments, and cars.

The last part of the study referred directly to the readiness to abandon the possession of selected categories of things if convenient access on request to these things is provided. The subjects of the questions were: bicycles, cars, tools (such as drills or saws), elegant clothes, more expensive toys, sports and tourist equipment. The term "convenient" was intentionally left unspecified. The aim of the study was not to establish detailed conditions for the provision of on-demand access services (both financial and organizational), but only to determine the respondents' readiness to adopt such a model.

Results

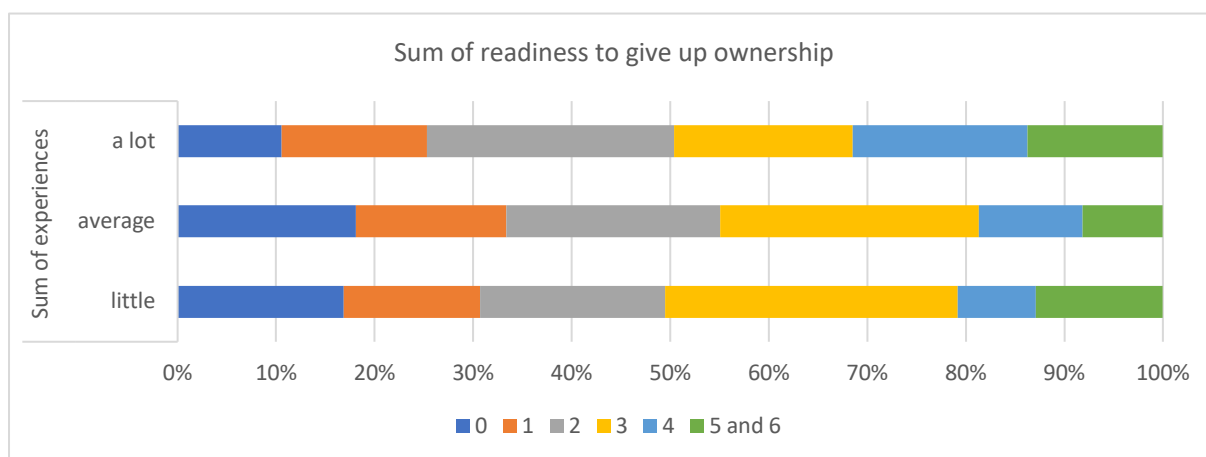
The results clearly show a relatively high readiness of the society to give up ownership when convenient access to many categories of goods is provided. At the same time, we can observe the special status of apartments and cars. In these two cases, it would be the most difficult for respondents to give up ownership.

However, the main research question was: what influences the readiness to give up the ownership of certain categories of things? My research shows that age is the most important factor. Younger respondents more often declare such readiness. In Spearman's correlation tests age is relevant in the context of every 6 categories of things. Additionally, besides age, there is no significant change in the distribution of answers based on demographic variables. In particular, a very common belief in the public debate, that giving up ownership and buying access on demand is correlated with lower income was negatively verified.

Moreover, people who expect that the state should be active in the field of public policies supporting citizens both in lending and in taking ownership of various categories of things also show less attachment to property. Interestingly, in general, the previous experience of respondents with access on demand which replace ownership transfer is not associated with a statistically significant difference in the level of willingness to give up ownership. The only exception is using bike rentals, where statistically significant difference has been observed in relation to several categories of things.

The chi-square tests were made for the variable "Sum of readiness to give up ownership" (where all the answers "definitely yes" and "rather yes" were counted in 6 questions about the readiness to give up ownership of particular categories of things). In addition, due to not enough number of observations, the sums of 5 and 6 were merged into one category. This variable was analyzed with:

- the sum of experiences (answers "definitely yes" and "rather yes" to 4 questions about the use of on-demand access) (grouped: 0-1 little, 2- average, 3-4 a lot)



Chi-Square Tests

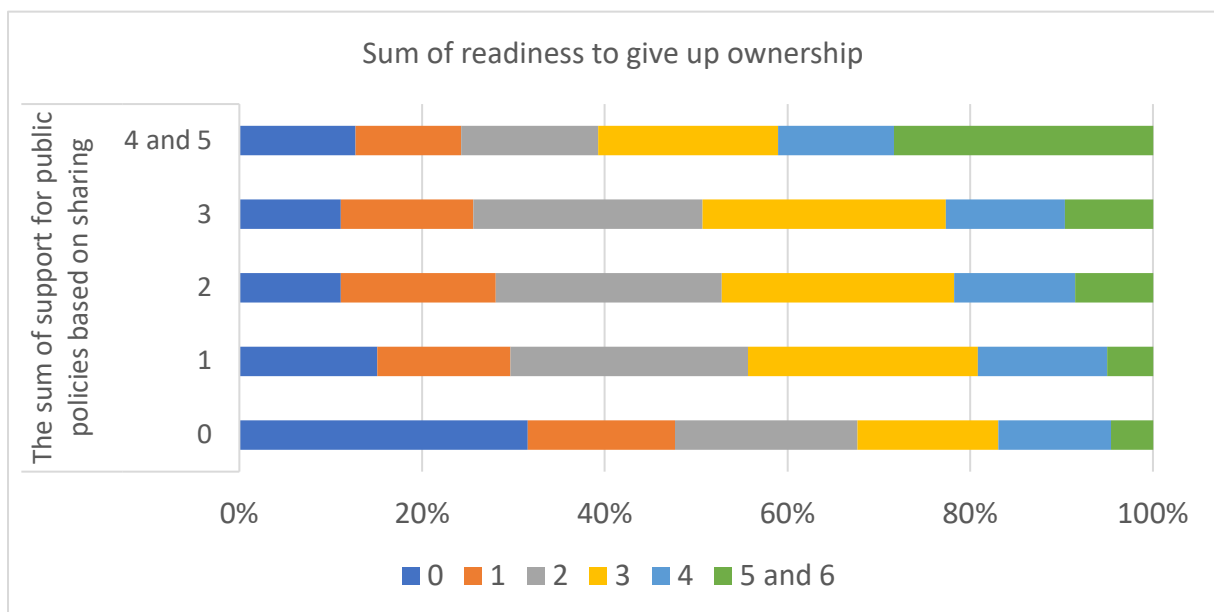
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36,678 ^a	10	0,000
Likelihood Ratio	37,248	10	0,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	7,897	1	0,005
N of Valid Cases	1000		

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11,01.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0,192	0,000
	Cramer's V	0,135	0,000
N of Valid Cases		1000	

- the sum of support for public policies based on sharing (lending) (counted answers "definitely yes" and "rather yes" to 5 questions) (due to not enough number of observations, the sums of 4 and 5 were merged into one category)



Chi-Square Tests

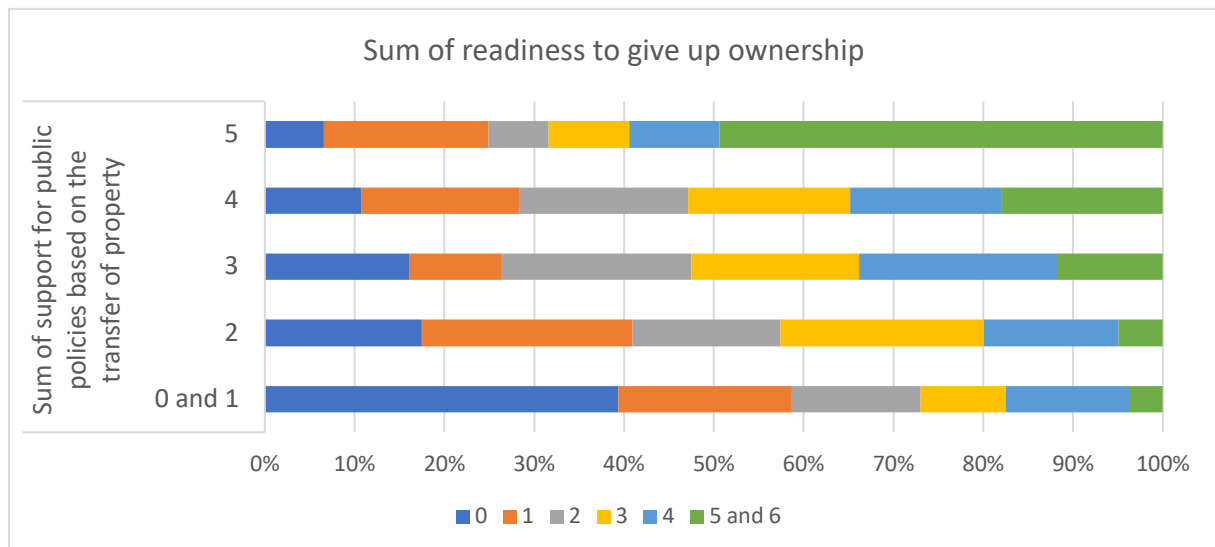
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	106,706 ^a	20	0,000
Likelihood Ratio	90,710	20	0,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	41,985	1	0,000
N of Valid Cases	1000		

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14,17.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0,327	0,000
	Cramer's V	0,163	0,000
N of Valid Cases		1000	

- the sum of support for public policies based on the transfer of property (counted answers "definitely yes" and "rather yes" to 5 questions) (due to not enough number of observations, the sums of 0 and 1 were merged into one category).



Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	213,248 ^a	20	0,000
Likelihood Ratio	166,433	20	0,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	90,075	1	0,000
N of Valid Cases	1000		

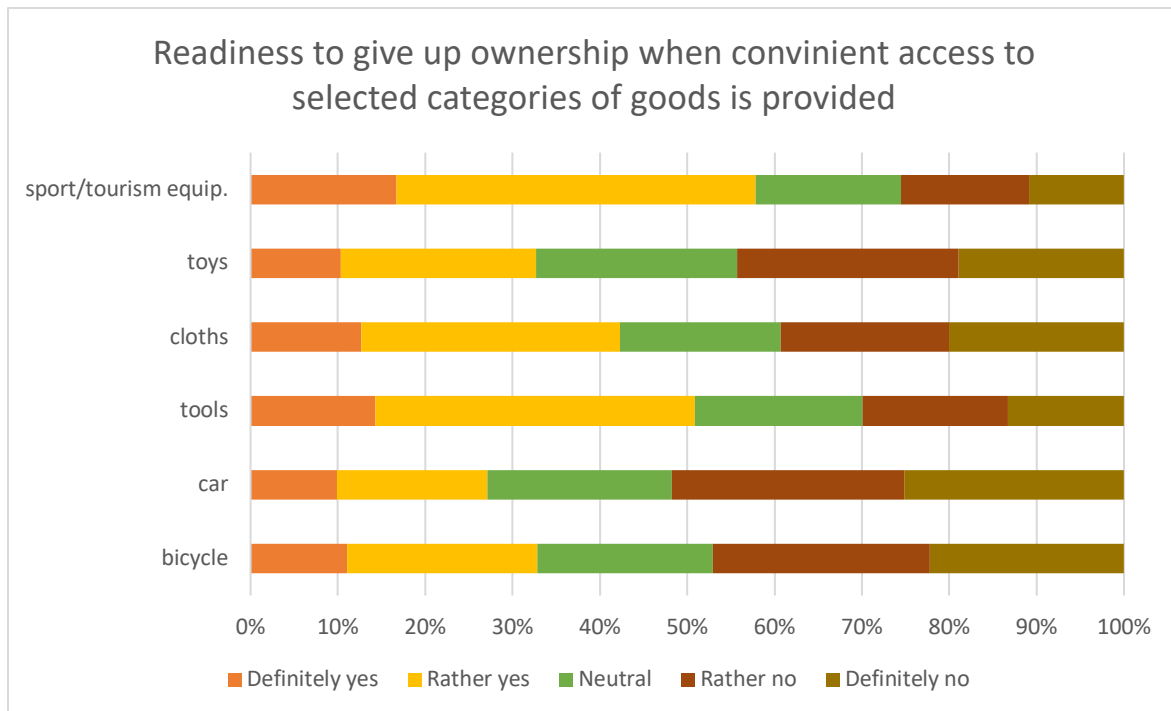
a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12,10.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0,462	0,000
	Cramer's V	0,231	0,000
N of Valid Cases		1000	

As shown in the tables above, Pearson Chi-square is statistically significant in all three cases.

Additionally, it is worth to notice the differences between different categories of things. Most of the respondents (over 50%) were ready to give up sports and tourist equipment and tools (such as drills or saws). On the other hand, the fewest are ready to give up their car, toys and bicycle. In all categories the share of the undecided is similar and amounts to approximately 20%.



Discussion

Naturally, it is impossible to predict whether these declarations would lead to real actions. We do not know how restrictively the respondents understand the "convenience" that was implied in all six "willingness to give up ownership" questions - whether it is the level of car availability per minute in big cities or something much more user-friendly.

This does not mean, however, that reducing the importance of property rights in relation to tangible goods will be equally easy in large cities and smaller centers. The costs of providing a satisfactory loan infrastructure are (per capita) much higher in rural areas. This aspect was not covered in this study.

Conclusion

Naturally, it cannot be suggested that the economic value of the ownership has been completely degraded. In many cases it is still a source of market power. However, this power is weaker than before - not only in the context of intellectual property but also in material property. The reasons are complex and lie both on the side of consumers (new lifestyles, a greater desire for immediate gratification, etc.) and business (the possibility of taking a large part of the benefits based on virtual platforms that mediate between owners and recipients).

It is expected that the popularization of solutions based on the right of access will be growing. As with other innovations (clearly technological in nature), it will increase its reach starting from younger people. The research confirmed the readiness of society to use this formula in private life and in public policies. Taking advantage of this opportunity is one of the key challenges for both business and public administration.

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