

***Towards a Broader View of Hunter-Gatherer Sharing.* Noa Lavi and David E. Friesem, editors. 2019. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, Cambridge. Digital (open access), ISBN 978-1-902937-92-2. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.47185>.**

Kim Sterelny<sup>1</sup>  and Peter Hiscock<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Philosophy, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia and <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Science, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia

Chapters in *Towards a Broader View of Hunter-Gatherer Sharing* vary in topic and in quality. Three themes run through many of the chapters in this coedited volume. Foragers share more than food, and one focus is on sharing other goods, including ones that are not material. At times, this expanded picture of sharing becomes unhelpfully metaphorical: “shared selves” just seems to be a florid metaphor for the intimate character of forager lives. But there are probing chapters on sharing information, particularly those by Jerome Lewis, Alan J. Osborn and Robert K. Hitchcock, and Gilbert B. Tostevin. Tostevin discusses the intrinsic challenge of sharing information about skills and steps in stone tool manufacture. The speed and subtlety of striking a flake from a core makes it difficult to describe or follow, although Tostevin suggests that a planned series of strikes (the “strategy” rather than “tactics” of knapping) might be easier to describe—and therefore teach. Importantly, his article points to a range of intermediate possibilities between intentional teaching and passive tolerance of observation (this also comes up in Peter M. Gardner’s ethnographic chapter), which explains the difficulty of identifying an archaeological signature of true teaching. Lewis focuses on information sharing between rather than within communities, discussing Congo forager practices of trading for cultural goods—in this case, new spirit plays (hybrid ritual-music-theater performances). He links trade in cultural goods both to a regional exchange of material goods and to maintaining links among geographically scattered communities. A second nonmaterial good is shared space (explored in particular by Barry S. Hewlett et al., but also by Thomas Widlok, Kenneth Sillander, David E. Friesem and Noa Lavi, and Bram Tucker). To Western eyes, foragers live in tiny huts, nestled together, open to one another. Although the size of huts has obvious economic explanations (do not invest in place if you are on the move), their close spacing has no obvious economic or ecological explanation. Hewlett and his colleagues argue persuasively that foragers prefer physical and social intimacy; it is not forced on them by external circumstances. Surprisingly, there is no chapter on shared services (cooperative childcare, for example).

A second theme is skepticism about reciprocation-based or insurance-based explanations of forager resource sharing (chapters by Nurit Bird David, Widlok, Penny Spikins, Sillander, Lewis, and Tucker). This approach sees sharing as a way of managing risk (especially in variable environments): on any given day, the collective take of a community is likely to approximate its average take; not so, the take of any individual. The skeptical response is that much forager sharing is sharing on demand. Members of a community expect to share as a right, and they do not take themselves to be under any obligation as a result of accepting shares. These chapters point to alternative psychological and social mechanisms, with the idea that sharing is based on expanded kinship systems (Bird David; Widlok), on the emotions of generosity and connection fostered by intimate living (Spikins, Sillander), and by the foundational norms of these communities (Olga Yu. Artemova). We are unpersuaded. For one thing, some of these skeptics do not seem to note that insurance models are ultimate rather than proximate models of sharing. They are not intended as descriptions of the conscious motives of foragers as they share their resources. Rather, they are analyses of the long-term effects of practices of sharing (however motivated)—effects that tend to stabilize these practices through the long-run on-average benefits that accrue to those who adopt them, becoming part of norms and ideology in the process. Insurance models are compatible with the suggestion that foragers

share out of affection with those with whom they live their lives. Compatible, on the assumption that they are not exploited. No system of sharing is stable if it is routinely exploited. None of the chapters skeptical of the insurance model systematically discuss barriers to exploitation, although there are hints that mobility is critical because it gives foragers some control over their association partners.

However, although we doubt that the case against insurance models has been made, these chapters show an important connection between material sharing and the social intimacy of forager life. In these worlds of almost no privacy, the social costs of failing to share would be extreme. Moreover, these are worlds in which social capital is relatively important to life prospects, and material capital is relatively less important. Collectively, these articles suggest support for a tolerated theft model of sharing. The social costs of defending food are higher than the residual value of that food. Only Tucker, writing about the Mikea of Madagascar, explicitly discusses this explanation of sharing, but he downplays it, which is odd given that his own ethnography seems to fit the model. The Mikea are reluctant sharers, often trying to conceal what they have, and they share only when concealing fails and not sharing would become public.

A third focus encompasses a disparate set of chapters connecting archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on sharing. Ran Barkai continues to place collective elephant sharing at the center of hominin subsistence in the mid-Pleistocene but still without an account of how mid-Pleistocene foragers could kill elephants with sufficient reliability and safety using the technology known to be available to them. Spikins iterates her argument from survival with illness or injury to care and sharing in the deep past. Emmanuelle Honoré builds a case for Saharan cave art as evidence for communitarian rituals. But the standout article (Robert L. Kelly, Spencer R. Pelton, and Erick Robinson) uses ethnographic data to build and test a model of intercommunity relations and then applies that to the archaeological record (of Wyoming), thereby showing the complementarity of ethnographic and archaeological methods. The model suggests that relations between communities will depend on the risk of unpredictable variation in conditions and on the spatial extent of that variation. When variation-driving factors are localized, good and bad times for one community tend not to be experienced in the same way by neighbors. In those circumstances, rewards for intercommunal cooperation are high, because individuals can give help when it is really needed at moderate cost. When variance is determined by regional factors, bad times here are bad times next door, and opportunities for mutual benefit are limited. Moreover, because variance is high, bad times are times of genuine stress, perhaps crisis. This is a scenario predicting high degrees of territoriality—and high risks of conflict. This general model is built from the ethnographic record, and Kelly, Pelton, and Robinson show how to apply it in archaeology.

doi:10.1017/aaq.2024.13

***The Pleistocene Social Contract: Culture and Cooperation in Human Evolution.* Kim Sterelny. 2021. Oxford University Press, New York. xi + 182 pp. \$74.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-19-753138-9.**

John A. J. Gowlett 

School of Histories, Language and Cultures, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

(Received 2 February 2024; accepted 2 February 2024)

People generally write about human evolution with one of two approaches: they aim to explain who we are now, with the past as a support; or they seek to look at that past in detail in its own right, with separate value in each part of the story. Kim Sterelny appears to have started with the first, but in