



McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

# Towards a Broader View of Hunter-Gatherer Sharing

Edited by Noa Lavi & David E. Friesem



# Towards a Broader View of Hunter-Gatherer Sharing





McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

---

# Towards a Broader View of Hunter-Gatherer Sharing

Edited by Noa Lavi & David E. Friesem

*With contributions by*

Olga Yu. Artemova, Ran Barkai, Nurit Bird-David, Adam H. Boyette,  
Hillary N. Fouts, David E. Friesem, Peter M. Gardner, Barry S. Hewlett,  
Robert K. Hitchcock, Emmanuelle Honoré, Jean Hudson, Robert L. Kelly,  
Noa Lavi, Jerome Lewis, Sheina Lew-Levy, Alan J. Osborn, Spencer R. Pelton,  
Magalie Quintal-Marineau, Erick Robinson, Kenneth Sillander, Penny Spikins,  
Gilbert B. Tostevin, Bram Tucker, George Wenzel & Thomas Widlok



This book was funded by the EU 7th Framework Programme (7FP), TropicMicroArch 623293 Project ([http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/187754\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/187754_en.html)). The book will be Open Access, thanks to FP7 post-grant Open Access (<https://www.openaire.eu/postgrantoapilot>).

*Published by:*

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research  
University of Cambridge  
Downing Street  
Cambridge, UK  
CB2 3ER  
(0)(1223) 339327  
eaj31@cam.ac.uk  
[www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk](http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk)



McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2019

© 2019 McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.  
*Towards a broader view of hunter-gatherer sharing* is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 (International) Licence: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

ISBN: 978-1-902937-92-2

Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.  
Typesetting and layout by Ben Plumridge.

On the cover: *Sharing space and selves among Nayaka people in South India.*  
*Image taken and processed by D.E. Friesem and N. Lavi.*

Edited for the Institute by James Barrett (*Series Editor*).

---

---

# CONTENTS

Contributors	ix
Figures	xi
Tables	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
<b>Introduction</b> NOA LAVI & DAVID E. FRIESEM	1
Why hunter-gatherers? Why sharing?	1
About the book	4
Innovative perspectives of sharing: chapters outline	5
Concluding remarks	9
<b>Part I Intimacy, presence and shared-living</b>	
<b>Chapter 1</b> Where have all the kin gone? On hunter-gatherers' sharing, kinship and scale	15
NURIT BIRD DAVID	
The unscalability of kinship identities	17
Enter individuals	18
Kinship as a root metaphor	19
Demand-sharing constitutes social relations	20
Re-enter kinship, talk and presence	21
Conclusions	22
<b>Chapter 2</b> Extending and limiting selves: a processual theory of sharing	25
THOMAS WIDLAK	
What is wrong with evolutionary models of sharing?	25
The problem of historical diversity	26
The problem of outcome	27
Extending the self	28
Limiting the self	30
The analytical purchase of the new theories of sharing	32
The opportunity to request	32
The opportunity to respond	34
The opportunity to renounce	34
Conclusions	36
<b>Chapter 3</b> Intimate living: sharing space among Aka and other hunter-gatherers	39
BARRY S. HEWLETT, JEAN HUDSON, ADAM H. BOYETTE & HILLARY N. FOUTS	
Density of households: Sharing space in settlements	40
Sharing space in a home	42
Sharing space in a bed	44
Sharing interpersonal space: touching	45
Hypothetical implications of intimate living	49
Summary and conclusion	52
<b>Chapter 4</b> Sharing and inclusion: generosity, trust and response to vulnerability in the distant past	57
PENNY SPIKINS	
Sharing in an evolutionary perspective	58
Sharing and care for injury and illness in the distant past	60
Sharing, tolerance and diversity	61
Contrasting emotional schemas – sharing through generosity and calculated collaboration	64
Conclusions	66

<i>Chapter 5</i>	The demand for closeness: social incentives for sharing among hunter-gatherers and other groups	71
	KENNETH SILLANDER	
	Open aggregation	72
	Relatedness	77
	Conclusion	81
<i>Chapter 6</i>	An ethnoarchaeological view on hunter-gatherer sharing and its archaeological implications for the use of social space	85
	DAVID E. FRIESEM & NOA LAVI	
	Ethnoarchaeology of hunter-gatherer use of space	86
	Social dynamics and their archaeological implications	86
	Archaeological implications	90
	Concluding remarks	93
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Senses of connectedness beyond the horizons of the local group</b>	
<i>Chapter 7</i>	Sharing pleasures to share rare things: hunter-gatherers' dual distribution systems in Africa	99
	JEROME LEWIS	
	Pygmies today	99
	BaYaka cultural area	100
	BaYaka egalitarianism and demand sharing	101
	What is not shared on demand	102
	Economies of joy	104
	The regional economy and contemporary change	105
	A dual economy	106
	Hunter-gatherers' dual economic systems	106
	Conclusion	108
<i>Chapter 8</i>	The archaeology of sharing immaterial things: social gatherings and the making of collective identities amongst Eastern Saharan last hunter-gatherer groups	113
	EMMANUELLE HONORÉ	
	The concept and the practice of sharing in archaeology	113
	Sharing: an ambivalent concept	113
	Approaching the sharing of immaterial things in archaeology	115
	Interaction and the making of social existences by sharing performances	115
	Group cohesion and the different forms of sharing	118
	Conclusion	119
<i>Chapter 9</i>	Information sharing in times of scarcity: an ethnographic and archaeological examination of drought strategies in the Kalahari Desert and the central plains of North America	123
	ALAN J. OSBORN & ROBERT K. HITCHCOCK	
	Beads, adornment and information	124
	Behavioural ecology and signalling theory	125
	Beads and ethnology: the Kalahari Desert of Southern Africa	126
	Beads and archaeology in the North American Great Plains	132
	Discussion and conclusions	135
<i>Chapter 10</i>	Studying sharing from the archaeological record: problems and potential of scale	143
	ROBERT L. KELLY, SPENCER R. PELTON & ERICK ROBINSON	
	Archaeological studies of sharing	144
	Sharing in the prehistory of Wyoming, USA	147
	Conclusions	150

<i>Chapter 11</i>	An elephant to share: rethinking the origins of meat and fat sharing in Palaeolithic societies	153
	RAN BARKAI	
	Thoughts about sharing	154
	Becoming an elephant/mammoth	157
	The origins of fat and meat sharing in the Palaeolithic	161
	Endnote	163
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Learning and sharing of knowledge</b>	
<i>Chapter 12</i>	Identifying variation in cultural models of resource sharing between hunter-gatherers and farmers: a multi-method, cognitive approach	171
	ADAM H. BOYETTE & SHEINA LEW-LEVY	
	Sharing in forager and farmer thought	172
	Sharing and early life experiences	173
	Evolutionary approaches to resource sharing	173
	Ethnographic setting	174
	Hypotheses and qualitative predictions	175
	Methods	175
	Results	177
	Discussion	180
	Conclusion	182
<i>Chapter 13</i>	Foragers with limited shared knowledge	185
	PETER M. GARDNER	
	Actual learning processes	186
	The challenge of cognitive diversity	189
	Evidentiary criteria for knowledge claims	190
	Closing thoughts	191
<i>Chapter 14</i>	The sharing of lithic technological knowledge	195
	GILBERT B. TOSTEVIN	
	Framing the question	195
	Why should one share flintknapping knowledge?	197
	But to what extent can one share one's flintknapping knowledge?	198
	The importance of the tactical vs. strategic knowledge distinction for the experimental investigation of the sharing of flintknapping knowledge	199
	What does it mean to share flintknapping knowledge?	201
	Sharing space	201
	Sharing time	202
	Conclusion: how do we test our assumptions about when a given lithic technology must have been shared?	203
<b>Part IV</b>	<b>Sharing in times of change</b>	
<i>Chapter 15</i>	Men hunt, women share: gender and contemporary Inuit subsistence relations	211
	MAGALIE QUINTAL-MARINEAU & GEORGE W. WENZEL	
	Methods	211
	<i>Ningiqtuq</i> : the traditional sharing system	211
	Women, the mixed economy, sharing and subsistence	213
	Discussion	217
	Postscript	218

---



---

<i>Chapter 16</i>	The pure hunter is the poor hunter?	221
	OLGA YU. ARTEMOVA	
	Preliminary notes	221
	Twists of fate	223
	'Absolutely tribal people'	226
	There is no other way	227
	'That's enough for me'	227
	'We cannot be like them'	228
	When generosity is stressed	229
	Retrospect	231
<i>Chapter 17</i>	Ecological, historical and social explanations for low rates of food sharing among Mikea foragers of southwest Madagascar	237
	BRAM TUCKER	
	Mikea of Madagascar	239
	Mikea food sharing	239
	Why Mikea rarely share, explanation 1: culture history and property relations	241
	Why Mikea rarely share, explanation 2: competitive self-interest	242
	Why Mikea rarely share, explanation 3: social exchange	244
	Conclusions	245

---

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

OLGA YU. ARTEMOVA

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, 119991, Leninsky prospect 32a, Moscow, Russia.

Email: artemova.olga@list.ru

RAN BARKAI

Department of Archaeology and Near Eastern Cultures, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, 69978, Israel.

Email: barkaran205@gmail.com

NURIT BIRD-DAVID

Department of Anthropology, University of Haifa, Mt. Carmel, 31905 Haifa, Israel.

Email: n.bird@soc.haifa.ac.il

ADAM H. BOYETTE

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Department of Human Behavior, Evolution, and Culture, Deutscher Platz 6, 04103 Leipzig, Germany.

Email: adam\_boyette@eva.mpg.de

HILLARY N. FOUTS

Department of Child and Family Studies, University of Tennessee, Jessie W. Harris Building, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA.

Email: hfouts@utk.edu

DAVID E. FRIESEM

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, Downing Site, CB2 3ER, Cambridge, UK.

Email: df360@cam.ac.uk

PETER M. GARDNER

Department of Anthropology, University of Missouri, 112 Swallow Hall, Columbia, MO 65211, USA.

Email: GardnerP@missouri.edu

BARRY S. HEWLETT

Department of Anthropology, Washington State University, Vancouver, WA 98686, USA.

Email: hewlett@wsu.edu

ROBERT K. HITCHCOCK

Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, MSC01 1040, Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001 USA.

Email: rhitchcock@unm.edu

EMMANUELLE HONORÉ

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing Street, CB2 3ER Cambridge, UK.

Email: eigh2@cam.ac.uk

JEAN HUDSON

Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 3413 N. Downer Ave. Sabin Hall 390, Milwaukee, WI 53211, USA.

Email: jhudson@uwm.edu

ROBERT L. KELLY

Department of Anthropology, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071, USA.

Email: RLKELLY@uwyo.edu

NOA LAVI

Department of Anthropology, University of Haifa, Mt. Carmel, 31905, Haifa, Israel.

Email: noalaviw@gmail.com

JEROME LEWIS

Department of Anthropology, University College London, 14 Taviton Street, WC1H 0BW London, UK.

Email: Jerome.lewis@ucl.ac.uk

SHEINA LEW-LEVY

Department of Psychology, Robert C. Brown Hall RCB 5246, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6 Canada.

Email: sheinalewlevy@gmail.com

ALAN J. OSBORN

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Nebraska-Omaha, 383G ASH, Omaha, NE 68182 USA.

Email: aosborn2@unomaha.edu

SPENCER R. PELTON

Transcom Environmental, 331 N. 3rd St., Douglas, WY 82633, USA.

Email: spencerpelton@gmail.com

---

MAGALIE QUINTAL-MARINEAU  
Centre Urbanisation Culture Société, Institut  
national de la recherche scientifique 385 Sherbrooke  
Street E., Montreal, Canada H2X 1E3.  
Email: magalie.quintalm@ucs.inrs.ca

ERICK ROBINSON  
Department of Sociology, Social Work, and  
Anthropology, Utah State University, 0730 Old  
Main Hill, Logan, Utah 84322-0730, USA.  
Email: Erick.Robinson@usu.edu

KENNETH SILLANDER  
Swedish School of Social Science, University of  
Helsinki, P.O.Box 16, 00014 Helsinki, Finland.  
Email: kenneth.sillander@helsinki.fi

PENNY SPIKINS  
Archaeology PalaeoHub, University of York,  
Wentworth Way, Heslington. York YO10 5DD, UK.  
Email: penny.spikins@york.ac.uk

GILBERT B. TOSTEVIN  
Department of Anthropology, University of  
Minnesota, 395 H.H. Humphrey Center, 301 19th  
Ave. S Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA.  
Email: toste003@umn.edu

BRAM TUCKER  
Department of Anthropology, University of  
Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 USA.  
Email: bramtuck@uga.edu

GEORGE WENZEL  
Department of Geography, McGill University, 805  
Sherbrooke Street W., Montreal, Canada H3A 0B9.  
Email: george.wenzel@mcgill.ca

THOMAS WIDLÖK  
African Studies, University of Cologne, Albertus-  
Magnus-Platz, 50923 Köln, Germany.  
Email: thomas.widlök@uni-koeln.de

---

## Figures

2.1.	<i>The waves of sharing.</i>	28
2.2.	<i>Screenshots from a field video documenting sharing among ≠Akhoe Hai//om.</i>	29
2.3.	<i>Small foraging camp of a ≠Akhoe Hai//om person in the north of Namibia.</i>	33
2.4.	<i>An Owambo agro-pastoralist homestead in northern Namibia.</i>	33
2.5.	<i>Advertisement for a gated community in Nairobi, Kenya (2015).</i>	33
2.6.	<i>≠Akhoe Hai//om burial ground.</i>	36
2.7.	<i>≠Aonin Nama burial ground.</i>	36
3.1.	<i>Four people co-sleep on an Aka bed.</i>	45
3.2.	<i>Percentage of time forager and farmer infants, children and adolescents are held or touched during the day.</i>	47
3.3.	<i>Feedback loops between intimate shared spaces and other forms of sharing.</i>	53
4.1.	<i>Significant cognitive-emotional capacities involved in sharing in mobile hunter-gatherer contexts.</i>	58
4.2.	<i>Evolutionary pressures, motivations to share and sharing behaviours in early humans.</i>	59
4.3.	<i>Example of an embedded figures test.</i>	62
4.4.	<i>Example of portable art showing embedded figures (or overlapping forms).</i>	63
4.5.	<i>Examples of embedded forms (or overlapping figures) in parietal art.</i>	64
4.6.	<i>Contrasting internal working models and social behaviour between sharing through generosity and calculated collaboration.</i>	65
8.1.	<i>The sharing of material things (dividing) and the sharing of immaterial things (multiplying).</i>	114
8.2.	<i>Location map and general view of Wadi Sūra II, Eastern Sahara.</i>	116
8.3.	<i>The central panel of Wadi Sūra II paintings.</i>	116
8.4.	<i>A group of human figures depicted with bent legs in the rock art of Wadi Sūra II.</i>	117
8.5.	<i>Human figures in a row at Wadi Sūra II.</i>	117
8.6.	<i>A row of human figures holding possible musical instruments at Wadi Sūra II.</i>	117
9.1.	<i>Interpretive framework for understanding the interrelationships between social recognition and quality signals.</i>	126
9.2.	<i>Distribution of San language groups in southern Africa.</i>	128
9.3.	<i>Ju'hoan beadmaker at Nyae Nyae (//Xao//oba).</i>	130
9.4.	<i>Tubular bone beads from the Felis Concolor Site (25SM20) in central Nebraska.</i>	132
9.5.	<i>Spatial distribution of sites with tubular bone beads in the Central Plains of North America.</i>	133
9.6.	<i>Temporal distribution of sites with tubular bone beads in the Central Plains of North America.</i>	134
10.1.	<i>The Winterhalder-Kelly model of sharing relations between groups of foragers.</i>	146
10.2.	<i>Radiocarbon dates, groundstone, nearest neighbor, and obsidian distance for the study area.</i>	148
11.1.	<i>An Acheulean flint biface from Lower Paleolithic Revadim site, Israel.</i>	157
11.2.	<i>An experiment in using flint handaxes in butchering operations.</i>	159
11.3.	<i>A biface made on an elephant bone from the site of Fontana Ranuccio.</i>	160
12.1.	<i>Box plot of cultural competency scores for Aka and Ngandu men and women.</i>	177
14.1.	<i>The relationship between equifinality and the likelihood of accurate reverse engineering of core reduction processes.</i>	204
15.1.	<i>Country food consumption and financial support to harvesting activities.</i>	216
16.1.	<i>Map of Australia.</i>	224
16.2.	<i>Phillis Yankaporta throws the cast net.</i>	225
16.3.	<i>Lucky family.</i>	225
16.4.	<i>The interior of an Aurukun house.</i>	229
16.5.	<i>The children of Aurukun.</i>	230
17.1.	<i>Map of the forest camp of Belò in 1998, showing households clustered by space and kinship.</i>	240

## Tables

3.1.	<i>Measures of settlement density in five forager groups.</i>	41
3.2.	<i>Average nearest neighbour in forager groups with data.</i>	41
3.3.	<i>Average size and space per person in Aka and Efe homes.</i>	43

3.4.	<i>Comparison of space per person in a typical household of mobile hunter-gatherers and farmers.</i>	43
3.5.	<i>Average home size and living area per person in developed countries.</i>	44
3.6.	<i>Average space per person in a bed among Aka hunter-gatherers and Ngandu farmers.</i>	44
3.7.	<i>Infant holding and other measures of caregiver sensitivity.</i>	47
3.8.	<i>Percentage of time intervals G/wi adults touched or were within proximity of other males and females in the camp setting during daylight hours.</i>	48
3.9.	<i>Percentage of time G/wi adolescents touched or were within proximity of other males and females in the camp setting during daylight hours.</i>	48
3.10.	<i>Husband-wife co-sleeping in hunter-gatherers versus other modes of production.</i>	49
3.11.	<i>Average frequency of sex per week among married couples in three age groups among Aka foragers, Ngandu farmers and U.S. middle-class market economists.</i>	49
7.1.	<i>Southern Mbendjele mokondi massana (spirit plays) organised according to context of use.</i>	102
9.1.	<i>Late Stone Age and recent forager sites in the Kalahari that have evidence of ostrich eggshell beads.</i>	127
9.2.	<i>Iron Age sites in the Kalahari Desert region of Botswana with ostrich eggshell beads.</i>	130
9.3.	<i>Evidence for severe droughts on the plateau of southern Africa during the Iron Age Interpretive framework for understanding the interrelationships between social recognition and quality signals.</i>	131
10.1.	<i>Obsidian Frequencies by Wyoming County and Time Period.</i>	149
12.1.	<i>Interview questions and associated hypothetical domain.</i>	176
12.2.	<i>Percent of forced-choice responses by ethnicity and domain.</i>	178
12.3.	<i>Rankings of responses to the question: who teaches children to share?</i>	178
12.4.	<i>Rankings of responses to the question: Who do children share food with?</i>	179
12.5.	<i>Ranking of responses to the question: Who do children share non-food items with?</i>	180
15.1.	<i>Ningiqtuq/sharing interaction sets in the Inuit social economy.</i>	212
17.1.	<i>Per cent of different foods given away to other households among Mikea and Ache foragers.</i>	240
17.2.	<i>Mikea foods and the predictions of the marginal utility model of tolerated theft.</i>	243

---

---

## *Acknowledgements*

First and above all, we wish to express on behalf of all the authors of this monograph our deepest gratitude to the people and communities with whom each of us worked and shared experiences. Without their sharing of selves, thoughts, actions, space and time, the studies presented here could not be possible. We are grateful for their help and trust and hope this volume will promote better understanding of their unique ways of sharing as they see it.

This monograph is a result of a conference we organized at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at the University of Cambridge on ‘Sharing among hunter-gatherers’, which aimed to promote a wider notion of sharing. We are especially indebted to Nurit Bird-David and Peter Gardner for being our source of inspiration for the theme of this conference and for their endless support and encouragement along the road. We also thank Jerome Lewis who was extremely supportive and helpful in making the conference both attractive and successful.

A number of people at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research formed an important and essential part of the conference and we are grateful to all of them. Especially, to Emma Jarman and Laura Cousens, who were there from the beginning and made every request and need possible and simple. To Cyprian Broodbank and Simon Stoddart for their institutional support. To Patricia Murray, Luc Moreau,

Emily Hallinan, Emmanuelle Honoré, Tanja Hoffmann, Cynthia Larbey and Laure Bonner, who made sure everything went smoothly and professionally. The success of the conference was truly thanks to them.

The publication of this monograph owes much to the work of those involved in the McDonald Conversations Series and we are very thankful to James Barrett for his support, help and advice and to Ben Plumridge for his editing and typesetting work. We are also grateful for the anonymous reviewers who helped us improve each chapter and the monograph as a whole. Thanks too to Elizaveta Friesem for her help and invaluable comments on earlier versions of the text.

The conference and the monograph were funded by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, the University of Cambridge and the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under REA agreement no. 623293 (granted to D.E.F.). OpenAIRE, the European Research Council FP7 post-grant OA publishing fund, contributed to the open-access publication of the monograph.

Lastly, we would like to thank all the people who took part in the conference and the writing of this monograph for imparting their knowledge, experiences and thoughts, giving their time and helping us to promote a better and more holistic understanding of the core social notion and practice of sharing.

Noa Lavi & David E. Friesem,  
Cambridge, October 2019



---

---

## Chapter 2

# Extending and limiting selves: a processual theory of sharing

Thomas Widlok

For a long time explanations of sharing have been proposed primarily from the position of evolutionary theory, more specifically from behavioural ecology. Considerable research has been conducted with reference to what are now often considered complementary modules within the evolutionary model, such as reciprocal altruism, tolerated scrounging, kin selection, and costly signalling to name the most common ones.<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists who felt uncomfortable with underlying assumptions of these models, or with evolutionary approaches more generally, tend to resort to a descriptive ‘culturalist’ approach that highlights the particularities of specific ethnographic cases and the cultural meanings attached to sharing by the agents themselves. This contribution proposes that there is room for theoretical models of sharing that are comparative and explanatory – and which have a temporal, processual dimension – while not relying on the assumptions of behavioural ecology. I discuss these theoretical ideas under the labels ‘extending self’ and ‘limiting self’. Reference is made to hunter-gatherer ethnography but also to examples from consumerist societies. After briefly discussing some shortcomings of evolutionary theory the chapter outlines ideas of extending self and limiting self and the theoretical purchase that they provide before ending with some remarks on remaining challenges for future research in this field.

### **What is wrong with evolutionary models of sharing?**

It is important to underline how productive evolutionary theory has been for research on sharing since a lot of empirical research has been inspired by evolutionary models. This has proven very valuable in particular in the field of hunter-gatherer studies where these models have been influential at a time when many hunter-gatherer economies were still heavily

characterized by sharing, allowing researchers to collect rich data. Evolutionary anthropologists have done their homework, as it were, in terms of their work on sharing. They have worked out theoretical models and used them as inspiration for systematically collecting empirical data. The onus is on the social and cultural anthropologists to do the same by employing alternative theoretical ideas, in this contribution more specifically those emerging from practice theory and processual social theory.

Self-critically social and cultural anthropologists have to note that they have been hampered by two things, firstly by an over-reliance on the gift-exchange paradigm and secondly by a reluctance to connect ethnographic case studies to comparative theories. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Widlok 2017) there is – still – a wide-spread notion that sharing phenomena are covered by gift-exchange theory and there is of course a great deal of work on the gift, not only by Melanesianists. There are a number of reasons why gift-exchange theory is so strong, with the result that it features in all the main works of economic anthropology (e.g. by James Carrier, Marshall Sahlins, Chris Gregory, Keith Hart and most recently by David Graeber). In all these works great care is given to establish that the world knows and practices forms of transfer that are not capitalist or market-oriented in nature. However, in the alternatives described there is in fact only limited ethnographic data on sharing. Conversely, there has been a growing opposition amongst ethnographers who have worked on sharing to accept that giving gifts and sharing are similar enough to be covered by one theory. The discontent has been expressed across all regions, see Rival (2000) for South America, Kent (1993) for Africa, Lye (2004) for South-east Asia, Bird-David (2005) for South Asia, and MacDonald (2000) for Australia. It is nicely summed up in a text by Woodburn (1998) programmatically entitled ‘Sharing is not a form of exchange’, but it is mirrored

in other contributions (e.g. Hunt 2000) and this critique has been put forward also by anthropologists working outside the hunter-gatherer domain (see Gell 1999, 88). The fact that the equation between gift-exchange and sharing has been reproduced despite the heavy weight of evidence against it may be attributed to the general influence of Marcel Mauss' ideas in all quarters of present-day mainstream anthropology. It seems that the situation is now finally changing since it has been sinking in that sharing is a mode of transfer in its own right and that it is in most respects very different from gift giving. Claims that 'in practice, there is no strict boundary between what is exchanging and what is sharing' (Honoré, this volume) need to be qualified in the face of a large body of ethnography that pinpoints a great deal of differences between exchanging and sharing – particularly when looking at the practice itself. Providing an outline of a distinct theory of sharing beyond the description of individual ethnographic cases will facilitate this process.

Before engaging in this task, however, a few words are in order to justify the claim that current evolutionary theory in itself is not sufficient to provide a comprehensive theory of human sharing. This is not the place to engage fully with the matter but a few points need to be highlighted. There are fundamental critiques of evolutionary theory, be it of the creationist type that rocks US American academia regularly or the more sophisticated philosophical type of critique that, for instance, Tim Ingold continues to raise (Ingold 2007, 2013, 2015) or that has been explored by Deacon (2012). There is also a diversity of approaches and positions out there that are usually covered under the label 'cultural evolution' (see Richerson & Christiansen 2013). In the context at hand, some more modest should be made. They concern firstly, the problem of establishing the relative importance of sharing once it has become a regular part of the human repertoire and secondly, the problem of explaining sharing solely in terms of its outcome (adaptation, selection, fitness) and not in terms of its ongoing social dynamics.

### **The problem of historical diversity**

Consider first the evidence about sharing compiled by primatologists. Jaeggli & Gurven (2013) have summarized the evidence about sharing among primates and found that there is a broad correlation to be found: As you go up the phylogenetic tree of apes there is more sharing, or rather sharing broadens up from sharing with offspring only, to including partners and it only becomes really widespread among one species, namely humans. On the whole the instances of sharing in non-humans are far and apart, miles away

from cases like the Ache which get about 80 per cent of their provisions through sharing at any one time. This suggests a linear increase of sharing in terms of quantity and breadth. The anthropologically more intriguing question, however, is what happens once sharing has been established among human foragers, i. e. once cultural variation sets in. The most striking feature of the evolution of sharing is not so much that it has emerged but rather that it has become so variable and versatile in human culture. Other primates have survived into the present without (much) sharing and in many societies in human history sharing is suppressed or side-lined in the face of market exchanges and the giving of alms or gifts.

Even if we accept for a moment an evolutionary scenario of hunter-gatherers, agriculturalists and industrial and post-industrial society of today as being representative of evolutionary stages it seems that we do not get a continuation of a linear development. Rather, we may get closer to a sort of bell shape or sinoid curve where sharing peaks among foragers but then gets limited by increasing gift-exchange and market exchange systems. We have not reached the end of the curve and it is currently being discussed in how far sharing through social media, the internet, the so-called sharing economy etc. is or is not an increase of sharing compared to what we had before. The question is not easy to answer. While sharing instances may have increased in absolute terms the problem remains to establish what proportion of all transfers are sharing transfers, how they are intertwined with other (and conditioned by) forms of transfer and whether there is a classification of transfer forms that can easily be applied across time and space. In any case, whatever the evolutionary forces that allowed sharing to emerge in the evolution of life, the diversity of historical trajectory since makes it implausible that this is all there is to what enable or inhibits sharing in the further course of development.

Sharing, it seems, is underdeveloped among animals, including non-human primates and other social animals who may occasionally help each other but very rarely share food or other items. Similarly, sharing has also been considered to be decreasing in human society under conditions of growing social complexity since the Neolithic introduction of animal and plant domestication (see Marlowe 2004). What happens once sharing has become a part the repertoire of modes of transfer amongst humans but with changing articulations and emphases? The scale and the particular shape that sharing takes in some human social settings (but not in others) is not explained by a general evolutionary benefit for wide-ranging sharing. Since sharing as a practice seems to thrive particularly

well under the rather specialized conditions of egalitarian societies, anthropologists have tried to pinpoint some of the cultural factors that foster sharing, and those that inhibit it. The comparison is not between humans and animals but between humans in a wide variety of cultural settings: Why do Nayaka (Bird-David 1990) have a cultural cosmology of a 'giving environment' (and most of their Indian neighbours do not), why do Hadza (Woodburn 1982) have a strong 'cultural obligation' to share (and the neighbouring African farmers do not), and why do indigenous Australians (but not other Australians) have a 'relational ontology' about persons, an ontology that reproduces sharing even in the contemporary welfare economy (Macdonald 2000; Peterson 2013)?

A number of important ideas have been formulated in the process, for instance the importance of demand in sharing (Peterson 1993), the tension between autonomy and collectivity in sharing (Myers 1988), the importance of scale and kin (Bird-David 2017) and the importance of presence (Widlöck 2017) to name but a few. Moreover, there are now some attempts to move towards a non-evolutionary theory of sharing to be outlined further below.

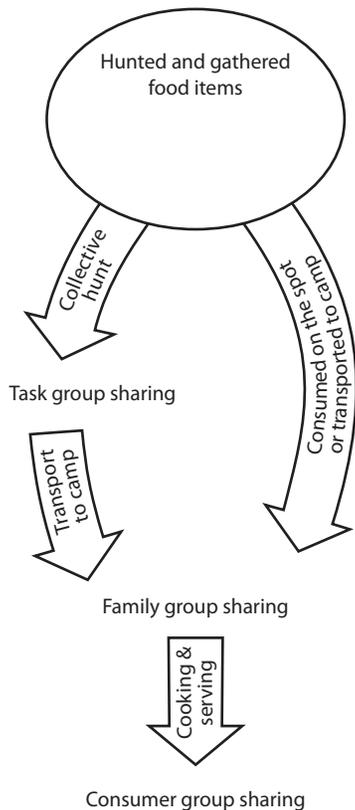
### The problem of outcome

Evolutionary theories of sharing have focused on the beneficial outcomes of sharing at societal and individual level. This is because at the face of it, sharing – in particular sharing with non-genetically related individuals – seems to challenge deeply engrained notions according to which evolution is all about ensuring the survival of individuals and their genetic heritage. Sharing sustenance with other organisms that are genetically unrelated undermines Darwinian assumptions about competition and selection. More considerate work under the evolutionary paradigm has therefore conceded that not all practices can be traced back to a particular 'fitness benefit' (Kelly 1995, 177) and that the evolutionary benefits of sharing may be 'between-species advantages' that can outweigh any disadvantages that sharers may suffer in as individuals (Marlowe 2004). However, the focus on outcomes continues to be a problem. It has been remarked that thinking of sharing only in terms of the distribution of amounts of calories falls short of what sharing achieves (Hyndman 1985) but there is a more general point to be made here. As Abbott (2016, 4) has recently pointed out: 'The social process doesn't have outcomes. It just keeps on going.' What exactly keeps sharing going if it is not an optimal quantifiable outcome, a net gain of calories? What are the conditions under which sharing thrives even though there are

other ways available of making a living and of satisfying one's needs? Moreover, we may ask the same questions not only with regard to material outcomes such as calories and objects but also other benefits such as pleasure and excitement (see Lewis, this volume). After all, pleasure is not limited to having a certain item at the end of the day but it is in the pursuit of shared activities, in the way in which items may connect people and in the 'participation in moments of intense sociality' (Lewis, this volume) as well as in the anticipation and memory of these moments.

When seeking to trace the particular conditions that enable and maintain sharing (or – as the case may be – disable and prevent it) it is useful to turn to the ethnographic record that provides this kind of information. Elsewhere (Widlöck 2013) I have summarized these conditions under the headings of establishing relatedness, modes of conversation and presence. Here, I want to highlight that there is a temporal dimension to these conditions. Sequence does matter in sharing as social practice. It is not sufficient to know 'who ended up having what' since there is no end to the transfers (see above) and since giving after receiving is different from receiving after having given just as it matters who demands what from whom at which stage of a set of 'waves' of sharing (Fig. 2.1) that ethnographers around the world have documented (see Widlöck 2017, 9).

The theories that are grounded in ethnography and that are discussed in this contribution are non-evolutionary in at least two senses. Firstly, they re-install human agency to the picture. Instead of assuming 'selfish genes' or some other homunculus to which the ultimate driving force of evolution is being ascribed (as criticized by Deacon 2012), the starting point is human practice in terms of both, choices made by humans in particular settings as well as the unintended consequences of their actions. Secondly, they invert the common sequence in evolutionary theory that seeks to establish relevant patterns in simple settings and organisms and assumes that these can then be upscaled to the more complex settings where, for instance, social and cultural institutions play a major role. The theories introduced in the next section rely on sharing as it is observable today as habitual practice that forms part of complex human behaviour. Habits and habitualization can explain patterns over time (back in time as well as forward in time) without the need to assume that there is a single closed set of 'natural laws' at work at all levels of complexity. At the same time the theories of personhood to be introduced shortly nevertheless have a strong temporal dimension. Previous attempts to make anthropological theories of personhood fruitful to archaeology



**Figure 2.1.** *The waves of sharing (following Bahuchet 1990 and Widlok 2017).*

have adopted the idea that there are different types of personhood for instance individual versus dividual (partible/permeable) personhood (see Fowler 2004).<sup>2</sup> The idea pursued in the remainder of this contribution is that it is not so much cultural types we are dealing with but rather partly conflicting tendencies to change the dynamics of personhood, more specifically to extend self and to limit self. Both tendencies may be present at the same time in human society thereby explaining the fact that there is no linear increase or decrease to be observed with regard to human sharing – and that it cannot be explained with reference to outcome alone. Forager specialists are reluctant to consider theories of self for understanding sharing (see Bird-David, this volume) so that some clarification is necessary here. Moving from particular (indexical) observations to (de-indexicalized) constellations is a problem for every ethnography, not just those of hunter-gatherers. As soon as we use categories like ‘sharing’ or ‘kin’ we always generalize to some degree beyond the individual cases that are never entirely alike. With regard to foragers, however, it has been claimed that their ‘pluripresent kinship’ is so different that to talk about their sharing terms such as ‘individ-

ual’ or ‘group’ do not apply (see Bird-David 2017 and comments). There is no room here to discuss the issue except to point out that, firstly, sharing is a recognizable phenomena beyond forager cases and therefore needs an analytic language that applies across these cases, that, secondly, an exclusive attention on kin relations is not appropriate because sharing in many settings goes beyond kin (in whatever definition), and, thirdly, the notion of universal self as ‘a centre of being’ and selves as ‘loci of experience’ (Morris 1994, 14) is not to be confused with the notion of individual as society’s ‘pre-given [...] primary moral and political units’ (Bird-David, this volume). I think it is instructive to see how sharing is scaled up (or down) among foragers who encounter kin and non-kin as much as among the neighbours and peers that encounter one another on digital platforms. Starting with selves is not to buy into consumerist assumptions of calculating individuals but it allows us to describe different ‘cultural models of self’ (see Hewlett et al., this volume) and how relations and relatives are made relevant in sharing activities in the first place.

### Extending the self

This theory of sharing as extending the self builds on what Nurit Bird-David (2005, 207) has called ‘entangled identities’ or ‘joined lives’ and what Russell Belk (2010, 724) has tried to bring into an account of ‘extending the self’ that can help to explain variation in the intensity and breadth of sharing. These ideas built on the ‘sharing in’ rather than the ‘sharing out’, in other words it is not the dispersal of property that is at the centre of attention but how transfers bring together and unite people. Or, as I have put it elsewhere (2004, 61) the focus is not on giving and receiving but on ‘extending the circle of people who can enjoy the benefits of the share resource’.

In Belk’s model the key to sharing is that those who are close to us are treated as ‘part of our extended self’ so that ‘sharing with them is like sharing with self’ (2010, 724). This is why sharing takes place, above all, within the immediate family circle even in highly commercialized contemporary societies. When children take food that their parents have bought and placed in the fridge, when they use the facilities of their family home etc. it would be wrong to consider this following an abstract rule of reciprocity because there is no movement between two units. Anthropologists are generally in agreement with this observation since this kind of relatedness has been reported for many kinship systems. However, it is important to note that people who share their home and their resources in this way need not be genetically related, nor do they

necessarily consider one another to be kin. Rather, in Belk's theory, it is not necessarily kin that makes people share but also sharing that effectively extends the self. Moreover, there may be other cultural practices and conditions that effectively extend the prevalent notion of self which then in turn allows them to extend the group of people with whom they share. Instead of assuming that an individual (fixed in terms of its extension of self) has to altruistically overcome set boundaries we are, according to Belk, dealing with a single unit that is feeding itself. This 'aggregate extended self' (Belk 2010, 725) has been constituted through numerous habitualized activities which create and maintain its boundaries. In other words, the 'training' that leads people to develop sharing as a skill is based on the many everyday activities in which people extend their selves. As Belk notes, what works most readily in many immediate families can also work more or less effectively among peers in an age-set such as the student hostels or flat shares (see Widlok 2017, 104–5). In small bands of foragers these everyday acts of bonding and extending the self are regularly trained as has been documented ethnographically (see, for instance, Marshall 1961). Belk, being a researcher in consumer studies, points out that extending the self can also be anchored in commercial settings, for instance in the practices of co-consumers sharing a brand of clothes (Belk 2010, 726) or those sharing files on the internet (see Widlok 2017, 142). Extending the self in this way is by no means 'natural' or an inescapable evolutionary law since there are also many activities that work against such an extension, typically when people engage in direct competition with one another or when exercising exclusivist practices for instance in systems of consumption as distinction (Bourdieu 1979). Here the extension of self is greatly restricted, or rather one may speak of an amplification of self in demarcating oneself from others (by increasing status, reputation and distinction) rather than of extending the self towards others. Similarly, insisting on drawing the boundaries of the ethnic or other 'we' group ever more narrowly in face-to-face interaction (Widlok 2015) extends the self in a restrictive way since it only includes certain members of a 'we' group and thereby also 'un-trains' what is needed in order to realize widespread sharing.

The theory of sharing as extending self has not only cross-cultural plausibility. Rather, it can help to explain the variation of sharing in different cultural systems because the extension of aggregate selves varies across (sub)cultures, and more generally over time and across situations. The theory can therefore explain why sharing is so widespread and broad among humans and why it is so culturally diverse.

While some core notion of self, as a sentient centre of experiencing the world, is a good candidate for a cultural universal among humans, the various forms of establishing personhood as extended self is culturally very diverse. It requires considerable imagination and complex processes of consciousness to recognize a self as a person since that person need not be congruent with an individual body. As humans we are used to the fact that one and the same individual may act as different persons in different context and moreover that there are 'legal' persons which are either not tied to a human body (e.g. modern corporations) or that go beyond individuals (e.g. clans). We have also become accustomed to objects that can come to stand for particular persons (in religious shrines, or in bureaucratic or digital forms of identification) just as foragers may engage interpersonally with animals and landscape features. As Bloch (2013) has pointed out, humans not only entertain a transactional sense of person but also a transcendental one. When thinking about sharing and when practicing sharing we not only conduct transactions with other individual bodies but our sharing is motivated and framed by the ways in which we 'transcendentally' conceive of the others as persons, as selves connected to our self and at times as constitution a single aggregated self.

By contrast, recognizing personhood in oneself and in others is either absent or very limited among animals and therefore can also explain the relative absence of sharing among non-humans. Moreover, given that personhood is subject to cultural imagination, it is also not surprising that there is considerable diversity in the ways in which people recognize personhood and determine what the relevant 'selves' are and how far they extends. Again, the diversity of personhood concepts can therefore help to explain that sharing varies so widely in its intensity and width among human groups. For archaeology, this means that when trying to reconstruct sharing relations in any one place the attempt has to be made to elicit as closely as possible the concepts and boundaries of personhood in the place and time one is dealing with. Above all, it is productive to understand that extending the self (as a constructing selves) is a dynamic process. While there may be prevalent notions of personhood in particular 'cultures', there is also some evidence that the extension of self can shift as individuals grow and undergo stages in their biography but also according to situational conditions in particular social constellations. The examples that come most readily to mind are children who grow up to learn (or unlearn) certain forms of sharing (see Schäfer 2014) and the participants of 'effervescent' rituals that entice 'demand participation' and also 'sharing' (see Widlok 1999).

### Limiting the self

Belk's theory of extending self is good to think with and it takes us a forward in explaining cultural diversity as well as recurring patterns in human sharing (for a further critique, see Widlok 2017; John 2016). However, –this is only half the story because humans not only have the capacity to extend selves and personhood. Their notion of self and person is also critically conditioned by the human ability to limit one another as selves and to reflect on the limits of their selves as being 'threatened' by their own finiteness and by being limited by death. In other words, humans not only have the capability of extending their selves in many different ways but also face the necessity to deal with the limiting of their selves in at least two ways, in the finiteness and limitation of their earthly lives and in being constantly confronted and limited by other selves around them. Being limited by others is a precondition for establishing a self in the first place but, again, this limitation does not come 'naturally' since animals seem not to experience it in this way. Rather, human ways of organizing social co-presence (or sociality) and of creating institutions with which we remind one another of the finiteness of our lives, are above all cultural ways.

Take the way of creating and recognizing 'presence' in social interaction as an example. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Widlok 2017) physical presence is the prototypical means for prompting sharing. Figure 2.2 shows screenshots from footage taken among ≠Akhoe Hai//om foragers in northern Namibia who recognize 'hanging around in order to get a share' as an important social institution. Video analysis allows us to see how subtle presence and demands are made and managed. Those demanding

food may use not only words but also their gaze or outstretched arm and body posture to underline their request. Those who have may initially turn their gaze and their body away before attending to the person making the request (as seen in Figure 2.2). More generally speaking a demand made only vocally, often across distance, is much less effective and often half-jokingly than a demand that is underlined by appropriate gazes, body gestures and postures. This makes sharing much more dependent on indexical acts in a particular situation than other forms of transfer which rely on specific and recognized obligations to return, considered 'on record' by both giver and receiver. Explicit demands may underline the presence of the person trying to elicit a share but frequently it is a 'silent demand' (Løgstrup 1997) that can be nuanced in many ways – just as the responses to these demands. ≠Akhoe Hai//om approach one another's fire places regularly when the occupant of the fire place is able to share something. The goal is to make that person recognize the presence, to recognize that people are constantly in need and therefore should be given a share. The fact that presence (and the recognition of presence) is often silent is relevant insofar as this pre-discursiveness also helps to explain why children learn these strategies so early in life. It also explains why sharing is typically considered a strong moral obligation even if there is no body of codified rules that would need to go along with it. The pressure to share is 'felt' through presence. Paradoxically, a direct demand is relatively easy to fend off. In foraging camp one often hears people shout from afar, including demands of various sorts. But many of these demands or questions are not responded to, and if people respond they can counter the demand either by claiming that there is not enough, by lying



Figure 2.2. Screenshots from a field video documenting sharing among ≠Akhoe Hai//om.

that they have anything, at all, or by making promises for the future. Physical presence at the fire place is much harder to ignore. The presence of others limits those who cook food and to the degree that this presence is culturally constructed and constitutes a social practice, that of limiting, and there is a distinct time-dimension involved since presence can grow with time (when bystanders refuse to leave) or it can diminish with time (when visitors have not re-visited for a long time).

This is not only the case around the fire place but more generally true. When visiting another camp the newly arrived ≠Akhoe Hai//om quietly sit under a tree or at the margins of the camp, seen by everyone but formally not yet arrived, not yet recognized as arrivals. It usually takes a while as locals may finish what they are currently doing, may get dressed or may light a pipe before they greet the visitors and thereby recognize their presence. Once they are recognized, visitor may stay on for considerable time, receiving a share of the local food and sometime turning into 'regular' co-residents after some time. The presence-sharing nexus is continually trained. Approaching people and being present is read as a positive silent demand and turning away from people, splitting up, separating oneself and avoiding co-presence is read as a negative response to these demands. 'Demand sharing' has been used in the literature to label sharing prompted by voiced demands initiated by those who want to receive something (see Peterson 1993). But one could go further than that by suggesting that there is no sharing without a demand in a somewhat wider sense of sharing a demand. By 'sharing a demand' I mean the human ability to recognize that a fellow human shares one's demands such as eating regularly, having a place to stay and so forth. This awareness is implicated in the way in which we share our lives with one another in which we can – and need to – fulfil our needs through others and others through us. All human life is limited by death but more specifically this limitation creates linearity and unrepeatability, the characteristic temporality of human life which implies that an action A carried out after action B is never quite the same as an action B carried out after action A, and indeed an action A carried out before action B (see Abbott 2016, xii). It does matter as to when a demand is posed in the sequence of sharing waves (see Fig. 2.1). Those who successfully demanded something in the first wave, for instance, are often subject to demands at the second wave. It is difficult to hold on to something extra after all others have finished their share. Moreover, there is also a spatial limiting dimension in that A being close to B and C is different from A

being close to D and E and typically the inability to be close to all of them at the same time (see Fig. 2.2).

Cutting a longer story short one of the main results of the everyday experience of a limited self is that humans realize that they can go beyond their own limited opportunities by drawing on the support of others but that in turn endless and limitless accumulation is impossible. They not only experience this early in life but throughout their lives, above all through the death (and mortality) of every particular other with whom they share their lives. Evolutionist approaches only take account of death as a general possibility (an ultimate outcome), not as an individual certainty that colours how humans lead their lives. In evolutionary conceptions any one individual only needs any others for transmitting one's own genes into future generations. For some genes to be transmitted across generations they require some humans who carry them and who die in the process but it does not matter who these carriers are and who exactly dies at what point in time, or before whom.

The social process of developing a sense of self is set in motion by demands that others make for something that I, as the owner, thereby may start to consider to be 'mine'. A man or a woman can only gain a sense of self and act meaningfully on the basis of this sense of 'me and mine' when he or she is limited by others and their demands. The prerequisite of developing a sense of self, of being someone in particular who is limited by others who are equally particular is a twofold finiteness, namely being finite with regard to others and being finite with regard to the extension of one's life – and that of others (Marten 1987). Humans 'essentially' live in non-essentialized existences, they are always encounter one another in particular relations due to their limited selves, as junior or senior, as children or parents, as husband or wife and so forth. Whether a demand for a share is made and whether it is being met depends on these specificities, the ways in which we relate to others at particular points in time and in space. The human capacity to distinguish one another along these specificities is the reason why sharing varies in social relationships. It also explains why it grows exponentially when crossing the threshold to humanity. It is not only an extension of the person beyond the individual (see Belk 2010) but also establishing a notion of personhood and personal relations in the first place – primarily through realizing that persons and relations are finite and do not extend endlessly. Sharing depends on the ways in which humans are able to distinguish and understand relationships and lived practice. It is not a strategy that is hard-wired in genetic, cognitive or behavioural programmes but a skill that is built up across a multitude of sharing events.

### The analytical purchase of the new theories of sharing

As mentioned before, there have been successful attempts to make anthropological ideas about personhood fruitful for the long-term perspective and for the kind of evidence that archaeologists may be able to establish (see Fowler 2004). To begin with the ideas of extending and limiting the self may help us to rephrase the well-known tripartite scheme that Marcel Mauss for gift giving, namely the sequence of the obligation to give, to receive and to return (see Mauss 2002). Note that these 'obligations' are principal and timeless in nature, one has always got the obligation to give, to accept and to return a gift. On the background of what was discussed above with regard to the limits and finiteness of life that create a specific temporality for human sharing, it is possible to think of sharing transfers not so much in terms of obligations but in terms of opportunities, more specifically the opportunity to ask (others), the opportunity to respond (to others) and the opportunity to let go (for others). Along the lines of a processual social theory one may ask as to what conditions create and foster these opportunities and whether there are conditions that prevent these opportunities to emerge. While the notion of 'obligations' immediately begs the question as to what social power or institution is enforcing these obligations, the notion of 'opportunities' makes it easier to see how the observable patterns have emerged out of myriad of individual actions without any larger entity being necessarily in place. Moreover, the conditions for opportunities may be easier to trace than the impact of large external agencies, especially when turning towards the past and the long-term. As Abbott (2016, 5) has argued, continuity over time may be more readily ascribed to the biological, memorial and substantive 'historicality' of individuals who carry forth the past in their habitual practice (which in turn leave residues in their individual bodies) leading their lives rather than to institutions or organizations trying to engineer these lives. Instead of imagining 'large social forces that push little individuals around' (Abbott 2016, 4), a processual approach takes the responses of individuals taking their opportunities that open up under certain conditions as a lead.

### The opportunity to request

By replacing 'the obligation to give' with 'the opportunity to request' the potential recipient rather than the forced giver becomes the focus of attention. The distribution of resource sites is regularly recorded in archaeology, and so is the distribution of sites where

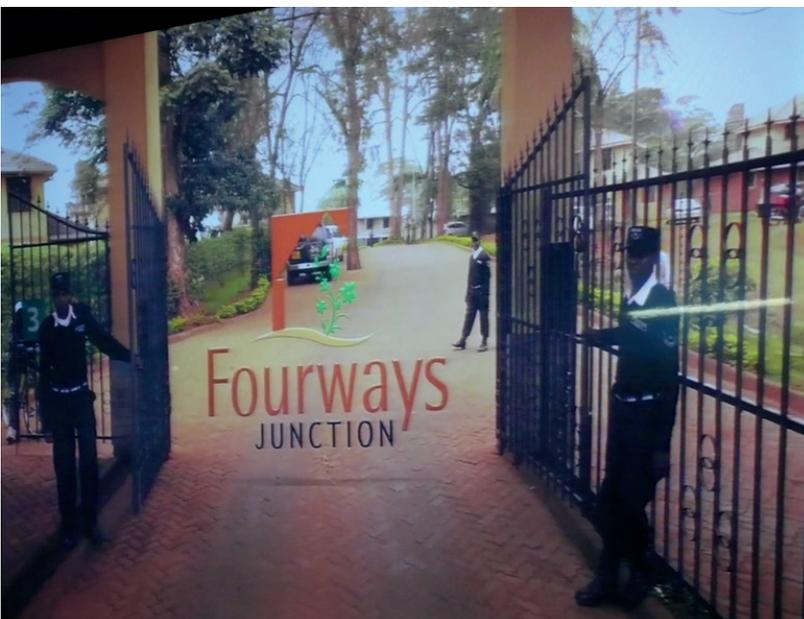
resources were processed. This reflects the position of those who have something and face the question of what to do with this resource, whether to keep it, trade it, give it away or discard it. What deserves equal attention, however, is the position of those who do not have but who may want to make a request. As Hewlett et al. (this volume) point out 'proximity is an important predicator of sharing' so that we need to investigate the conditions that provide opportunities to request and the creation of spatial proximity is very important in this context. Archaeologists find it easier to recognize sharing as 'dividing of material goods' in their record rather than sharing as 'multiplying immaterial things' (see Honoré, this volume). But it is important to note that 'sharing a visit' or shared participation in an event may leave material traces, too, in particular when we consider how spatial arrangements influence the opportunities to request. Comparing Figures 2.3 and 2.4 provides a first impression how much the spatial (and social) permeability of a place conditions these opportunities. Figure 2.3 is a small foraging camp of a ≠Akhoe Hai//om person in the north of Namibia. The place is accessible from many different directions, the spatial structure gives little opportunity for hiding anything from sight or from keeping visitors at a distance. Conversely, it gives plenty of opportunity for approaching the residents, for knowing what they do and what they have and for requesting a share. Figure 2.4 is a homestead of Owambo agro-pastoralists in the very same region of Namibia with its characteristic palisade fence, its embeddedness in a cultivated field and its wooden huts. While the ≠Akhoe Hai//om hut is a permeable spatial structure in which anyone can easily get access to the hearth and the fire places of others, this homestead has a much lower permeability (see also Widlok 1999). The relative impermeable spatial structure corresponds to a relative impermeable social structure since even inside the homestead space is highly structured with a designated place for visitors and for different categories of residents. Getting at the hut of the homestead owner in such a structure takes time and effort as one needs to pass by the huts of unmarried boys, the kitchen, and the places of the women in the household before getting to the homestead owner. Note that this is a matter of *relative* permeability and impermeability. Compared to some more recent spatial structures, for instance the 'gated communities' now advertised all over Africa and the rest of the world (Fig. 2.5), the Owambo homestead has in turn a somewhat higher permeability. This is because the spatial structures are the aggregate result of a host of activities over time, building activities as much as dwelling activities and more generally activities of



**Figure 2.3.** *Small foraging camp of a #Akhoe Hai//om person in the north of Namibia.*



**Figure 2.4.** *An Owambo agro-pastoralist homestead in northern Namibia.*



**Figure 2.5.** *Advertisement for a gated community in Nairobi, Kenya (2015).*

regulating distance and nearness. When discussing Belk's notion of 'extended self' above, it became clear that this extension is by no means natural or inevitable since there are always practices that counteract the extension of self, creating impermeable space is one of them that can be read in the anthropological and archaeological record.

### The opportunity to respond

'The opportunity to respond' importantly includes the opportunity to deflect or dodge a demand for sharing. The most common strategy amongst foragers to do so is mobility, moving away so that one is no longer subject to demands. But not only people come and go, opportunities, too, come and go so that sharing has not only got some depth of time, a *chronology*, but above all an appropriateness of time, a *kairology*. As I have explained in more detail elsewhere (Widlök 2017), sharing is all about timing. Premature giving is problematic because it interferes with personal autonomy and has the potential of creating dependency. Belated giving (i.e. hoarding) also is problematic and can create harsh reactions and the practices of others that anthropologists have discussed under the notion of 'levelling mechanism'. Giving in too readily into inappropriate demands (what the Australians call 'humbugging') and responding sufficiently to a response is what the temporal skill of sharing is all about. Having received something in one wave of sharing makes you subject to demands by others who have not as yet received. It is therefore important to move beyond the common recording of 'amounts shared' and give more attention to these waves of sharing (see Fig. 2.1) because ethnographers across the world agree that making your claim at the right time is what enables sharing.

It is a challenge for archaeologists to document as to who intermingled with whom and in which time rhythm at any particular site. However, what the long-term record, in particular of physical human remains, may disclose is the effects of rhythm and regularities in habitual practice over a long time. If everything is changing all the time, the challenge is to understand where stability comes from. Given what is known today about implicit knowledge and cultural skills being engrained in individual bodies it is likely that much of the social stability of social systems in which sharing is prevalent is due to the physical continuity of individuals whose lives overlap and who train one another in the important skills of life – including things such as the right timing in sharing. Traces of a living self are left with the wider social landscape that has interacted with that person over time. Having said that, it is also important to

remember that the larger and largest part of the structure that individuals bring forward from the past into the present is located in their own bodies and selves. It is their memories as well as their record of past nutrition, diseases, movements, (sexual) relations and so forth that leaves residues in their physical bodies (see Abbott 2016, 6). The extension and limiting of selves are culturally variable and they are tightly connected to social practices such as sharing. Relatives and co-residents participate in one another's lives. The more they share their life (in terms of residence, diet, hygiene and so forth) the more they retain a record of one another, including one another's habits. In other words, by looking at physical remains of co-resident persons comparatively (signs of nutritional stress or of food consumption reflected in tooth records for instance) one can get hints about the prevalence of sharing over time and even in the distant past. Sharing, it could be hypothesized, not only improves the health of a population but it may also make a group of people more alike both in terms of how healthy and unhealthy features can be reconstructed from the human remains. Conversely, if co-resident individuals show distinctive features with regard to these physical features, we may hypothesize successful strategies of avoiding sharing, of responding negatively to demands or of being able to live autonomous lives. When anthropologists think about 'opportunities to respond' they tend to think ethnographically about linguistic responses, speech acts or intercorporeal actions in face-to-face settings. However, these 'responses' may also be read much more broadly and much deeper in time as responses which leave traces in individual bodies. If sharing is a particular habit, a habit that is regularly brought about by certain conditions, we need to look more closely at what the traces of these habits are in the physical bodies of those who practice sharing.

### The opportunity to renounce

Turner (1999) has introduced the term 'renouncing' to the discussion but one may also speak of 'to let go' since this is one way in which foragers typically phrase the fact that things are gained and things are lost. Renunciation has a connotation of active striving for relinquishing things which need not always be present. The renouncer may not be happy about having lost something to someone else, just as many foragers resist and bemoan the fact that they are being pressured to share but ultimately has to comply. It is also important to note that this letting go or renouncing is different from the strategic 'sacrificing' that religious or worldly utopian thought. In the latter case

it is part of a do-ut-des (I give so that you may give) strategy, giving up so that one achieves eternal life or a better life for future generations or for humanity in the abstract. The renouncing involved in sharing is not directed towards a utopian resolution. Rather, the expectation is that within a lifetime everyone who has forgone something also receives opportunities to request again which can start a new sequence, but not endlessly given the realization that lives and selves are finite (see above).

Part of the specific temporality of sharing is due to the fact that sharing comes to an end when requests come to an end and when shared presence come to an end. This explains the puzzling fact why in foraging societies with high sharing intensity old and frail people may be left alone and may not get extra support. It is explicable on the grounds that their presence in terms of their ability to make requests may be diminishing, too. An ancestor system (like in Africa), by contrast, in which old people can make lasting claims on the young, even beyond their death, is more likely to stimulate specific gift-giving obligations rather than sharing. If it is true that sharing is all about being mortal, about realizing the limits of self, and about being prepared to let go of things, and the world, when the time comes then it may be possible to predict from the burial habits how entrenched sharing is in a particular setting. There is ethnographic evidence to support this point.

Figures 2.6 and 2.7 are pictures from burial sites of two different contemporary Khoisan groups in southern Africa. One is a ≠Akhoe Hai//om graveyard in which graves are not marked. Relatives and residents typically do not know who is buried where and they never visit the graves. The other one is a ≠Aonin Nama graveyard in the coastal Namib Desert. This a group has adopted a modest degree of monumentalism since graves are clearly marked, they are made to last, and they are (at least nowadays) explicitly made at a site to which people regularly turn to celebrate their cultural heritage enshrined in the graves of ancestors, in particular of their chiefs, and for making claims of land and succession to office. The two grave types closely correlate with a high incidence of sharing in the first case and a more developed system of gift-exchange and mutual obligation and dependence in the second case. It is probably not possible to read off the importance of sharing from the prevalent types of gravesite (or vice versa) in any categorical way. For instance, graves among the ≠Aonin Nama are diverse, some more 'monumental' than others, reflecting the stratification of this society. And in many San groups sharing occurs side-by-side with other forms of transfer (e.g. *hxaro* gift exchange or nowadays buying and

selling). However, the practice of limiting selves, in terms of mortal selves that have no ancestral power about the living and no justification based on a utopian life after death, are reflected in both, the way the dead are being treated and in the role of sharing. Learning to let go takes place in both instances. Sharing decreases when humans are culturally less exposed to our own finiteness and to that of others, typically as a result of ideologies that deflect and bracket out this finiteness. If the good that really counts is to be found in an afterlife or at the level of abstract groups or nations, then the realization of goods in sharing can easily take second place. Learning to become a skilled sharer is not acquired once and for all through early socialization in childhood. Rather, the training continues in a life-long way and it culminates in the ability to be able to let go of what one accumulates in the course of a lifetime and ultimately to let go of one's life itself. The daily routines of sharing enable individuals in these societies that cultivate sharing to also cope with the fact that 'shrouds have no pockets'. However, the logic works both ways: A society in which the recognition of human finiteness is appreciated and cultivated also provides fertile ground for the development of sharing practices in the everyday.

When persons die, they do not just die for themselves but can be said to die for one another, the death of others being a constant reminder of one's own finiteness. Many hunter-gatherers like the ≠Akhoe Hai//om are renowned for their insistence that the dead are truly dead, that they have had their live. The living do not 'owe' them anything in that sense, at least not more than they owe to the social beings with whom they continue to share their lives on a daily basis. In their practices giving up life in death is not 'traded in' for a better life in the way as proposed by many book-based religions or political ideologies. There is also no attempt to convince oneself (or others) that it the value of giving up things in sharing is compensated for the prospect of a utopian future where one has everything. Sharing, as I have formulated it elsewhere (2004) realizes its intrinsic good of extending the circle of those who can access a good. By contrast, many worldviews suggest that individual lives, however miserable, gain their meaning through membership in a larger metaphysical body, be it the 'house', 'clan', 'nation', a 'church' or 'the scientific community'. I have emphasized the importance of a recognition of the finiteness of life in many hunter-gatherer societies. The 'transactional' character of sharing deflates any 'transcendental' units such as 'the house' that may be established through other means (see Bloch 2013). It will be worth investigating in detail whether there is a correlation in the long term record



**Figure 2.6.** #Akhoe Hai//om burial ground.



**Figure 2.7.** #Aonin Nama burial ground.

between evidence for such ‘transcendental’ units, the ‘fictitious selves’ that humans have the ability to create, and the evidence for sharing.

### Conclusions

This contribution has outlined key ideas that may become important ingredients of a non-evolutionary theory of sharing. The importance of the human cultural imagination of how personhood can be extended (as described by Russell Belk) has been highlighted for understanding the cultural diversity of sharing amongst humans. Moreover, attention has been given to the importance of finiteness that is pre-discursively experienced from an early age on and throughout ones life but also realized in acts of mutually limiting one another. Learning to let go of things and to let

go of a particular status vis-a-vis others is therefore an everyday experience but one that is culturally entrenched in very different ways in different cultural contexts. It is also a genuine human trait and therefore an explanation for the considerable differences to be found between wide-spread sharing among humans and rather restricted sharing among non-humans. Correspondingly, the notions of ‘extending self’ and of ‘limiting self’ can become the productive cores from which one may develop a more comprehensive theory of sharing. In an attempt to connect these anthropological ideas to a processual social theory that also looks at the long term, this chapter has highlighted the traces that practices of ‘extending’ and ‘limiting’ self leave in the long term record when looking at the permeability of spatial structures, at the physical bodies of individuals sharing their lives with other

selves and at the ways of dealing with death and the question of an afterlife. Having established that 'sharing' is a category of its own that deserves its own theoretical consideration rather than being an afterthought to gift-exchange theory, there is still a lot to be done to flesh out a comprehensive theory of sharing. The modest aim of this contribution has been to show that there are shortcomings in the dominant evolutionary approach to sharing, in particular its focus on outcomes and its inadequate dealing with cultural diversity. It has also tried to show that a theory of sharing that centres around the extending and limiting of selves can deal productively with these shortcomings as it reinstates agency and the open nature of social processes. For those who are dissatisfied with the ways in which the evolutionary paradigm is applied to phenomena such as sharing the new approaches to sharing illustrate that there are other ways of describing and explaining long-term, transgenerational effects of individual social practice and the processual nature of social life.

## Notes

- 1 The literature produced within this research paradigm is overwhelming. I have tried to give an overview of the main contributions in Chapter 2 of my recent book (Widlok 2017) without, however, being exhaustive.
- 2 Note that these were largely based on new developments in gift-theory (see Strathern 1988; Busby 1997).

## References

- Abbott, A., 2016. *Processual Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Belk, R., 2010. Sharing. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36, 715–34.
- Bird-David, N., 1990. The giving environment: another perspective on the economic system of gatherer-hunters. *Current Anthropology* 31, 189–96.
- Bird-David, N., 2005. The Property of Sharing: Western Analytical Notions, Nayaka Contexts, in *Property and Equality. Volume 1: Ritualisation, Sharing, Egalitarianism*, eds. T. Widlok & W.G. Tadesse, New York: Berghahn, 201–16.
- Bird-David, N., 2017. Before Nation. Scale-Blind Anthropology and Foragers' Worlds of Relatives. *Current Anthropology* 58, 209–19.
- Bloch, M., 2013. *In and Out of Each Other's Bodies: Theory of Mind, Evolution, Truth, and the Nature of the Social*. Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers.
- Bourdieu, P., 1979. *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement*. Paris: Les Éd. de Minuit.
- Busby, C., 1997. Permeable and partible persons: A comparative analysis of gender and body in South India and Melanesia. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3, 261–78.
- Deacon, T.W., 2012. *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*. New York: Norton.
- Fowler, C., 2004. *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Anthropological Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Gell, A., 1999. Inter-tribal commodity barter and reproductive gift-exchange in old Melanesia, in ed. E. Hirsch, *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams* (1st ed.). London: Athlone Press, 76–106.
- Hann, C. (ed.), 1998. *Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunt, R., 2000. Forager food sharing economy: transfers and exchanges, in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Allocation and Modern Hunter-Gatherers*, eds. G.W. Wenzel, G. Hovelsrud-Broda & N. Kishigami. (Senri Ethnological Studies 53.) Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 7–26.
- Hyndman, D., 1985. Comment on H. Kaplan & K. Hill, Food Sharing among Ache foragers. *Current Anthropology* 26, 240.
- Ingold, T., D. Riches & J. Woodburn (eds.), 1988. *Hunters and Gatherers. Vol. 2: Property, Power and Ideology*. Oxford: Berg.
- Ingold, T., 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T., 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T., 2015. *The Life of Lines*. London: Routledge.
- Jaeggi, A.V. & M. Gurven., 2013. Natural cooperators: Food sharing in humans and other primates. *Evolutionary Anthropology* 22, 186–95.
- John, N.A., 2016. *The Age of Sharing*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Kelly, R.L., 1995. *The Foraging Spectrum: Diversity in Hunter-Gatherer Lifeways*. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. Press.
- Løgstrup, K.E., 1997. *The Ethical Demand*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Lye, T., 2004. *Changing Pathways: Forest Degradation and the Batek of Pahang, Malaysia*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Macdonald, G., 2000. Economies and personhood: Demand sharing among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales, in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Allocation and Modern Hunter-Gatherers*, eds. G.W. Wenzel, G. Hovelsrud-Broda & N. Kishigami. (Senri Ethnological Studies 53.) Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 87–111.
- Marlowe, F.W., 2004. What explains Hadza food sharing? Socioeconomic aspects of Human Behavioral Ecology. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 23, 69–88.
- Marshall, L. 1961. Sharing, Talking, and Giving: Relief of Social Tensions among !Kung Bushmen. *Journal of the International African Institute* 31, 231–49.
- Marten, R., 1987. *Der menschliche Tod: E. philos. Revision*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Mauss, M., 2002. *Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*. Electronic edition.
- Morris, B., 1994. *Anthropology of the Self. The Individual in Cultural Perspective*. London: Pluto.
- Myers, F.R., 1988. Burning the truck and holding the country: Property, time, and the negotiation identity among Pintupi Aborigines, in *Hunters and Gatherers*.

- Vol. 2: *Property, Power and Ideology*, eds. T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn. Oxford: Berg, 52–94.
- Peterson, N., 1993. Demand sharing: Reciprocity and the pressure for generosity among foragers. *American Anthropologist* 95, 860–74.
- Peterson, N., 2013. On the persistence of sharing: Personhood, asymmetrical reciprocity, and demand sharing in the indigenous Australian domestic moral economy. *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 24, 166–76.
- Richerson, P.J. & M.H. Christiansen (eds.), 2013. *Cultural Evolution: Society, Technology, Language, and Religion*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Rival L., 2000. Marginality with a difference: How the Huaorani remain autonomous, preserve their sharing relations and naturalize outside economic powers, in *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern Context: Conflict, Resistance and Self-Determination*, eds. P. Schweitzer, M. Biesele & R. Hitchcock. Oxford: Berghahn, 244–60.
- Schäfer, M., 2014. *Cultural Variation in Children's Development of Resource Sharing and Fairness*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Leipzig University.
- Schweitzer, P., M. Biesele & R. Hitchcock (eds), 2000. *Hunters and Gatherers in the Modern Context: Conflict, Resistance and Self-Determination*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Strathern, M., 1988. *Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Turner, D.H., 1999. *Genesis Regained: Aboriginal forms of Renunciation in Judeo-Christian Scriptures and other Major Traditions*. New York: P. Lang.
- University of Cologne Forum 'Ethnicity as a Political Resource' (ed.), 2015. *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions, and Periods*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Wenzel, G.W, G. Hovelsrud-Broda & N. Kishigami (eds), 2000. *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Allocation and Modern Hunter-Gatherers*. (Senri Ethnological Studies 53.) Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Widlok, T., 1999. *Living on Mangetti. 'Bushman' Autonomy and Namibian Independence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widlok, T., 2004. Sharing by default? Outline of an anthropology of virtue. *Anthropological Theory* 4, 53–70.
- Widlok, T., 2013. Sharing: Allowing others to take what is valued. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, 11–31.
- Widlok, T., 2015. Ethnicity as social deixis, in *Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Conceptualizations across Disciplines, Regions, and Periods*, ed. University of Cologne Forum 'Ethnicity as a Political Resource'. Bielefeld: Transcript, 85–96.
- Widlok, T., 2017. *Anthropology and the Economy of Sharing*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Widlok, T. & W.G. Tadesse (eds.), 2005. *Property and Equality. Vol. 1: Ritualisation, Sharing, Egalitarianism*. New York: Berghahn.
- Woodburn, J., 1998. 'Sharing is not a form of exchange': An analysis of property-sharing in immediate-return hunter-gatherer societies, in *Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition*, ed. C. Hann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 48–63.
- Woodburn, J., 1982. Egalitarian societies. *Man* 17, 431–51.