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The Epipalaeolithic-Neolithic as the pivotal transformation of human history

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4312/dp.45-2>**Keywords:** Epipalaeolithic; Neolithic; Southwest Asia; cultural evolution; cumulative culture; cultural niche construction

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to set the Epipalaeolithic-Neolithic transformation (ENT) within the truly long-term of human evolutionary history. The Epipalaeolithic-Neolithic transformation take us out of the world of Palaeolithic mobile foraging into a new world, in which the scale and organisation of the social group and the tempo of socio-cultural evolution were transformed. The scale and diversity of cultural innovation and social organization can be seen to be linked in co-evolutionary feedback loops that have been characterised as 'cumulative culture', 'ratcheting' effects, or 'runaway' cultural evolution. The up-scaling of communities and the intensification of their interaction and networking enabled the emergence of super-communities that became the first large-scale societies, an inflection point on an accelerating curve of complex cultural, social and economic development, en route to emergent socio-political hierarchies, urbanism, kingdoms and empires.

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