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Gray, Benjamin (2025) Resilience as a tool for interpreting the Hellenistic polis: beyond 'survival' and 'vitality'. In: Hartmann, A. and Rieger, A.-K. and Schliephake, C. (eds.) Ressourcen der Resilienz in der Antike. Materielle, performative und narrative Praktiken und Strategien. LEIZA Publications 6. Heidelberg, Germany: Propylaeum, pp. 131-149. ISBN 9783969294222.

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Resilience as a Tool for Interpreting the Hellenistic Polis

Beyond »Survival« and »Vitality«

ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates »resilience« as a tool for analysing the polis (city-state) in the Hellenistic period (ca. 323–31 BC). Can »resilience« capture, better than dominant paradigms of »survival« or »vitality«, both existential threats to the Hellenistic poleis and their often successful surmounting of them? How can it help to analyse Hellenistic poleis' complex combination of conservatism with change? The paper approaches these questions by analysing responses of individual Hellenistic poleis to varied crises: civil war and civic breakdown (Telos); great-power war, city destruction and displacement (Abdera); and intense demographic and ecological pressures (Abdera, Herakleia, Antiocheia-in-Persis). The paper analyses the public inscriptions in which these communities commemorated acute shocks, as evidence for resilience practices as well as »narratives of resilience« in themselves. It then asks to what extent these inscriptions can be used to build a broader picture of a »resilient« network of Hellenistic poleis, co-existing with Hellenistic monarchies and empires (including eventually the Roman Empire).

KEYWORDS

Hellenistic / polis / resilience / civil war / war / demography / environment / citizenship

The city-states of the Hellenistic world were beset by severe, even existential crises: civil wars; royal imperial interventions; interstate wars; shortages of food and vital resources; ecological crises; demographic pressures; even city destructions. This used to be central to the stereotypical picture of a Hellenistic polis »in decline« from a supposed Classical peak, or even »dead at the Battle of Chaironeia« (i. e. from 338 BC), against which twentieth century scholars began to react. Historians' stress in recent decades on the vitality and dynamism of the Hellenistic poleis (and their network)¹ has perhaps partly

occluded the ever-present dangers and pressures of Hellenistic city-state life, which have recently come back into focus in scholarship². Could the concept of »resilience«, as debated and interrogated in this research network, offer a route to harmonising these different features of Hellenistic civic life within a single complex picture?

It is fundamental to this volume, and the discussions of the research network which underpin it, that »resilience« cannot easily be reduced to any single definition. I discuss in this chapter how different forms of »resilience« can (or cannot) illumi-

¹ This approach is synthesised and developed now in Ma 2024, drawing on his own earlier work and many other studies: e. g. Robert 1937; Gauthier 1985; Grieb 2018; Mann/Scholz 2012; Matthaei/Zimmermann 2015; Foster 2018.

² E. g. Vadan 2018 on risk and crisis; Gray 2015 and Börm 2019 on civil war and collective displacement; Heitmann-Gordon 2017 on the challenge of new forms of individuality and self-assertion.

nate Hellenistic civic life. Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of definition, any notion of »resilience« must capture the »ability of an individual, a social group or an institution to survive chronic stress or acute crises«: indeed, the ability literally to »bounce back«, usually through a complex mix of restitution and adaptation. This relies on »resources of resilience«, including material resources, but also cultural practices such as rituals, religion or intentional history³.

A central difficulty in applying the concept of resilience, which becomes acute in my example of the Hellenistic poleis, is how to define the »essential core« of the system which is preserved through, and »bounces back« from, crisis, despite the change and adaptation which is intrinsic to resilience as a process⁴. Any historian's definition of this »essential core« is likely to reflect ideological choices and unconscious assumptions. In the case of individual poleis surmounting severe crises, it is not too controversial to identify a single community, bound by shared institutions, ideals and narratives, which endures and adapts. It might also be possible to trace the »resilience« of specific institutions and ideals, such as civic courts or theatres or values of autonomy and equality, without opening insoluble questions of definition.

This question of the resilience of individual communities, and their institutions and ideals, is my initial focus. In my examples there, study of particular

cities' strategies of resilience is intimately connected with analysis of their own narratives of resilience: far from concealing crises, many Hellenistic poleis drew explicit attention to the gravity of the challenges they had faced (and might face again), in order better to celebrate their capacity to surmount them (cf. my four main examples in the next section). There is, of course, a risk of taking these local »narratives of resilience« too literally: there is a danger, for example, that they underplay or overplay risks, or radical change. This too will be a concern of my next section.

Although my focus in the next part is on individual cities, in each case, interdependence with other cities was an indispensable foundation of their resilience. Collectively, regional and wider networks of cities sustained a shared social and political model. This raises the more abstract question (broached in my final section) of the »resilience« of »the polis«, which brings to prominence much more contested questions of definition: in this case, in particular, the assumption that there existed a »Classical« form of the polis against which all later city-states must be judged (cf. Moser in this volume). Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to probe the »resilience« of a central core of institutions, practices and ideals characteristic of Greek polis life, of the kind captured by Aristotle in his *Politika*, which were sustained by the whole network of interdependent poleis. I will return to this difficult question in the second half of my essay.

Four Hellenistic Poleis and their Strategies and Narratives of Resilience

In this section, I explore four examples, in each of which a Hellenistic polis community responded to (and recovered from) a severe shock through inventive use of civic institutions, rituals and rhetoric, which were themselves parts of a shared inherited repertoire. The response to the particular shock in each case also illustrates more long-term patterns of local (and wider) adaptation in response to major social changes associated with the Hellenistic world of vast, complex, competing monarchies, in dialogue with which poleis had to negotiate their standing and autonomy⁵.

Telos: Recovering from Civil Strife

My first example illustrates recovery after acute civil strife (*stasis*), in this case on the south-eastern Aegean island of Telos in the later 4th century BC. The evidence derives from an inscription documenting the processes of reconciliation after the *stasis*, quite recently published⁶. There had clearly been a violent confrontation between the Telian people (*dēmos*) and some wealthy dissidents, resulting in politicised lawsuits and penalties for these wealthy citizens, which they refused to pay, leading to their exile and the con-

³ Cf. the introduction to this volume. For the theoretical background followed here, see especially Bollig 2014; Rampp et al. 2019.

⁴ On the complex mix of continuity and change in resilience, and the question of enduring »identity«: Rampp 2019. On the importance of treating resilience as a process: Endreß/Rampp 2014.

⁵ See Chaniotis 2005; 2018 for overviews.

⁶ IG XII 4 1 132.

fiscation of their property. The pledges in the oath of reconciliation, included in the inscription, suggest that these dissidents probably mounted armed resistance while in (nearby) exile, perhaps even seizing the stronghold (ἄκρᾱ) which overlooked the city.

The inscription documents how the citizen-body was reconstructed after conflict, with the help of outsider conciliators from Cos, a larger island and regional power. Indeed, the preserved copy of the document was found on Cos, in the sanctuary of Asklepios. The Coan conciliators negotiated a balanced compromise concerning the disputed penalties and confiscated property, by which the exiles would have their convictions overturned and property restored if they performed symbolic liturgies, repairing an altar and contributing to a special sacrifice (a hecatomb). All the citizens were then to swear an oath protecting the democratic constitution⁷.

This Telian text is one of a series of similar records of bipartisan reconciliation from the 4th century BC and Hellenistic period, which reveal the

evolution of a shared repertoire of institutions, language and ritual for ensuring a resilient »bouncing back« from acute *stasis*, to which all poleis were intrinsically prone. These »resources of resilience« after *stasis* included structured negotiation between citizens, through conciliators; full or partial amnesty and collective forgetting of conflict, reinforced through ritual and law; performance of reconciliation through oaths and rituals, which helped to construct an imaginary community of united citizens, mutually respectful of certain gods and divine oversight of civic life and conflict; and memorialisation and the construction of a consensual, stabilising narrative, not least through the practice of inscription itself⁸.

All of these elements come together in the Telian text, a long inscription of which ca. 140 lines are preserved from its two faces. The earlier parts include an honorific decree in which the reunited citizen-body praised the virtues of the conciliators from Cos (ll. 1–16):

<p>Face A, fr. a: [ἔδοξε τῷ δᾶμῳ, γνώ]μα πρυτανίων· ἐπειδὴ vac. [ὁ δᾶμος δηλόμενος δι]αλυθῆμεν ποτὶ τοὺς δια[φερομένους ἐ]ψαφίξατο ἐπιτράψαι Κώοις ὑπὲρ [ῶν διεφέροντο ποτ' ἀλλ]ήλους πάντων, ὅπως ὁμο[νοιεῦντες ἐν δαμοκρ]ατία πολιτεύονται, ὁ δὲ δᾶ[μος (l. 5) ὁ Κώων μεμναμένο]ς τᾶς εὐνοίας ἐψαφίξατο [ἐξαποστεῖλαι ποτὶ τὰ]ς διαλύσεις ἄνδρας κα[λοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς –3–4–]γόραν Μίκωνος, Ἀριστω[– – – – –c.15– – – – –], Χάρμ[ιππον Χαρμύλου, [– – – – –c.20– – – – –]νᾶ Ξενοδίκου, τοὶ δὲ (l. 10) [ἐξαπεσταλμένοι διαλλακτᾶ]ι διέλυσαν καλῶς [καὶ δικαίως τὸν δᾶμον vacat], δεδόχθαι τᾷ ἐκ[κλη]σίᾳ· ἐπαινέσαι μὲν τὸν δᾶμον, τὸν Κώων [καὶ στεφανῶσαι στεφάνῳ χρυσέῳ ἀπὸ] δραχμᾶ[v] [χιλῖαν, ἐπαινέσαι δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐπὶ] τῷ δ[ικαί]ῳ (l. 15) διαλύσαι τὸν δᾶμον τὸν Τηλίων – – – – –]</p>	<p>Resolved by the people, on the proposal of the <i>prytaneis</i>: since the people, wishing to be reconciled with those in dispute, voted to refer to the Coans all the matters about which they were in dispute with each other, in order that (l. 5) they might consensually run their affairs under democracy, and the people of the Coans, mindful of the good will between us, voted to send out to take charge of the reconciliation virtuous and good men, Orthagoras son of Mikon, Ariston son of [.....], Charmippos son of Charmylos, (l. 10) [.....]-n son of Xenodikos, and the arbitrators who had been sent out reconciled virtuously and justly those in dispute, it was resolved by the assembly: to praise the people of the Coans and to crown them with a gold crown worth a thousand drachmas, and to praise the men for reconciling the people of the Telians justly....</p>
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⁷ For discussion, see Thür 2011; Gray 2015, 94–98; Börm 2019, 183–188; Simonton 2019; Scafuro 2020; 2021.

⁸ For analysis, see Dössel 2003; Gray 2015, chs. 1–2; Börm 2019, esp. part II.

This honorific decree served partly as a formal guarantee that the settlement had been achieved through robust, fair procedures, widely accepted by the citizens. At the same time, the passing and inscription of the honours constituted a public performance of the Telians' unified, consensual trust in the settlement. As well as foregrounding procedure, and trust in procedure, the honorific decree also made explicit the necessity, for reconciliation and for civic life more generally, of virtuous individual character, a necessary supplement to well-designed institutions: repeated stress was laid on the Coan conciliators' virtue and justice. This too was performatively acknowledged and celebrated.

There then follows a detailed record (in fact, in two different versions, ll. 37–125) of the painstakingly negotiated compromise which the conciliators achieved. The detailed record makes clear the concessions made by both sides: the *dēmos* had to acknowledge it had been overhasty (even unfair) in condemning the dissidents, by accepting the overturning of their convictions and the return of their property; the dissidents had to accept sym-

bolic amends for their behaviour (contributions to the upkeep of civic rituals) and the permanent recording on stone of their dubious loyalty⁹. Both the painstaking, balanced character of the negotiations themselves, and their later detailed recording on the stone, were important resources of resilience in this context. If, in future, either side called into question the terms of reconciliation or the legitimacy of the restored democracy, the other side could point to the public, consensual record of the settlement.

The fact that the former dissidents had to contribute to an altar and a sacrifice hints at the importance of civic rituals as a further indispensable foundation of the reconciliation, which fits with many of the other case-studies in this volume¹⁰. Both the unity of the polis as ritual community and the negotiated character of that unity were acted out when the citizens joined in future in festivals and sacrifices, funded by these (or other, echoing) financial contributions by the local elite. The most significant shared ritual of reconciliation was, however, the collective performance of the oath of reconciliation itself, to be taken by all citizens:

ὅπως δὲ Τήλιοι καὶ εἰς τὸν ἐπίλοι[π]ον (l. 125) χρόνον ὁμονοεῦντες διατελῶντι, ὁμοσάντω τοῖ γεγενημέ[ν]οι ἀπὸ τε ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἐτέων πάντες θεὸς τὸς ὀρκίους [κ]ατὰ ἱερῶν νε[οκ]αύτων τὸν ὄρκον τόνδε· »ἐμμένεω ἐν τῷ πολιτεύματι τῷ καθεστακῶτι καὶ διαφυλαξέω τὴν δαμοκρατίαν καὶ οὐ μνασικακησέω περὶ τῶν [ἐν ταῖ κ]ρίσει[ν] γενομένων οὐδὲ πραξέω παρὰ τὰν διάλυσιν τάνδε οὐδὲν (l. 130) [οὐδὲ] ὅπλα ἐναντία θησεῦμαι τῷ δάμῳ οὐδὲ τὰν ἄκραν καταλαμψεῦντι συμβουλευσέω οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ ἐπιβουλεύοντι οὐδὲ καταλύοντι τὸν δᾶμον εἰδὼς ἐπιτραπέω· αἱ δὲ κα αἰσθωμαί τινα νεωτερίζοντα ἢ συλλόγους συνάγοντα ἐπὶ καταλύσει τοῦ δάμου, δηλωσέω τοῖς ἀρχουσιν· εὐορκεῦντι μέμ μοι ἤμεν πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ, ἐφιορκεῦντι δὲ τὰ ἐναντία« (l. 135).

In order that the Telians should continue also for the future [lit. »for the rest of time«] living in harmony, let all those over eighteen years swear by the gods of oaths with freshly burnt sacrifices the following oath: »I will remain faithful to the established constitution and I will preserve the democracy and I will not bear grudges (l. 130) about the things covered in the judgement (?), nor will I do anything contrary to this reconciliation, nor will I bear arms against the people, nor will I conspire with anyone who has seized the acropolis, nor will I knowingly give permission to any other conspirator or to any man aiming to dissolve the democracy. If I perceive anyone making revolution or calling meetings aiming at the dissolution of the people, I (l. 135) will report it to the magistrates. May many good things happen to me if I swear justly, and the opposite if I perjure myself.«

This oath makes clear the importance of amnesty or »not bearing grudges«: collective forgetting could be a resource of resilience. The collective ritual of the oath was a symbolic and practical new start, after which citizens would move on from the rancour which had gone before. The collective oath-taking,

both in form and content, conjured into being an aspirational form of well-regulated, balanced democracy, mainly defined obliquely through the negative pledges to abstain from unrest. These negative pledges constitute a dystopian spectre of renewed unrest: revenge, coups, conspiracy, dissolution of

⁹ Simonton 2019 emphasises this latter aspect, suggesting the democrats have the upper hand; but I would also emphasise the *dēmos*' own concessions.

¹⁰ Cf., for example, Graml, Rieger and Schliephake in this volume.

democracy (literally, »of the *dēmos*«). The oath ritual added to the settling of material and procedural problems a strong emotional dimension¹¹, using fear (of renewed unrest, of divine punishment) and hope (for stability and democracy) to shape citizens' outlook and interrelations. As in other ancient historical contexts (cf. Rieger in this volume), fear and hope were important anticipatory capacities for managing risk¹². The Telians' candid admission of the potential vulnerability of the constitution to violent challenges from within, also found in many other Hellenistic civic texts¹³, was (perhaps paradoxically) itself key to these effects, and a strategy of resilience in itself: the democracy was sufficiently self-confident to confront directly, and avert, civil strife.

It is important to reflect about exactly what entity, or entities, was or were resilient in this case. There was a longstanding Telian civic community, with a range of civic institutions, traditions, rituals and ideals, which was perpetuated, with adaptations, through this settlement. This reconciliation settlement may itself hint at a greater level of change than in many comparable settlements. It was normal at moments such as this for Greek poleis to celebrate their return to an »ancestral constitution«, most famously in the Athenian reconciliations of 411 and 403 BC¹⁴, but also elsewhere¹⁵. In the Telian case, by contrast, the promise in the oath was only to preserve »the established democracy« (τῶι πολιτεύματι τῶι καθεστακότι) and »democracy«, with no explicit suggestion that they had ancestral roots; the perfect participle might suggest more recent »establishment«.

Making further progress with the question of the balance of continuity and change is difficult because of our very limited knowledge of Telian internal life before (or after) this settlement. It is, however, possible to draw some conclusions by considering Telos in the context of the much wider network of Greek city-states and their evolution in the 4th century BC, though this necessarily anticipates the wider themes discussed below. As John Ma has recently shown, the mid- and later 4th century saw a »great convergence« of Greek city-states around a shared

model of internal, moderate¹⁶ democracy, with each individual polity closely networked with peer democracies through diplomatic and cultural ties¹⁷. This involved the preservation (or resilience) of an older core of citizen-centred institutions and norms, Athenian but also panhellenic. Yet it also involved creative adaptation of them, not least in the sphere of interpolis interaction.

This Telian text can be cautiously placed within this wider framework. The basic civic model stabilised and secured through the Telian settlement had many continuities from an earlier model known across the Aegean, especially in cities which had been subject to the 5th-century Athenian Empire and its 4th-century echoes: civic assembly, magistrates, law, courts and other institutions; an ideology of local autonomy, equality and self-government; and deep links with the wider Greek world. Yet there are also signs of adaptation to fit the demands of the changing early Hellenistic world.

The role of outsiders – the foreign conciliators from Cos – to help resolve internal conflict is particularly significant. Cities themselves summoning outsider conciliators and judges was to evolve into a standard element of Hellenistic judicial and diplomatic life¹⁸. Yet it would have been incongruous in many Classical poleis, especially but not only in a hegemonic polis such as Athens or Sparta: it would have been an affront to civic sovereignty to put such important issues of civic order in the hands of outsiders. It is true that many subject-cities of the 5th-century Athenian Empire had been required to sacrifice some judicial autonomy, since it seems controversial cases were commonly referred to the fully-funded democratic courts of Athens¹⁹. There were some similar interventions from outside to preserve or restore local political order in the 4th-century Second Athenian Confederacy, though then the Athenians were more cautious, making use of the collaborative institutions of the Confederacy²⁰. Indeed, in the first half of the 4th century, the practice of outsider conciliators and arbitrators re-establishing stability after *stasis* was starting to take shape, partly at the initiative of Athens and its rivals for hegemony²¹.

11 Cf. Chaniotis 2013 on the emotional force of such reconciliations.

12 Cf. too Eidinow 2007.

13 Cf. Hamon 2008; Gray 2015, chs. 1–2; Börm 2019, part II.

14 E. g. Shear 2011, esp. chs. 2, 3 and 8.

15 E. g. SEG 57.576 (Dikaia, 365–359 BC), esp. ll. 68–69.

16 »Moderate« when compared with the hegemony of the *dēmos* made possible in Classical Athens by extraordinary financial resources (e. g. for systematic payments to jurors and office-holders).

17 Ma 2018; 2024, ch. 9.

18 See Robert 1973; Magnetto 2016.

19 de Ste Croix 1961; Low 2013.

20 See Rhodes-Osborne *GHI* 29 (concerning Paros, 373/372 BC), where the Second Athenian Confederacy and its *synhēdrion* seems to have taken the lead in re-establishing concord on Paros (cf. Crowther/Matthaïou 2004–2009).

21 See SEG 57.576 (Dikaia, 365–359 BC), where the Macedonian King Perdikkas played an instrumental role; cf. again Rhodes-Osborne *GHI* 29.

Despite these partial precedents, the early Hellenistic Telians, and other early Hellenistic poleis who helped to inaugurate the new phenomenon of summoning »foreign judges«, broke new ground. They positively sought out – indeed, embraced – the guidance of outsiders who stood outside the local political fray. They probably did so partly under the influence (pressure or encouragement) of one or more of the new early Hellenistic kings²². Yet this need not be interpreted purely as an imposition from above. It can also be seen as reflecting a new willingness at the local level to harness the potential of the interpolis networks of the Hellenistic Aegean²³ to reinforce local stability and political effectiveness.

Outsiders who were conspicuously (if only ostensibly) impartial were particularly suited to brokering and stabilising a moderate, balanced form of democracy, which was less about political struggle between rich and poor, and more a negotiated social contract between mass and elite, based on financial and political give-and-take (in this case, liturgies in exchange for political recognition and restitution of status). The key role of outsiders tallies with one of the themes emphasised in discussions of »resilience«, including in this research network: the importance of wider supportive networks in sustaining any individual »resilient« community²⁴. Inward-looking reinforcement of group cohesion was not adequate for resilience; it was also necessary to look outward, while preserving insider/outsider distinctions. Indeed, in an unstable and uncertain early Hellenistic world, the devising and institutionalisation of new forms of interdependence among city-states were crucial to maintaining meaningful local independence.

Abdera (and Teos): Recovering from City Destruction through War

This intertwining of resilience with the wider supportive interpolis network²⁵ is also crucial to my second example, the recovery of Abdera, on the Thracian coast of the north Aegean, from Roman sack and destruction in 170 BC (during the Third Macedonian War). The polis network was resilient enough

to endure the death of some cities – and to forestall the death of others, such as Abdera here²⁶. The recovery of Abdera is documented in a very recently discovered and published long inscription (ca. 120 lines preserved across two fragments), containing a copy of the honours which the Abderites passed, after the successful restoration of their polis, for the citizens of Teos, in recognition of the Teians' help during their exile and after their return²⁷. Teos was the »mother-city« or original founder of Abdera in the distant past – the Abderites called the Teians their »fathers« here²⁸ – though the Abderites had helped to refound Teos itself in the interim (cf. below). This copy of the honours was found in the temple of Dionysos at Teos, the honoured city²⁹.

The honorific decree of the Abderites and Teians is interesting partly for the evidence of practical resilience it preserves: the Abderites successfully returned from diaspora exile, slowly rebuilt the urban and economic fabric of their city, and relaunched their civic life and institutions. The text shows clearly how interdependence with another city, Teos, cultivated over centuries, was crucial to alleviating the effects of the crisis: the Teians helped to reassemble the dispersed Abderites and refound the city of Abdera; to pay for the reconstruction of the city-walls and temples; and to overcome ecological and demographic pressures in the refounded community, by offering an interest-free loan to pay for oxen to help the Abderites make their agricultural base more resilient³⁰.

Yet the decree was also itself a »resource of resilience«, creating and sustaining connections, obligations and motivations which were vital for the continued functioning of the city. Most importantly, the decree itself played a crucial role in celebrating, but also reinvigorating, the longstanding relationship between Teos and Abdera as a physically distant but intimately interdependent pair, almost a dual city³¹. The passing and communication of the honours, including the decree itself but also a monumental statue of the *dēmos* of the Teians, was itself a practical means of sustaining the relationship, but also advertising its value and endurance to any who doubted the potential of the Abderites to continue their recovery.

²² Note the fragmentary reference to »kings« in I. 108.

²³ See, for example, Ma 2003; Constantakopoulou 2017; Mack 2022.

²⁴ Cf. Christmann et al. 2019.

²⁵ On this network, see also Malkin 2011; Woolf 2020, chs. 10–12.

²⁶ Cf. Woolf 2020, 210, on Mediterranean urban networks in which »redundant elements dropped out, and settlement consolidated on sites that were well connected« (though his focus there is on earlier Greek urbanism).

²⁷ Adak/Thonemann 2022, ch. 2.

²⁸ Fragment A, ll. 4–5.

²⁹ Adak/Thonemann 2022, ch. 1.

³⁰ Fragment A, ll. 14–27; fragment B, ll. 1–52.

³¹ See again the analysis of their interrelationship in Adak/Thonemann 2022; cf. earlier, on the wider phenomenon, Graham 1964; Malkin 2011.

As in the Telian case, this second text thus makes clear the force of rhetoric, rituals and narratives as effective »resources of resilience«: the public celebration of the links between these two cities, tested by crisis, reinforced their interconnections and laid the foundation for further help in future. Indeed, this inscription contains a rich »narrative of resilience«, comparable to those found in ancient literary texts studied in this volume. Throughout the decree,

the Abderites stressed the depth of the crisis they had endured, including the weakness and desperation caused by their situation, if only to make more vivid and extraordinary their recovery, and especially the Teians' role in it.

The Abderites' degree begins with an explicit celebration of the resilience of the bond between the two cities, rooted in kinship³² and goodwill:

<p>Fragment A (in wreath) ὁ δῆμος ὁ Ἀβδηριτῶν τὸν δῆμον. ἐπειδὴ Τήϊοι, πατέρες ὄντες τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν, τὴν προγονικὴν εὐνοίαν οὐ λόγῳ, ξῶ[γοις] δὲ τηρεῖν προαιρούμενοι, πειρῶνται πρὸς ὑπέροθιν αἰεὶ τῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς εὐεργεσιῶν ἀμιλλώμενοι τὴν ἑαυτῶν σπουδὴν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν ἀκατάπαυστον πρὸς τὸν δῆμον ἡμῶν διαφυλάξειν, ἀθάνατον παρασκευάζοντες, ὅσον ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς, τὴν ἐκ τῆς ὁμονομίας ἐκατέραις ταῖς πόλεσιν π[εριγε]νομένην εὐδοξίαν ...</p>	<p>Fragment A (in wreath) The <i>dēmos</i> of the Abderites (honours) the <i>dēmos</i> (of the Teians). Since the Teians, being fathers of our city, choos- ing to preserve the ancestral goodwill not through words, but through deeds, are attempting, by striving towards ever greater benefactions towards us, to preserve unceasing their own eagerness and love of honour towards the <i>dēmos</i>, making immor- tal, as far as it is in their power, the glory which accrues to both cities from their concord ...*</p>
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* Cf., here and elsewhere, the translation of Adak/Thonemann.

The goodwill of the Teians is explicitly said to be »unceasing«, and conducive to glory for both cities, rooted in their concord. It is also a distinctively practical form of goodwill: it is based on deeds, not words.

The following account is a more specific narrative of the resilience of the Abderites, but also of the Teians' goodwill towards them, in the particular circumstances of the 160s BC. The opening of this part could easily, elsewhere, have been a crushing ending: »and fortune was harshly disposed to the affairs of the People and the polis was left a mere circuit of walls« (καὶ ἡ τύχη τοῖς τοῦ δήμου πράγμασιν ἀνωμόνως [ῥ]διέ]κεῖτο καὶ περίβολος μόνον τειχῶν ἢ πόλις ἀπ[- - c.7 - -])³³. The Abderites were dispersed in exile (at least some of them probably enslaved), but the Teians stepped in to save them. The resilient surmounting of exile and enslavement was accentuated through a rhetorical contrast between meaningless, temporary sojourn and home (and home citizenship): the Teians collected up the Abderites »from every place« (ἐκ παντὸς τόπου) and restored them »to their ancestral hearths and their original citizenship« (ἐπιτάς πατρώϊους ἐ(σ)τίας [καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς] πολιτείαν)³⁴.

The solitary city-walls were a symbol partly of civic destitution (cf. above), but also of civic restitu-

tion. After the return, even the walls had begun to crumble (»since time had brought down some of the walls, and others the circumstances of war had destroyed«, ἐπειδὴ τινα μὲν ὁ χρόνος ν. καθεῖρηκει τῶν τειχῶν, ἃ δ' ἡ τοῦ πολέμου περίστασις διέφθορε[ε]). However, the Teians stepped in with financial help towards the rebuilding of the walls and other civic buildings³⁵.

The Abderites' narrative made explicit the painstaking nature of resilience as a process³⁶, and one reliant on active political agency³⁷. They marked the next stage in their recovery as the point »when time had progressed and our polis was already moving towards a better condition« (τοῦ χρόνου δὲ προκόψαντος καὶ τῆ[ς] πόλεως ἡμῶν ἤδη πρὸς βελτίονα κατάστασιν ἐρχομένης), because a workable population had been reassembled. Yet even at this point the community was assailed by threats requiring a resilient response. It was difficult to relaunch the agricultural life of the community, which meant »the people were being hard pressed for their livelihoods and were lacking in revenues« (θλιβομένων τοῖς βίῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀπροσόδων γινομένων)³⁸. The Teians' interest-free loan, for purchase of oxen, alleviated this latest stage of the crisis³⁹. As if ecological and

³² On »kinship diplomacy«, see Jones 1999.

³³ Fragment A, ll. 16–17.

³⁴ Fragment B, ll. 6–8.

³⁵ Fragment B, ll. 11–22, quotation from ll. 11–12.

³⁶ Cf. Endreß/Rampp 2014; Rampp 2019.

³⁷ Cf. Bollig 2014.

³⁸ Cf. elsewhere in this volume for such existential threats, e. g. the contributions of Rieger and Schliephake.

³⁹ Fragment B, ll. 22–31, quotations from ll. 22–23 and 25–26.

demographic pressures were not enough, the threat of enemy encroachment then reemerged: »when the Maroneitai encroached on our ancestral territory« (ἐπιβάντων δὲ καὶ Μαρωνιτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν πατρίον ἡμῶν χώραν), the Teians again intervened, to ensure a smooth and sustainable diplomatic solution⁴⁰.

The Abderites thus developed a gripping narrative of threat and vulnerability, surmounted through resilience and interdependence. The frank admission of their own weakness accentuated the Teians' contribution, but also, perhaps paradoxically, the Abderites' own self-confidence and resilience: whatever crisis might strike them, they had the resources to respond. Their rhetorical and political strategy can be paralleled from other episodes in the fraught era of Roman conquest of the Hellenistic world, when candid admission in public epigraphy of vulnerability and existential threat – surmounted through the aid of benefactors – served elsewhere too as a resource of resilience⁴¹.

As in my first, Telian case, it is necessary to ask precisely what was resilient (and what was claimed to be resilient) in the Abderite case. This is partly a matter of the resilience of individual communities: Abdera and Teos were two cities, each to a degree independently resilient, but also part of a greater, more resilient whole. As in the Telian case, the paucity of evidence makes it difficult to make precise judgments about continuity and change, though the long-range history of Teos and Abdera, documented at particular points in time through inscriptions⁴², shows that this latest episode of solidarity perpetuated a long-established two-polis system. Yet also central to this example is the resilience of a whole repertoire of civic (and intercivic) practices, institutions and norms – indeed, perhaps, of the wider polis world itself – which underpinned the resilience of these interconnected communities. This was merely one episode in the endurance of a particular style of small-city politics and interaction, with roots in the Archaic period. On the other hand, it was also a moment – or part of a phase – of transition.

The Abderites (and Teians) themselves presented an image of unbroken continuity, as if they were still living in the world of Herodotus and Pindar, the golden age of mother-daughter city relationships. As in other studies in this volume⁴³, this exaggerated conservatism in cultural memory must itself have been an effective strategy of resilience in an uncertain world. This was no mere façade: the institutions, diplomatic protocols and mythology involved would have been mainly recognisable centuries earlier. Indeed, a parallel, mirroring process of city refoundation had probably already happened in the Archaic period, when some Teian refugees from the Persians found refuge in their daughter-city of Abdera and then they (or their descendants) were involved in refounding Teos after the Persian sack⁴⁴ – something of which the drafters of this text were surely aware. This was, in both image and reality, a genuinely interdependent polis pair, with each side capable of literally regenerating the other; the inscription also invited the view that this polis-pair could stand up to any grand empire (let it be Persians or Romans) if it sought to crush one half.

Another aspect of this resilient conservatism in cultural memory was that the Abderites' public commemoration of their mass displacement itself perpetuated a long panhellenic tradition. As J. Schreyer's contribution here makes clear, many Greek communities made use of traumatic memories of collective displacement in order to cement internal solidarity and sustain external links with benefactors. Yet, in this respect, the Abderites' commemoration also had innovative features.

Earlier Greek traditions of mass expulsion through war or civil war, and successful return, had tended to stress the unblemished heroism and political commitment of the exiled community: a »*dēmos*-in-exile« (such as the Athenian exile movement of 480 or 404–403 BC) had preserved political and military integrity and force while on the move, even if its members were, in fact, dispersed⁴⁵. There are signs in other Hellenistic cities of a shift towards

⁴⁰ Fragment B, ll. 31–52, quotation from ll. 31–32.

⁴¹ Cf. *I.Prusa* 1001 (city uncertain, ca. 188 BC), analysed recently in Kaye 2023, 34–36: the decree celebrates this city's recovery, with extensive Attalid help, from »material want and profound social disorder« (Kaye 2023, 35) after entanglement in imperial wars. As at Abdera a little later, this decree candidly admits the threat to the very livelihoods of the citizens, including their ability to cultivate their land, and mobilises a range of resources of resilience (political institutions, ritual, cult, appeals to outside benefactors). Cf. Kaye 2023, 35: »Remarkably, the citizens of this devastated city [...] seem to have negotiated rather ably« (with the Attalids) – and they concealed neither the devastation nor their resilient political agency.

⁴² See Adak/Thonemann 2022.

⁴³ Cf., for example, the contributions of Graml and Zingg.

⁴⁴ Alluded to in Pindar's »Second Paeon«, ll. 28–31; cf. Herodotus 1.168; Strabo 14.1.30. Adak/Thonemann 2022, 90–91: »each was mother-city to the other«.

⁴⁵ On Athens, see, for example, Demosthenes 18.204–205 (on 480 BC); 20.48; Lysias 31.8–9 (on 404–403 BC); *IG II²* 448, ll. 62–4 (on 322–318 BC); Thomas 1989, 132–138; Forsdyke 2005, ch. 6. This was not a purely Athenian tendency in the Classical period, though, as usual, evidence from outside Athens is scarce: note, for example, the Boeotian traditions about democratic exile resistance at Thebes in the 370s preserved in Plutarch *Pelopidas* (esp. 7–12).

a different imagined picture of displaced citizens as more vulnerable, dependent refugees or wanderers, relying on the kindness of benefactors⁴⁶. This new Abderite text is the most extreme example so far known of this shift: the Abderites did not try to conceal – in fact, they emphasised – the destitution and dispersal (including probably the literal enslavement) of the Abderite refugees, who were unable to save themselves, but relied on the Teians undertaking the difficult task of gathering them back together »from every place«. The Abderites admitted on stone that they had been, during exile and after, people in distress (ἐπταϊκότες, θλιβόμενοι)⁴⁷, almost entirely dependent on external help. There was no suggestion that they had retained a spiritual unity as a *dēmos*-in-exile. This kind of pathetic presentation might have been acceptable in the Archaic and Classical periods for women and children as refugees; but male citizens would have been expected to be warrior exiles, fighting to the death for their city rather than waiting for charitable rescue⁴⁸.

This perspective on the Abderite decree shows how a conservative framework of language and institutions could itself channel quite profound shifts in citizenship, ethics and masculinity. Indeed, it places the Abderite decree on the cusp of significant changes in the wider polis landscape, intensified by the arrival of the Romans, from the mid-2nd century BC onwards:

the rise of new forms of power, hierarchy and dependency, alongside continued defence of democracy⁴⁹, but also related shifts in gender roles and the increased prominence of »gentler« civic virtues in civic ideology⁵⁰. The Abderite decree shows all these processes in motion, as two communities grappled with challenges of survival in the face of a new all-conquering empire. This example shows that communities using polis forms were resilient partly because they could adapt them while appearing not to do so; and the polis forms themselves remained attractive because they were flexible, and could be retuned to quite different frequencies of ethics and politics.

Herakleia: Responding to Ecological Pressure

My first two examples illustrate mainly man-made crises, though the Abderite example brings out too how war exacerbated the challenge for cities to survive and flourish within their natural environment. These environmental and ecological pressures were also a more chronic feature of Hellenistic city life, which could challenge cities' viability on a day-to-day basis⁵¹. This is evident from an enigmatic 3rd-century BC inscription from the small Aegean island of Herakleia⁵²:

[The preserved text starts after a long gap:]

[... καὶ τὸν Δία (l. 1) καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους [θεοὺς τοὺς τὴν νῆ]σιν κατέχοντας, εὐορκοῦν[ι μὲν μοι εὖ] εἶη, ἐφιορκοῦντι δὲ τὰναντία τῶν [ἀγαθῶν]· ἐὰν δέ τις βιασόμενος αἴγας εἰσάγ[ειν ἢ] (l. 5) τρέφειν ἐν τῇ νήσῳ παρὰ τὸδε τὸ ψήφ[ι]σ[μα] καὶ τὸν ὄρκον τῷ κωλύοντων τινὰς κτείνει, ἐπεξιόντων αὐτὸν οἱ τε προσήκοντες τοῦ παθόντος καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῶν νησιωτῶν ἅπαν· ὃ τι δ' ἂν εἰς τὴν κρῖσιν (l. 10) ἀνῆλωμα γίνηται, τὸ μέρος ἕκαστον εἰσ[φ]έρειν· ἀναγράψαι δὲ τὸδε τὸ ψήφισμα τὸν [ἱεροποιὸν] ἐπιστροφίδη[ν] εἰς στήλην λιθίνην καὶ στήσαι εἰς τὸ Μητροῶν· τὸ δὲ ἀνῆλωμα τὸ εἰς τὴν στήλην καὶ τὴν ἀναγραφὴν (l. 15) ἔστω ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ. ταῦτα δ' εἶναι εἷς τε φυλακὴν καὶ σωτηρίαν Ἡρακλειωτῶν πάντων καὶ τῶν οἰκούντων ἐν τῇ νήσῳ].

[The preserved text starts after a long gap:]

... by Zeus and the other gods who have possession of the island; may things go well for me if I swear truthfully, and the opposite if I perjure myself. If anyone, using force to bring in goats or rear them on the island contrary to this decree and the oath, kills any of those preventing him, the relations of the victim and the whole community of the islanders should prosecute him. Whatever costs arise for the legal proceedings, each should contribute a part. The *hieropoios* should inscribe this decree in continuous lines (?) on a stone stele and set it up in the Metroon. The expenditure for the stele and the inscription should be from the community. These measures should be for the protection and salvation of all the Herakleots and those living on the island.

⁴⁶ E. g. /IG XII 6 1 17–40 (Samos); SEG 30.1123 and 35.999 (Entella). For full discussion of the Classical traditions and Hellenistic shifts, see Gray 2015, 304–308.

⁴⁷ Fragment B, l. 11; l. 25.

⁴⁸ Cf. Gray 2015, 334–339.

⁴⁹ See Ma 2024, ch. 11, building on and revising Gauthier 1985.

⁵⁰ Cf. Gray 2013; 2017.

⁵¹ Cf. Woolf 2020 on the wider Mediterranean context.

⁵² /IG XII 7 509, 3rd c. BC.

With the inscription incomplete and in the absence of any further context, it is very difficult to interpret this famous Hellenistic inscription. Yet scholars have shown that it probably reflects the pressures on the fragile ecosystem, food supply and economy of this small island posed by the potential import of (new?) goats, which could be an existential threat to a community dependent on arable cultivation. It is not clear who was suspected of aspiring to introduce (more) goats, though (like in the Telian example above) the forceful prohibitions suggest recent bad experience. It is possible that outsiders (perhaps even powerful individuals connected with a king or local royal governor) were involved, though the reference to introduction of goats »contrary [...] to the oath« suggests that the focus was on regulation of insiders⁵³. In any case, the threat provoked a forceful collective response.

Although the economic and political context is hard to reconstruct, the preserved lines themselves testify to communal resources and strategies of resilience. The community on the island rallied together to prohibit import of new goats, and threaten severe penalties against anyone who resorted to violence in breaking these rules. The collective oath and its inscription would have themselves reinforced communal bonds, and expectations of commitment to the common good (cf. the final lines). The inscription also envisaged, and encouraged, the beneficial intertwining of forces which might in other contexts have been in conflict. If anyone did murder someone while attempting to import goats, the victim's family and the wider community would combine forces to prosecute them, pooling financial resources and blending familial revenge with communal justice.

As in my other examples, it was partly a specific, fragile community which was resilient, through its own agency. Yet, once again, this specific community was drawing on the shared repertoire of civic institutions and ideology: law, oaths, and the ideology of the common good. These were, however, also subtly adapted to suit local circumstances and the current situation: the measures were designed for »the protection and salvation of all the Herakleots and those

living on the island«, non-citizens as well as citizens. This suggests the existence – or perhaps rather the emergence – of a fluid form of community and mutual interdependence, partly a traditional polis (or sub-division of a polis), but partly something else: a *koinon* for collective survival and success which extended to all those living on the island, regardless of legal status⁵⁴. This was partly dictated by practicality – the success of these rules relied on all residents preserving a commitment to uphold them⁵⁵ – but also involved experimentation with accepted models of community and common good, to ensure collective embrace of measures to ensure economic sustainability, crucial for communal resilience.

Antiocheia-in-Persis: Responding to Demographic Pressure

My examples so far have been from the old Aegean heartland of the polis world. My final example, another well-known decree, comes from one of the new Hellenistic city-foundations much further east: Antiocheia-in-Persis, which seems to have been closely integrated into (and overseen by) the Seleucid kingdom. This Antiocheia was one of the many new Greek city-states founded in the east in the course of Alexander's conquests and their long aftermath⁵⁶. In this quite different political, social and environmental context, ongoing threats to the survival and flourishing of the community were at least as acute as in the Aegean world; a particular challenge seems to have been sustaining a viable citizen-body (cf. again the effects of war at Abdera). In the first half of the 3rd century BC, this had made it necessary for the Seleucid King Antiochus I to broker support, and reinforcements to the working and fighting citizen population, from a much older Greek polis back in the Aegean world, Magnesia-on-the-Maeander in western Asia Minor. This is recorded in a long later 3rd-century decree of the Antiocheians in praise of the Magnesians (ca. 120 lines long)⁵⁷, which begins as follows:

⁵³ Ma 2024, ch. 1; for other quite recent discussions, synthesising earlier studies, see Constantakopoulou 2004; Mack 2015, 70–71. For L. Robert's original analysis of this inscription: Robert 1940–1965, vol. 7, 161–170.

⁵⁴ Cf. Constantakopoulou 2012; note the alternative interpretation of P. Fröhlich, *Bull. Épigr.* 2013, 327.

⁵⁵ Mack 2015, 70.

⁵⁶ See Cohen 2013.

⁵⁷ *OGIS* 233.

<p>[π]αρὰ Ἀντιοχέων τῶν Π[ερσίδος] [ἐ]πὶ ἱερέως Σελεύκου Νικάτορος καὶ Ἀντιόχου Σωτήρος καὶ Ἀντιόχου Θεοῦ καὶ Σελεύκου Καλλινίκου καὶ βασιλέως Σελεύκου καὶ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου (l. 5) καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου Ἡρακλείτου τοῦ Ζωέους τῆς πρώτης ἑξαμήνου· δόγματα ἐκκλησίας κυρίας τὰ ἀπενεχθέντα ὑπὸ Ἀσκληπιάδου τοῦ Ἑκαταίου τοῦ Δημητρίου τοῦ γραμματέως τῆς βουλῆς καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας μηνός Πανθέου τρίτη φθίνοντος (l. 10) ἔδοξε τῇ ἐκκλη- σίαι πρυτάνεων εἰπάντων· ἐπειδὴ Μάγνητες οἱ ἀπὸ Μαιάνδρου συγγενεῖς ὄντες καὶ φίλοι τοῦ δήμου καὶ πολλὰς καὶ ἐπιφανεῖς χρείας παρεισχημένο[ι] τοῖς [Ἑλλ]ησιν [τῶν εἰς εὐδοξί]αν ἀνηκουσῶν πρότερόν τε Ἀντιόχου τοῦ Σωτήρος (l. 15) φιλοτιμ[ο]μένον ἐπα[υξ]ῆσαι τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν οὐσαν αὐτοῦ ἐπώνυμον καὶ πέμψαντος πρὸς αὐτοὺς περὶ ἀποικίας, καλὰ καὶ ἐνδοξα ψηφισάμενοι καὶ εὐχὰς καὶ θυσίας ποιησά- μενοι ἀπέστειλαν ἄνδρας πλήθει ἱκανοὺς καὶ ἀρετῇ διαφέροντας ...</p>	<p>From the people of Antiocheia in [Persis]. In the first six months of the year in which Heraclitus, son of Zoes, was priest of Seleucus (I) Nikator and Antiochus (I) Soter and Antiochus (II) Theos and Seleucus (II) Kallinikos and King Seleucus (III) and King Antiochus (III) and his son King Antiochus. Decisions of a principal assembly which were rendered by Asclepiades, son of Hekataios, son of Demetrios, the secretary of the council and (l. 10) of the assembly, three days from the end of the month of Pantheos. It was resolved by the assembly, after the <i>prytaneis</i> made the proposal. Since the Magne- sians-on-the-Maeander are kin and friends of the People and provide many conspicuous services to the Greeks, of the kind which are conducive to glory, and when previously Antiochus (I) Soter (l. 15), being ambitious to strengthen our polis, which bears his name, sent an embassy to them concerning a col- ony, having voted for fine and reputable measures and made prayers and sacrifices, they sent men in suitable numbers and distinguished in virtue ...*</p>
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* Cf. the translation of Austin 2006, no. 190.

This later decree was prompted by the arrival of envoys in the other direction: envoys from Magnesia had come to Antiocheia, as part of a much broader Magnesians diplomatic drive, to persuade the Antiocheians to join other Greek cities in recognising the special status of the festival of Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia, as a celebration now equal in dignity to the Pythian games at Delphi⁵⁸. In the rest of this long decree, preserved because it was inscribed by the Magnesians, the Antiocheians enthusiastically acceded to this request, detailing the background and the role of this new connection in the extended history of solidarity between the two cities⁵⁹.

The different stages and levels of internal and interstate politics documented in this decree reveal complex strategies and narratives of resilience, which parallel those found in the Aegean world itself (my first three examples). The Antiocheians candidly acknowledged in their narrative their past (and continuing?) demographic challenges, partly as a way of accentuating the Magnesians' contributions, but also in order to advertise their own resilience as a Greek polis community far in the east. They were also clear that this resilience was not all their own achievement. For one thing, it relied on interventionist Seleucid kings, who played a crucial role in

brokering relations with the older Greek world, especially that part of it which fell under Seleucid power. It was this incorporation into the wider peer-polity networks of the Greek polis world on which the Antiocheians placed the most emphatic weight in this text. This incorporation was not so automatic for Antiocheia-in-Persis as for Telos, Abdera or any other city of the older Greek world. As this decree implicitly acknowledges, the Antiocheians made active efforts, from their distant and unconventional location, to integrate themselves into these wider civic networks, consciously shaping their internal and interstate affairs to fit the wider shared template.

This again raises the issue of the resilience, not simply of one community, but of a shared civic model. The shared civic network was sufficiently robust and influential to sustain, and rescue from difficulties, new outposts. A new outpost such as Antioch-in-Persis could faithfully reproduce both internal institutions (e.g. the »principal assembly«, or decree procedure) and interstate practices (receipt of envoys, »kinship diplomacy«) very familiar from the better-established polis world⁶⁰. Antiocheia was, in fact, part of a whole eastern extension of the interpolis network, as emerges from the closing lines (ll. 100–111), which comment on the parallel decrees passed by other new eastern cities.

⁵⁸ On this broader Magnesians initiative, see Rigsby 1996, 179–279; Thonemann 2007; Sosin 2009.

⁵⁹ See further Rigsby 1996, 258–260.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ma 2003, 25–26. For wider trends in assembly practice and decree-making: Rhodes with Lewis 1997. For interstate interaction, cf. Jones 1999; Ma 2003.

There is less clear evidence here than in my other three examples of reform and development, rather than mere reproduction, of a shared template. This is perhaps partly explained by the pressure on a new, marginal polis community to stress conventionality and conservatism in order to gain acceptance. Under the veneer of conventional polis institutions and ideology, the physical city community

of Antiocheia may well have looked quite different from most traditional Greek poleis. This raises a challenge addressed in my next section: the risk that the epigraphic record conceals change and diversity, because of the homogenising impression of shared epigraphic formulae, but also because of the ambitions of city-states to project an image of continuity and convergence around a shared model.

Resilience as a Wider Model for Interpreting the Evolution of the Hellenistic City-state?

My four examples have revealed the value of »resilience« as a tool for understanding individual Hellenistic cities' trajectories, and their own interpretations of them: we have seen four self-consciously »resilient« poleis – or perhaps regional (and wider) networks of poleis – which combined conservatism and adaptation to overcome threats. Yet, as I have commented in each case, these examples also demonstrate the resilience of a shared model of participatory civic life, based on a complex mix of institutions and ideals. In this final section, I reflect in more depth on the advantages, and potential risks, involved in using »resilience« as a more general model for the evolution of the polis in the Hellenistic world.

The resilience of »the polis« in the Hellenistic world is not, of course, identical with the resilience of Hellenistic poleis. The two things were divisible in practice, as well as in theory. This is clear from the common Hellenistic practice of two or more existing cities coming together, through synoecism or *sympoliteia*, into a single larger unit, often partly through royal influence, but also partly through pressure from below. This could lead to the extinction of one or more prior independent polis communities, and sometimes even of one or more physical settlements. Yet it reinforced the strength of polis institutions and ideology in the region, and the wider world, by creating a more resilient enlarged polis, better equipped to stand up to kings and empires⁶¹.

This phenomenon also puts into a different light the resilience of individual poleis. An individual polis could outlive a failed union: the small Carian polis of Pisasa seems to have outlived a union with (Herakleia-under-)Latmos, since it was later incorporat-

ed into another polis, Miletus⁶². Even within an enlarged polis such as Megalopolis in the Peloponnese, the constituent communities could show some individual »resilience«, especially in preserving some distinctive religious cults which recalled their old individual communities, even as citizens of the new polity⁶³. According to their own legends, picked up by Pausanias, the Trapezountians of Arcadia were so resistant to (»resilient« against?) incorporation into Megalopolis that the surviving refugees fled to their homonymous kin city of Trapezous on the Black Sea (cf. Zingg in this volume, on narratives of resilience of the displaced)⁶⁴. These cases all throw up interesting philosophical quandaries, of a kind explored by Aristotle⁶⁵, about when a polis does or does not remain the same entity, despite radical change. Yet common to all these examples is the tenacity of (so to speak) the form of the polis, which found new incarnations even when older ones were merely flickering, or extinguished altogether.

To develop the opening of this chapter, at the risk of oversimplification, it is possible to identify some prominent existing scholarly narratives of the evolution of »the Hellenistic polis«. One might at first glance expect civic and democratic forms to be superseded in the Hellenistic world by monarchy and larger-scale communities. Indeed, older stereotypes emphasised decline of democracy and the civic spirit in the monarchical Hellenistic world, but this view was overturned by L. Robert: the polis »did not die at Chaironeia' in 338 BC⁶⁶ despite the challenges posed by new forms of monarchy and empire. According to this view, what characterises the Hellenistic polis is »survival« or »non-death«. More recently, scholars have taken even this »survival« model

⁶¹ On this phenomenon in general, studying many examples: Reger 2004; Mack 2014; Boehm 2018.

⁶² SEG 47.1563; *Milet* I.3, no. 149; Wörrle 2003; van Bremen 2003, 313–317; Labuff 2010.

⁶³ Cf. Jost 1996; Parker 2009.

⁶⁴ Pausanias 8.27.4–6.

⁶⁵ Aristotle *Politika* 1276a.

⁶⁶ Robert (2007), 603, for the quotation, though the theme is explored throughout Robert (1940–1965; 1969–1990).

to be too pessimistic: rather than simply surviving, the Hellenistic polis flourished, perhaps even entering a true »golden age« of Greek democracy, widely spread around the Greek world, based on extensive citizen participation and meaningful constraints on the powerful⁶⁷. This trend, towards a »vitalist paradigm«, has recently been dominant in scholarship⁶⁸. Some scholars have recently questioned this dominant approach, asking whether the epigraphic self-presentation of the Hellenistic poleis as self-governing democracies in fact conceals a reality of moves towards greater oligarchy⁶⁹ or new forms of exploitation of outsiders and non-Greeks⁷⁰.

»Resilience«, in the complex theoretical form explored in this volume, has the potential to capture and combine strengths of these different existing narratives. As discussed throughout this volume, »resilience« is an effective model for capturing a subtle mixture of conservatism and change: the ways in which an »essential core«, in this case a basic shared core of citizen-centred participatory civic institutions and ideology, was perpetuated and spread, but also adapted, in the Hellenistic world, by poleis old and new.

Moreover, »resilience« offers a means to improve on, and combine, both »survival« and »vitality«. »Resilience«, interpreted as an active practice and process, foregrounds much more than »survival« the agency of citizens of Hellenistic poleis, in responding to acute crises and long-term changes: as Bollig puts it, resilience was a »political act«⁷¹. Much of this Hellenistic citizen agency was concentrated on reshaping their rich political and cultural legacy: transforming the »essential core« of the polis model to preserve it, as in my examples from Telos, Abdera and Herakleia.

As well as offering a more complex, agent-centred model than »survival«, »resilience« also has advantages over »vitality« as a way of capturing both the chronic challenges and the intermittent shocks which Hellenistic poleis had to confront, and which the currently dominant »vitalist« model perhaps downplays too much. To sum up my earlier discussion, these included internal wars and *stasis*, including tensions between the majority and the wealthy elite (cf. Telos); imperial pressure and its effects, especially interstate war and displacements (cf. Abdera); and

ecological pressures, depopulation and competition for resources (Herakleia and Antiocheia-in-Persis), including competition with kings and their agents and with neighbouring non-Greek populations. No ancient Mediterranean urban experiments, as Woolf has recently emphasised⁷², were ever entirely secure, for reasons of ecology, demography, economics and politics. The Hellenistic poleis faced their own, often intense versions of these diverse ongoing challenges, which could flare up at any time⁷³, and they had to be agile in responding to them.

»Resilience« thus allows greater links to be drawn between Hellenistic polis history and the now thriving environmental history which is prominent in this volume. It also allows more connections to be drawn with the intellectual history of the Hellenistic world. No one would now doubt that many Hellenistic intellectuals continued to embrace the polis ideal, but, for some of them, the polis life was no longer a self-evident good, as it had been for Plato or Aristotle. The poleis themselves helped to nurture philosophers, especially certain Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics and Sceptics, who made it their business to question at the root the very principle that engaged citizenship in a particular polis is the essence of a good human life⁷⁴.

These philosophers' ideas, such as cosmopolitan universalism or an Epicurean or Cynic turn to the simple life among close friends, were partly responses to wider social changes of the Hellenistic world. They represented much more fundamental critiques of polis life than Plato's or Aristotle's, since those came from within the polis mindset and constituted advice for making poleis more resilient⁷⁵. Relevant Hellenistic philosophers, by contrast, shifted their emphasis to personal or psychological, not collective, resilience, from which legal and political institutions (such as polis citizenship) were sometimes seen as a distraction. For example, the Stoic theory that no wise, virtuous person, in free, rational control of the soul, can be a slave – even if physically enslaved⁷⁶ – implies a world of threats to personal survival and success, to be navigated through work on one's own mind and desires. This dimension of ancient Stoicism, in particular, has influenced modern therapeutic models of resilience through meditation and self-care⁷⁷.

⁶⁷ See the analysis of this approach in Heller 2009, 341.

⁶⁸ Ma 2013, 225; 2018, 277 (identifying, and partly endorsing, a »vitalist paradigm«). For other influential elaborations of this view, see (for example) Gauthier 1985; Mann/Scholz 2012; Matthaei/Zimmermann 2015.

⁶⁹ Chaniotis 2018, esp. ch. 6; Müller 2018.

⁷⁰ Ando 2018.

⁷¹ Bollig 2014, 253.

⁷² Woolf 2020.

⁷³ Cf. again Vadan 2018.

⁷⁴ For the complex relationship between Hellenistic philosophers and poleis, see Long 2006, chs. 1–2.

⁷⁵ E. g. Aristotle *Politika* Book V, on averting *stasis*.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Cicero *Paradoxa Stoicorum* section V; Garnsey 1996, ch. 9.

⁷⁷ E. g. Robertson 2020.

Certain Hellenistic intellectual changes thus posed yet another existential challenge to Hellenistic citizens: they had to argue for the value of their way of life, no longer axiomatic. This required reinventing the polis ideal in attractive ways, in competition with the allure of philosophical critiques, not to mention new religious practices and the attractions of life at a royal court or on the move⁷⁸. In fact, the civic ideology of interdependence and mutual solidarity which emerges from my epigraphic examples can even be read as a response, or alternative, to the more personal forms of resilience advocated by certain Hellenistic philosophers, and perhaps embodied in some Hellenistic social and religious activities »beyond the polis«⁷⁹. The poleis insisted on the continued importance of collective resilience, rooted in civic institutions and practices, including as a route to personal resilience⁸⁰.

It follows from this that »resilience« also captures very well the shared ideology, rhetoric and narratives characteristic of polis life in the Hellenistic world. The epigraphic narratives in my examples do not celebrate seamless continuity and triumph, but positively emphasise crises and threats and the (often narrow) overcoming of them; they also imply that repeats of the crises are probable. As I have repeatedly noted, there is much more admission of weakness and mutual suspicion than one might expect. To recapitulate, at Telos, for example, the rhetoric about the future in the post-*stasis* oath is very much about endurance and survival, not triumph (cf. above): »I will remain faithful to the established constitution and I will preserve the democracy and I will not bear grudges«. In the text from Abdera, the atmosphere is one of constant existential threat, symbolised by the city-walls, which are first all that is left of the city, and then themselves crumble. Endurance and fortitude are key virtues: the Teians are praised for »preserving« (τηρεῖν) ancestral goodwill through deeds, not words, and for dedication and zeal which are unceasing or »unstoppable« (ἀκατάπαυστος) (cf. above).

To turn now to some disadvantages of »resilience« to characterise the Hellenistic polis in general, an important objection, foreshadowed in my introduction, is that to speak of the »resilience of the polis« relies on the questionable move of defining some original »Classical« form against which later

poleis are judged. The inevitable paradigm might be thought to be the Classical Athenian democracy – which later poleis either emulated or failed to match. This risk is particularly acute in the case of the polis of Athens itself in the Hellenistic and Roman periods: as M. Moser makes clear in this volume, it is misleading always to interpret later Athenian history only in terms of continuity or change from Classical Athenian precedent. The later Athenians would have measured success and resilience (at least in certain contexts) quite differently.

In general, however, the risk of Athenocentrism can be avoided, or minimised. As noted above (see my section on Telos), what I have been calling resilient is a polis model which does date to the (late) Classical period, but was anything but a purely Athenian creation: a model of democratic city government, shared across the older and newer Greek world, to which Athenian thinking and institutions contributed, but only as one among many other influences, including myriad other cities, federations and kingdoms, as well as intellectual theorists⁸¹. Any precise definition of the essence of »the polis« is likely to be deficient, though we do have the guidance of Book III of Aristotle's *Politika* and the modern Copenhagen »Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis«⁸². All that is needed for the purposes of my argument here is a core of participatory, citizen-centred institutions and ideology, recognisable in all the examples I have discussed, which could be adapted in diverse ways without losing its basic structure. It might be possible to study the resilience of some of these institutions (e. g. the assembly, council, decree, proxeny) in isolation; but they also formed an inextricably interlinked organism.

Another response to this objection would be to deny that it is truly a problem: the Hellenistic poleis were, in many ways, backward-looking and conservative, at least at the surface of their institutions, rhetoric and ideology. When they could, individual communities always claimed to be perpetuating a long local tradition, going back at least to the Classical period. As noted above, poleis often claimed to be returning to the »ancestral constitution« after *stasis*. Even the more recently founded Antiocheia-in-Persis claimed some vicarious antiquity from the Magnesians, praising their »ancestral constitution«⁸³. More importantly, it was open to all poleis,

⁷⁸ Cf. the panorama of Hellenistic lifestyles, religion and society in Chaniotis 2018, esp. chs. 15–16.

⁷⁹ Cf. Hadot 1995 on Hellenistic philosophy as part of Hellenistic society and social life. Cf. Graml in this volume on Hellenistic religion.

⁸⁰ Cf. Gray 2018 on cities' honorific decrees promoting an alternative ethical code to the Stoic.

⁸¹ Cf. again Ma 2018; 2024, ch. 9.

⁸² Hansen/Nielsen 2004.

⁸³ OGIS 233, ll. 52–3.

old and new, to claim to belong to a long shared Greek civic and democratic tradition, in which Classical Athens loomed large (alongside other influences) for the Hellenistic cities themselves, in ways which foreshadowed the Atticism of the Roman Imperial period⁸⁴.

Nonetheless, a sceptic might reasonably object further that the very point I have been stressing – that the Hellenistic cities themselves claimed to be »resilient«, in all senses and time-frames, in their own narratives – undermines the value of »resilience« as a sociological tool in this case. The fact that the surviving evidence consists almost solely of inscriptions may deceive us into accepting unquestioningly the poleis' (or their elite male citizens') own projection of the spread and endurance of a recognisable polis model across the whole Hellenistic world. What if the inscriptions' picture of shared institutions and ideology was no more than a façade, which conceals radical diversity across regions (for example, between older and newer cities) and across centuries?

Accepting too readily the cities' own epigraphic image risks neglecting the complexity of the urban, demographic and agrarian realities of different cities, which may well have undergone much more radical changes than the inscriptions reveal. Indeed, the new unified poleis discussed above, products of synoecisms and *sympoliteiai*, were necessarily distinctive in scale and complexity. As Ando argues, speaking of Hellenistic »cities«, rather than Hellenistic »poleis«, would immediately shift the debate: it would shine a light on the wide diversity of evolving urban forms on which different poleis relied, each with its own distinctive structure of domination of outsiders. The veneer of poleis' rhetoric emphasised »resilient« uniformity across the whole Hellenistic civic world of free democracies, for ideological reasons, often including the aspiration to justify domination of local populations⁸⁵. A truly historical approach, informed by archaeology, geography and sociology, would pay more attention to material factors, and their diversity. Such an approach would interrogate the individual factors which led to each city's resilience or disappearance, especially the different types of agricultural and other labour on which each citizen elite relied, whether women, non-Greek indigenous labour in the surrounding countryside (*chōra*), or imported slaves⁸⁶. It might, in the end, be possible

to identify widespread urban forms, shared by many cities, but they would probably differ radically from the idealised picture of polis life in the inscriptions.

It is not only the word »polis« but also the word »resilience« itself which faces difficulties here. As Bollig discusses, the concept of relatively static and harmonious »resilience« itself potentially obscures power relations. It is necessary to focus, with Bollig himself, on »(social) resilience« as »social capital« for a limited group, gained at the expense of others⁸⁷. This raises the complex question whether that limited group is itself »resilient«, if it is in no way self-sufficient but reliant on dominating others. Though the sociological concept of »resilience« is designed to be ethically neutral, it is open to debate whether »resilience« is the most effective term to convey the character of communities such as Antiocheia-in-Persis, effectively engaged in a form of settler colonialism. When they were short of population, as the inscription shows, the Antiocheians looked to the distant Aegean, rather than (hostile?) surrounding Persian communities, for aid. The concept of »resilience« needs to accommodate exploitation, marginalisation and struggle in order to capture the imperial dynamics at work.

A final, more fundamental objection would be that to focus on poleis, or even cities, is completely the wrong frame of reference. Woolf, following Weber, interprets the Roman Imperial period as a golden age of polis life, but only because cities were a useful tool of the Roman monarchy for durable, light-touch control and for taxation⁸⁸. No Hellenistic monarchy dominated the polis world as comprehensively as the Romans, which created opportunities for Hellenistic poleis to advance their interests in negotiations with competing kings. Nonetheless, as the Antiocheia-in-Persis example shows, Hellenistic kings, like the Romans later, did often find the foundation and cultivation of poleis a useful strategy of imperial control. This means that it is also necessary to consider the »resilience« of political entities at a much larger scale, as well as the resilience of a certain form of monarchy, which used poleis as a convenient tool. There is considerable force to this objection. Nonetheless, could any of these monarchies or empires have been resilient without the foundation of a resilient model of polis life, which empowered a resilient network of poleis to exercise their own initiative at the local level?

⁸⁴ Cf. Canevaro/Gray 2018.

⁸⁵ Ando 2018, 24.

⁸⁶ Cf. Boehm 2018 for this type of approach. On dependent populations in earlier periods, cf. Zingg in this volume.

⁸⁷ Bollig 2014, 265.

⁸⁸ Woolf 2020, chs. 17–18, esp. pp. 338–344. Cf. Weber 1909, section 7 (the »Siegeszug der Polis« in the Roman Imperial period).

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Benjamin Gray
 University of London
 Birkbeck College
 School of Historical Studies
 26 Russell Square
 UK - London WC1B 5DQ
 b.gray@bbk.ac.uk
 ORCID: 0009-0006-3121-5436

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesem Beitrag wird »Resilienz« als Instrument zur Analyse der Polis (Stadtstaat) in der hellenistischen Periode (ca. 323–31 v. Chr.) bewertet. Kann »Resilienz« besser als die vorherrschenden Paradigmen des »Überlebens« oder der »Vitalität« sowohl die existenziellen Bedrohungen der hellenistischen Poleis als auch deren oft erfolgreiche Bewältigung erfassen? Der Aufsatz nähert sich diesen Fragen, indem er die Reaktionen einzelner hellenistischer Poleis auf verschiedene Krisen analysiert: Bürgerkrieg und Zusammenbruch des Gemeinwesens (Telos), Krieg der Großmächte, Zerstörung der Städte und Vertreibung (Abdera) sowie intensiver demografischer und ökologischer Druck (Abdera, Herakleia, Antiocheia-in-Persis). Der Beitrag analysiert die öffentlichen Inschriften, mit denen diese Gemeinschaften akuter Schocks gedachten, als Beleg für Resilienzpraktiken sowie als »Narrative der Resilienz« an sich. Anschließend wird die Frage gestellt, inwieweit diese Inschriften genutzt werden können, um ein umfassenderes Bild eines »resilienten« Netzwerks hellenistischer Poleis zu zeichnen, das mit hellenistischen Monarchien und Imperien (einschließlich des Römischen Reichs) koexistierte.