

# Town and country in Early Imperial Greece

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## Abstract

*The administrative measures of Augustus and his successors brought change to the political geography of the Greek peninsula, imposing the dominance of certain metropoleis provided with large territories. This new structure changed the spatial distribution of population and wealth, but also the prevailing social hierarchy and the relationship between the city and its chôra. While during the preceding period of independance this relationship was relatively equal, a new hierarchical structure was now established, with the aim of transferring the agricultural surplus of the countryside to the areas where power was concentrated and where the privileged social groups resided. This was possible by the spread in the countryside of some cities of a new model of settlement and agrarian strategy, the villa rustica - whose goal was not subsistence farming but rather the production of a marketable agricultural surplus for profit. The result was an increasing accumulation of wealth in the hands of a landowning urban elite, which was juxtaposed to growing rural misery. Thus the chasm which separated town and country, already developing since the Late Hellenistic period, was further widened during the Empire.*

## Keywords

Romanization – countryside – urban economics – survey – epigraphy.

## Introduction: town and country, an evolving relationship

Although there was in the Classical Greek world a clear distinction between city and country, urban and rural environment, this distinction was surpassed by the social and economic reality as well as in the law, the city and its territory forming an indissoluble unit.<sup>1</sup> The main settlement was the symbolic as well as the real centre of political and religious activity and a centre of commercial activity. The city was also the place for services and divertissement of any kind; one could find beautiful public spaces and prestigious buildings for meetings and celebrations, but also shops, workshops and private houses for wealthy or poor people living in

<sup>1</sup> On this problem, see the interesting discussion in Bintliff 2006, 13-32.

the town. But the people living in the town, where many citizens were at least part-time farmers, could not survive without the countryside where a significant population lived in smaller settlements or isolated farms, cultivating the land to feed themselves and the town, which in return offered them manufactured items and other things they needed. There was in fact a symbiotic relationship, as town and country somehow had complementary roles. There were no extreme disparities in wealth and as citizens had the same political rights, a balance existed in legal and social terms.

What really changed with the Romans? Literary and epigraphic sources of the period have let us long suspect a change in the relationship between town and country, which has now been confirmed by recent archaeological excavations and integrated field surveys. It has been demonstrated that the traditional interdependence of urban centres and rural communities progressively declined, of course with regional variations, from the Late Hellenistic period as a result of the Roman conquest.<sup>2</sup>

While the physical image and institutions of the cities, at least before the Empire,<sup>3</sup> did not change and despite the fact that, with some minor exceptions, these cities were tributaries of the Roman state,<sup>4</sup> they did not have the same legal status and taxation levels.<sup>5</sup> The situation of each city varied according to the circumstances of each conquest, history and geographical location, but above all, depending on the strategy and aims of the imperial power. A common trend however is that a large part of the land progressively ended up in the hands of the urban elites, which monopolized wealth, prestige and power.<sup>6</sup>

Rome's indifference to the fate of the Greek world during the late Hellenistic period (146-31 BC), but also civil wars, various interventions<sup>7</sup> and abuses of power

<sup>2</sup> See Stewart 2010, 222, with interesting remarks on continuity or discontinuity of the landscape, as suggested by site survival or by their shifting numbers. His idea (2010, 220 and 229) that the 'traditional historical narrative of a declining and depopulated Greece in the Roman period requires emendation' is right, in the sense that there are spatial and chronological variations, but his interpretation of the meaning of loss of site numbers seems to me more doubtful. For the variation between different areas based on survey evidence, see Bintliff 1997, 1-38.

<sup>3</sup> Touloumakos 1967; Waelkens 1989, 81

<sup>4</sup> See Rostovtzeff 1957, 387; Giovannini 1978, 115-122; Jones 1986, 2; id. 1974, 1; more recently Rich & Wallace-Hadrill 1991; in particular see Millet 1991, 169-189; Corbier 1991, 211-239; Wallace-Hadrill 1991, 241-232; Depeyrot 1991. See also Kehoe (2007, 8) who underlines the consequences for the economy of the administrative and legal changes, in contrast to scholars who ascribe the economic developments to changes in population and technology.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Roman colonies, cities of free or peregrine status, or settlements that were attributed to larger communities (*civitates adtributae*). For the different kinds of territory and fiscal system, see Corbier 1991, 224-236.

<sup>6</sup> Syme 1977 (concerning the cities of Baetica and Narbonensis); cf. also Corbier 1991, 223.

<sup>7</sup> Especially in the case of territorial conflicts between cities (see Camia 2009), as has been stated by Burton 2000.

combined to cause the economic decline of many cities. Augustus and his successors tried to stop this decline by introducing some changes, which favoured some large cities, but they did not show a particular concern for the rural areas and peasants in general. It appears that, at least in the Early Empire and with the exception of the territories of Roman colonies, imperial authorities directed their efforts towards towns, while the countryside was not a priority in the economic and social strategy.

The reconsideration of all kinds of evidence, particularly during the last few years, has contributed enormously to our understanding not only of the world of the urban elites, which is relatively well known from written sources and urban archaeology, but also of the poor city dwellers, as well as of the humble people living and labouring in the countryside. This knowledge can bring us closer to the complexity of life in Roman imperial communities and, in consequence, closer to both urban and rural citizens themselves.

### Greek cities in the new imperial context

It is generally accepted that the victory of Octavian against Antony, at Actium (31 BC), represents a break with the past, and inaugurates, at the same time, a new period, that of the *Pax Romana*. Indeed, the creation of the Empire put an end to a long transitional and difficult period (146–31 BC) marked by political instability and economic and demographic decline in the Greek cities.<sup>8</sup> Augustan intervention changed gradually the political, social and economic map of Greece by introducing a new spatial organization, which altered the traditional balance between town and country.

Of great importance was the establishment of a few highly-centralized administrative centres of peregrine, free or colonial status, such as Sparta, Messene, Argos, Athens, Corinth, Patrai and Nikopolis (Figure 1). These cities now became the focus of Roman administration and wealth.<sup>9</sup> The Emperor granted to these centres political and economic privileges in order to respond better to their new role, which was that of mediators between local realities and central power.

<sup>8</sup> On urbanization and rural change during the Hellenistic period, see some examples in Musti 1979, 524–555 and passim; Bintliff & Snodgrass 1986, 145; Sinclair 1991, 107 and ns 135, 118; Green 1993, 382; Davis 1995, 394; Williams 1995, 71 and 86; Cartledge 1997, 10; Campanile 1998, 379; Alcock 1999, 167; Gallo 1999, 38; Shipley 2000, 31; id. 2002a, 190; id. 2005, 328; Cartledge & Spawforth 2002, 141–142; Billows 2003, 196–197 and passim; Coarelli 2009, 12–13; Oliver 2007, 77. On the political and social context of this period, see Gruen 1984; Kallet-Marx 1995. On the economy of Greek cities, see Rizakis 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Larsen 1938, 471–472; Bowersock 1965; Alcock 1993, 129–131, 141–45; Rizakis 1996, 256–257; id. 1997; id. 2009, 17–18 (Patrai); Purcell 1987 & Doukellis 1990 (Nikopolis); Böhme 1995, 42–75 (Athens), 76–82 (Sparta), 83–98 (Olympia), 99–124 (Corinth).



Figure 1. Roman foundations in Achaea, Epirus and Macedonia

Furthermore, by imperial decision some of them obtained a substantial increase in their cultivated lands and were endowed with complementary economic resources, through the attribution of remote territories of other cities that were now obliged to pay an annual tax (*vectigalia*) to the metropolitan city upon which they were dependent (*civitates adtributae*).<sup>10</sup> The territory of these *megapoleis* far exceeded the dimensions of an average Greek polis, and the expansion of their territory was frequently done at the expense of some small neighbouring cities, which were completely integrated in the new structure and became *komai* of the new polis.<sup>11</sup> The classical examples of this policy in Greece are those of the Augustan foundations of Patrai in old Achaia and of Nikopolis in Epirus.<sup>12</sup> In order to serve their new function, their demographic growth was encouraged or even imposed through the synoecism of the adjoining *komai*, or redistribution of the population by transferring inhabitants from one region to an urban nucleus in another region.<sup>13</sup> The migration process to some towns at the expense of the countryside went on during the Empire.

Rome did not take any measures to stop this trend, which contributed enormously to the deterioration of the balance between towns and their relationship to the countryside.<sup>14</sup> This situation led to a concentration of resources, with central encouragement, in some large urban centres.<sup>15</sup> The centralization of resources was founded on the creation of fewer, larger landholdings; hence the

<sup>10</sup> For the Augustan foundations of Patrai and Nikopolis, see Kahrstedt 1950; for the dependency of the Aitolian and Lokrian towns on Patrai in particular, and for its legal character, see Rizakis 1996, 279–285. For the dependencies of Sparta or Athens, see Rizakis 2012. On the nature of this dependency, see Laffi 1966; Biundo 2003, 131–142; ead. 2004, 371–436. This policy was followed by other emperors; cf. one of Hadrian's foundations, Hadrianopolis in Caria (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup>, 837), to which the Emperor granted the revenues from the neighboring territories; cf. Corbier 1991, 219.

<sup>11</sup> This spatial and administrative reorganization established a new hierarchy between the *metropolis* and the small communities which depended on her. This new relationship is explained by Laffi 1966; cf. Corbier 1991, 217–218.

<sup>12</sup> For Patrai, see Strabo VIII.7, 5; Pausanias VII. 7, 18; Kahrstedt 1950, 549–561; Alcock 1993, 160–164; Rizakis 1996, 279–285; id. 2009, 20–21; for Nikopolis in Epirus, see Strabo VII.7, 5; cf. X.2, 2; Pausanias V.23, 3; X. 38, 4; cf. Kahrstedt 1950, 549–561; Purcell 1987.

<sup>13</sup> Demographic growth of for example Nikopolis and Patrai was encouraged, at the beginning of the Imperial era: see Larsen 1975, 469–471; Alcock 1989b, 116; Alcock 1993, 96–117, 133–137; Purcell 1995; Rizakis 1996 and 2009, 19; Lafond 1993–94, 291. However, Corinth gained land but dramatically shrank (see Romano 2003; Bintliff 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Medium-sized urban centres also attracted minor members of the countryside's elite because they offered better possibilities; see Alcock 1989b, 111–112; Spawforth 1989b, 142. On the pre-Roman balance between town and country see *supra* n. 2. In Early Imperial Roman Italy the balance was reversed, to a 70%–30% rural to urban population ratio (de Graaf 2012). Future research will show whether this also occurred in other provinces such as those of Roman Greece.

<sup>15</sup> The tendency, known already from previous periods, for the larger cities to seek by one means or another to extend their influence over the smaller, continued under the Empire which favoured by various means the large urban centres; for example in Arkadia, on which see Roy 2008, 176–183.

growth of urbanization seems here to be linked to a drop in the number of rural sites. This is clearly the case for Patrai, Nikopolis and Corinth and may be for some other places<sup>16</sup> but it was not the general rule. In fact, in many cases, population decline, both urban and rural, continued even during the Early Empire. However, from the Middle Empire the countryside of some cities was at least filled up even more with villas, although the towns stayed stagnant; in the Late Empire ever larger villas appeared and towns shrunk even further.

This evolution, which we may describe as the centralisation of power and wealth, took place at the beginning of the imperial period, at the expense of the majority of minor centres, which had henceforward a completely marginal role, as they remained marginal to or even completely outside the new system. Only a minority of them continued to play a role as small regional centres (e.g. Aigion, Megalopolis, Sicyon, Tegea, Thespiai, Tanagra)<sup>17</sup> but the picture of the majority of the small cities was one of progressive decline. This may have been exaggerated by the contemporary literary sources that idealized their Classical past, but archaeological data confirmed it as a reality.<sup>18</sup> The new balance established by Augustus and his successors in the regional power foci proved to be successful, as shown by the fact that the list of major cities remained nearly unchanged until the end of Late Antiquity.<sup>19</sup>

### Written sources and archaeological data

The basic weakness of literary sources is their lack of interest in the countryside and more generally in the economy and economic activities; their approach is largely city-centred. Literary sources do not permit us easily to understand the complex relationship between town and country,<sup>20</sup> but recent studies, in particular of Strabo and Pausanias, have demonstrated their importance for the understand-

<sup>16</sup> It seems that the impact of Roman control on the non-urbanized mountainous area was the same as that studied in Samnium by Patterson (1991) as well as in the interior of Asia Minor. The pattern of contraction of a number of rural sites under the impact of Roman rule seems to emerge from a number of surveys in the eastern Mediterranean, as shown by Alcock 1989a.

<sup>17</sup> On Megalopolis, see Roy, Lloyd & Owens 1989.

<sup>18</sup> This is the case of the Aetolian (see Purcell 1987, 71-90; Buescher 1996, 145-153) and Peloponnesian cities (Baladié 1980, 301-320) but also of other more famous centres such as Thebes which survived as poleis but whose inhabited area was restricted to the acropolis (Kadmeia: Symeonoglou 1998, 148-155). This continuous decline of a number of small cities explains the diminution of the number of the poleis during the imperial period: see Alcock 1993, 89-90 and 145-148 with previous bibliography; ead. 2002.

<sup>19</sup> See the list offered by the *Synecdemus* of Hierocles; cf. Sanders & Whitebread 1990, 339, fig. 2 and 443 pl. 4; Avramea 1997, 107-119; Tausend 2006.

<sup>20</sup> On the nature of the sources and the problems of their interpretation, see Skydsgaard 1992, 9-12; Alcock 1993, 24-32.

ing of the political geography of that period, the topography of cities, and albeit in a more limited way, that of the countryside.<sup>21</sup> As for Plutarch, Dio, Aelius Aristides and others, modern analysis of their work has contributed to a better understanding of the mentalities of members of the the upper class, and of their social links to Roman aristocrats which were facilitated by the importance assigned to Greek *paideia* (education).<sup>22</sup>

Speaking stones, ‘*ῥηθηγόμενοι λίθοι*’ – i.e. original documents that conserve the collective memory of the past better than any other evidence<sup>23</sup> – could fill this lacuna, but unfortunately their quantity and quality are subject to fluctuations that are not always explained by the epigraphic habit of a particular area.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, epigraphy remains by and large primarily an urban phenomenon: very few inscriptions come from countryside contexts.

Traditional archaeology could offer more knowledge of the ancient rural world, but rural choices for excavations are not so attractive both to archaeologists and to those financing them. Moreover, although archaeological data (both from excavations and surveys) provide our only substantive new means of escaping ‘established assumptions and tired arguments’, as Alcock pointed out, the lack of broader synthetic studies deprives us of a more accurate picture of the countryside and its relation with the urban centres.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Baladié 1980. Interest in Pausanias was renewed in recent decades and his authority was re-established, in particular concerning his topographical descriptions, but also now more scholars noticed his low interest in the countryside (e.g. Achaia: Rizakis 1995, 52; on the contrary his interest in physical geography is better, Rizakis 1995, 52–53). On the limited interest of the authors of the Roman period for the changes introduced to the provincial landscape by Roman colonization and its impact on local populations, see Doukellis 2007, 302–321 (for the exceptions of Appian and Dio Cassius, see Guff 1983, 148; cf. Doukellis 2007, 316–319).

<sup>22</sup> On *paideia* as an element of identity, and as a *lingua franca* for the understanding between élites both in the East and the West, see Flinterman 1995, 90–91; Borg 2004, 9; for the important social role of *paideia* and its association with social status, see Whitmarsh 2001, 91–108; Drecoll 2004, 403–418.

<sup>23</sup> Already some ancient authors recognized the importance of epigraphy and used the testimony of written stones when needed. Dio Chrysostom’s statement (XXXI.159–160): ‘It is rather the stones which make manifest the dignity and greatness of Hellas’ is not a literary or rhetorical exaggeration. For the use of epigraphy by ancient writers, especially by Pausanias, see Habicht 1984; Whittaker 1991; Zizza 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Economic crisis or the weakness of civic institutions should be one other reason. So the Late Hellenistic period and the Early Empire are generally poor in epigraphic monuments; this is obvious when we get a look at Athenian decrees of the first period, published in *Athenian Agora* XVI = Woodhead 1997. In contrast, the number and the quality of the epigraphic documents become more important with the economic recovery of the cities and the stability of their institutions, during the High Empire, especially from the Flavians. This tendency becomes more pronounced in the 2nd century AD, as public spaces such as the agora become more monumental in appearance. A change also occurs now in the type of documents, the majority of which are private texts.

<sup>25</sup> Alcock 2007, 672–673, 673 n. 5.



### The new image of towns under the Empire

Up to the last few decades very few archeologists were interested in the period of 'Greek decay'. A typical symptom is the fact that, although the 2nd century AD, marked by the 'Greek Renaissance' of the famous Second Sophistic movement,<sup>26</sup> was very well investigated in contemporary scholarly literature, the domain of archaeology was far less explored. This was first pointed out by Walker and Cameron at the *International Colloquium on the Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire*, organized by the British Museum in 1989.<sup>27</sup> Although the majority of the papers presented at the colloquium concerned 2nd century artistic production in the provinces of Achaia, Epirus and Macedonia, the volume did not lack studies concerning Roman interventions in the public or religious space, as well as in the agonistic and social life of some cities.

But if our knowledge of material culture, for the 2nd century AD, has been continually ameliorated by new congresses and monographs, this has not been the case for the previous period. In terms of formal historical study, the Augustan and Julio-Claudian dynasties remain a neglected period for the Greek cities, at least in comparison with the period from the time of Hadrian onwards. The most important comprehensive historical studies of this period, for example for Athens and Greece in general, remain those by P. Graindor and G. Bowersock.<sup>28</sup> Fortunately things changed rapidly thanks to new monographs, those of Schmaltz and Spawforth,<sup>29</sup> and congresses focussed on that period. An important colloquium, held at the *École Française d'Athènes*, brought new material and new thoughts on this period.<sup>30</sup> Recent discoveries from Roman foundations in the province of Achaia and particularly from Macedonian cities<sup>31</sup> were presented and at the same time older findings were revisited or reinterpreted (e.g. from Athens, Argos, Sparta, Corinth, the Isthmus and Olympia).<sup>32</sup> This volume, in spite of a lack of data and contributions for the countryside, is the first serious attempt to illustrate this period, while the various contributions have been of great help in reconstructing our image of cities during the Late Hellenistic and Early Empire periods.

The majority of studies assembled by M. Hoff and S. Rotroff in the volume entitled *The Romanization of Athens* dealt with 1st century BC Athens.<sup>33</sup> The balance of the essays however tilts toward archaeology. We can also find some inter-

<sup>26</sup> Anderson 1993; Goldhill 2001.

<sup>27</sup> See the introductory remarks of Walker & Cameron 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Graindor 1927, 1930, 1931, 1934; Bowersock 1965.

<sup>29</sup> Schmaltz 2009; Spawforth 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Marc & Moretti 2001.

<sup>31</sup> See Marc & Moretti 2001, *passim*; cf. Marchetti 2001, 140 ns 21-22.

<sup>32</sup> See Marchetti 2001, 139-140 ns 15-16 and 18-20.

<sup>33</sup> Hoff & Rotroff 1997, reviewed by Kennell, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 1998.10.08



esting purely historical studies. Alcock's introductory essay<sup>34</sup> questions the value of the term 'Romanization' itself as an investigative tool, given the multiplicity of responses to Roman power.<sup>35</sup> Athens is also the focus of the studies presented in the colloquium organized by the Benaki Museum (2006) and published by S. Vlizos.<sup>36</sup> Archaeological data from recent excavations, presented on this occasion, brought new information and material for discussion in four domains: architecture, topography, sculpture and ceramics. Other publications of the same kind especially for Athens<sup>37</sup> and the new Italian edition of Pausanias, with the pertinent commentaries of D. Musti and M. Torelli,<sup>38</sup> fed novel material into the debate, which enriched our total picture of Athens, all of which were unfortunately missing in the earlier synthesis drawn up by D.J. Geagan.<sup>39</sup>

Recent years have seen a burgeoning of interest in other cities in the province of Achaia, Macedonia and Epirus. There are new monographs, congresses and collective works on sculptural production or fuller treatment concerning various aspects of the political, social, economic and cultural life of the Greek cities during the Early Empire. The focus of many new studies as well of thematic congresses in recent years has been on Peloponnesian cities.<sup>40</sup> I shall mention only two major collective works more closely connected with my paper: the first one is consecrated to the important production of sculpture in the Peloponnese; the region was dominated by Athenian artists and materials but local works were also produced, especially in more isolated parts like Laconia which also produced its own marble.<sup>41</sup> The 26 papers of the collective volume published by myself and C. Lepenioti concern architecture, building techniques, and the religious and cultural history of the Peloponnesian cities.<sup>42</sup> They shed light on the interaction between the Greek and Roman worlds, on the values which each professed and served, and on the various ways through which cities were integrated into the Roman system.

It is important to note that thanks to these studies our knowledge on cities and city life during the Early Empire has vastly improved. Although the first works of construction or reconstruction of important public or religious buildings had begun, in some rare cases, already in the Augustan period, the first major global urban projects date from the Flavian period. They concern the reorganization of

<sup>34</sup> Alcock 1997, 67-80.

<sup>35</sup> Hoff & Rotroff 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Vlizos 2008.

<sup>37</sup> See *Ostraka* 4, 1995, 9-190; cf. aussi Gros 2001, 127-140.

<sup>38</sup> Musti & Torelli 1986 (Corinthia and Argolis), Musti & Torelli 1991 (Laconia); cf. Marchetti 2001, 139.

<sup>39</sup> Geagan 1979.

<sup>40</sup> See Rizakis et al. 2001, 2004, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Palagia & Coulson 1993.

<sup>42</sup> Rizakis & Lepenioti 2010.

the agora in some cases (e.g. Athens and Sparta, Corinth, Argos, Olympia, Patrai) but also other public spaces like the gymnasium,<sup>43</sup> which now possessed greater significance. The economy continued to grow in the 2nd century through the development of agricultural production and a variety of industrial activities, some of which were not focussed solely on the city's population but were intended for export.<sup>44</sup> Thanks to a number of new regional studies we know better today the ceramic production for Athens,<sup>45</sup> Corinth,<sup>46</sup> Patrai,<sup>47</sup> Argos,<sup>48</sup> Olympia<sup>49</sup> and Sparta.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the recent synthesis of Monaco on the Athenian workshops<sup>51</sup> covers the ceramic workshops of the Roman period only partially, and we need more studies on other workshops and their ceramic production. The same can be said for imported ceramic vessels or glass objects,<sup>52</sup> although the numbers of such studies has been reinforced during recent years.<sup>53</sup>

The concentration of wealth from various agricultural, industrial and commercial activities for the first time made it possible to implement large-scale town planning interventions, water supply installations and the widespread construction of roads and harbours.<sup>54</sup> The economy being at its peak during the Antonine dynasty permitted wealth accumulation and a broader rise in demand for essential commodities as well as luxury goods. Towns benefitted particularly from this new prosperity, and a number of them improved their infrastructure, which gave them a monumental aspect unknown before.<sup>55</sup> New large agorai/fora, theatres, amphi-

<sup>43</sup> Spawforth 1989b, 193-197; cf. Walbank 1997 (Corinth); Marchetti 2001, 144-145; Eustathiadis 2010, 37-84 (Athens), 84-95 (Argos), 135-147 (Mantineia), 147-196 (Sparta), 212-252 (Corinth), 252-259 (Patrai).

<sup>44</sup> The most recent works on this theme are those of Kokkorou-Alevra (2001, 319-348) and of Fittschen (2008, 325-336); cf. also Fuchs 1959. The discovery of a great number of coins in many *villae rusticae* is the best proof that they were integrated into economic networks and the money-based economy. In this respect an analogy can be made with the large *villae rusticae* in Macedonia during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, in contrast with those in Attika and the Peloponnese in previous periods (Bresson 2007, 158-159).

<sup>45</sup> For Athens, see Rotroff 1997, 97-116; Burkhard Böttger 1992 and 2002; Hayes 2008a and 2008b, 439-447.

<sup>46</sup> I mention only the most recent publications on Corinthian pottery by Slane (1989, 2003, 2004, 2011), Petrides (1992) and Malfitana (2007).

<sup>47</sup> Petropoulos 1999; Hübner 1996, 1997, 2003, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> For Argos: Abadie-Reynal 1983, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Martin 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2011; Schauer 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Pickersgill & Roberts 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Monaco 2000.

<sup>52</sup> For Athens, see Stern 2008, 459-472.

<sup>53</sup> See now Willet 2012a.

<sup>54</sup> Although there is a vast range of individual studies on such developments, we lack an overall critical assessment on the civic or provincial economy. See, in general, Piérart 1976, 161.

<sup>55</sup> On the sea and land routes, see Miller 1964; Levi & Levi 1967; particularly for the Peloponnese, see Baladié 1980, 227-277.

theatres, music halls, baths, bridges, aqueducts<sup>56</sup> or luxurious private houses<sup>57</sup> are clear evidence not only of an accumulation of wealth in the towns but also of a kind of 'Romanization' of their public and private spaces.<sup>58</sup>

### The Greek countryside during the Early Imperial period

In spite of the progress accomplished during the last few decades, our knowledge of the countryside is really poor in comparison to the towns. This new knowledge is partly offered by the great number of surveys carried out in Greece,<sup>59</sup> in spite of recognized weaknesses in the methodology and the difficulties of interpretation of the data collected. Alcock was the first, in her *Graecia Capta*,<sup>60</sup> to present the preliminary results of the various surveys in the Greek peninsula and tried to raise historical conclusions from these new sources. Fifteen years later J. Bintliff did the same but in a wider Aegean context, followed by two more recent papers.<sup>61</sup> Like Alcock, he concluded that the overall picture 'confirms the Boeotian scenario with a general reduction in site numbers over the long-term from Classical Greek through later Hellenistic and Early Imperial times and frequently accompanying evidence for matching contraction at urban sites'.<sup>62</sup>

The pattern of settlement around any town should provide evidence of the nature of the interaction between urban and rural sites but if we wish to use our data to its full potential, 'we must use it', as Millet says, 'critically'.<sup>63</sup> Bintliff, correctly in my view, pointed out that the picture given by survey work in Greece

<sup>56</sup> For Augustan interventions in Athens, see Baldassari 1998 and 2001; Hoff 1989a, 1989b; Schmalz 1994. For Corinth, see Wiseman 1979, 509-532. For Sparta, see Spawforth 1989a, Appendix I, 216-225. For Patrai, Papapostolou 1991, 305-316. For Nikopolis, see Höpfner 1987, 129-133; Andreou 1987, 145-152; Vokotopoulou 1987, 135-144. For the 2nd century interventions, especially for Hadrian's reign, see Boatwright 2000, 83-157, 204-209.

<sup>57</sup> Alcock 1989b, 115-116; Bonini 2006; Wurmster 2008.

<sup>58</sup> The only real rupture in the urban landscape was that of new types of monuments which appeared now in the public space of some cities, although they were frequently integrated into the monumental centres; see, for Athens, Shear 1981, 361 and, for the Greek world in general, Reusser 2001; Gros 2001, 393-394. Even a conservative city like Sparta accommodated herself quickly with the new style of life 'à la romaine'; there is nothing which distinguishes in this point the city of Lycurgus from other imperial cities: see Spawforth 1989a, 143-144 and 160-175; Steinhauer 2010, 79.

<sup>59</sup> To the bibliography cited by Alcock 1993 must be added some recent survey publications: Rizakis et al. 1992 (western Achaia); Petropoulos & Rizakis 1994 (Patrai area); Jameson et al. 1994 (Southern Argolid); Mee & Forbes 1997 (peninsula of Methana); Cavanagh et al. 1996 and 2002 (Laconia); Forsén & Forsén 2003 (Asea/Arkadia); Wiseman & Zachos 2003 (Nikopolis); Lolos et al. 2011 (Sicyon); Bintliff et al. 2007 (Boeotia).

<sup>60</sup> Alcock 1993.

<sup>61</sup> Bintliff 1997, 2004a and 2008, 21-31.

<sup>62</sup> Bintliff 2008, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Millet 1991, 186.

is more complicated and presents some exceptions:<sup>64</sup> this is clear in the Phlius urban survey by Alcock who argues 'for an expansion of the city in Roman times linking this to the contemporary decline in rural sites of the region'.<sup>65</sup> A slightly different picture is offered by my own surveys (with the collaboration of M. Lacakis and M. Petropoulos)<sup>66</sup> in the Patrai lowland of Achaia, where the rural settlement numbers grow during the Early Imperial period, followed by a decline in Late Antiquity. It is noteworthy that at the same time Patrai itself grew in parallel with rural expansion. Bintliff rightly concludes that the take-off of the Patrai area is part of a different growth model to much of the Peloponnesus and central Greece examples.<sup>67</sup> The Patrai exception is to be explained, as I tried to show in many papers, by the foundation of the Roman colony in the area repopulated by the Roman colonists and people coming from neighboring but declining areas.<sup>68</sup>

For many discerning historians there are considerable difficulties in using survey data. Many question whether survey data have sufficient resolution for close-dating and socio-economic interpretations. Bintliff's opinion is that 'most surveys produce results which are poorly-suited to addressing historians' questions with accuracy.'<sup>69</sup> Shipley, in the Laconia survey volume,<sup>70</sup> expressly raises such doubts. This weakness of archaeological survey for chronological precision and short-term historical reconstruction was stressed by historians who, although accepting the importance of the work undertaken, prefer to privilege traditional sources.<sup>71</sup> Despite the controversy regarding the effectiveness of survey methods and interpretations, there is more a renewal of scholarly interest in economic history and the history of the countryside. More scholars are involved in recent decades in understanding better the permanent and deep links between people and the soil. Aspects that this involves include rural morphology, the structure of rural settlements or cultural systems and mental representations; these are completely new fields for classical archaeologists and historians and they are extremely promising for the future.

<sup>64</sup> Alcock 1991. For the case of Patrai, see Bintliff 2008, 24-25, but also Rizakis 1992; Petropoulos & Rizakis 1994; Rizakis 1994 and 2006, 101-110. In contrast, in the survey of part of Messenia by the PRAP team (Davis et al. 1997), we see 'a delayed takeoff in the rural site numbers till Hellenistic and Early Roman sites'.

<sup>65</sup> Alcock 1991 and fig. 19.

<sup>66</sup> Rizakis 1992; Petropoulos & Rizakis 1994; Rizakis 1994 and 2006, 101-110.

<sup>67</sup> Bintliff 2008, 24-25.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Rizakis 2009, 17-38 and 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Bintliff 2008, 25.

<sup>70</sup> Shipley 2002b, 334-336.

<sup>71</sup> See the critical remarks of Osborne 1996; Rousset 2004; Brunet 2007, 33-39.

### Remodelling space and introducing new rural strategies

The Roman conquest was followed by a period of instability in the Greek countryside and, in some cases, by new configurations of ownership and tenancy and possible changes in agricultural strategies.<sup>72</sup> These revolutionary changes are visible in the case of the Roman foundations (44-16/5 BC), but much less so in the peregrine or free cities. The installation in the former of Roman colonists or other populations (in the case of Patrai in the north-western Peloponnese and Nikopolis in Epirus)<sup>73</sup> led to the remodelling of spatial organization - responding to the needs of the new situation - which required the confiscation and redistribution of landholdings, radically changing previous economic and social structures.<sup>74</sup> The discovery of such kinds of rural reorganisation is made possible by the analysis of vertical aerial photographs or remote sensing techniques, the interpretation of which requires an advanced experience of this kind of method. We can here mention studies on the territory of the Roman colonies of Patrai and Dyme in the north-western Peloponnese, for Corinth and for Nikopolis<sup>75</sup> but the extraordinary progress of technology and the discovery of new important finds require a re-examination of these patterns in the landscape in combination with settlement networks and other forms of rural installations uncovered by archaeology (e.g. *villae*).

A telling sign of the changes in the Greek landscape is the appearance of a novel type of farm, the *villa rustica*, of the new elite landowners. This model appeared for the first time in the 1st century AD; after the crisis of the 3rd century it was revived again during the 4th century AD.<sup>76</sup> Until recently our understanding of the spread of these structures has been imperfect, but the various papers that were presented at the international conference held at Patrai and published recently (2013),<sup>77</sup> have in my opinion clarified the incoherent picture. What we can say, is that the spread of these rural establishments in the Greek landscape varied considerably in size and elaboration, reflecting not only political, economic and social variation, but also deliberate displays of wealth.

<sup>72</sup> For this question, see now Rizakis 2013.

<sup>73</sup> For Patrai, see Rizakis 2009; for Nikopolis, see Purcell 1987.

<sup>74</sup> This situation required a new organisation according to Roman practice, which is by the geometric division of land, whose most common type is the *centuriatio* (20 x 20 *actus*).

<sup>75</sup> A full bibliography concerning these studies is cited in Doukellis 2002; id. 2007, 302 n. 5 and more recently in Rizakis 2010, 12 n. 49.

<sup>76</sup> See Petropoulos 1994; the *villae rusticae* appear in Italy much earlier, in the 2nd century BC, see Harris 2007, 525. 68 (i.e. 39 %) of the *villae* of the countryside of Patrai are identified as Roman by Petropoulos (1994) and 45 (i.e. 26%) as Late Roman. Bintliff (2012, 318) has recently suggested that this phenomenon began with the settlement by the Macedonians of elite estates in conquered territories in Greece and then further afield, i.e. in Hellenistic times, suiting other economic changes towards proto-capitalism that developed in the Hellenistic era.

<sup>77</sup> Rizakis & Touratsoglou 2013.

This new type of farmhouse that sometimes coexists with traditional forms of rural settlement (i.e. small farms or grouped villages), implied a novel agricultural strategy, and a new fashion for ostentation of wealth and power in the Greek countryside. The spread of the *villa rustica* is in short indicative of a new relationship between the countryside and the city. This new kind of rural exploitation, which appeared most often in the countryside of the colonies, and in that of other large cities, can be associated with the introduction of new crops and the specialisation or intensification of production, primarily in the suburban zones of some colonies or large cities.<sup>78</sup> They served the food supply needs of large urban centres (colonies, peregrine or free cities) in the most efficient way.<sup>79</sup>

The situation in the majority of small and middle-sized Greek cities is different. Land division and land ownership follow in these cases completely different pathways. Certainly, concentration of land into the hands of the local aristocrats started in the Hellenistic era<sup>80</sup> and this tendency was reinforced during the Empire, but there is no massive and abrupt alienation of property into foreign hands during the late Hellenistic and the Early Empire.<sup>81</sup> In fact, there is a regional and intra-regional variation in landowning which is obvious and confirmed both by the material evidence and by written sources. In many areas villas of Roman type coexisted with traditional small rural farms that continued to use long-established agricultural strategies.<sup>82</sup> This means that land division and land ownership did not suffer, in some cases, radical changes during the Roman Empire.

<sup>78</sup> Alcock 1993, 80-85. On crops, see Baladié 1980, 175-185. We do not know to what extent technological advances made agriculture more profitable; cf. Greene 2000, 29-59.

<sup>79</sup> Intensification of agricultural activities can also be observed in the countryside of large cities (e.g. Sparta, Athens) with the aim of providing a better food from small single farmstead-based to estate-based structures run by human labor dependent on an élite resident in the polis; see Spawforth 1989a, 170. It is generally believed that the yield and productivity of the agricultural economy during both Antiquity and the Middle Ages were relatively low (1:4); see Bresson 2007, 176-178. Even so, it is certain that in some periods, e. g. the Imperial period, profit was much higher than at other times. There is also a general opinion that increasingly wider markets were opened up than just Greece alone, in wine and oil as well as fish preserves, for Greek exports (Rizakis 2013, 37-39 with previous bibliography).

<sup>80</sup> On this question, see Will 1975, 554-565; Ste Croix 1981, 518-521, 523-529. On the social conflicts during the Late Hellenistic period, see Briscoe 1967; Fuks 1974, 40-51; Alcock 1993, 72-73 and n. 51 with further references on this question.

<sup>81</sup> Rostovtzeff's opinion (1972, 1114) that elites became, already since the Hellenistic period, more dominant agrees with recent regional studies: see Roy et al. 1989, 146-150 (Megalopolis); Lloyd 1991, 180-193 (Arkadia); Kahrstedt 1954, 220-234; Davis et al. 1997, 456-457 (Messenia); Alcock 1998, 179-191 (Messenia); Forsell 1996, 336 (Argolis); Shipley 2002, 185.

<sup>82</sup> Foxhall 2004. According to Mee & Forbes (1997) the small farms of Methana were tenant farms on large estates, but this is difficult to prove. It is the same with Boeotia where according to the Boeotia Project (cf. Bintliff et al. 2007) landscapes show a massive disappearance of small farms, and the rise of villas, despite the absence of colonies. Nonetheless the considerable evidence of Italian presence in the Boeotian towns (see Müller 2002) cannot be used as a further argument, because it

### Concluding remarks

The administrative measures of Augustus and his successors brought changes to the political geography of the peninsula, imposing the dominance of certain *metropoleis*, as well as the spatial re-distribution of population and wealth. These changes had an impact on the political and social hierarchy as well as on the relationship between the cities and their *chora*. During the period of freedom this relationship had been relatively equal (balanced), but now a new hierarchical structure was established, with the aim of transferring the agricultural surplus of the countryside to the areas where power was concentrated, and where the privileged social groups resided.<sup>83</sup>

These urban centres should not be seen as merely parasitic on the countryside because various manufacturing activities were developing there during this period (metallurgy and textile production, leather, clay, production of luxury goods such as perfumes) and it is likely that this range of production did not only supply the territory around the town but was distributed within a broader network of exchange.<sup>84</sup> Certainly this is not a general model. We know that Weber's three categories of 'consumer city', 'producer city', and 'trading city' are ideal types and many actual historical societies have elements of all three types.<sup>85</sup> What is certain is that the administrative and spatial changes introduced during the imperial period changed the economic conditions and the agricultural strategies; the aim was, in some cases now, not only the subsistence economy but also the exportation of a significant part of the production.<sup>86</sup> This situation creates an increasing inequality between town and country, which is obvious in the tax-system of the state, the *census*, because the basis of the assessment rested essentially on land as the primary sector of the economy.<sup>87</sup> As the collection of taxes due to the central

dates mostly from the Late Hellenistic period and we know that many Thespian *negotiatores* emigrated to Corinth in the years after 44 BC (see Spawforth 1996, 172).

<sup>83</sup> Alcock 1993, 117–118; Bintliff 2004b, 216 (for Boeotia).

<sup>84</sup> The model of the 'consumer city' (on the concept, see Rich & Wallace-Hadrill 1991, *XV–XVII*) is preferred by some scholars (see Hopkins 1983, XII–XIII; Horden & Purcell 2000, 105–108) but is criticized by many others (see Mattingly & Salmon 2001; cf. Hansen 2006, 90–95; Bresson 2007, 199). Engels (1990) also challenges this model and presents, for Corinth, an alternative one, that of the 'service city'; see now for Corinth, however, Willet 2012b, 127–158.

<sup>85</sup> See Weber 1920–1921, 67. Hansen 2006, 90–97 prefers Weber's model to that of the ruling orthodoxy (i.e. Finley's theory) that the typical polis had a 'subsistence economy' (Finley 1973, 138; Hopkins 1983, XI; Kolb 1984, 74–75; Davies 1992, 19–20; id. 1998, 237–238).

<sup>86</sup> As was pointed out to me by John Bintliff (pers. com.), the territory of centres like Corinth (140 ha), or Nikopolis (130 ha) is vastly greater than that required to feed those cities; such vast land holdings must have been designed as much for 'capitalistic' agriculture for export, although this matter still requires more attention (for the large *villae rusticae* excavated in the countryside of the cities of this period, see Rizakis & Touratsoglou 2013).

<sup>87</sup> Ulpian, *Digest*, 50, 15, 4.



state relied on the city's ruling class, towns made a profit from their collection, and they also imposed on the countryside more or less exceptional levies such as requisitions of grain. In fact we observe an increasing accumulation of wealth in the hands of a landowning urban elite that went together with growing rural misery.<sup>88</sup> This exploitative relation is visually expressed, as Wallace-Hadrill has observed,<sup>89</sup> by the aqueducts which 'siphoned off the resources of the land into the urban centre' to feed the baths where the imported water acts as a focus of sociability, and as a symbol of the 'washed' and civilized way of life that rejects the stench of the countryman.<sup>90</sup>

The urban expansion of some cities and their monumental infrastructure as suggested by excavations indicate their development and wealth. The economic conditions which prevailed during the Empire gradually but inexorably changed the relationship between city and countryside in favour of the former where the privileged groups lived. The impressive picture of some cities is reflected in Pausanias' descriptions – he visited them just after the middle of the 2nd century AD – and is confirmed by the surviving remains and the more recent archaeological findings. This image of grandeur and wealth, reflecting the ostentatious nature of the local ruling class as well as the prosperity and generosity of the empire,<sup>91</sup> is in complete contrast to the picture of abandonment and decline of the small centres. This contrast is clearly due to the downgrading of their political and economic role since the beginning of the imperial period which further widened the chasm that separated them from the privileged large centres. If some minor centres survived and

<sup>88</sup> See Jongman 1991, 85–95. Martin 1971, 372–273 thought that the peasant's situation was not worsened during this period, but the distance, which separated them now from the wealthy landowners, was enormous, although this is difficult to show on the basis of present evidence. The historical sources hint at a continual wealth gap and survey evidence often shows the decline of small farmers and the eating up of land by villa estates (Bintliff, pers. com.).

<sup>89</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1991, X. The formula is due to Mireille Corbier (1991, 234) who observed that this situation profited more cities' 'powerful men', i.e. the great landowners unlike the small cultivators who were certainly the losers (see details on these inequalities between town and country in Corbier 1991, 224–236).

<sup>90</sup> According to Williams (1995, 87): 'The emergence of an urbanized and urbane upper class with more luxurious, expensive and sophisticated tastes emphasized the rift between them and the poor, hard-working, uncouth peasants', but this is a phenomenon which appears already in the Hellenistic period. The same author (Williams 1995, 94) defines this class as an 'urbanized oligarchy of wealth, leisure, and culture'.

<sup>91</sup> The wealthy, powerful families would gather in the large urban centres, which benefitted primarily from the redistribution of land and wealth (Alcock 1993, 114–115 and 160–164). The adornment of the cities was made possible also due to the fact that now the provincial tribute was not destined to finance the elite's power but streamed into the fisc and partly came back to the cities in the form of imperial gifts. The ideal of the *princeps euergetes*, the emperor as benefactor (see Aristid., *Or. to Rome* 98–99), functioned as a prime example to be followed by local aristocrats. Imperial generosity was most evident under Hadrian and his immediate successors, see Boatwright 2000, 204–209; for Asia Minor, see Pont 2010.

experienced a renaissance in the 2nd century,<sup>92</sup> the majority of small cities suffered a continuous decline or even utter abandonment.<sup>93</sup> This contrasting image between large privileged centres and small towns, between city and country, in general, combined with the advantages offered by city life, intensified the existing trend of urbanisation and the gradual abandonment of the countryside, exacerbating the phenomenon of the *agri deserti*<sup>94</sup> for small marginalised communities in particular and the growth of animal husbandry in areas such as Arkadia, where Dio Chrysostom observed huge territories empty of people where the only activity was husbandry.

When the economic balance was altered, notably in the inflationary process experienced by the Empire at the end of the 2nd century AD and beginning of the 3rd, municipal responsibilities, obligatory and voluntary and in principle an element of prestige, became too much to bear and many tried to abandon them.<sup>95</sup> The transient recovery noted in many Peloponnesian cities during the 4th century AD did not last long,<sup>96</sup> and the 6th century AD brought an end to antiquity, as after this period most Greek cities were to disappear forever from the political map of the peninsula.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Only Megalopolis, Mantinea and Tegea in Arkadia stood out, although they never developed into large centres. On the depopulation of the territory of many Greek towns, see the critical approach to the literary sources taken by Alcock 1993, 24-32; for the archaeological evidence, see Alcock 1993, 40-46. For the devastation of Arkadia, see Larsen 1975, 472-74; Baladić 1980, 316-320 (towns which disappeared and those which survived on the basis of numismatic evidence from the period).

<sup>93</sup> Depopulation and apparent abandonment is still observed, at the end of the 1st century AD in Dio Chrysostom's *Euboean Discourse* (7. 34-6). Although this oration is a fiction, the description reflects the rural desolation, in some places in the Early Empire: 'a wilderness because of neglect and lack of population' which partly can be explained by the growth in estate size and by a greater concentration of land ownership, probably in part at the expense of smaller proprietors: 'I too own many acres, as I imagine some others do, not only in the mountains but also on the plains, and if anybody would till them, I should not only give him the chance for nothing but gladly pay money besides'.

<sup>94</sup> On this matter, see Whittaker 1976, 137-207. Bintliff (2004b, 216) observed that land use levels in Early Imperial and Late Antique Boeotia, were only half or less of those of the Classical era. However, the fact that the associated towns had also shrunk by a similar percentage or even disappeared (e.g. Haliartos) opens up issues of overall depopulation but also of streamlining of urban functions for lesser Greek cities.

<sup>95</sup> MacMullen 1964, 49-53.

<sup>96</sup> Political, economic and social changes introduced during Late Antiquity were beneficial in re-peopling some Greek countryside; we observe a peak in the number and size of rural sites which means demographic development or population moving from the towns to country; see Alcock 1993, 48; Pettegrew 2007. Bintliff et al. 2007, however, showed that the rise in the number and size of villa sites is illusory, at least for Boeotia (e.g. in the chora of Thespieae), as the villa estates were large but almost empty of personnel.

<sup>97</sup> On the collapse of the villa system (Liebeschuetz 2002, 232-243) and the decay if not the disappearance from the map of many cities after this period, see generally Poulter 2002, 244-259 and, for Greece, Avramea 1997 (Peloponnese); Morisson & Sodini 2006, 310-312 (with complete previous bibliography); Saradi 2006.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank warmly John Bintliff, Onno van Nijf and John Appleseed for their valuable remarks and for revising my English. Any remaining shortcomings are my responsibility alone.

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