

## **Resilience and reconciliation: democracy in crisis and repair across history**

Democracy is often praised for its resilience — its capacity to weather crises, adapt, and regenerate. But resilience is not always linear or redemptive; it may involve periods of rupture, reassembly, or even hollow continuity through democratic façades. From classical Athens to postwar Europe to the global South, democratic endurance has required both structural recalibration and social reckoning. This round table will explore how democratic institutions and cultures withstand breakdown — and whether they genuinely recover, evolve, or become something else entirely. Rather than treating reconciliation as the sole pathway to democratic renewal, we examine a broader spectrum of mechanisms — legal, cultural, symbolic, institutional — that shape and challenge the very idea of democratic resilience.

Bringing together scholars from history, archaeology, political theory, anthropology, gender studies and philosophy, we ask: What makes a democracy resilient, and at what cost? Can resilience conceal regression or co-optation? Is resilience always desirable — or can it entrench flawed or exclusionary systems? In an era of global democratic backsliding and renewed civil conflict, examining historical forms and failures of democratic survival becomes urgent. The Northern European institutes in Athens, with their cross-disciplinary and transnational networks, are ideally positioned to explore these questions across the long durée — from ancient civic practices to modern institutions and transitional frameworks. Among the analytical anchors we will explore:

- **Resilience beyond repair:** How do political communities maintain or reinvent democratic forms after rupture or collapse — and whose participation or voices are restored or excluded in this process, including along gendered lines??
- **Institutions under reconstruction:** When transitions preserve the appearance of democracy, who drives this process, and to what ends? What roles do leadership, charisma, and legitimacy play?
- **The limits of forgetting:** If institutional learning fades, is there any democracy left at all? Does forgetting risk suppressing justice in the name of stability?
- **Material and symbolic resilience:** How do civic architecture, monuments, rituals and archives embody – or manipulate – narratives of continuity and democratic renewal?
- **Models of compromise:** What can Northern European traditions of negotiation, tolerance and dissent reveal about the endurance and mythologies of democratic consensus?
- **Post-democracy and its ghosts:** Are there political forms that outlive democracy in name but not in substance? What traces of democratic culture persist in their wake?