

The Proper Share: The Language of Citizenship, Participation, and Enfranchisement in Classical Greece

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ABSTRACT:

This chapter argues that the vocabulary of “sharing in the *polis*” and “sharing in the *politeia*” was central to classical Greek ways of conceptualising citizenship, political participation, and enfranchisement. Focusing especially on late fifth- and fourth-century Athens, it traces how verbs such as *metechein* and *meteinaí* were used to mark civic belonging, exclusion, and access to political rights. It shows that participatory concepts were crucial to Greek ideas of citizenship, and that sharing in the “affairs” of the *polis* could express a direct form of political participation. Far from being merely descriptive, this vocabulary functioned as normative political parlance through which speakers articulated who had a proper share in the city-state, its constitution, and its political life.

KEYWORDS: citizenship; participation; *polis*; *politeia*; Athens.

Already some forty years ago, Robert K. Sinclair observed in his *Democracy and Participation in Athens* that “[t]he idea of participation or sharing is central to Greek thought and writing about citizenship and political life”,¹ which he substantiated with a range of classical sources. In recent years, both participation and citizenship in Greece—and in Athens specifically—have once again become the focus of lively scholarly debate, to which the chapters in this volume make substantive new contributions. This debate has focused on how to

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1 Sinclair 1988, xi; cf. 23: “The wider span of the period from the middle of the fifth century to 322 enables a keener appreciation of the central concept in the relationship between the individual citizen and democracy. That concept is the notion of sharing or participation. It was central to Athenian (and Greek) thinking and writing about citizenship and the life of the polis”.

understand the foundations of classical citizenship, whether primarily in terms of descent, social activities, and civic cult, or in explicitly legal, political, and participatory terms.²

This chapter argues that the expressions such as “sharing in the *polis*” and “sharing in the *politeia*” were crucial to Greek conceptions of citizenship and civic identity and, from the late fifth century BCE onwards, regularly denoted political participation. It traces the political meanings of the “sharing” vocabulary down to the end of the classical period, showing how it is used to mark civic belonging, participation, and enfranchisement. The discussion focuses on the political uses of verbs and expressions of “having” and “being given” a share, such as *metechtein*, *meteinai*, *metallambanein*, and *metadidonai*, and the objects of these shares, particularly the *polis*, the *politeia*, and *ta (politika) pragmata*. In doing so, it treats this language not merely as a descriptive register but as a normative grammar for inclusion and exclusion: a way of articulating what counts as a “proper” portion of civic standing, participation, and political rights in a changing constitutional landscape. In what follows I begin with the earliest political and explicitly civic attestations of “having a share” as a criterion of belonging, before tracing its use in periods of crisis and in fourth-century disputes over status and enfranchisement.

1. Early texts and early laws

As I have argued elsewhere, the language of “having a share” or “taking part” was already well established in Greek long before it became tied to political, cultic, and other specialised uses.³ At the same time, early non-civic uses concerned with power and distribution already show how readily this language could be linked to authority, entitlement, and the allotment of both tangible portions and more abstract claims. In Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women*, Melampus receives a share in Proetus’ kingdom (“they [came] to Argos, [to godly Proetus], where he gave them a share [...] an allotment”, tr. G.W. Most; cf. Hdt. 9.34).⁴ In the fifth century, a Pindaric paean tells of Euxantius refusing to “rule over the Cretans... and to share a seventh part of one hundred cities with the sons of Pasiphaë”.⁵

2 See esp. Blok 2017, with Fröhlich 2016 [2017]; developed further by contributions to Duploux, Brock 2018, Filonik *et al.* 2023, Cecchet, Lasagni 2025; cf. the conclusions below, with n. 60.

3 Cf. Filonik 2022; 2023; 2025a for the earlier semantic history and non-political uses of this terminology; forthcoming (b) on its reemergence in political slogans around 404/3 BCE. See also Appendix, *s.v. metechō*.

4 Hes. fr. 35 = 37 MW, ll. 10–12. See Erdas 1997 on this fragment and land assignment practices of the period. Cf. n. 19 below.

5 Pind. fr. 52d, 37–38 Maehler (= *paean* 4): λόγο[ν ἄν]ακτορ Εὐξαν[τίου | ἐπαίνεσα [Κρητ]ῶν μαιομένων δς ἀνα[ίνετο | αὐταρχεῖν, πολίων δ’ ἑκατὸν πεδέχει[ν | μέρος ἔβδομον Πασιφ[ά]ας (σὸν) υἱ- | οἴσι (tr. W.H. Race).

A wide spectrum of non-political applications of the “sharing” vocabulary is attested across lyric, tragedy, comedy, and technical prose.⁶ Here, however, I move directly to the Athenian sources and explicitly civic contexts in which these terms develop their clearest and most abundant participatory senses.

The earliest attested use of this language with reference to the *polis* specifically, already in a participatory context, comes from the early sixth-century Solonian neutrality law, which according to *Ath. Pol.* 8.5 stated: “if, when the city was torn by strife, anyone should refuse to place his arms at the disposal of either side (ὅς ἂν στασιαζούσης τῆς πόλεως μ[ὴ] θῆται τὰ ὄπλα μηδὲ μεθ’ ἐτέρων), he should be outlawed and have no share in the city (ἄτιμον εἶναι καὶ τῆς πόλεως μὴ μετέχειν)” (= fr. 38a R.-L., tr. Rhodes).

The concept of “neutrality” is similarly reflected in Athenian court speeches, where failure to take a side can be framed as a failure properly to share in the *politeia* or in the city’s misfortunes.⁷ There remain, of course, doubts about how “Solonian” particular laws cited in fourth-century texts really were, given their later revision and rhetorical exploitation,⁸ but the distributive and participatory framing is not without archaic parallels. First, a fragment of Solon’s poem mentions refusing to grant an “equal share” (ἰσομοιρίην) of land to the lower strata of society (29b G.-P. = 34 W. ap. *Ath. Pol.* 12.3).⁹ Second, we know that the verb *metechein* (Aeol. *pedechein*) was already used in archaic lyric poetry, which Solon would have been familiar with.¹⁰ Finally, Aristophanes in his *Birds* of 414 BCE uses the “sharing” (μετεῖναι) terminology to paraphrase Solonian inheritance law,¹¹ later explicitly cited in fourth-century speeches (starting with Isae. 6.25).¹² Whether this reflects an early formulation or a later paraphrase is difficult to determine, but it already shows how the loss of civic standing could be articulated through the concept of “having no share in the *polis*” (and linked to *atimia*).

6 E.g., Sappho fr. 55.2-3 (no share in the “roses of Pieria”); Eur. *El.* 605-7 (sharing in good and bad fortune); Ar. *Ecl.* 582, 590 (sharing in good reputation and in common property); Hippoc. *Nat. Hom.* 7.37-38 (shares of the elements in the body); Xen. *Oec.* 9.12-16 (sharing in pleasures and labours). See Filonik 2025a for a detailed analysis of all such attestations; cf. n. 10 below.

7 See Lys. 31.5-10, 32-33, Isoc. 16.40, Aeschin. 3.191, Lycurg. 1.133, 142, cf. Lys. 16.3, 24.25, 18.19, 25.

8 The issue of the law’s authenticity keeps being debated; see esp. Ruschenbusch 1966, 82-83 and 2014², 76, Goldstein 1972, Bers 1975, Develin 1977, Fritz 1977, David 1984, Pecorella Longo 1988, Rhodes 1993², 157, Gabba 1994, Maffi 2005, Teegarden 2014b, Leão, Rhodes 2015, 63-66, Goušchin 2016, Valdés Guía 2021.

9 Cf. Rosivach 1992 on possible different interpretations.

10 See Filonik 2025a on the use in Sappho (fr. 55.2-3, cf. 63.5 Voigt) and Alcaeus (fr. 70.3), and later Theognis (1.81, 351-59 Young) and Pindar (*Pyth.* 2.81ff); cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 540.

11 Ar. *An.* 1649: τῶν γὰρ πατρώων οὐδ’ ἀκαρῇ μέτεστί σοι, 1660-66: Ἐρῶ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Σόλωνός σοι νόμον... ἐὰν δὲ παῖδες μὴ ᾧσι γνήσιοι, τοῖς ἐγγυάτω γένους μετεῖναι τῶν χρημάτων.

12 See Griffith-Williams 2023 on Solon’s inheritance law in fourth-century inheritance cases.

The *Ath. Pol.*, when discussing Pericles' citizenship law, first states the stipulation that "a man should not have a share in the *polis* if not born of citizen parents on both sides (μὴ μετέχειν τῆς πόλεως, ὃς ἂν μὴ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἀστοῖν ἢ γεγονώς)",¹³ and soon after rephrases the requirement as "having a share in the *politeia*" when it says "The present form of the constitution is as follows. Men belong to the *politeia* if they are of citizen parentage on both sides... (μετέχουσιν μὲν τῆς πολιτείας οἱ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων γεγονότες ἀστῶν)".¹⁴ Such parallelism suggests that the distinction between "sharing in the *polis*" and "sharing in the *politeia*" may often be one of contextual emphasis rather than substance (cf. *Ath. Pol.* 21.2 on Cleisthenes, 36.1 on Theramenes; see also 13.5, 37.1).¹⁵ Indeed, as argued by Jacqueline Bordes, *politeia* in classical Greek has a wide semantic range, spanning constitutional arrangements and government as well as civic status and political rights, and more broadly the life and practice of politics in the city.¹⁶ Throughout this chapter, I thus treat *polis* and *politeia* primarily as emic (the Greeks' own) labels whose overlap is itself historically meaningful: in many contexts the choice between them signals a shift of rhetorical emphasis (community, status, institutions) rather than a stable conceptual boundary. Both passages arguably address two different framings (diachronic first, synchronic second), but in each case, the *Ath. Pol.* paraphrases the same law in different terms in successive contexts, varying not only between *polis* and *politeia* but also in the formulation of citizen parentage (with a shift in number from dual to plural), while possibly still retaining some of the law's original language.

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* of 411 BCE seems to allude to the law when the chorus leader says she has her claim to the *polis*—framed as a joint loan (*eranos*)¹⁷—as a result of contributing new men-soldiers to it as a mother (*Lys.* 651: Τοῦράνου γὰρ μοι μέτεστι· καὶ γὰρ ἄνδρας εἰσφέρω), with an accompanying dig at wartime taxes (*eisphora*).

13 [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 26.4 Chambers = 26.3 Oppermann: καὶ τρίτῳ μετὰ τοῦτον ἐπὶ Ἀντιδότου διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πολιτῶν Περικλέους εἰπόντος ἔγνωσαν μὴ μετέχειν τῆς πόλεως, ὃς ἂν μὴ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἀστοῖν ἢ γεγονώς ("In the third year after this, during the archonship of Antidotus, after Pericles put forward the proposal owing to the great number of citizens, [the Athenians] passed a law saying that a man should not have a share in the *polis* if he had not been born from both citizen parents", tr. mine).

14 [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.1, tr. adapted from P.J. Rhodes; cf. Patterson 1981, 151-74 on the language.

15 Cf. Patterson 1981, 169: "By the end of the fifth century the two phrases seem to be used interchangeably".

16 Bordes 1982 (see esp. p. 13: "En effet, *politeia*, loin de correspondre exactement à notre expression 'régime politique', a, en grec ancien, une portée beaucoup plus large et des acceptions diverses: constitution, organisation politique, vie politique, politique (de la cité), république, démocratie, pouvoir politique, gouvernement, droit de cité, droits politiques, politique (du citoyen); telles sont, avec celle de 'régime', les valeurs approximatives possibles que l'on trouve parfois côte à côte dans un même texte"); cf. n. 37 below.

17 On *eranos*, see Arnaoutoglou 2003, 70-87, Harris 2006, 333-54, Faraguna 2012, Thomsen 2015 (171 on Ar. *Lys.* 651); on the *eranos* metaphors, see Millett 1991, 154-55, Liddel 2007, 141-43.

2. Prose and drama of the Peloponnesian war

If early legal formulations already cast “having a share” as a criterion of civic inclusion, the prose and drama of the Peloponnesian war show the same concept at work in living political discourse: marking belonging and exclusion, and staging claims to civic standing in moments of crisis. If the commonly accepted emendation is correct, this language of “sharing” is already used in a clearly political context—exile and the loss of status in one’s city—in Euripides’ *Children of Heracles* from 430 BCE. Here, Iolaus, speaking as an Argive exile and a suppliant in Athens, explains that by a collective decision, the suppliants *no longer have a share in Argos* but are now exiles (185-86: Ἄργους οὐ μέτεσθ’ ἡμῖν ἔτι, ψήφῳ δοκῆσαν, ἀλλὰ φεύγομεν πάτρην),¹⁸ and thus essentially non-citizens (189: ξένοι γάρ ἐσμεν). Around the same time, Sophocles’ Creon tells Oedipus that he, too, has a share in the *polis* (OT 630: καὶ μοι πόλεως μέτεστιν, οὐχὶ σοὶ μόνῳ).

The specifically political collocations of “having a share” also include references to public activities, offices, honours, and variously phrased claims to (equal) political rights. Continuing the earlier Greek phraseology of “equal shares”,¹⁹ Euripides’ Theseus emphasised in 423 BCE that Athens is ruled by the *dēmos* and that the poor have their equal share in the *polis* and equal access to justice (*Supp.* 406-8, 429-34; cf. fr. 362.7-8). A prayer in Euripides’ lost unnamed drama additionally invokes having a share in the rule of the underworld (fr. 912.8 TrGF: χθονίων θ’ Ἄϊδη μετέχεις ἀρχῆς).

Most famously, Thucydides’ Pericles uses the language of “sharing” to mark direct civic engagement (2.40.2), emphasising that the Athenians are deeply concerned with both private (οἰκεῖα) and public (πολιτικά) affairs, and that they alone regard those who do not share in public matters not merely as quietists but as truly useless (μόνοι γὰρ τὸν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ’ ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν).²⁰ Here, “sharing” refers to political activity, not least at popular assemblies (καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικά μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι), with the subtle play on the *erga-logoi* opposition, also echoed in Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.7).²¹ The same phrasing in the speech underpins equality before the law in private disputes (2.37.1: μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον).²² Thucydides elsewhere applies this lexis to the

18 Allan 2001, 147 *ad loc.* rightly notes that ψήφῳ here must mean the tyrant’s decision, not a popular vote. As Wilkins 1995, 76 notes, Dobree’s emendation to οὐ μέτεσθ’ corrects a clear MS error of repetition from the preceding verse (184 οὐδὲν ἐστὶν—185 οὐδὲν ἔσθ’).

19 See Borecký 1965; Filonik 2025a; cf. Seaford 2004, Filonik 2023, Malkin, Blok 2024 on cultural implications and archaic (also Homeric) phraseology.

20 On quietism in Athens, see Kleve 1964, Dover 1974, 187-90, Lateiner 1982, Carter 1986, Bearzot 2007c, 121-40.

21 Cf. Parry 1981, 166.

22 See Canevaro 2023, 136-38 and Iglesias-Zoido 2020 and 2022 on this passage. See also Filonik forthcoming (c) on Thuc. 2.39-40.

extension of full franchise to colonies,²³ to equal military leadership among city-states in joint expeditions,²⁴ and to the giving or receiving of a share in benefits (8.21) and citizen rights (3.55.3: *πολιτείας*, below).

Even more notably, in Book 6, Athenagoras of Syracuse contrasts democracy with oligarchy in openly distributive terms: oligarchy merely gives the many a share in dangers while the few seize the benefits (Thuc. 6.39.2).²⁵ The democratic ideal of “equal sharing” (*ἰσομοιρεῖν*, 39.1) is then made gradable when he says that “the good” among the wealthy (*οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ὑμῶν*) ought to “have an equal or even greater share” in the city (40.1: *καὶ ἴσον καὶ πλεόν... μετασχεῖν*, cf. 2.37.1, 3.42.5-6).²⁶ How far this reflects specifically Syracusan political terminology rather than a more widely shared democratic register is debatable.²⁷ What is clear, however, is that the language of political rights and participation was rapidly crystallising in this period.²⁸ In Athens, this development is particularly visible after 403 BCE, as the reconciliation and amnesty provided a context in which such terminology could gain prominence in the Athenian political discourse.²⁹

3. Oligarchic and democratic debates on sharing

When the Old Oligarch recounts the constitutional foundations of Athenian democracy, he notes that, according to the *dēmos*’s own principles, it is proper for everyone to have a share in the offices (*archai*), except for military posts, in which the *dēmos* has no share ([Xen.] *Ath. pol.* 1.2-3: *τῶν ἀρχῶν μετεῖναι*). Right after this, he scolds the Athenians for “distributing” (*nemein*)³⁰ more to the lower classes than to the “good men” (1.4: *πανταχοῦ πλεόν νέμουσι τοῖς πονηροῖς*

23 Thuc. 1.27.1: *μετέχειν... βούλεται τῆς ἀποικίας*, 28.2: *οὐ μετὸν αὐτοῖς Ἐπιδάμνου*, 4.105.2: *Ἀμφιπολιτῶν καὶ Ἀθηναίων τῶν ἐνόντων τὸν μὲν βουλόμενον ἐπὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ τῆς ἴσης καὶ ὁμοίας μετέχοντα μένειν*.

24 Thuc. 5.47.7: *τὸ ἴσον τῆς ἡγεμονίας μετεῖναι ἀπάσαις ταῖς πόλεσιν*, cf. OR 165, l. 26.

25 Thuc. 6.39: *...ταῦτα ὁμοίως καὶ κατὰ μέρη καὶ ξύμπαντα ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ ἰσομοιρεῖν. ὀλιγαρχία δὲ τῶν μὲν κινδύνων τοῖς πολλοῖς μεταδίδωσι, τῶν δ' ὠφελίμων οὐ πλεονεκτεῖ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ξύμπαντ' ἀφελομένη ἔχει...*, cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.9 with n. 33 below.

26 Thuc. 6.40.1: *μαθόντες γε ἢ μεταγρόντες τὸ τῆς πόλεως ξύμπανσι κοινὸν αὔξετε, ἡγησάμενοι τοῦτο μὲν ἂν καὶ ἴσον καὶ πλεόν οἱ ἀγαθοὶ ὑμῶν ἥπερ τὸ τῆς πόλεως πλῆθος μετασχεῖν* (some editors prefer to delete *ἥπερ* τὸ τῆς πόλεως πλῆθος but Alberti keeps it, with Dover’s emendation of *ὥνπερ* for *ἥπερ*).

27 Cf. Cecchet 2024b on Athenagoras’ political categories and Franco San Román 2025, 369-82 on his portrayal as a democratic demagogue.

28 See Filonik 2025a for a more detailed analysis of its development, cf. forthcoming (b) on its use around the times of the Thirty.

29 See Bearzot 2007c, Joyce 2022.

30 See Borecký 1965, 25-26, 77-88 on the meaning and use of *nemein* in such conceptualisations; cf. IG IX 1² 3, 609, 5 for early epigraphic use of *epinemein* and *epinomia*, cf. Faraguna 2024, 139.

καὶ πένησι καὶ δημοτικοῖς ἢ τοῖς χρηστοῖς, cf. 1.2, 1.14). This distributive complaint recurs later in anti-democratic critique and is echoed in Aristotle's analysis of *stasis* (see below on *Politics* 5), which records the oligarchic view that contributions to the *polis* should be matched by proportional returns.³¹

Isocrates' *Against Lochites* (20.20), written shortly after 403 BCE, seems to respond to such claims voiced in the fifth century. The speaker argues that it would be most horrifying if, in a democratic *polis*, citizens did not enjoy the same treatment as others, and that it would be equally shocking if—while considering themselves worthy of sharing in offices (τῶν μὲν ἀρχῶν μετέχειν ἀξιοῖμεν)—people deprived themselves of legal protection and, though willing to die for the *politeia* in battle, would nonetheless allocate greater privileges (πλέον νέμοιμεν) to the wealthy in their voting (cf. above on Athenagoras). It is this sense that the *Ath. Pol.* evokes when saying that before Solon the common people (*hoi polloi*) found themselves “having a share in nothing” (2.3: οὐδενὸς... μετέχοντες).

Lysias' speech from around 403 BCE discusses individuals who “had a share” in the activities of those in Piraeus (τῶν Πειραιοῖ πραγμάτων μετέσχον, i.e., the democratic party), but who shared the outlook of those from the city (τῇ δὲ γνώμῃ τῶν ἐξ ἄστεως, i.e., supporters of the Thirty) (34.2). Lysias then concludes that all Athenians “ought to have a share in the *politeia*” (34.3), providing the first explicit attestation of *tēs politeias meteinaí*. The expression used here already signals a claim to direct political agency. Not long afterwards, in the speech *Against Philon*, concerning a citizen's right to sit in the Council, Lysias observes that civic counsel should be provided not merely by those who “are citizens”, but by those who truly desire the role (ἢ τοὺς πρὸς τῷ εἶναι πολίτας καὶ ἐπιθυμοῦντας τούτου), and who must share in the city's misfortunes, as they do in its happiness (μετέχειν τὸ μέρος τῶν δεινῶν, ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν μετέχουσι) (31.5, cf. 9-10; [6].48), echoing earlier debates on political involvement.

In Isocrates' court speech *On the Team of Horses* from around 397 BCE, the speaker praises his father, Alcibiades, for taking risks alongside the *demos* in the constitutional struggles over the *politeia*. At a time when it became clear who had democratic or oligarchic inclinations and who considered it right to have a share in both (τοὺς ἀμφοτέρων μετέχειν ἀξιοῦντας), he remained loyal to democracy and shared in the city's misfortunes (τῶν τῆς πόλεως συμφορῶν ἐκοινώνησεν), maintaining that he should have an equal share in the *politeia* with all other citizens (τῆς δὲ πολιτείας ἴσον ὄρετο δεῖν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις μετεῖναι) (16.36-39)³². In the same speech, with reference to both oligarchic coups in Athens, the speaker claims he is on trial not only for money, but also for his right to have a share in the *polis* (16.46: ἀγωνίζομαι δ' εἰ χρή μετεῖναι μοι

31 Arist. *Pol.* 3.9.1280a 25-31; 5.1.1301a 28-39; cf. 1316a quoted in n. 62 below; see also Thuc. 3.65.3, 8.48.1. See Caire 2016, 93-134, Simonton 2017, and Simonton's chapter in this volume on the Greek oligarchic patterns (and ideals) of inclusion and exclusion.

32 See Bearzot 2020, 15-40 on the discourse of democracy in Isocrates.

τῆς πόλεως). Notably, Lysias' speech *On the Property of Nicias' Brother* from the same period connects both terms in almost identical language, arguing that the present case is not merely about property but about the *politeia* as well (οὐ γὰρ μόνον περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἀγωνιζόμεθα, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας), and about whether the defendants will be able to have a share in the democratic *polis* (18.1: εἰ χρὴ δημοκρατουμένης τῆς πόλεως ἡμῖν μετεῖναι). This striking similarity may point to an emerging political vocabulary or direct borrowing between logographers around 403 BCE, but it also reveals the evolving language of citizenship and political rights in Athens, increasingly intertwined with democratic participation.

The principle of reciprocity in the allocation of “shares” is evident in Critias' speech in the Odeon, where, as reported by Xenophon, he insists, “We... are establishing this *politeia* no less for you than for ourselves. Therefore, just as you will share in honours (ὥσπερ καὶ τιμῶν μεθέξετε), so you must also share in the dangers (δεῖ οὖν ὑμᾶς... οὕτω καὶ τῶν κινδύνων μετέχειν)”³³, when he calls on the hoplites and the cavalry to condemn the Eleusinians in an open vote. Similar appeals to reciprocity appear in democratic rhetoric about the efforts in the recent civil war (Lys. 16.3, 18.25, 31.5-10; cf. 24.25, with Canevaro 2017a, 46-8). Conversely, as attested by both Xenophon and the *Ath. Pol.*, being granted a “share in the *politeia*” of the Three Thousand was, at least in principle, meant to mark off those included in the civic body and thus shielded from arbitrary execution from those who enjoyed no such rights.³⁴

The democratic ideal of an “equal share” is most clearly encapsulated in Lysias' speech *On a Charge of Overthrowing the Democracy*, where the speaker instructs the judges that their duty is “to grant an equal share in the *politeia* to those who commit no crimes” (25.3: ἐξ ἴσου τῆς πολιτείας μεταδιδόναι, cf. Pl. *Resp.* 8.557a).³⁵ In Lysias' speeches, *metechain* is almost always used in a political sense (offices, franchise, participation, government), and most often with reference to the Thirty, which is partly mirrored in Xenophon's focused use of this language in the *Hellenica*.³⁶ Notably, sources from the period following the Thirty provide many examples of the language of “sharing in the *politeia*”, but comparatively fewer references to “sharing in the *polis*”, suggesting that Aristotle's later focus on *politeia* continues an already well-established textual and political history. While the meaning and focus of the term *politeia* and one's

33 Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.9 (tr. adapted from C.L. Brownson); cf. 2.3.18, 48-49.

34 Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.18-22, 50-55, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 36.1-37.1, cf. Diod. Sic. 14.32.4; see Bordes 1982, 298-300, Todd 2020, 7-14, Azoulay 2023, par. 58-63, Mitchell 2025, 216-19 on the numbers of the enfranchised and the political initiatives of the Thirty. See also Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.6 on Argos, with Bordes 1982, 71-77.

35 See Bearzot 2007c, 37-54 on the political background of Lys. 25.

36 See Filonik forthcoming (b). See Wolpert 2002 and 2019 on remembering the Thirty by Lysias and Xenophon.

more or less active “share” in it may shift across contexts and time (not least in the times of political upheavals and crises),³⁷ the concept remains central to Athenian discourse on political activity, institutions, and civic aspirations.

We also find various attestations of “granting” or “being given” political rights in classical texts, often referring not just to general enfranchisement but also to more concrete forms of group inclusion, phrased in a giver-centred register that emphasises the asymmetry between granter and recipient and the discretionary character of such “bestowals” of a civic “share” (cf. Lys. 25.3, above, and 14, below).³⁸ In Lysias 16.3-5, for instance, the defendant, after stating that he had no share in the *politeia* of the Thirty because he was abroad almost until the restoration of democracy, stresses that the Thirty did not even intend to grant a share (μεταδιδόναι) in the *politeia* to those who had committed no crime but had remained outside of the city (5). Similarly, the speaker in Isocrates 16 notes that, after the oligarchic revolution of 411 BCE, the oligarchs would rather have surrendered (παραδοῦναι) Athens to the Spartans than grant a share (μεταδοῦναι) in the *politeia* to democratic Athenians returning from Samos (17; cf. on [Lys.] 20.13 below).³⁹ In constitutional debates (and their later echoes), this vocabulary was also used to speak of “having a share in democracy”⁴⁰ or “having a share in oligarchy”⁴¹, making explicit that the “share” at stake could be conceived as participation in a regime itself and thus reflecting distinctive patterns of inclusion and exclusion, especially in phases of social and political disruption.

Even under the regime of the Thirty, Lysias, Isocrates, and the *Ath. Pol.* use noticeably convergent formulations to describe “sharing” in the *politeia*, usually to denote the enjoyment of political rights and privileges within a particular constitutional order and its institutions.⁴² This usage continues throughout fourth-century sources and is well established in the classical corpus long before Aristotle’s attempts to formulate political definitions.⁴³ The connection

37 See Bordes 1982, Piepenbrink 2001, 68-71, Blok 2013 and 2017, Rhodes 2018, Faraguna 2025a on the polysemy and chronological semantic shifts behind *politeia*; cf. Appendix, *s.v. politeia*; see Filonik forthcoming (b) on “sharing in the *politeia*” in the times of crisis.

38 See Bordes 1982, 49-53 on naturalisation decrees and the phrase *politeian didonai* in classical prose.

39 Cf. Whitehead 2022, 521-23 on this passage and the events it recounts.

40 Lys. 18.1 (*et passim*), Dem. 21.67, 112, 188, 23.86, Isoc. 18.62, 3.15, cf. 16.17, 37, 7.69; ps.-Xen. *Ath. pol.* 1.2-3; cf. having a share in *eleutheria*: Lys. 2.64, 26.2, Isoc. 14.5, 18. See a more detailed discussion in Filonik forthcoming (b).

41 Thuc. 8.75.1, 86.3, 89.1-2 (cf. 6.39.2), Pl. *Resp.* 8.551b, Lys. 18.4, 26, 26.21, Isoc. 3.15, cf. 16.17, 37, 7.69, Xen. *Lac.* 6.5; see also [Arist.] *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1424a.40-b.4. See also Simonton in this volume.

42 See Lys. 12.77, 13.61, 16.3-5, 18.4-6, 24.25, 30.14-15, 34.3, Isoc. 16.38, 18.16, 42, 48-49, 21.2, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 36-37, cf. Lys. 18.25, 34.4-5, Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.18.

43 See esp. Dem. 23.86, 24.59, 51.19; cf. And. 2.10, Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.6. Note also the language of “granting” (or “being granted”) a share in the *politeia*—including the naturalisation decrees discussed below—in Thuc. 3.55.3, Lys. 25.3, Isoc. 16.17, and [Dem.] 59.104-5. The

between this language and questions of citizen status and political participation is sometimes especially pronounced. For example, in Isocrates' *Against Callimachus*, written soon after the democratic restoration, the speaker asserts that the defendant was so eager to participate in "the other *politeia*" (the oligarchic regime), rather than take part in the government (*politeneisthai*) with the democrats, that he continued sharing in the *politeia* of the Thirty until the very end (18.48–49). He is thus characterised as someone who had a clear preference for obtaining a larger—rather than an equal—share than his fellow citizens (50). Notably, forms of *politeneisthai* are also attested in connection with the "sharing" phraseology from the late fifth century onwards, helping to make explicit that the "share" at stake could be construed as active engagement in governing, rather than merely a formal status.⁴⁴

4. Sharing in the affairs

A more context-dependent but significant expression is *metechlein tōn pragmatōn*, generally expressing "to have a share in the ongoing affairs (of the state)", or "political business", but in crisis or upheaval shading into active involvement in plotting or extra-legal action. The broadly political sense of *ta pragmata* (LSJ, s.v., III.2), as a term for the management of political "business" and the exercise of an active participatory role, emerges with particular clarity during the Peloponnesian War. The political meaning of *ta pragmata* likely predates its frequent coupling with the language of "sharing", so it is worth briefly tracing this usage before turning to the collocation itself.

In fifth-century literature, *ta pragmata* can stand for the "affairs" of the *polis* in a strongly political sense, often shading into the idea of control over public business. In Aristophanes' *Knights* of 424 BCE, one slave tells another of a politician "who will be the first to have control of the affairs of the *polis*" (Eq. 130: ὃς πρῶτος ἔξει τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα, cf. *Plut.* 907, 919). In Herodotus' Constitutional Debate, the term likewise carries the sense of control of civic affairs when the rebels against the Magians deliberate about all the affairs of the state (περὶ τῶν πάντων πρηγμάτων) and Otanes proposes to end the monarchy and give political power to the people (ἐς μέσον Πέρσῃσι καταθεῖναι τὰ πρήγματα, 3.80). In Book 6, Miltiades is sent to the Chersonese to seize power (καταλαμψόμενον τὰ πρήγματα), which leads to a hostile takeover and the establishment of 500 armed guards (Hdt. 6.39), while later the Argive slaves take

expression *koinōnein tēs politeias*, often considered particularly "Aristotelian", is attested in a wide range of fourth-century sources: Isoc. 14.8, Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.18, Pl. *Leg.* VI, 753a.6, Dem. 10.45, cf. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 13.5; 37.1; see Baumert 2003, 145–69, 275–87 on the distinction between a partitive/distributive (*metechlein*) and relational/sociative (*koinonein*) involvement behind these expressions in Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle; cf. Bordes 1982, 97–103.

44 And. 2.10, Isoc. 18.48–49, Dem. 9.33; cf. Lys. 12.62–63, Isoc. 4.150, Arist. *Pol.* 6.5.1320b 14.

control of everything in the city (ἔσχον πάντα τὰ πράγματα) and rule in place of their masters (6.83).

In Thucydides, *ta pragmata* likewise denotes political decision-making or the exercise of power. His Pericles emphasises that the Athenians make political decisions themselves (κρίνομεν... τὰ πράγματα, 2.40.2; opp. 7.48.2, 49.1), right after praising those who directly engage in the affairs of the *polis* (τὰ πολιτικά, quoted above), with related ideas phrased further in the narrative in similar terms (2.65.4, 11; 5.80.1). In the description of the events in Mytilene, Thucydides resorts to a much more concrete expression, οἱ ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, for “those in power” (3.28.1). In discussing the *stasis* in Corcyra, he names those ruling the *polis* οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πράγματα (3.72.2; cf. 8.74.3: πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας τὴν πολιτείαν), and the Theban spokesmen recall a time when the government of their *polis* was held by a narrow clique (3.62.3: δυναστεία ὀλίγων ἀνδρῶν εἶχε τὰ πράγματα)⁴⁵.

The earliest attestations of “sharing in the *pragmata*” appear in Thucydides, who describes some Megarians as having a part in secret dealings with the Athenians (4.74.2: ὅσοι... τῶν πραγμάτων πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους μάλιστα μετέσχον), and later refers to Athenian oligarchs taking a leading role in the revolt of 411 BCE (8.89.2: οἱ μετέσχον... ἐν τοῖς πρώτοι τῶν πραγμάτων, cf. 48.1, 63.4, 75.1, 81.1, 97.1; see also 3.47.3). In the right context, merely saying “the participants” (*hoi metechontes*: Hdt. 8.132; cf. Thuc. 4.76.4, 4.114.3, 8.66.5) or “those taking action” (*hoi prassontes*: Thuc. 4.89.2, 4.110.2, 4.113.1, 4.123.2, 5.76.3) could thus have easily invoked the sense “conspirators” for an alert reader (cf. *ta prassomena* for “plot”, “conspiracy”, or “covert negotiations” in Thuc. 4.68.6, 8.7.1, 8.9.3, 8.44.2, 8.48.3, 8.48.7). In other words, the force of this vocabulary was often audience-dependent: in democratic self-description it could function as a badge of legitimate civic engagement, whereas in hostile characterisation—especially with reference to *stasis*—the very same phrasing readily turned into a euphemism for illicit agency.

The “subversive” or “seditious” connotations of these political catchwords are especially pronounced in phrases such as *ta neōtera pragmata*, frequently expressing “subversive activities” (already visible in Herodotus 5.35, 6.1–2, 74). In describing the mutilation of the Herms, Thucydides notes that these events were interpreted as part of a conspiracy (ἐπὶ ζυνωμοσίᾳ) and as carried out with plans for revolution and the overthrow of democracy in mind (νεωτέρων πραγμάτων καὶ δήμου καταλύσεως γεγενῆσθαι, 6.27.3), a description echoed in Isocrates’ story about Alcibiades (14.6). Isocrates later defends himself from the charge of seeking *ta neōtera pragmata* in his proposal to adopt the so-called ancestral constitution (7.59), and the technical sense of (seeking) regime change continues in Xenophon (*Hell.* 5.2.9–10; cf. *kaina pragmata* in 1.4.16) and

45 Cf. Caire 2009; 2016, 251ff.

Demosthenes (24.206). In such contexts, “sharing in the affairs” signals not routine civic business but involvement in plots, upheavals, and attempts at constitutional change.

Lysias plays on both political senses of *ta pragmata* when describing those plotting regime change in Athens in 404 BCE as desiring “new things” (νεώτερα πράγματα) in the *polis*, so that they could organise “the affairs” (τὰ πράγματα) as they wanted.⁴⁶ Across fourth-century prose, “sharing in the *pragmata*” can refer either to active participation in a regime (especially oligarchic) or to ordinary political engagement (particularly under democracy). Lysias uses the phrase twice about those who actively participated in the regime of the Thirty (25.18, 31.14, cf. Lys. 12.62, 66: ἔργων), but also about participation in politics under the restored democracy (25.23) and the democrats’ activities in Piraeus (34.2). Isocrates likewise employs it for normal political engagement under democracy (18.62, 7.65), alongside more explicit formulations for “running the state affairs”, such as *ta (pragmata) tēs poleōs*, *ta politika pragmata*, and *ta tēs poleōs prattein*.⁴⁷ Plato’s Socrates through a similar expression rejects the idea of “dabbling in political matters” (πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ πράγματα, *Ap.* 31d; cf. *Gorg.* 491b-d, 515a-c). In Xenophon (*Hell.* 2.3.17-18) and *Ath. Pol.* (36.1, cf. 38.2), “sharing in the *pragmata*” is tied to proposed expansion of political participation among the Three Thousand under the Thirty (cf. above, with n. 34); Thucydides uses it for the narrowing of enfranchisement to the Five Thousand in 411 (8.65.3: οὔτε μεθεκτέον τῶν πραγμάτων πλείοσιν ἢ πεντακισχιλίοις, cf. 8.72.1, 8.97.1-2, [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 33.1).

Lysias’ fixed phrases point to a sense closer to “regime” where other classical authors usually have *politeia*: accordingly, *ta kathestekota pragmata* means “the present form of government”, often under threat (Lys. 16.3, 25.3; cf. 25.8, Isoc. 7.57, Antiph. fr. 1a Th., Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.10), while *ta kathistamena pragmata* (cf. *politeia*) refers to “the government being instituted” in moments of change (Lys. 13.6, 21, 61; cf. Thuc. 8.89.3, Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.9, Pl. *Leg.* 735d, 802a),⁴⁸ with οἱ πράττοντες τότε τὰ πράγματα referring to the Thirty as “those actively in charge of the affairs at the time” (Lys. 13.60, cf. above on related democratic uses). Elsewhere, especially in the context of the oligarchic revolution of 411, *ta pragmata* explicitly refers to handing over the management of the state to the Five Thousand (παραδοῦναι τὰ πράγματα, [Lys.] 20.13, cf. 20.14, 25.10, 12) or to (not) receiving an active role in the oligarchic management of political affairs (25.14).

By 391 BCE, this language had become so ingrained in Athenian political discourse that it had already entered the lexis of comedy. In Aristophanes’

46 Lys. 13.6: οἱ βουλόμενοι νεώτερα πράγματα ἐν τῇ πόλει γίγνεσθαι ἐπεβούλευον, νομίζοντες κάλλιστον καιρὸν εἰληφέναι καὶ μάλιστ’ (ἂν) ἐν τῷ τότε χρόνῳ τὰ πράγματα, ὥς αὐτοὶ ἐβούλοντο, καταστήσασθαι, cf. Caire 2016, 64 on the language of oligarchic plotting.

47 See Isoc. 4.113, 171, 15.174, 232; cf. Ar. *Lys.* 32; Lys. 16.21, 18.16, 25.11, 19, 27.7, 30.31.

48 Cf. Bordes 1982, 298.

Assemblywomen, Praxagora, speaking as a member of the comic citizen-women's assembly, declares in her "rehearsal" speech: "My own *stake* in this country is equal to yours, and I am annoyed and depressed at all the city's affairs (τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἅπαντα... πράγματα, 175)",⁴⁹ shortly after expressing the hope that the Assemblywomen can "take over the affairs of the *polis* (παραλαβεῖν τῆς πόλεως τὰ πράγματα, 107)". When this later happens, it is again phrased in similar, explicitly political terms (ἄρχειν... ἀπαξάπάντων τῶν κατὰ πόλιν πραγμάτων, 556-557). It is also in the period following the Thirty that we see the political terminology of "sharing" becoming more fixed, with these expressions increasingly used to mark political rights and different forms of participation in the city-state—both by (and about) democrats and oligarchs.

Of all the expressions discussed so far, *metechein ton pragmaton* most clearly captures active engagement in current political business, whether through formal institutions or illicit means (partly in contrast to *apragmosyne*, the slogan for "non-involvement").⁵⁰ This usage is best exemplified in Lysias' speech *On a Charge of Overthrowing the Democracy* (25.14), where the defendant insists he was neither among the Four Hundred nor a member of the Boule under the Thirty nor an office-holder (οὔτε βουλευσάντα οὔτε ἀρχὴν οὐδεμίαν ἄρξαντα), making clear that those in power at the time (οἱ τότε δυνάμενοι) did not consider it proper to grant him a share in the management of public affairs (μὴ ἡξίουν μοι μεταδιδόναι τῶν πραγμάτων). Overall, the evidence illustrates a semantic spectrum: what in stable conditions functions as a broad expression for engaging in civic business—particularly office holding—crystallises, in moments of crisis, into near-technical lexis for subversion, conspiracy, regime change, and illicit activities. In this way, the idiom of "sharing in the affairs" and related phrases function as a key bridge between everyday political engagement and the exceptional situations in which the management of the state's affairs become contested, with the stakes of being involved in "political business" becoming much higher.

5. Distribution of civic shares in oratory

Moving beyond the immediate post-403 language of reconciliation and reciprocal "sharing" just discussed, fourth-century oratory shows this vocabulary fully embedded in disputes over legal status, naturalisation, and proper civic conduct. In Isocrates' *Plataicus*, the contrast is drawn between the Spartans, who "enslaved" the Plataeans, and the Athenians, who granted them a share in the *polis* (14.13: τοὺς τῆς πόλεως τῆς αὐτῶν μεταδόντας), a reference to the famous

49 *Ecl.* 173-75 (tr. adapted from Henderson, my emphasis): ἐμοὶ δ' ἴσον μὲν τῇσδε τῆς χώρας μετὰ [sc. ἐστίν] | ὅσον περ ὑμῖν ἄχθομαι δὲ καὶ φέρω | τὰ τῆς πόλεως ἅπαντα βαρέως πράγματα, with Ussher 1973, 99-100 *ad loc.*, rightly comparing it to Soph. *OT* 630 (see below); cf. Sommerstein 2007, 153 on the "rehearsal" before the actual delivery of the speech.

50 On *apragmosyne* in classical Athens, see the bibliography in n. 20 above.

naturalisation decree (cf. Isoc. 12.94: *πολίτας ἐποιήσαντο καὶ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῖς ἀπάντων μετέδωσαν*).⁵¹ Still addressing the imagined Athenian assembly, the speaker then recasts the same grant as “giving a share in your fatherland” (14.52: *τῆς πατρίδος*). A few decades later, Apollodorus, discussing the same decree, speaks of the Athenians granting the Plataeans a share in the *politeia* ([Dem.] 59.104), and highlights that the decree makes provisions for the scrutiny procedure for each naturalised citizen in order to prevent others from getting a share (*μεταλάβωσι*) in the *politeia* under false pretences (105). Seen together, these passages show that enfranchisement can be framed as a “share” in the *polis*, the *politeia*, or even the *patris*, with the choice of object shifting the rhetorical emphasis. Interestingly, Thucydides reports that, already in 427 BCE, the Plataeans—when surrendering to the Spartans—claimed in their speech to have previously received a share in the *politeia* from the Athenians (3.55.3: *πολιτείας μετέλαβεν*), a claim that implies an earlier but otherwise unattested instance of granting political privileges to the Plataeans.⁵²

When Demosthenes’ *Against Aristocrates* (23.214) discusses granting citizenship to Charidemus of Oreus, the orator describes it as “granting a share in the whole *polis*” (*πάσης τῆς πόλεως μεταδόντες*, cf. 65)—signalling full enfranchisement, much like Herodotus’ account of the Spartans acceding to Tisamenus’ request to “be made their fellow citizen and be given a share in everything” (9.33: *ἦν μιν πολίτην σφέτερον ποιήσονται τῶν πάντων μεταδιδόντες*). Finally, as a third example, the *Ath. Pol.* reports Theramenes’ complaint that the Thirty did not “give a share in the *pragmata*” to the *beltistoi*, nor did they immediately implement the plan to give a share in the *politeia* to the Three Thousand (36.1, cf. above). By contrast, formal naturalisation decrees typically foreground “making X an Athenian”, rather than framing enfranchisement as a “share” in the *polis* or the *politeia*.⁵³ In fourth-century oratory, we find a whole variety of the “sharing” phraseology,⁵⁴ related to engagement in the socio-political framework of the city-state, in particular *μετέχειν/μετεῖναι τῆς πόλεως* (“to have a share in the *polis*”, as just described), *μετέχειν τῶν τῆς πόλεως* (“to have a share in the affairs of the *polis*”), *μετέχειν τῶν [τῆς πόλεως] κοινῶν* (“to have a share in the communal/public affairs [of the *polis*]”), and more specific uses tied to equality, justice, and democratic norms. Within this variation, the concept of “having a share” is employed to delineate the boundaries of citizenship, to stir indignation, and to articulate democratic norms of equality.

In Demosthenes’ *Against Eubulides* the speaker insists that he would never have claimed “to have a share in the *polis*” if he came from non-citizen parents,

51 See Kapparis 1995 and Canevaro 2010 (showing problems with the document at [Dem.] 59.104) on the decree granting Athenian citizenship to the Plataeans; cf. Campa 2025.

52 See Hornblower 1991, 449–50 *ad loc.*

53 Osborne 1981–1983 collects the epigraphically attested naturalisation decrees.

54 See more examples in Filonik 2022 and 2023.

and that, by remaining with his legitimate ones, he now “claims his rightful share in the *polis*”.⁵⁵ In this context, *μετέχειν τῆς πόλεως* signals both citizenship and the privileges it entails, grounded in lawful descent. Apollodorus’ *Against Neaira* deploys the same concept as an emotional appeal,⁵⁶ contrasting those who “share in the *polis*” legitimately by birth with those whom Stephanus allegedly forces into the citizen body in defiance of the laws.⁵⁷ Finally, in *Against Meidias*, Demosthenes explicitly links this language to democratic ideology when speaking of public services, remarking that “in a democracy each man thinks that he has a share in what is equal and just”,⁵⁸ and presents the defendant’s conduct as a violation of this principle. Together these passages show how the “sharing” terminology was used not only to denote formal status, but also to frame grievances about exclusion and unfair advantage as disputes over the proper distribution of civic shares (cf. Dem. 21.112, 24.201).

Orators also speak of sharing in “the common things”, usually meaning “public affairs” (τὰ κοινά), typically denoting participation in the political institutions of the *polis*. In his speech *Against Timarchus* of 345, Aeschines censures the lifestyle of a citizen who allegedly prostituted himself and who thus should not address the Assembly according to an old Solonian law, trying to incite the audience’s indignation at his political career (1.160, tr. Carey, modified):

[The legislator] absolutely bars the man who has engaged in prostitution from the public affairs of the polis [τὸν πράξαντα κελεύει μὴ μετέχειν τῶν τῆς πόλεως κοινῶν]. And rightly so. If any man in his youth abandoned noble ambitions for the sake of shameful pleasure, he believed that this man should not in later years fully enjoy political privileges [τοῦτον οὐκ ᾔφηθι δεῖν πρεσβύτερον γενόμενον ἐπίτιμον εἶναι].

Conceived in this way, political “shares” help to conceptualise one’s legal status through the social and political activities that status allows one to enjoy on an equal basis with other citizens, not least active participation in public institutions. This is also clear from the links between “sharing” language and citizens’ political rights, particularly when expressed through the discourse of *atimia* and *epitimia*, as speakers repeatedly argue that an unworthy citizen must not share in the *polis* or its affairs.⁵⁹ Taken together, fourth-century speeches

55 Dem. 57.51: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ξένην καὶ ξένον τοὺς ἑμαντοῦ γονέας ἐπιγραφάμενος μετέχειν ἡζίου τῆς πόλεως... διόπερ μένων ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐσιν δικαίως γονεῦσιν ἑμαντῷ τῆς πόλεως μετέχειν ἄξιῳ, cf. 57.1, 23, 55.

56 See Filonik 2025b on the appeals to emotions in such arguments.

57 [Dem.] 59.28: πῶς οὐκ οἴεσθε δεινὸν εἶναι, εἰ τοὺς μὲν φύσει πολίτας καὶ γνησίως μετέχοντας τῆς πόλεως ἀπεστέρηκε τῆς παρρησίας Στέφανος οὐτοσί..., cf. 59.111.

58 Dem. 21.67: τῶν ἴσων καὶ τῶν δικαίων ἕκαστος ἡγεῖται ἑαυτῷ μετεῖναι ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ, cf. 21.188, 23.86.

59 See Dem. 15.32–33, 24.201, cf. 21.96, [44].35, [58].15; Aeschin. 1.160; [Lys.] 6.13; *Ath. Pol.* 8.5. See a fuller analysis of these sources in Filonik 2022.

show how apparently technical disputes about who may “have a share” in the *polis* and its institutions provide an established vocabulary for broader reflection on citizenship and constitutional arrangements.

6. Political philosophy—new or old definitions?

Aristotle’s *Politics* unsurprisingly represents a further stage in the abstraction and theorisation of the concept of *politeia*;⁶⁰ yet even there, the term retains a dual reference: it can denote both the constitution and the concrete status of those who share in it (cf. n. 37 above). Aristotle’s famous definition of the citizen as someone who “has a share in judgement and office/power” (*Pol.* 3.1.1275a.22–23: μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς) may thus be less of an outlier than has sometimes been assumed, at least for the classical period: it crystallises, rather than invents, a concept already shaped in historiographical and forensic discourse. Recent scholarship has stressed that Aristotle’s definition was not meant to be exclusive but rather conclusively precise, that it must be read in its argumentative context and alongside other evidence, and that, read in this way, it remains a viable definition for city-states such as classical Athens.⁶¹

If *Politics* Book 3 offers a concise definition of citizenship in terms of “sharing”, Book 5 shows how the same lexis structures arguments about distributive justice and the causes of constitutional conflict, especially in claims about “equal shares”. Aristotle observes that “a constitution changes... into oligarchy... because those who are greatly superior in property think it is not just for those possessing nothing to have an equal share in the city (ἴσον μετέχειν τῆς πόλεως) with those having possessions” (cf. *Pl. Resp.* 8.551b).⁶² Comparable oppositions between the rich and the poor recur in oligarchic critique (the Old Oligarch, above) and in Xenophon, where they shape how “sharing in the *polis*” can be imagined in markedly elite terms. Notably, one of the few explicit instances of the phrase *metechein tēs poleōs* before 350 BCE occurs in Xenophon’s treatise *On Horsemanship*, primarily meant for an elite Athenian audience.⁶³ There, Xenophon offers a socio-political sketch of the cavalry, describing it as drawn from those “who have ample means and enjoy a considerable share in the *polis*”.⁶⁴ Although the precise nature of this share remains somewhat ambig-

60 See Poddighe in this volume.

61 See esp. Fröhlich 2016 [2017], Joyce 2023a, Ma 2024, 432, McConnell 2024, Faraguna 2025a and 2025b, and contributions to the present volume.

62 *Arist. Pol.* 5.12.1316a 39–b 3: ἄτοπον δὲ καὶ τὸ οἶεσθαι εἰς ὀλιγαρχίαν διὰ τοῦτο μεταβάλλειν ὅτι φιλοκρήματοι καὶ χρηματισταὶ οἱ ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὅτι οἱ πολλοὶ ὑπερέχοντες ταῖς οὐσίαις οὐ δίκαιον οἶονται εἶναι ἴσον μετέχειν τῆς πόλεως τοὺς κεκτημένους μὴθὲν τοῖς κεκτημένοις... (tr. D. Keyt). See contributions to Anagnostopoulos, Santas 2018 on (in)equality in Aristotle. On Aristotelian definitions of *stasis*, see now Cairns *et al.* 2020, 2022, and 2023.

63 See Christ 2020 on Xenophon’s readership.

64 *Xen. Eq.* 2.1: τάττονται... δὴ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἱππεύειν οἱ τοῖς χρήμασι τε ἱκανώτατοι καὶ τῆς πόλεως οὐκ ἐλάχιστον μετέχοντες (tr. adapted from E.C. Marchant).

uous in this context, the association between material standing and a privileged relationship to the *polis* is unmistakably foregrounded.

In *Nicocles* (3.15-16), Isocrates even suggests that a share in a “monarchical *politeia*” would be preferable to any “sensible” person (16: τῶν εὖ φρονούντων), probably with a nod to related class distinctions (see also 14: τοὺς χρηστούς, cf. above on ps.-Xen.).⁶⁵ How much of this language was an originally Athenian parlance that became popular and spread throughout Greece, and how much is simply a product of the nature of our surviving classical corpus, is difficult to tell. Nonetheless, variants of this language in the late fourth century begin to appear in legal inscriptions and extend beyond Attica, often emphasising the participatory context.⁶⁶ By that period, this phraseology commonly appears in isopolity decrees and citizenship grants, at times even mirroring the just-quoted “Aristotelian” phrasing—as in the Olbia-Miletos *isopoliteia* (ca. 330 BCE), which allows the Milesians in Olbiopolis to make sacrifices and enter rites as citizens do, and stipulates that all Milesians should be exempt from taxes except those who live as citizens in another *polis* and thus “share in offices and in law-courts” there (RO 93, ll. 18-20: πλ(ῆ)ν ὅσοι ἐν ἄλλῃ(ι) πόλει πολιτεύονται καὶ ἀρχαίω(μ) μετέχουσιν καὶ δικαστηρίων).⁶⁷ This explicit link between enfranchisement and a share in offices continues a long tradition, spanning from the Old Oligarch (ps.-Xen. *Ath. pol.* 1.2-3) through the fourth century (Lys. 26.2-3; Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.12-13, cf. *Mem.* 4.3.12). At the same time, “sharing” language can assume more overtly participatory senses, including active involvement in the Assembly, as shown above. These participatory meanings continue in later literary and epigraphic texts, but their post-classical trajectories lie outside the scope of this chapter.

Overall, in Greek political thought of the classical period, the enjoyment of political rights was repeatedly articulated through the language of “having a share” in the *polis*, its *politeia*, and its public affairs. Aristotle’s formal definitions systematise, rather than reinvent, a usage long shaped in forensic and historiographical discourse. The sources discussed here suggest that such a “share” was imagined not only as a legal status but as a contested “proper” portion, encompassing rights, participation in collective decision-making, and political dangers alongside the corresponding advantages, continuously claimed and denied in the courts and the Assembly. To describe oneself, an opponent, or whole groups as (not) “having a share” was to shape arguments about who properly belonged to the civic community, on what terms, and why. Seen from this perspective, citizenship in a *polis* emerges less as a static label than as an ongoing practice of staking, distributing, and contesting one’s place in common political life.

65 Cf. Brock 2022 on the Greek elites’ crypto-speak, cf. Caire 2016, 67-70, 151-64.

66 See Brock 2015, Filonik 2023, 265-66.

67 See RO 93 and Saba 2020, 37-44 on the inscription and its context.

