

# **Fossilised Futures: Topologies and Topographies of Crisis Experience in Central Greece**

Dr Daniel M. Knight, Department of Anthropology, Durham University, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, UK [daniel.knight@durham.ac.uk](mailto:daniel.knight@durham.ac.uk)

## **Short Bio:**

**Dr Daniel M. Knight** is an Addison Wheeler Research Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Durham University and Visiting Fellow at the Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics and Political Science. He is author of *History, Time, and Economic Crisis in Central Greece* (2015) and has written extensively on the Greek economic crisis, temporality and entrepreneurship. Daniel has received EPSRC and Leverhulme grants for projects on renewable energy and sustainable economic development in Greece and Turkey.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to participants at the BSA 'Balkan Topologies' conference, workshops at Oxford and Durham, the 2014 AAA meetings in Washington D.C. and the 2015 AES spring conference in San Diego for comments on sections of this article.

## **Abstract**

Drawing on ethnography from western Thessaly, this paper reassesses notions of time and temporality in light of the Greek economic crisis. People experience the past as a folded assemblage of often linearly distant and sometimes contradictory moments that currently help them make sense of a period of extensive social change. It is the responsibility of anthropologists to embrace the paradoxes of (poly)temporality and address the topological (and topographical) experience of time and history. In an era of severe uncertainty, in central Greece temporality is often discussed through material objects such as photovoltaic panels and fossils as people articulate their situation vis-à-vis the past, present, and future. Multiple moments of the past are weaved together to explain contemporary crisis experience, provoking fear of returning to times of hardship or hope that the turmoil can be overcome.

**Keywords: Temporality, Historical Consciousness, Economic Crisis, Assemblage, Topology, Topography, Affect**

## **Introduction**

One-hundred-and-forty to two-hundred million years ago the Plain of Thessaly in central Greece was an ancient sea stretching from the Kalampaka pass where today stands the geological wonder of Meteora, to the Aegean Sea beyond Larisa. Now, if one knows where to look, numerous types of Mesozoic (Cretaceous, Jurassic, Triassic) fossils can be found on mountainsides in relative abundance. On New Year's Day for the past five years three generations of a family from Trikala have gone fossil hunting in the Hasia Mountains above Kalampaka. On their adventures they discuss history, time and the current economic turmoil.

After a hearty New Year's lunch, Eleni, 69, her son Vassilis and daughter Eugenia, both in their early forties, and Vassilis's 7-year-old daughter, Stella, pile into their small Nissan Micra to make the 40 minute journey into the mountains. The car struggles up the winding roads as its boot is laden with hammers, chisels, pick-axes, machetes and a crowbar, essential tools for any fossil hunter. The usual route includes at least three stops for Eugenia and Stella, the most eager fossil hunters, to violently throw up, as pork and potatoes rarely complement motion sickness. This is particularly ironic as the 1<sup>st</sup> January is Eugenia's 'birthday', or at least that is what her official papers say, for she was actually born on the 29<sup>th</sup> December; perhaps our first example of intriguing notions of time (cf. Hirschon 2013).

Over the course of two to three hours the family and the anthropologist scour the mountainside for fossils with varying degrees of success. Stood upon the folded topographical strata of ancient rock where flora and fauna that perished over 140 million years ago finally meet the crisp light of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Greece, conversation

turns to the history of the region, the present socioeconomic crisis and what the future holds. ‘Historical’ accounts are manifold (see Papailias 2005, Knight 2015a). Some take the form of personal experience, such as when Eleni’s family were forced to migrate to Trikala from a village in Greek Macedonia in 1947. She also discusses the junta of 1967-1974 and being relocated to the island of Chios due to her perceived Communist links based on the political tendencies of her village of origin. Other accounts are mediated through intergenerational familial oral history, such as how Papou Vassilis survived the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, and fought on the Albanian border during World War Two. However, Eleni believes that given the present conditions of social suffering and material poverty associated with the current economic crisis, the most poignant memories are of the Great Famine of 1941-1943 and the Ottoman and Axis occupations. These events have acquired nationalised narratives whereby direct experience is not necessary in order for people to embody moments of the past (Knight 2012a, 2012b, 2015a). Indeed, the Great Famine that was responsible for over 300,000 deaths in Athens alone, had relatively little impact on western Thessaly as people continued with subsistence agriculture and employed dense networks of resource sharing (Knight 2012a, 2015a, cf. Theodossopoulos 1997:264). Yet these historical moments are still embodied in the present ‘as if’ they were experienced first-hand (cf. Serres 1995a:57-59, Zerubavel 2003:3).

I ask Eleni why certain moments of the past gain special significance during the current crisis. Holding up a large fossil to the sky she says that time and memories are like a fossil bed. Some layers are seen, some are hidden. The layers do not see the light in any particular (implying chronological) order. Certain layers in the folded rock are exposed, whilst some are destined to remain in darkness until a major event,

like the next earthquake – or, may I suggest, crisis – shakes them to the surface. Indeed, she suggests that it may not even require an extravagant earth-moving event, but perhaps just the next shower of rain to wash away a covering of mud, or provoke a landslide. After being twisted, tangled and condensed under great heat and pressure, preserved moments of the past are brought to the fore by critical events (cf. Das 1995, Knight and Stewart n.d.). But in some cases only part of the fossil is unearthed, part of the moment, part of the memory, leaving one to speculate what an untainted version may have looked like. Eleni says that we go looking for some memories akin to how we search for fossils, whilst others are forced to the surface by ‘earthquakes’ or ‘torrents’ that ‘shake-up’ time (cf. Serres 1995a, Pipyrrou 2010). Perhaps we must think about topographies of time in addition to topologies.

Ironically, when we return home the fossils are cleaned and placed in a shoebox labelled with the date and location where they were found. They are put, in chronological order, in a bathroom cupboard on top of other labelled boxes containing the previous year’s findings. The labels read: ‘01/01/2009, 01/01/2010, 01/01/2011’ and so on. Fossils that were embedded in folded, twisted layers are now boxed with their ‘contemporaries’ and linearly catalogued. Chronological stratification is not dead.

### **Topologies of Crisis Experience**

When discussing economic crisis in central Greece narrators jump from recounting oppression during the Ottoman era to occupation during World War Two and the stock market crash at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People articulate their relationship to the past, present, and future through objects and landscapes that transport them on

multiple temporal trajectories (see also Bryant 2014). This paper takes liberty from the topologies theme to follow informants as they ‘bounce around’ through the past, sewing together moments that help them make sense of their current social situation.

In contexts of severe crisis moments of the past that appear distant in linear time are brought to the fore as people attempt to explain experiences of increasing poverty and suffering. Distant moments of the past are ‘re-lived’ in the present as actors invoke personal, intergenerational and nationalised histories in order to render present conditions bearable or overcomable, and construct possible futures in the midst of chronic turmoil (Knight 2012a:357, 2015a).

Taking inspiration from Michel Serres’s (1995a) work on fluctuating and folded time, I propose that people in crisis-stricken central Greece experience time in a topological and topographical manner, rather than in a geometric, linear fashion as is generally the perception in western late-capitalist societies. Time is fluctuating, folded, and with currents and counter-currents (Serres 1995a:58) that create a ‘scrambled’ experience of the past in the present. Furthermore, there are significant localised fluctuations in how people understand past events.

How specific moments of the past are experienced during the current crisis should be approached as more than simply a recollection of historical events. In Trikala the crisis is understood as an assemblage of multiple “rebirths of past situations” (Serres 1995a:21, 42). Moments are re-lived, re-embodied. The past acts as a warning of what might be just around the corner, inciting fear and insecurity, but some moments also offer hope that current events are overcomable. It is not necessary for past events to

have been experienced first-hand as accounts are transmitted from generation to generation or acquire official nationalised narratives (Serres 1995b:2, Knight 2012a:354-355, 2015a, 2015b). Contemporary crisis experience is thus the assemblage of different moments of social turmoil comprising multiple national and familial narratives and rhetorics of the past that provide the “background noise” to everyday life (cf. Serres 1995b:71-72).

Serres theorises time not merely as a ‘passing’, but as an extraordinarily complex mixture of disordered stopping points, ruptures and gaps. He offers a theory of percolating and fluctuating time, “dancing like flames”. “Time doesn’t pass, it percolates. This means that it passes and it doesn’t pass ... one flux passes through, while another does not” (Serres 1995a:58, also Knight 2015a). The current crisis is the filter that provokes some moments of the past to resurface as people try to make sense of a rapidly changing social scene. Some segments of time get caught in the filtration process – they remain contemporary – whilst others are forgotten or lay dormant, like the fossils, to be brought to the surface by the next critical event. Much like Eleni in the opening vignette, Serres (1995a:58-61) invokes the natural environment to explain his experience of time, comparing it to “fluctuations in the weather” or a river flowing beneath a bridge that has unforeseen counter-currents running under the surface in the opposite direction with hidden turbulences that remain out of sight to the casual observer. Describing how the past is preserved in order to elucidate later circumstances, he explains how a glacier may preserve a body frozen for 50 years only to deposit it looking as young as when the man had first died, while his children (other memories) have grown old (1995a:61). Akin to how my

informants discuss the Greek crisis, Serres's ponderings on topological time are rich in topographical metaphor.

As will be demonstrated through ethnographic vignettes collected in central Greece since the outbreak of economic crisis in 2009, the temporal proximity of specific moments of the past may vary from family to family, town to town, valley to valley. The past is experienced in a seemingly disordered, untidy manner and it is the responsibility of the anthropologist to embrace this messy topology, awash with apparent paradoxes, and decipher the reasons behind locally meaningful historicities (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, Knight and Stewart n.d.). This way, a polychromic mosaic of crisis experience can be constructed that does justice to local understandings of critical events. This is especially important when global economic and political bodies, the international media, and even academics, continuously seek to make clear cuts in tangled flows of history and culture when discussing social and economic crises (Knight 2013a:157, 2013b).

In following my informants' adventures through time, in this article I identify objects and landscapes as two nodes around which people orientate themselves (see also Bryant 2014). When discussing fossils, attention turns to the landscape and recent programmes advocating futuristic renewable energy developments on agricultural land. Further discussions on occupation of the land lead to winding narratives of civil war conflict that vary between inhabitants of the plains and the mountains. Through representative ethnographic vignettes I argue that topologies are deeply entwined with topographies as diverse moments of the past are experienced as temporally proximate in the context of economic crisis.



## **Tangible Histories**

In western Thessaly, many people believe their future – the future promised over the last thirty years – is over; it is already past. Present and future trajectories are overwhelmingly understood in terms of the past as collective memory is employed to lend meaning to unusual and sometimes inexplicable events. People rhetorically pose the questions “Who are we?” “What have we become?” “Where are we now ... *when* are we now?”. In situations of upheaval and uncertainty people critique historical events in an attempt to situate themselves within a trajectory (Kirtsoglou 2010:2, Bryant 2014). Moments of the past are discussed and embodied on a daily basis, directly informing perceptions of the future, including shifting notions of modernity and progress (Knight 2014b:21, 2015c). In some cases, the future is inseparable from the past, whether in terms of land ownership, hunger, or energy practice.

Local perceptions of time are often mediated through objects. Recent examples from the literature on southern Europe demonstrate how objects as diverse as items of food (Sutton 2001, 2011, 2014, Knight 2014b), religious icons (Stewart 2003, 2012), abandoned homes (Navaro-Yashin 2012, Bryant 2014), second-hand clothes (Pipyrou 2014), war debris (Henig 2012:23), solar panels (Knight 2012b, 2015c), buried treasure (Stewart 2003, 2012), and a dowry chest (Bryant 2014) possess the possibility to bend time. Objects have their own temporalities, Rebecca Bryant (2014:683) has recently argued following Serres, containing different senses of rhythm, speed, and trajectory of time. The things in our lives have their own “lifespan,” they inhabit a time of their own that usually outlasts ours (2014:682). In this case they can become “time capsules” (Stewart 2003:487), possessing a temporal

dynamism capable of exploding, imploding, twisting or braiding the past (Bryant 2014:684). Objects thus mediate history and memory because of the ways in which they aid us in reorientating the relationship of past, present, and future.

Material objects are part of a wider array of “affective images and symbols” (Stewart 2012:2) around which multifaceted “indigenous historicization” is centred (Stewart 2012:190), triggering intense historical consciousness that relates to events such as war and famine and to notions of modernity and belonging. This is not a linear perspective of historical continuity, but more a folded, contoured appreciation of historical moments that trigger a critique of the current social situation.

Returning to the opening anecdote, I thought that Eleni’s family were unique in their fossil hunting adventures. However, upon further enquiry, it became evident that many people from the Trikala/Kalampaka area venture into the mountains in search of ‘Triassic Treasure’. Another avid fossil hunter, Kostas, 35, told me that it brings him “closer to history”. By holding a tangible piece of the past in his hand it reminds him that his existence, the problems of Greece in 2013, are insignificant and the “world will continue to turn whether it is Mr Samaras, Mr Venizelos, or Papa Smurf” that eventually destroys the Greek state. The fact that the fossil beds upon which he is stood cover a chronological range of 60 million years of the inhospitable, unrelenting forces of nature automatically shifts his perspective on five years of Greek economic turmoil. Kostas seems to take some form of comfort from this.

On the day I accompany him into the mountains he pauses as we come to a high crest. Looking towards the vast Plain of Thessaly stretching towards Trikala and Larisa

beyond, he asks me “what do you see”. Before I have chance to respond, he answers his own question: “occupation”. Once the property of Ottoman era and later Greek *Tsiflikades* (landlords of great estates) the Plain of Thessaly was divided into private property during the agrarian reforms of the early 1900s. Today, people in western Thessaly temporally condense the period of the *Tsiflikades* with the Axis occupation of the 1940s, producing a combined narrative of occupation which they compare to the suppression experienced in Troika-occupied Greece. Notions of neo-colonialism are exacerbated by the recent programmes advocating land diversification towards renewable energy that openly promotes foreign technology (Argenti and Knight 2015, Knight and Bell 2013). As I stand on the ridge with Kostas, 500 metres below us, glimmering in the winter sun, ten photovoltaic parks stand on prime agricultural land. Since the solar programme was introduced in 2006 there has been a dramatic rise in the amount of farmers installing photovoltaics, only curtailed by the recent announcement that the initiative has been frozen for the foreseeable future. Often the panels are produced in Germany and German investors have shown significant interest in recent plans to privatise the Greek energy sector as part of Troika reforms. The energy produced by the panels is rarely consumed by the local community but rather fed into the national grid to contribute to energy needs in urban centres; local people have recently resorted to ‘archaic’ methods to heat their homes, burning whatever they can get their hands on to keep warm at night. Kostas repeats something that I have heard regularly over the last four years: “These are the new *Tsiflikades*, the new occupying forces. The Germans have returned to take our land. The same rocks upon which we are stood are no longer Greek”. Overlooking Kostas’s implication that ‘these rocks’ were always Greek, in another twist to the story, with a failing business,

Kostas himself has taken ‘second jobs’ installing both photovoltaic panels and ventilation systems for open-fires.

### **Energizing Objects**

A prominent way that people in western Thessaly discuss temporality refers to how the economic crisis has given birth to paradoxical energy practice. From home installations to developments on agricultural land and large solar parks producing energy for international export, photovoltaics has been heralded by the Greek government and European Union as the future for year-round energy self-sufficiency for local people and a means to repay national debt (Knight 2012b:66-67, 2013b, Knight and Bell 2013:4, Argenti and Knight 2015). Despite the significant uptake of the solar programme, winter 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 witnessed a return en-masse to wood-burning open-fires (*tzakia*) and stoves (*ksilosompes*) last popular during the 1960s and 1970s. Two seemingly contrasting energy sources – high-tech photovoltaic panels and open wood-burning fires – have become highly visible material symbols of the economic crisis. Photovoltaics are associated with clean-green energy, futuristic sustainability, ground-breaking technology, ultra-modernity and international political energy consensus. For local people, open-fires conjure images of pre-modern unsustainability, pollution, poverty, return to ‘village life’ and peasantry status. Both are symptomatic of how people negotiate the Troika-enforced fiscal austerity, rousing notions of neo-colonialism and occupation (cf. Pipyrou 2014, Argenti and Knight 2015). Furthermore, both solar panels and *tzakia* have raised questions of future environmental impact and food sustainability. As people can no longer afford high petrol prices to fuel home central heating systems, thick smog now engulfs Greek towns on a nightly basis as people burn whatever they can lay their

hands on; old varnished furniture, shoes and clothes, or unsuitable firewood. Open fires have turned into a national health hazard with regular government appeals for people to revert to petrol heating (see Knight 2014b). Here I wish to offer some brief representative accounts of how people discuss history and temporality around objects of energy paraphernalia. Giota, 68, from Kalampaka:

I remember the days back in the village when everyone had open fires. Now people are just burning anything and it is so dangerous. People are choking on the thick air – my daughter has asthma and has recently experienced serious problems breathing ... Back when I was a child we all used to have wood-burning fires, the whole village, but we knew what to burn and there wasn't the same feeling of desperation. It was normal then. But we thought this time had passed, we are Europeans now. We are all modern now. *Tzakia* are symbols of the past and of our poverty, unless you are a very rich person from Athens who thinks it is fashionable. I saw a report on television that compares what is happening in Athens with the smog from *tzakia* and *sompes* to the industrial revolution in England when London transport was stopped for two days as people could only see two metres through the smoke ... We feel as though we have been forced back in time to another era of Greece, an era before the dictatorship (1967-1974) when Greece was cut off from the world. We are now supposedly in 'Europe' but actually we are back living in the past. Europe does not care about the impact of austerity on local people who may be starving or freezing to death. And the elites in our government for some reason continue to support them. Something is wrong; like we say, "there is no smoke without fire".

Michalis, a 55-year-old farmer living near Karditsa, provides comment on the photovoltaic initiative:

I am proud that I have the ability to change my lifestyle with the future in mind. It is not what I would have expected to do ten years ago, and I would not have chosen to install photovoltaic panels on my home and land. But they *are* symbols of the future rather than symbols of destitution. I want to help my family, and help my nation in this moment of crisis. I am too old to pick up my gun and start a revolution. My father fought during World War Two against occupation, but this time the intelligent thing is a little collaboration. I know what I am doing may seem manipulative, like colluding with the enemy, but nowadays putting food on the table for my family is more important, I cannot let them starve. Whilst everybody else argues about who is to blame for this terrible crisis I have put all my assets into creating some form of future for my family. We were not defeated by Ottoman or German occupation, war, or military dictatorship. Photovoltaic panels are a sign of my defiance. I *will* overcome the economic crisis.

Michalis's narrative resonates with established patterns of 'defending the family' identified by John Campbell. Campbell (1964) distinguishes between the responsibilities of adolescents (*pallikaria*) and married men. A *pallikari* must assertively exhibit attitudes of manliness, he must be "prepared to die, if necessary, for the honour of his family or his country" (1964:279). As such, the *pallikari* is the ideal of manhood. However, after marriage a man must exhibit characteristics of

cleverness (*eksipnada*) and cunning (*poniria*), demonstrating a quickness of mind and a degree of foresight in protecting his family (ibid.:280-282). Today, these attributes are still legitimate and praiseworthy where the family is the object of protection, even if this means forgoing conscience and pride. Michalis has shown considerable foresight by investing in photovoltaics, despite historically embedded reservations about ‘collaboration’.

Giorgos, a 48-year-old farmer, from Trikala provides another perspective on the historicity involved in photovoltaic diversification:

I hope that the photovoltaic programme may help stop us returning to the situation of the 1960s and 1970s when we were so poor. But by embracing photovoltaics people are signing over their lives to external forces. They tell me that I should let foreign companies put huge photovoltaic panels on my land. The land which my great-grandfathers worked when it was part of a *tsifliki*, that he fought for against the landlords (*Tsiflikades*), that my father fought for under German occupation and land that I one day want my son to work. Now, instead of producing cereal, it has thirty-six polycrystalline silicon-based, German manufactured solar panels producing an estimated 150 kw/hrs of power (!). Just think of where we were thirty to forty years ago and where we are now. We cannot write all that off immediately, but must adapt our style of living for the current situation ... we have survived much worse in the past but it is possible that these events will happen again. At this moment a combination of European-backed energy technology (photovoltaics) and “old”

ways of coping with crisis (saving money through wood-burners) is the best way of dealing with a desperate situation.

In discussing the ‘power relations of power’, Michalis and Giorgos condense culturally proximate historical moments that may be distant in terms of linear time in order to explain present-day experiences. As the narrators move seamlessly between historical moments, the Ottoman and later Greek *Tsiflikades* and the Axis occupation are condensed into one singularly meaningful moment to simultaneously provide a critique of the current situation and pass comment on possible future trajectories. Objects of energy practice provide connectivity to the past, present and future and symbolise both fear and hope. Both photovoltaics and open-fires represent complex assemblages of temporality, one seemingly looking to the past, whilst the other is markedly futuristic. This has led people to reflect on their place in modern Europe and question their belonging to the West through materiality (see Herzfeld 1987, Knight 2014b).

Fossils, the sun, wood, and land are all employed to help people locate themselves in time and place. They are ‘affective objects’ inextricably linked to the landscape (Navaro-Yashin 2009). Diverse forms of materiality inform temporal assemblage and provide added dimensions to a historically situated “embroilment of subjects and objects” (Navaro-Yashin 2009:8).

### **Topographies of Time: Different Pasts, Same Crisis**

My theoretical muse, Michel Serres, and my informants employ the landscape to explicate their experiences of time and history. The landscape plays a prominent role



in how local people discuss the past and thus I suggest thinking about historical consciousness in terms of ‘topography’ as well as ‘topology’. Topography (the surface shape and features of the Earth) and topology (primarily the mathematical theory of connectedness and distortion [Serres 1995a:60]) are closely related and prove fruitful tools to successfully translate local life experiences. Topography refers to the study and depiction of physical features in the landscape. Topology is used to describe the relationships between objects. The past is entwined with the physical features of the landscape – mountains, valleys, caves, fossils, forests, the sun or mineral mines that act as “indexes of the eventful past” (Stewart 2012:196). Topography and the closely linked discipline of cartography can thus assist people in developing patterns to organise the past (Zerubavel 2003:110, Rosenberg and Grafton 2010).

The relationship between the past, time and the physical landscape has been explored in the ethnography of Greece and Cyprus in terms of icons (Stewart 2008, 2012), cartography (Stewart 1991), human remains (Danforth 1982, Seremetakis 1991, Sant Cassia 2005), buried artefacts (Bryant 2012, Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996), and displacement (Hirschon 1989, Navaro-Yashin 2009, 2012). In the present case, people’s relations with the material landscape, from harnessing the power of the sun and burning wood to searching for fossils, reveal localised historicities (Stewart 2012:21) and unlock “the affects of environments” (Navaro-Yashin 2009:4).

A two hour drive into the Pindos Mountains and the topography of the past changes. It is particularly striking how, just a short distance away, people experience the current economic crisis through the embodiment of different moments of the past. On the

plains of western Thessaly during the current economic turmoil the two most prominent narratives of past crises pertain to the Great Famine and conflated stories of Ottoman and German occupation. Yet in accounts of the “heavy historical load” (Papailias 2005:140) of 1940s crises one aspect is perennially absent: the civil war.

The 1946-1949 Greek civil war is not a salient part of collective memory in western Thessaly, and although aspects of history directly pertaining to the event are narrated, such as internal migrations or living conditions in make-shift housing, the conflict itself is absent from everyday discourse on the current economic crisis. The event is still considered collectively sinful and radical differences are played down and denied through collective silence. From 1974 onwards any remnants of internal blame for the civil war, brothers against brothers, was supposedly assigned to the pages of history as a collective rhetoric against the external Other was adopted, denying any “internal divisions and ambiguities” (Marantzidis and Antoniou 2004:225). Nonetheless, at the local level, the attempt to normalise historical relations had limited impact in western Thessaly. Selective remembering and forgetting are directly related to concepts of collectivisation, unity and division (Das 1995:128-129) and as such the Great Famine is a collectivising keystone event whilst the civil war is divisive.

However, the civil war is the key to unlocking contemporary crisis experience in other parts of mainland Greece where it regularly punctuates discourse on the current economic turmoil. Situated 1200 metres into the Pindos Mountains of Western Macedonia, perceptions of history in Kalimera, Grevenon, my second field site in Greece, are quite different. People respond to histories that move them (Stewart 2012:8) and, as has been detailed by scholars such as Keith Brown (2003), and Jane

Cowan (2000), historical consciousness in the Macedonian region can vary from one valley to the next. In Kalimera the ambiguities and paradoxes of civil war regularly penetrate public discourse and people articulate their experiences of the current economic crisis through an event that is silenced just two hours further south. “I can’t remember a time like this since the civil war” Haido tells me as we walk the mountainsides picking mushrooms (see Knight 2014a),

... that time tore the village apart. We have never recovered properly. My husband fought for the communist resistance and disappeared in 1947. I was 22-years-old. I have waited for him ever since. My brother, Dimitris, joined the nationalists and was kidnapped by the communist side and his body was never discovered. But we know he was kidnapped and last seen north of the Albanian border. My son-in-law was murdered outside the church as he was suspected to be a government sympathiser ... When the Italians invaded and occupied the village in 1940 it was okay, they didn’t do any harm. We actually had to look after them as they were starving and freezing to death. But the civil war is what haunts the mind ... Nowadays when you hear of the violence in Athens and see pictures of people homeless and starving on the streets, and then listen to the extremist political views of Golden Dawn, you have to think that we are returning to this time (of the civil war).

The poignancy of the event transcends generations of residents in Kalimera.

Panagiotis, 27, re-lives the events his grandfather witnessed.

Today I feel I am living the stories of my grandfather. They feel closer than ever, more painful than ever. He lived here during the civil war. In the evenings the communist soldiers would come down from those caves over there (he points in the direction of an adjacent hillside) and demand food from people in the village. If you could not provide it they would take something else. My uncle was taken from his bed at the age of 12. The majority of the villagers just wanted to get on with a normal life, but this is never reported in history. Every landmark in these mountains has a tale to tell. You can feel the history. I am terrified that our nation is heading once again towards those dark times. People cannot take any more austerity and they will snap. Those times are close; I feel it in my bones. In fact, I think it is already happening.

Panagiotis's claims of tangible history through the landscape are supported by other villagers who maintain that they can, "touch the history through a single walk in the mountains and the forests, or a single visit to remote chapels ... you can feel the wars, you can see the people" (Knight 2014a:187). Their accounts of the civil war are passionate and authoritative and transgress the seventy years of spatial and temporal transformation. Panagiotis understands the warning signs of further crisis and interprets them in terms of reliving his grandfather's experiences of the civil war. The warning, according to Nadia Seremetakis (1991:48), "is a knowledge of future events and processes that are manifested in the present through a conventional system of signs". Warnings intertwine "the natural and the social, life and death". Panagiotis feels that the 'event' – the civil war – is already happening, it is part of contemporary crisis experience, part of the assemblage, and has penetrated both past and future histories.

Fernand Braudel (1949) recognised how collective histories were tangled-up in the relationship between sea, plain and mountains. Following this line, Peregrine Horden argues that social and economic inconsistencies can be the remnants of extreme topographical fragmentation. Horden (2005:29) attributes this fragmentation to the “tectonics of the region” that influence “microecologies” of society, economics and history. Microecologies are as much embedded in localised perceptions of landscape as in physical topographical particularity. Although this may sound deterministic at first, what Horden suggests is that people’s affective interactions with the landscape inform unpredictable, fluid, and mutable socio-historic creations (cf. Braudel 1949). Here we have topology and topography hand-in-hand that helps to explain the differences in proximate affective history displayed in western Thessaly and Kalimera, Grevenon.

The significance of specific moments of the past employed to explain national crisis differs according to locale. This gives another meaning to the phrase “memory is kept in place” (Papailias 2005:1). However, in a Braudelian sense, the “topography of spatial and temporal irregularities” (Dimova 2013:210) are also systemically interrelated as crisis experience is constructed around social history, geography, and archaeology (Navaro-Yashin 2009:13). The moments of the past assembled to explain economic crisis experience in the two locales are at once “so different yet so alike” (Braudel 1976:1239, Horden and Purcell 2006:724); they are interconnected in a topological and topographical manner.

### **(In)Conclusive remarks**

With the topic of this collection ‘topologies’, I have taken the liberty to ‘bounce around’ through history without much order, or, some may say, coherence. But this is exactly what my informants do. Temporal leaps occur as people move from the early nineteenth century Ottoman era to Troika austerity Greece, collapsing the *Tsiflikades* with Axis occupation and condensing nationalised accounts with personal experience. Past, present and future are embraced within a single moment. This is often something that cannot be captured by solely discussing collective memory, because it is a messy re-living of multiple moments of the past. Accounts are mediated by objects or landmarks that symbolise and facilitate temporal trajectories.

Charles Stewart (2012:202) mentions that fossils stimulate historical imagination as they represent both something old, created 200 million years ago, and something new, as they are recently discovered. Moments of the past are also ‘recently rediscovered’ in wake of the current economic crisis. Photovoltaic panels at once represent Ottoman and Axis occupation, but provide hope in their high-tech futurism. *Tzakia* symbolise pre-modern village life but also new employment opportunities for entrepreneurial mechanics.

It is also important to accommodate the local and regional nuances of crisis experience. The Atheno-centric perspective prominent in the international mass media represents the next stage of reproducing a homogenous national history of a critical event – in this case economic crisis experience. However, as the present paper demonstrates, understandings of both past and present crises differ greatly between landscapes just forty minutes or two hours apart. These seemingly competing local discourses of crisis experience must be embraced. Heterogeneous historical moments

sourced from many temporal points are fused together to form an assemblage of contemporaneity (Deleuze 1991:38). The heterogeneous nature of multiple moments makes for an uncertain and unforeseeable future not necessarily bound to the present or to any singular historical era (Hodges 2007). Due to the sudden and unexpected change enforced in the form of fiscal crisis, for people in western Thessaly futures once promised as a birth-right in the European neoliberal world have been thrown into disarray (cf. Price 2012, Knight 2014b, 2015b). Experiences of the present crisis are fusions of instances of organic and inorganic matter – an “active synthesis”, a temporal “scrambling” (Stewart 2012:191). Distant events in linear time are brought into close proximity, into a singularly meaningful moment where past and future are superimposed (Serres 1995a:57-59, Knight 2012a:350, Hirsch and Stewart 2005:261, Stewart 2012:193).

Understanding local perceptions of time as topological and/or topographical in the face of westernised concepts of living for the future rather than the past enrich the study of crisis experience. Thirty years of uninterrupted prosperity have been abruptly ruptured, ejecting people into a state of confusion to which the past offers direction to both present crisis experience and to future life trajectory. Photovoltaic panels, *tzakia*, and fossils are characteristic of different understandings of trajectory and shape the rhythm and orientation of temporalities.

## References

- Argenti, Nicolas., and Daniel. M. Knight. 2015. Sun, Wind and the Rebirth of Extractive Economies. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1949. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vol. 1*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1976. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vol. 2*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Brown, Keith. 2003. *The Past in Question: modern Macedonia and the uncertainties of nation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bryant, Rebecca. 2012. The Fractures of a Struggle: remembering and forgetting Erenköy. In Papadakis, Yannis. and Rebecca Bryant. (eds.). *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Bryant, Rebecca. 2014. History's Reminders: On Time and Objects after Conflict in Cyprus. *American Ethnologist*, 41 (4): 681–697.
- Campbell, John. 1964. *Honour, Family and Patronage: a study of institutions and moral values in a Greek mountain community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Cowan, Jane. (ed.). 2000. *Macedonia: the politics of identity and difference*. London: Pluto.

Danforth, Loring. 1982. *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Das, Veena. 1995. *Critical Events: an anthropological perspective on contemporary India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1991. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone.

Dimova, Rozita. 2013. Topography of Spatial and Temporal Ruptures: (Im)materialities of (post)socialism in a northern town in Macedonia. In de Munck, Victor. C. and Ljupcho Risteski. (eds). *Macedonia: The Political, Social, Economic and Cultural Foundations of a Balkan State*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Hamilakis, Yannis and Eleana Yalouri. 1996. Antiquities as Symbolic Capital in Modern Greece. *Antiquity*, 70: 117-129.

Henig, David. 2012. Iron in the Soil: Living with Military Waste in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Anthropology Today*, 28 (1): 21-23.

Herzfeld, Michael. 1987. *Anthropology through the Looking-glass: critical ethnography in the margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hirsch, Eric. and Charles Stewart. 2005. Introduction: Ethnographies of Historicity. *History and Anthropology*, 16 (3): 261-274.

Hirschon, Renée 1989. *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: the social life of Asia Minor refugees in Piraeus*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Hirschon, Renée. 2013. Cultural Mismatches: Greek Concepts of Time, Personal Identity and Authority in the Context of Europe. In Featherstone, Kevin. (ed). *Europe in Modern Greek History*. London: Hurst & Co.

Hodges, Matt. 2007. *The Ethnography of Time: living with history in modern rural France*. Lampeter: Edwin Mellen.

Horde, Peregrine. 2005. Mediterranean excuses: Historical writing on the Mediterranean since Braudel. *History and Anthropology*, 16 (1): 25-30.

Horde, Peregrine and Nicholas Purcell. 2006. The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology. *American Historical Review*, 111 (3):722-740.

---

Kirtsoglou, Elisabeth. 2010. Introduction: Rhetoric and the Workings of Power – the Social Contract in Crisis. *Social Analysis*, 54 (1): 1–14.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2012a. Cultural Proximity: Crisis, Time and Social Memory in Central Greece. *History and Anthropology*, 23 (3): 349-374.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2012b. Turn of the Screw: Narratives of History and Economy in the Greek Crisis. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 21 (1): 53-76.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2013a. The Greek Economic Crisis as Trope. *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 65: 147-159.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2013b. Your Money of Your Life: Misunderstandings of Greek Austerity. *Anthropology News*, 54 (9-10): 11-12.

Knight, D. M. 2014a. Knowledge Exchange and Polytemporality in Kalloni, Greek Macedonia. *Food, Culture and Society*, 17 (2): 183-201.

Knight, D. M. 2014b. A Critical Perspective on Economy, Modernity and Temporality in Contemporary Greece through the Prism of Energy Practice. *GreeSE Working Paper Series, Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics and Political Science*, 81: 1-44.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2015a. *History, Time, and Economic Crisis in Central Greece*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2015b. Wit and Greece's Economic Crisis: Ironic Slogans, Food, and Antiausterity Sentiments. *American Ethnologist*, 42 (2): 230-246.

Knight, Daniel. M. 2015c. Opportunism and Diversification: Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Strategies in Uncertain Times. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 80 (1): 117-144.

Knight, Daniel M. and Sandra Bell. 2013. Pandora's Box: Photovoltaic Energy and Economic Crisis in Greece. *American Institute of Physics Journal of Renewable and Sustainable Energy*, 5: 1-16.

Knight, Daniel and Charles Stewart. n.d. Introduction: Temporalities of Crisis. *History and Anthropology, Special Issue 'Temporalities of Crisis'*.

Marantzidis, Nikos., and Giorgos Antoniou. 2004. The Axis Occupation and Civil War: changing trends in Greek historiography, 1941-2002. In *Journal of Peace Research*, 41 (2): 223-231.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2009. Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15 (1): 1-18.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective geography in a postwar polity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Papailias, Penelope. 2005. *Genres of Recollection: Archival Poetics and Modern Greece*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Pipyrou, Stavroula. 2010. Urbanities: Grecanici migration to the city of Reggio Calabria, South Italy. *History and Anthropology*, 21 (1): 19-36.
- Pipyrou, Stavroula. 2014. Cutting *Bella Figura*: irony, crisis and secondhand clothes in South Italy. *American Ethnologist*, 41 (3): 532-546.
- Rosenberg, Daniel and Anthony Grafton. 2010. *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Sant Cassia, Paul. 2005. *Bodies of Evidence: burial, memory and the recovery of missing persons in Cyprus*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- Seremetakis, C. Nadia. 1991. *The Last Word: women, death, and divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Serres, Michel. (with Bruno Latour) 1995a. *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, Michel. 1995b. *Genesis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stewart, C. 1991. *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stewart, Charles. 2003. Dreams of Treasure: Temporality, Historicisation, and the Unconscious. *Anthropological Theory*, 3 (4): 481–500.

Stewart, Charles. 2008. Dreaming of Buried Icons in the Kingdom of Greece. In: Mazower, Mark. (ed.). *Networks of Power in Modern Greece: Essays in Honour of John Campbell*. London: Hurst.

Stewart, Charles. 2012. *Dreaming and Historical Consciousness in Island Greece*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Sutton, David. 2001. *Remembrance of Repasts: an anthropology of food and memory*. Oxford: Berg.

Sutton, David. 2011. Memory as a Sense: a gustemological approach. *Food, Culture, Society*, 14 (4): 462-475.

Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 1997. Turtles, Farmers and Ecologists: the cultural reason behind a community's resistance to environmental conservation. In *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 7 (2): 250-267.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2003. *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.