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To cite this article: Daniel M. Knight & Charles Stewart (2016) Ethnographies of Austerity: Temporality, Crisis and Affect in Southern Europe, *History and Anthropology*, 27:1, 1-18, DOI: [10.1080/02757206.2015.1114480](https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1114480)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2015.1114480>



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Published online: 05 Jan 2016.



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# Ethnographies of Austerity: Temporality, Crisis and Affect in Southern Europe

Daniel M. Knight & Charles Stewart

*This article focuses on how the economic crisis in Southern Europe has stimulated temporal thought (temporality), whether tilted in the direction of historicizing, presentifying, or futural thought, provoking people to rethink their relationship to time. The argument is developed with particular reference to the ethnographies of living with austerity inside the eurozone contained in this special issue. The studies identify the ways the past may be activated, lived, embodied, and re-fashioned under contracting economic horizons. We argue for the empirical study of crisis that captures the decisions or non-decisions that people make, and the actual temporal processes by which they judge responses. We conclude that modern linear historicism is often overridden in such moments by other historicities, showing that in crises, not only time, but history itself as an organizing structure and set of expectations, is up for grabs.*

*Keywords:* Affect; Crisis and Austerity; Historicity; Temporality; Southern Europe

Some of the worst effects of the global economic downturn that commenced in 2008 with the bursting of the US housing bubble and collapse of companies such as IndyMac, Lehman Brothers, and Goldman Sachs, have been felt in Europe and specifically in the eurozone's so-called PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain) and Cyprus. In 2010, Greece received a €110 billion bailout from the European Central Bank, European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (the so-called

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Correspondence to: Daniel M. Knight, Department of Anthropology, Durham University, Dawson Building, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, UK. Email: [daniel.knight@durham.ac.uk](mailto:daniel.knight@durham.ac.uk); Charles Stewart, Department of Anthropology, University College London, 14 Taviton Street, London WC1H 0BW, UK. Email: [c.stewart@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.stewart@ucl.ac.uk)

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“Troika”), followed by another €130 billion in 2012 and €86 billion in 2015 in return for stringent austerity measures. Later in 2010, Ireland received €67.5 billion, followed in 2011 by Portugal (€78 billion), Spain in 2012 (€100 billion “support package”) and in 2013 by Cyprus (€10 billion). In all cases, the consequences of financial turmoil have been severe for local populations.

This *History and Anthropology* special issue is, to our knowledge, the first collection to bring together ethnographies of living with austerity inside the eurozone, which explore how people across Southern Europe have come to understand their experiences of increased social suffering, insecurity, and material poverty.<sup>1</sup> An earlier anthropology of the Mediterranean aimed at comparing the values and institutions of circum-Mediterranean societies (Peristiany 1965; Davis 1977), but by the 1990s, researchers had largely abandoned area studies approaches. Now, as desperate migrants attempt to cross the Mediterranean in flimsy boats, the matters of rescue and national jurisdiction over the sea itself have brought a new “Mediterranean” into focus (Ben Yehoyada forthcoming). At the same time, the imposition of austerity measures in return for the loans mentioned above has had the effect of converting this Southern part of the European Union into an area unified by shared problems, emergencies, and exigencies. The study of the Mediterranean thus no longer attempts to establish widely shared cultural forms, it analyses, rather, how societies in this region negotiate the structural violence (economic and political) to which they are all now subject.

Austerity differs from endemic underdevelopment and poverty, in that it applies to situations where societies or individuals that formerly enjoyed a higher standard of consumption must now make do with less. It plunges societies into the converse of counterfactual history where one is invited to ask, “what if the past had happened differently?” It is a counterfactual futurity approached with an entirely different level of investment and anxiety: what happens when (not if) the future does not take shape the way we expected and planned? Austerity, then, is not just an economically constrained static circumstance; its particularity for social analysis lies in the dynamics of reversal and the ongoing responses to it. How do individuals, and societies, cope with losing their assumed standard of living, their trappings of social status, and their day-to-day structure of life (especially in circumstances of unemployment)? Austerity throws the issue of human dignity into high relief as people set about deciding on the new minimum requirements for an acceptable life. The ethnographies presented here, the majority by anthropologists from and/or employed in Southern Europe, furnish perspectives from inside the situation. The contributors focus, in particular, on how crises stimulate temporal thought (temporality), whether tilted in the direction of historicizing, presentifying, futural thought, or some combination of these possibilities. The increasing social and economic uncertainty sweeping Southern Europe has resulted in shared quotidian anxieties about such activities as paying the mortgage, providing a warm home, feeding the family, securing medical treatment, and maintaining social status.

One of the themes linking diverse crisis experiences across national boundaries is how people contemplate their present conditions and potential futures in terms of the past. The studies in this collection thus supply ethnographies that journey to the

source of historical production by identifying the ways the past may be activated, lived, embodied, and re-fashioned under contracting economic horizons. How do people adjust to and accommodate new realities over their lifetimes? How do critical events shape the societies and individuals who reflect back on them? This is the hermeneutic question at the root of Gadamer's (1994, 300) notion of historical consciousness. Events shape people, and people through their narrations, reflections, and ethical obligations construe events. In other words, momentous pasts give rise to a present and a future that continually re-interpret that past. Nothing is completely fixed, even though we tend to imagine that critical events are singular and enduring.

In moments of extreme crisis, time becomes elastic—the time waiting for a bomb to explode or a fist to land can seem like an eternity, or a blink of the eye. Events can be indelibly remembered or blanked out; elided in unintelligibility. In the crucible of critical experience, time can swing backward and forward as in Lee Katzin's 1971 film *Le Mans*, starring Steve McQueen (Borden 2012, 217). At a certain point in the race, McQueen, playing the role of a racing car driver, realizes that he has to avoid a slow-moving car, and this leads to a lengthy sequence of careening and skidding, ultimately ending in his car crashing into the guardrail.<sup>2</sup> The ensuing scene is shot in a mixture of slow motion and regular speed, flashing back and forth to close-ups of McQueen's face. As he is lying dazed after the crash, his mind flits back and forth from the present to the moment he first perceived danger, through all the stages of the event. The crash is captured as a Husserlian phenomenology of time consciousness where the past, present, and future are all momentarily swimming together as the present undergoes successive re-evaluations.

Crises can de-realize the present as de Martino (2012) recognized in his concept of the "crisis of presence". Such moments can produce out-of-body experiences of being on the ceiling or the other side of the room watching oneself suffering. The reality of the present—one's historicity, in the sense of the historical continuity grounding the present—is momentarily lost.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, crises turn ordinary daily routine inside out and expose the seams of temporality to view, a metaphor literalized in the second-hand clothing spread out for sale at street markets in Calabria (Pipyrou, this issue). As the citizens of Reggio Calabria contemplate this tangle of garments, which austerity forces them to consider wearing, they ruminate on their existential bearings—their position in the South of Europe; their past of stylish dressing—opening what Pipyrou terms "history's can of worms". Crises rip the seams of existence apart requiring the extemporaneous re-stitching of time as when the dazed race car driver pieces together what just happened, or when the South Italian villager "de-historified" by illness is reintegrated into the present via rituals that bring him or her under the aegis of actions performed in the timeless *illo tempore* evoked in the ritual spells (de Martino 2015, 94).

Grand definitions of the global economic downturn have focused on macro-scale accounts of dramatic bailouts and incomprehensible numbers that seem to have become commonplace and over-ritualized. Although radical responses to austerity are observable across Europe in the form of mass-protest (Graeber 2011; Dalakoglou 2012; Theodossopoulos 2013, 2014), both Gray and Narotzky (this issue) bring

much-needed ethnographic specificity to these debates with local accounts of mobilization in Portugal and Spain, respectively. For the majority of people, the consequences of transnational fiscal turmoil have materialized in critical reflexion on topics including debt, consumerism, Southern Europe's emergent proximity to the global South,<sup>4</sup> and past epochs of socio-economic hardship. Activist groups in the South of Europe have linked into international anti-capitalist movements such as Occupy and anti-austerity political parties have supported one another. The leader of Podemos, for example, appeared at SYRIZA rallies in Athens. In parallel with these international political alliances, people in the European South have also burrowed into particular local and national pasts by engaging in historicizing and analogizing practices.

The experience of the current economic crisis has instigated a complex assemblage of past, present and future ambitions, hopes, failures, financial capacities, and political rhetorics (Knight 2012a, 2015a). Engaging in diverse forms of historical consciousness stimulated by socio-economic turmoil, people in Southern Europe regularly telescope specific pasts and futures into the present, temporally condensing moments that shed light on this rupture in everyday routines. The uncertainty caused by austerity requires the critical contemplation of everyday activities, which induce moments of anxiety and stress, moments when the present becomes uncanny (Bryant, this issue), caught in suspended animation. Drawing on past events to contemplate uncertain futures arises as one strategy for resolving the *aporia* of crisis. As the present collection illustrates, across Southern Europe, people are looking to the past to inform coping strategies or conjure strength, to express fear or to provide glimpses of hope for the future within the murky waters of this critical event (cf. Das 1995).

### Event, Archive and Epoch

Crises are a type of "event" and as such, they are the basic units of history—moments in need of explanation (Roitman 2014, 20). They exceed or defeat the expectations of "structure", or routine—the sphere of what is anticipated under normal circumstances. Events occur when structure cannot replicate itself in the expected way (Sahlins 1985, 153). They take on a particular significance, or semantic density, that separates them from other "outputs" (Ardener 1989, 87, 211). Crises thus stimulate historicization, for example, by prompting actors to assemble information in order not only to comprehend phenomena, but also to establish their reality. Insurance claims exemplify this pattern. Archives come into shape to capture the origin of events and they also institute ordering principles deriving from signal events.<sup>5</sup> Alexandrakis (this issue) introduces Andreas, whose mother was killed during street fighting in Athens in 1944. His home has become a historicist shrine overflowing with publications and photographs, while at the same time it testifies to the force which that event has held over Andreas' entire life. Amina, his Nigerian housekeeper, pursues her own archival project of assembling the evidence of her son's birth so that he may be officially documented by the state.

In situations of crisis, existing archives must sometimes be reopened as when further excavations commenced at Amphipolis in Northern Greece (Vournelis, this issue),

with the aim of aggrandizing the patrimonial collection. Or the archive may come into being and expand rapidly, as when versions of a Portuguese *fado* song decrying the conditions of austerity are circulated digitally and accumulated on the web and on social media (Gray, this issue). Pipyrou's (this issue) study of Calabrian children affected by floods and landslides in the 1950s discovers archives of the most conventional sort: the governmental and aid agency records kept at the time, and since stored away and ignored. It is a reminder that quintessential historical source materials—archives—were once produced by the effort to govern crisis events rather than intentionally recording them for posterity. Archives are often the index of the event itself, as when Greek citizens pawn their valuables, which then accumulate in the local pawnshop—a historical archival accretion pointing to the pauperization of the populace (Vournelis, this issue).

An event, according to Žižek (2014, 5–6), is “the surprising emergence of something new which undermines every stable scheme”. The event is “shocking, out of joint” and “interrupts the usual flow of things” (Žižek 2014, 2). For Das (1995, 1), specific “critical events” that annihilate and recreate the world become reference points for individual and collective suffering and thus sporadically resurface to be given a new form of life. Critical events may be collectivizing, unifying, or points of division. In any case, Das notes the importance of the “identity of events” in bringing contemporaneity to non-contemporaneous episodes as people identify and assemble moments with similar characteristics to explain their present circumstances (Das 1995, 121–129). And episodes, Zerubavel (2003, 13) argues, are the “stories” that make historical events socially meaningful.

In diachronic perspective, the event is paradoxical; at once particular to the time when it is qualitatively experienced, yet also known in later periods, indeed queried after, as in the case of archives. Hodges, following Hirsch and Stewart's (2005) work on historicity, develops the concept of “epoch” for the periodization of history; bounded sections of the past that help people position themselves against fluid presents and uncertain futures.<sup>6</sup> Epochs are referential “stable intervals in the so-called flow of time” that contrast the uncertain ruptures (Hodges 2010, 116). Hirsch and Stewart have argued that an epoch is a relational mode of time where “past and future ... exist in a simultaneous manner” (2005, 270). In other words, the event may be an occasion for fixing historicist distance, but it may also become entangled in the present. Also promoting the idea of simultaneity, Serres has employed the metaphor of a percolator to explain why some epochs, events, or moments, continue to be important to the lived experience of history and time: “time doesn't pass, it percolates. This means that it passes and it doesn't pass”. It filters, “one flux passes through, while another does not” (Serres with Latour 1995, 58). Some segments of the past get caught in the filtration process; they remain contemporary, simultaneous, meaningful, proximate.

The concept of simultaneous pasts and presents is prominent in how some Southern Europeans explain their experiences of the current fiscal crisis. Taking inspiration from Serres' (1995, 57–59) idea that two points in time can suddenly become close, even superimposed, during times of dramatic social change, Knight (2012a, 2015a) has

recently coined the term “cultural proximity” to explain how his interlocutors in central Greece express their belief that multiple moments of the past have been temporally condensed and are being re-lived in the present. Ottoman-era landlords, World War Two occupiers, and the 1940s’ Great Famine are central to how Knight’s informants unpack their crisis experience. Some events once considered culturally and temporally distant or detached, Knight argues, are now perceived as very close.<sup>7</sup> This visceral relationship to the past may explain current conditions and even render them surmountable. Such instances of cultural proximity can be realized in multiple modes of historical consciousness,<sup>8</sup> including dreams, visions and collective memory, or through engagement with objects, artefacts, institutionalized nationalism, and the education system (Knight 2015a, 3–4). Knight (2015a, 172) concludes that the current economic crisis “will leave an indelible mark, sedimented in mind and body, to become culturally proximate in future times of pain, poverty, and suffering” (see Pipyrou, this issue, on what happens when a proximate past is incommunicable or silenced).

Contributors to this collection dedicate particular attention to people as they “bounce around” through the past disregarding temporal distance, condensing events that are separated by decades and even centuries of linear time, and making them into meaningful moments in the present. In the current crisis, heterogeneous historical moments are knitted together to form the “whole” of contemporary experience. The multiplicities are qualitative in nature and are sourced from many temporal points, yet they are fused together to form an assemblage of contemporaneity (Deleuze 1991, 38). The heterogeneous nature of multiple temporal moments makes for an uncertain and unforeseeable future not necessarily bound to the present or to any singular specific historical era (Deleuze 1994; Hodges 2007). Deleuze (1994, 81–82) clarifies the concept of condensed historical moments by arguing that the only place that the past can exist is in the present as a series of events that are accessible through various avenues of remembering and embodying (also Hodges 2007, 38, 2008).<sup>9</sup> In this special issue, Alexandrakis engages with Deleuze’s concept of the event to discuss how individuals make sense of events topologically, as parts of a series that is organized affectively, rather than by linear time and contiguous space. Events, Alexandrakis argues, are two-sided: they run through the series, but also transform it. In a compelling account of the coming together of two personal crises, Alexandrakis traces the “small” recurrences of historical violence and how traumatized subjects continue to contribute to emerging political landscapes. The assemblage of the present-day crisis, he argues, finds its component parts rooted in an (ongoing) series of events, forming a recognizable unity by which people find familiarity when surrounded by uncertainty (Deleuze 1991, 38; Serres with Latour 1995, 45; Serres 1995, 2).

### **Exploring Historicity and Affect**

Historicity, the ways in which people experience social and historical time in lived experience, is a central theme running throughout the present collection. A helpful distinction between history and historicity is made by Hirsch and Stewart—the former

refers to an assumed empirically verifiable past, while the latter refers to “the ongoing social production of accounts of pasts and futures” (2005, 262). Whereas historicism (or historiography) separates the past from the present and future, historicity describes a situation where “versions of the past and future ... assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional needs” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, 262). The past can therefore be put to political and communicative uses.

In later work on historical consciousness, Stewart has argued that Western historicism is “but one specific and recently developed principle ... with peculiar ideas about linear temporal succession, homogenous time units ... causation, and anachronism” (2012, 197). The Heraclitean<sup>10</sup> view of time as continuously flowing in one direction is but one interpretation. Thus, much of Stewart’s work in Greece has focused on indigenous versions of invoking the past that create pools of inspiration from which local people create novel historicizations (2012, 203). Through the active synthesis and “scrambling” of moments, historical events are condensed and compressed together to form meaningful narratives in the present. People actively contribute to the continuous reconstruction of the past and reworked accounts regularly get transmitted through intergenerational stories to eventually constitute a tangible part of local affective history (Navaro-Yashin 2012, 5; Pipyrou 2014a; also Stewart 2012, 189). These affective histories “grab people” (Wetherell 2012), either domesticating and taming or exaggerating and agitating the most troubling aspects of the past (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 6; Pipyrou 2014a, 195).

Affective history is a theme taken up in an insightful article by Gray in the present collection, where she brings much-needed attention to a recurring sub-theme found in recent papers on the grassroots experience of the financial crisis—the re-appropriation of historical slogans, chants, songs, and music that have the power to mobilize (see, for example, Narotzky, this issue, and Knight 2015b). Gray explains how popular protests in Portugal were triggered by a song performed by the ensemble “Deolinda”, lamenting the social impact of the current crisis and calling people to the streets. The song became laden with affect as it resembled—often ironically and in parody<sup>11</sup>—registers common to songs from the dictatorship years (1926–1974). When “sutured” to a revolutionary era (1974) song, Deolinda’s piece became a catalyst for protest. How can a genre of public protest lie dormant for decades to be rekindled by a single song, Gray asks. Shaping an alternate aesthetic world that complements affectively the musical histories of bygone eras (without negating them) has been accomplished through subtle stylistic alterations and audio-visual virtuosity that harnesses and re-inflects the power of the past. In Portugal, new types of performance proliferate, addressed primarily to young adults and draw not only on national history but also the economic uncertainty found across Southern Europe in order to engage the common relation to precarity. Performances thus creatively shape shift, and flow like liquid into available cracks in the public space, creating common cause by producing convulsive assent, itself linked into that shared affective base created by fiscal crisis. Mockery of power and history, and power building solidarity, seem to be two sides of the same coin in a process that turns political subjection into future political counter-movement.



As well as the affective influence of audio, historical consciousness can also be intensified by interactions with material artefacts and physical features of the landscape. Vournelis (this issue) examines instances where national history and personal historicity blend in Greek interpretations of land, infrastructure, and natural resources. Through a case study of an ancient burial mound linked to Alexander the Great, Vournelis illustrates how historical consciousness instils people with faith in the power of ancestral lands to protect them from the dangers of economic crisis in which foreign markets dominate. Material remainders and landscapes also facilitate a search for the relevance—and complexity—of the past in the present, highlighting foreign attempts to “buy” Greek history and heritage (cf. Argenti and Knight 2015).

Vournelis shows how people articulate their relationship to the past, present, and future through objects and landscapes that transport them on multiple temporal trajectories. 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 2014b), solar panels (Knight 2012b, 2014a), buried treasure (Stewart 2003, 2012), and a dowry chest (Bryant 2014) possess the possibility to bend time. An object can be polychromic, polytemporal, topological, and reveal time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats (Serres with Latour 1995, 45). Objects have their own temporalities, 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.<sup>12</sup> Both Stewart (2012, 202) and Bryant (2014, 684) maintain that specific objects such as fossils and dowry chests stimulate historical imagination more than others as they represent both something old (created in a distant unknown past) and something new (recently discovered or undergoing constant transformation [see also Vournelis, this issue, on the discovery of ancient burial treasures]).<sup>13</sup> These objects are, at once, of their own time, represent future potentialities and make one pause to consider one’s existence in the “uncanny” present.

Bryant (this issue) continues to bring much-needed attention to the idea of the “uncanny present” (see also Bryant 2014). Through ethnographic vignettes from her field site in Cyprus, she considers why, in reference to two twenty-first century crises, people discuss fears of recurring and repeating traumatic pasts. Following Roitman’s (2014) reading that an event becomes a crisis because it shows how the world could be otherwise, Bryant maintains that crisis represents a critical threshold outside of normal time. She argues that “at a time of crisis we acquire a sense that what we do in this present will be decisive for both the past and the future, giving to the present the status of a threshold”. Crisis, she claims, becomes such precisely because it brings the present into consciousness, creating an unusually overburdened perception of *present-ness*. For Bryant, the present becomes uncanny due to this

social interrogation of the “now” and its usually unquestioned links between past, present and future. This stretching out of the present makes the familiar strange, imbued with a peculiarity that renders it “uncanny”. The weighty “edifice” of crisis crushes the foundations of the present, opening cracks of hazard and anxiety. Thinking in Bergsonian terms, we could say that in the uncanny present, people consciously reflect on the “immediate part of the past which, impending over the future, seeks to realize and associate with it” (Bergson 1991, 150, see also Dalsheim 2015). “The past gnaws through into the future” (Bergson 2002, 173).

In her article on home repossessions in Spain, Sabaté (this issue) focuses on how people deal with renegotiated presents (almost certainly uncanny) by living in their pasts—most notably with their parents and grandparents. The transformation of life-projects since the onset of economic turmoil brings attention to the pace of life in Spain which can be separated into long-term/ short-term decision-making processes. Since 2008, life-projects have imploded and people feel that their lives have “regressed” in every imaginable social and material way. This has resulted in a particular assemblage of past behaviours, Sabaté argues, commonly understood as guided by past individual irresponsibility, present insolvencies, and perpetually uncertain futures. Sabaté believes that we should consider the affective qualities of individuals’ past experiences and future aspirations when analysing periods of capitalist boom and bust.

### Trauma, Affect, History

In the growing archive of ethnographies of crisis, it is striking how interlocutors selectively discuss or silence their pasts; which unsettling histories are voiced and which remain unspoken? Certain circumstances activate affect—a taste of a sweet (Alexandrkis, this issue), the appearance of visitors (Bryant, this issue), or dust storms on a balmy day (Pipyrou, this issue)—triggering the communication of silenced events. In some instances, personal accounts of disturbing events are transmitted on a communal level, with emphasis on a collective “mental presence of the past” (Cappelletto 2003; Bloch 1998, 60).

Ethnographies of silenced pasts inevitably lend themselves to the rich literature on trauma that supposes that extreme events are not fully open to experience at the time of occurrence as they fracture time, stimulating what Caruth (1991) terms “belatedness”—the re-enactment of repressed memories well after the original event. The most inescapable feature of affective histories is precisely that they cannot be left behind because they exist in the perpetual present of the struggles and cleavages they have spawned, albeit often remaining unspoken (Argenti 2007, 23–24). It is sometimes maintained that the intergenerational transmission of traumatic events produces “cultural trauma”, a tear in the social fabric that is collectively recognized by a community that has not necessarily experienced the event directly (Eyerman 2001, 2, see also Argenti and Schramm 2010). However, as Feuchtwang (2010, 229) argues, the intergenerational transmission of trauma beyond those who experienced the event first-hand is rare; instead, there is more often “the transmission of an event that was traumatic”. Historical or biographical narrative transmission of affective and/or traumatic events is

often made possible through nationalist memorialization and family grievance and ritualization that galvanize people within the locality.

Contributing to the debate on affective and traumatic pasts, Alexandrakis (this issue) argues that individuals who continue to live with the effects of trauma can come to recognize traits in each other's stories, combining their traumatic experiences to expose state efforts to "normalize" history. Shared memories of traumatic events here act as galvanizing resources for people that fall outside of the official state historical project. Alexandrakis' informant, Andreas, is in "slow motion trauma" where the confusion of the initial event has sucked in the future. Rather than measuring disability wrought by past events, as pathologizing terms such as "trauma" might dispose us to do, Alexandrakis suggests, instead, that we attend to Andreas' unusual emotional constitution, which brings him into deep affective affinity with his traumatized cleaner, Amina. Through invoking the past "analogically" (Zerubavel 2003, 48), Andreas recognizes traits of his own life-story in Amina, something that he sees as morally binding the two individuals. In other words, the power of affect takes two sequential events separated by some sixty years, and binds them into the same series, or set, as typologically similar.<sup>14</sup> This paper calls attention to the power of series over sequence in the formation of affective communities, created by the common effects of critical events on families.

Caused by political forces (armies and governments) in the first place, critical events burrow into the affective composition of individuals to resurface at a later date as new political forms and ambitions. Like previous traumatic events, the current economic crisis "[is] the sublime ... that shatters to pieces all our certainties, beliefs, categories and expectations" (Ankersmit 2002, 76). Such "decision events" create new truths and crystallize new subjectivities (Humphrey 2008, 374). In Badiou's view, as explicated by Humphrey (Humphrey 2008), major events ontologically reassemble subjects, as can be seen not only in the longitudinal case of Andreas, but also in the emergent, remoralized subjectivity of the Spanish protesters against home repossessions and austerity in general (Sabaté and Narotzky, this issue).

This brings us to the other side of remembering, explored by Pipyrou in this issue: forgetting and silencing (cf. Battaglia 1992, 1993; Winichakul 2002). Collective forgetting, Battaglia (1993, 430, 439) suggests, is not associated with the avoidance of remembering distressing feelings, but reveals a process of ideological inscription intended to maintain social order and fit hegemonic historical narratives. There are aspects of memory that are silenced but available to consciousness, directly related to concepts of collectivization, unity, division and hegemonic power (Das 1995, 128–129; Ricoeur 2004). In this issue, Pipyrou engages with some prickly historical episodes that have obviously helped to shape her informants' social identity, but are rarely communicated as they are in friction with hegemonic discourses. Pipyrou's paper ties together events that happened in early 1950s South Italy with the consequences of the current crisis, moving from individual "microhistories" (Ginzburg 1992) to grand historical narratives. For Pipyrou's informants, partial forgetting is a collective goal (cf. Battaglia 1993, 440). Events such as the natural disasters that caused mass population relocations do not have a place in hegemonic narratives of Italian

history. It is the present economic crisis that catalyses their conversion from dormant memory into kinetic historical imagination.

Although Pipyrrou's paper focuses on events in the 1950s, it is based on accounts retrieved in the present, in the course of her ethnographic enquiries on the current fiscal crisis. In other words, she is already dealing with the effects of multiple crises on local people; and it reminds us what the Italian philosopher of history, Croce (1960), maintained: all history is contemporary history. This paper, furthermore, once again alerts us to the relationship between crisis and stories about the past, that is to say, "histories". The birth of modern history, as Koselleck (1988; Roitman 2014, 7, 30) has set it out, involved a meta-critical step from immersion in judgement, to the reflective awareness of the fact that oneself or another is/was being forced to judge. Modern history adjudicates the situations and effects of past judgements.

The present collection gives a reading of how modern anthropology might theorize the decision moments provoked by crisis, a term which originally meant judgement (Ancient Greek, *krisis*). Pipyrrou's paper, for example, concerns a fraught moment of decision and how the impoverished Southern villagers became a political football for those making decisions, and how they have come to terms—or not—with those decisions taken over sixty years ago. With people looking back on their experiences of relocation through intervening layers of concealment, suppression and forgetting, they may feel as if they are dissociatively standing outside themselves during a collective slow motion trauma. "Judgement" or "agency" may not have been accessible at any point along the way. Only now are they crystallizing as possibilities in a long-delayed aftershock of reinterpretation akin to the Freudian *après coup*. For those involved, the internal phenomenology of the crisis is bound up with their method for relating to crisis, for judging it, for living with it. The ethnographic study of crises must thus proceed empirically to capture the actual decisions or non-decisions that people make, and actual temporal processes by which they judge responses, if and when they manage to do that.

### Temporalities of Mobilization and Resistance

Social movements, the relationship between resistance and hegemony, and the pathology of protest, are topics taken up in contributions by Narotzky, Sabaté and Palumbo, who show how their interlocutors critique existing systems of power. In the context of the global economic downturn, Occupy protests, and recent news that the combined wealth of the world's richest 1% will soon overtake that of the other 99%, civic mobilization holds "a mirror up to society" to raise awareness of uncomfortable questions (Haugerud 2013, 18) and propose potential routes towards a remoralization of the economy.

Narotzky explores issues of social mobilization, creative resistance, and moral economy in Northern Spain, pinpointing a renegotiation of morality that tends to favour the responsibility of intersubjective care rather than state obligations (cf. Muehlebach 2012 on civic engagement and care, see Sabaté, this issue, on economic remoralization). In these contemporary reworkings of the conditions of possibility leading to

a better life during times of crisis, the ties between past and future are re-imagined and the past is reinterpreted in the light of a utopian future.<sup>15</sup> Narotzky has written elsewhere (2011; Narotzky and Smith 2006) about the production of present political mobilizations in relation to particular memories of the past, rendering certain future-orientated actions legitimate while excluding others. In the present paper, Narotzky connects a local past of mobilizations to the breakdown of the welfare state that the crisis is dispossessing and the attempts of local people to create a viable future. Her informants refer to history (a historical consciousness) as a constructed and structured account of a causal nature where working class agency and collective solidarities are paramount and need to be recuperated in order to preserve the “conquests” of past struggle and to be able to produce futures for younger generations. She examines the relationship with the past as manifested in two distinct grassroots mobilization movements, showing how in one case the future is imagined based on a break with the past and the creation of a new moral economy. Conversely, other forms of resistance strongly articulate with past struggles and conquests of the working class and nostalgic notions of prosperity based firmly within “futures past”. For Narotzky’s working class informants, futures that had once been promised have been subsequently lost, their futures are not mere geometrical extensions of time but, in Rosenberg and Harding’s (2005, 3–5) words, “junkyards” filled with past aspirations that continue to “haunt” contemporary lives, providing “morality tales” for the present. Continuing her project on grassroots economics in the space where “historically produced regional and local specificities regarding the form in which economic practices are embedded” meet the “global space of accumulation” (Narotzky and Besnier 2014, 4), Narotzky’s contribution links to topics as diverse as recycling second-hand clothes (also Piprou 2014b), unpayable mortgages (also Sabaté, this issue), food cooperatives (Vournelis 2013), protest slogans (Haugerud 2013; Knight 2015b), and new rentier agreements (see Knight 2012b, 2015a).

But what happens when a resistance movement with utopian visions of remoralized futures actually gains a mandate to govern? In his Sicilian case study in this issue, Palumbo analyses the consequences of an anarchist and radical pacifist coming to office in the city of Messina. Contrasting what he terms “Messianic” time with “bureaucratic” and “structural” time, he aims to better understand the difficulties that a social movement—whose temporal experience is made of idealist aspirations and attempts to experiment with new forms of civic participation—faces when it comes to power. The political goals of social movements during the economic crisis have been diverse, from aims to reform existing electoral and democratic structures while retaining focus on conventional social issues such as class, inequality and the wealth deficit (Haugerud 2013), to attempts to completely break away from current systems of neoliberal governance (Graeber 2013). Palumbo delves into the complexities of multiple and asynchronous temporal rhythms, whose different qualities and implications have been emphasized by the economic crisis. On a more concrete level, he suggests that temporal discrepancies are related to the functioning of the administrative machine (cf. Herzfeld 1992), which moves according to its own chronological rhythms, and idealized visions of heterochrony brought by an anarchist mayor.

The cases analysed by Gray, Narotzky, Palumbo and Sabaté show that there is no homogenous, naturalized, idealized, experience of protest, and thus they articulate with Theodossopoulos' argument that protest movements are regularly "pathologized", being depoliticized as "illogical" by politicians and the media, undermining protest and displacing its meaning (Theodossopoulos 2014, 415, 419). The articles also have a wider geographical and theoretical scope and can be read in conjunction with Graeber's (2013) work on the Occupy movement, Werbner, Webb, and Spellman-Poots' (2014) collection on the Arab Spring protests and Haugerud's (2013) study of satirical activism in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

### **Conclusion: Poignant Pasts, Uncanny Presents, Uncertain Futures**

This collection of ethnographically grounded essays delves into the social topology of the past, present, and future, to provide an inside view of how people in Southern Europe are making sense of economic turmoil. Contributors address temporality in numerous ways: how affective histories resurface in narrations of the present crisis; the comparisons that can be made between the temporalities of crisis as lived by people across Southern Europe; how the contradictions between modern historicism and other forms of historicity may be understood; the social mobilizations that may result from reinterpretations of the past; and how people may imagine and plan for the future in the teeth of crisis.

It is clear that the present is a temporal balancing point between the past and the future. And one of the profoundest effects of the ongoing economic crisis has been the way it has stimulated people to rethink their relationship to time. In some cases, the crisis has triggered affective pasts (Gray) or intimacy with histories that are not yet fully discovered (Vournelis). In other instances, once silenced pasts are beginning to seep through the cracks into present-day narratives of crisis (Alexandrakis, Pipyrou). Or members of social movements may already be living a utopian remoralized future through prefigurative politics palpable in protest camps (Narotzky) and "Messianic" mayoral victories (Palumbo).

This volume provides accounts of the multiple ways in which people make sense of their experience of living with austerity. Through the ethnographic studies presented here, contributors to this collection have come to reflect on how their interlocutors experience the murky, precarious, and still unfolding decision moments provoked by crisis. They have taken on the challenge of empirically researching uncanny crisis moments, and dived into the temporal vortices alongside their interlocutors in their moments of decision, indecision, non-decision or pure *aporia*. Modern linear historicism is often overridden (and overwritten) in such moments by other historicities showing that in crises, not only time, but history itself as an organizing structure and set of expectations, is up for grabs and can be refashioned according to new rules.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Notes**

- [1] The majority of articles in this collection are the outcome of a *Crisis: Social Suffering and Temporality* Research Group we convened in the Department of Anthropology, University College London in 2012–2013 and a corresponding workshop entitled *Anthropological Perspectives on the Crisis in Southern Europe* held in June 2013 and funded by UCL Anthropology and the Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics and Political Science. To a lesser extent, themes central to the current collection were also discussed on a panel convened by Knight, Pipyrou and Àngels Trias i Valls at the 2012 EASA meetings in Nanterre and a 2014 AAA conference panel in Washington DC convened by Knight and Alexandrakis, where Pipyrou was a presenter and Stewart a discussant. Nicolas Argenti's ESRC-funded workshop on "Post-Ottoman Topologies" (Athens, 2013) was also a valuable space for us both to think through the temporalities of crisis.
- [2] This scene may be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaTW7-uOrq4>.
- [3] de Martino (2012, 2015, 104) saw ritual as a social therapeutic process enabling re-entry into the world. The rites of mourning and even the singing of funeral laments in Greece or Southern Italy, for example, guide people out of the abyss of crisis and back into social relations.
- [4] Drawing on Comaroff and Comaroff's (2012) work on shifting international economic and ideological boundaries, both Pipyrou (2014b) and Argenti and Knight (2015) discuss how aspects of the new economic relations within the eurozone's austerity nations resonate with notions of neo-colonialism and the global South.
- [5] "Archive", from the Ancient Greek *arkheion*, was the place of storage of the *arkhai*, meaning both the "beginnings, origins" and "rules, principles, authorities" (Derrida 1995).
- [6] Zerubavel (2003) prefers the term "periods" to distinguish the highly structured mnemonic distortions of historical distance.
- [7] This transmission of intergenerational accounts of the past to act as warning signs or coping strategies for future generations instantiates Benjamin's (1969, 254) famous observation that covert pacts between present and previous generations may be activated in times of need.
- [8] The complexity of the term "historical consciousness" is unpacked in the introduction to Stewart's (2012) work on dreaming in island Greece.
- [9] On remembering and embodying in the Greek context, see Seremetakis (1994) and Sutton (1998).
- [10] Baer (2005, 3–5) offers an alternative to the Heraclitean view of time as a continuous flow by adopting a Democritean perspective that says that the world is occurring in bursts and explosions, privileging the moment rather than the story and the particular over the general. On the related topic of modern timelines, see Rosenberg (2005), Rosenberg and Grafton (2010).
- [11] Haugerud (2013, 10) notes that "plotted as satire, an economic meltdown is not a force of nature or freak accident but rather the entirely preventable outcome of politics and policy". A comparative example of employing irony, parody and satire in affective protest slogans is provided by Knight (2015b) in the context of Greece. Slogans that protest against fiscal austerity measures draw on affective moments of the past—including slogans that are credited with helping to topple the Greek military dictatorship in 1973–74. On irony, satire, and parody as modes of political protest, see also Brown and Theodossopoulos (2000), Boyer (2013), Haugerud (2013), Molé (2013) and Pipyrou (2014b).
- [12] See Hamilakis (2007). On objects as creating the boundary between memory and forgetting, see Battaglia (1992).
- [13] On local explanations of temporality during the Greek economic crisis as expressed with reference to fossils see Knight (n.d.).
- [14] On the differences between sequence and series, see Kubler (1962).

- [15] “The future” is a placeholder, a placebo, a no-place, but it is also a commonplace that we need to investigate in all its cultural and historical density (Rosenberg and Harding 2005, 9).
- [16] During rallies on the streets of Athens, Madrid, and Lisbon, as well as the “Occupy” movement, protestors have held aloft banners with messages to fellow activists in other nations (Graeber 2011; Theodossopoulos 2013).

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