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# The Past, The Present And The Future Of The Economic Crisis, Through Greek Students' Accounts Of Their History

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*The data was analysed within the framework of previous research in Greek historical consciousness, and of research conducted in 2013 and 2014, related to Greek, university and secondary school, students' account of the crisis (Apostolidou, 2014).*

*More specifically, in 2013 and 2014, students were found to assign historical significance to the country's 2010 economic crisis since they included it within brief accounts of Greek history that they wrote. They also used their official national narrative not only to explain the crisis but also to predict the future: students perceived of the crisis as another war the country had to fight, a war that Greeks would certainly win. Students in this 2016 study once more included the 2010 economic crisis in their account of the history of the Greek state, also using elements of the 19th century Greek economic history. Being asked to venture a prediction about how 'life in Greece will be like in 60 years from now', they were found to be pessimistic, grounding their predictions on the current economic and political situation in Greece.*

*Additionally, being asked to express their understanding of 'how things generally evolve in history', they spoke about 'repetition' but in a negative way: they also grounded their ideas on the current economic situation. On the whole, students in this study attempted to understand the 2010 crisis in the framework of Greek economic history, not employing the resistance pattern of their national narrative. Nevertheless, they seem to have been overwhelmed by their difficult present. The above stances could be read not only through Koselleck's theory of historical consciousness that emphasizes the parameter of experience (Koselleck in Zammito, 2004, p.129), but also through findings of other (empirical) research that focuses on the relationship between students' present experiences and their future scenarios (Haste & Hogan, 2010).*

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Greece, Economic crisis, Historical consciousness, Past accounts, National narrative, 'Resistance' narrative schema, Economic history

## THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, THROUGH GREEK STUDENTS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR HISTORY

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### Introduction

#### **The 2010 crisis as a recent past: implications for students' perception of the future**

Rüsen's defines historical consciousness as the meaningful nexus that synthesizes the three dimensions of time, past, present, future, by means of a narrative about the past that expresses

people's identities, either personal or collective (Rüsen, 2005, p. 25). 'Memory mobilizes the experience of past time ... so that the experience of present time becomes understandable and the expectation of future time is possible' (ibid, p. 10). In this study, Greek students were urged at two different time points (in 2013 and 2016) to write their country's history and possibly to articulate their understanding of the Greek economic crisis. The implicit question was how students would synthesize the three time dimensions to construct a historical narrative about their country being in crisis. Would they include the economic crisis in their narratives, and what the overall schema would be, optimistic or pessimistic? The reason why the study was repeated in 2016 was that the economic crisis persists, the consequences being worse, so I expected to locate different schemas in students' speech, schemas that could be indicative of relevant transitions in the public sphere.

In the 2016 study students were also given the opportunity to predict the future in a way that their understanding of the relationship between the future and the past or the present would be revealed: Carr, referring to Koselleck reminds us that 'different societies take different views of the relations between future and past', (Carr, 1987, p. 199). In other words, on what parameters do people in Greece, the students in this study, frame their prediction of the future? This would also be indicative of the type of their historical consciousness: Koselleck for example seems to think that the societies that see the future as dependent on the past are 'traditional' since they actually see the future as a repetition of the past (Koselleck, 2004, p. 268). At that point Koselleck brings up Creuzer and his motto that 'didactic purpose is incompatible with Historie' (ibid).

History as a discipline helped to answer people's need for orientation in time when unprecedented changes took place. It was a way to explain changes, also to preserve and register a past fading away, a past that structured old identities also fading away (Lowenthal, 1981). Körber attributes current historical thinking to new present experiences that force us to orientate anew (Körber, 2015, p. 25). On the whole, historical thinking, or history as a discipline, responds to people's need to make sense of changes that often have the dimensions of crisis. In that case the question is whether people will seek for solutions in pre-given cultural potentials (Rüsen, 2007, p. 20) or to new elements. In the first case, we have a 'traditional' or 'paradigmatic' historical consciousness, in the second one the 'critical' type<sup>1</sup>.

Lorenz mentions that ... "traditional" cultures are generally supposed to be characterized by a dominant (political, ethical, cultural, etc.) orientation to the past, while 'modern' cultures characteristically have a dominant future-orientation ...', (2014, p. 13). In the case of Greek students participating in this study one can locate incurable presentism.

If the 'essence' of the discipline of history is to differentiate between the past and present, the imposition of an exclusively present-day perspective in the reading of the past could restrict instead of facilitate our understanding of the past periods. In this study, students seem to revise the whole Greek history through the perspective of the 2010 crisis; the past appears to exist only as a 'prologue to the present' (Wineburg, 2001, p. 109). The latter presentism can also be a relatively recent past, the 2010 past, the past of the economic crisis in Greece that seems to have acquired traumatic or 'catastrophic' dimensions for the Greek people (Rüsen, 2007, p. 21). Greek students tend to see the economic crisis repeated equally in the remote past, they referred to the 19<sup>th</sup> century bankruptcies in Greece, or in the remote future, sixty years afterwards. When asked a third question, to indicate a line that would best represent development in history, they opted for a repetition line, justifying their choice on the grounds of repeated economic crises, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (in Greece) till now. Greek students' answers tend to be monothematic in

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<sup>1</sup> "Traditional", "paradigmatic" or "critical" types of historical consciousness, as defined by Rüsen, 2005: 29.

all three tasks: in selecting line of development in relation to history, a task referring to students' notion of change, in narrating their country's history where they included recent and remote economic crises in Greece, finally in attempting to predict the future; the economic crisis seems to be everywhere while all dimensions of time seem to have collapsed to the present. Present experience is projected equally to the future and backwards to the past as repetition.

Adopting White's terminology, it is as if Greek students live in the age of the 'metaphor' (White, 1985, p. 96): '... stressing similarities among the elements, we are working in the mode of metaphor ...' and Greek students both in 2013 and 2016 tended to see similarities between the past and the present and not differences. Greek students of the 2013 sample in their historical accounts made a political use of their country's history, drawing analogies between the economic crisis and the period of the German Occupation in Greece. Students in 2013 saw 'intervention' of foreign powers in Greek politics, a schema very popular for the conceptualization of the Greek politics in Greece along with 'victimization' (Demertzis, 2013, p. 9). In 2016 instead of including and using in a comparative way political and military events of their country's history, they selected economic events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, former bankruptcies. They also used the pattern of bankruptcies or economic crises that repeat themselves to justify their future predictions, also their selection of a repetition line to represent historical development. Judging from the Greek data from students historical accounts (2013 and 2016), from previous research in students' historical consciousness (Lee, 2012, p. 50), analyses of the Greek historical consciousness and culture (Liakos, 2001), I tend to see presentism on the part of the students, also the use of the present as a recent past: students extrapolated a relatively recent traumatic event, the 2010 crisis both to the past, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to the future, seeing repetition of the same type of events and exposing a traditional historical consciousness. To analyse further the data, Ankersmit's conceptualization of the trauma (Ankersmit, 2002), Rösen's typology of historical consciousness, also research in students' ideas about the past, especially students' presentism or their perceptions of change in history (Lee, 2012, Wineburg, 2001, Barton, 1996) will be used. After contextualizing this study in relation to place and time and describing research procedures, the presentation of the data follows. Four patterns were discerned, and respectively four subsections: 'the present in the past, reference to the national narrative', when students opt for the successful struggles of the Greek people, 'the present in the past', when students opt for less popular events in Greek history like bankruptcies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'the present in the future', when students see repetition of economic failures also for the future. The fourth subsection presents the 'repetition' pattern that students use when responding to the 'lines of development' task.

### **The Research Sample: Place, Time and Procedures**

#### **The research cohort**

The historical accounts in this paper were written by a group of ninety-seven students of the third year of the primary education department of the university of Ioannina (age 20 years old). The group is a 'convenience' sample (Cohen, and Manion, 2000, p. 102) they were my students who had volunteered to complete the questionnaire. Data collection took place in January 2016 within the context of the continuing economic crisis.

#### **Context**

The economic crisis in Greece officially started in May 2010 when the country, after having reached unsustainable debt levels, applied to be supported by the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the European Central Bank. In October 2011, a second memorandum (agreement with the above economic organizations) followed, and a third one in August 2015

the latter after a short period (June-August 2015) in which Greece was not supported financially either by the IMF or EU. Since July 2015 Greece has been under 'capital controls'.

On the political level, since 2011 only coalition governments were elected comprised of parties belonging to the right and the center of the political spectrum. In January 2015, a left-wing party won the elections but was obliged to seek for partners in order to form a government. When this paper was written a coalition of the left-wing majority party and a right-wing party governs the country on an initial common basis of the need to renegotiate the agreements with IMF and EU. Nevertheless, the latter coalition was obliged to sign the 2015 memorandum after long negotiations and a referendum that took place in July 2015.

Economically speaking we are having an impoverishment of the majority of the country population with unemployment reaching in 2016 almost 1.169.119 unemployed, c. 24% the population<sup>2</sup>. According to Eurostat<sup>3</sup>, in 2015 c. 22% of the Greek population lived in poverty.

### **The students' research tasks**

Against that background, students were asked

- first to comment on their perception of changes in time choosing between lines of development indicating decline and progress. This question about lines of development, part of the 'Youth and History' questionnaire (Angvik, 1997, pp. A40-41), seeks to understand their general perception of change in history since the latter constitutes a part of historical consciousness. Also, the line of development question would show whether their present experience of the lasting crisis informs their general perception of changes in history.
- A second question given to the students was to detect their criteria to judge about the future and their general, personal or cultural tendency for optimism or pessimism, it is also part of the 'Youth and History' questionnaire mentioned above: 'What do you expect life will be in Greece in 60 years?'
- Third, they were asked to narrate in brief the history of the Greek state from 1830 till today (2016). The brief narration of Greek history would indicate whether they would include the crisis in a narration of Greek history. Additionally, the narration task would indicate whether their understanding of the economic crisis would be mediated by their cultural tools, their master narrative.

The findings were produced through a process of analytic induction. Recurring patterns were sought in students' narrations of Greek history and these are presented both through students' quotes and through tables indicating the frequency of each pattern. The patterns are not allocated to 'previously defined units', as in classic content analysis (Titscher, Wodak and Vetter, 2000, p. 56) rather they are produced from my interpretations of the students' responses. This study does not seek to attain a "representativeness" of sample, rather the most complete possible description of how a group of Greek students perceive of the economic crisis, a traumatic and long lasting event for the Greek society (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 214). Figure 1. following describes the research process in the three different periods, 2013, 2014 and 2016.

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<sup>2</sup> Hellenic Statistic Authority, <http://www.statistics.gr/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7034688/3-16102015-CP-EN.pdf>.

FIGURE 1. The three different tasks of the years 2013, 2014 and 2016

2013	2014	2016
‘Briefly narrate Greek history since a long time ago, till now’	‘But today we are through Occupation again, though in a more modern way’, (a 2013 excerpt)  – Do you agree with the statement above? Please justify your answer.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Briefly narrate the history of the Greek state from 1830 till today (2016)</li> <li>2. What do you expect life will in Greece in sixty years?</li> <li>3. Which of the following ‘lines’/ statements would you think best describes history development?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Things generally get better</li> <li>– Things do not really change</li> <li>– Things generally get worse</li> <li>– Things repeat themselves</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

### The Present in the Past: Students’ accounts of the history of the Greek State

In 2013–14 students used the ‘resistance’ pattern of their official narrative (Nakou & Apostolidou 2010) not only to explain the economic crisis but also to predict the future: thus, they perceived of the crisis as another war the country had to fight, a war that Greeks would certainly win. Students’ narratives were also structured around political (change of governments) and military events (wars). In their narrations they did not include economic events that often involve unsustainable international borrowing despite the facts that economic crises are frequently occur in modern and contemporary Greek history and that since 2010 onwards there were many references in the public sphere (in newspapers many, art exhibitions, tv talks and others) to the economic crisis of 1929 and the national bankruptcies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, (Apostolidou, 2014: 83). In contrast to 2013–2014 students, thirty-five students of the 2016 sample included in their narrations almost all the relevant economic events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One can realize the extent to which students referred to the economic history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the following table:

Table 1 indicates that while the majority of the 2016 students included the current economic crisis in their narrations, as in 2013, they also referred to the bankruptcies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and not only to the big national wars, national catastrophes, traumas, while there was only little critique of the Greek political system. The ‘resistance’ pattern of the 2013 research implying optimism for recovery did not prevail either among the 2016 students, despite the fact that 2013 constructs were also identified in students’ answers. The question is whether students’ reference to the 19<sup>th</sup> century economic crisis produces a theory to explain the current economic crisis.

Students in the majority referred to the 19<sup>th</sup> century economic events in two ways: first in a neutral way giving a linear presentation of the major national, economic also, events of the country’s history. There was no developmental pattern for Greece’s history, either optimistic or pessimistic. Second a small group saw bankruptcies as repetitions in Greece’s history and in a sense, as inevitable. Assuming so, students repeated their most common construct, also used when they

TABLE 1. Did students of 2016 refer to 19<sup>th</sup> cent Greek economic history?

Total sample						
Reference to the current Crisis						
1) Reference to the 19 <sup>th</sup> cent Crises	a) <b>Linear presentation</b> of the history of the country including the 19 <sup>th</sup> cent economic events	26	35	81	97	
	b) <b>Repetition</b> (of bankruptcies) in Greece's history	9				
2) Use of the 2013 constructs no 19 <sup>th</sup> cent reference			26			
3) No special construct, no 19 <sup>th</sup> cent reference			20			

completed their 'lines of development in history' task: '(in history) things repeat themselves'. One can locate a linear presentation of Greece's history in excerpt (a), and the 'Repetition of bankruptcies' pattern in excerpts (b) and (c):

- a *'After the end of the 1821 revolution there were many political disputes that ended with Kapodistrias assassination and were restricted when king Otto took power. Disputes started again till the constitution was adopted. Afterwards a two-party system prevailed in Greek politics, the Trikoupis party being the one of the two parties and we were headed to **bankruptcy in 1897**, also to defeat in the Greek-Turkish war. Afterwards **Venizelos came in power, and Greece benefited both in the case of the Balkan Wars and the I World War, since the country doubled its territory ... In 1938 ... Metaxas imposed dictatorship in Greece. Afterwards we had the II World War, the Civil War and political disputes, Dictatorship, and Turks' invasion to Cyprus, the reconstitution of democracy, the New Democracy and Pasok governments that brought us to our present status, meaning the economic crisis. In the end, we had the Syriza government'**, student 5.*
- b *'Since 1830 the Greek state has been through an international war and a civil war. Also through a bankruptcy under the government of Charilaos Trikoupis. A period of development follows with other governments till today that **for once more we are close to bankruptcy'**, student 64.*

- c 'Greek history is characterized by **continuous** political, territorial and economic transformations. Elections were **frequent** and wars also ... governments **repeatedly** changed in the name of "patriotism", a phenomenon that led to the junta initiated by Papadopoulos. This **continues till now** with the several governments succeeding each other **while past and present economic problems increase**', student 12.

Words that denote repetition like 'for once more', 'repeatedly', 'continues' can be noticed in the excerpts. The latter idea of the economic phenomena either in repetition or in cycles, also appears in the 'lines of development' task that students completed in this study.

On the other hand, only one of the students classified into the 'Repetition' group attempted to compare the 19<sup>th</sup> economic crises to the current one. Please see the excerpt (d) below:

- d '**... For once again** the economic crisis is at the forefront; **the difference is that while Trikoupis** admitted bankruptcy, the governments today are trying to find solutions for economic problems but with no results. **People also are not having the same resilience as in the past**', student 106

In excerpt (d) the student locates differences between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and now in the politicians' management of the crisis also in people's resilience.

Finally, ten students expressed themselves in a positive way about Trikoupis and Venizelos, well known Greek prime ministers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, seeming to have been removed from stereotypes critical of politicians; could this be the start of a critical historical consciousness on their part? Panagiotopoulos commented on the fact that Greek economic history has been neglected throughout the crisis in public speech; politicians and journalists often used the history of bankruptcies in a negative, fatalistic way, and did not make use of positive reform examples, extremely unpopular in their own time but appreciated afterwards (Panagiotopoulos, 2013, p. 260). Speaking also about selectivity on the students' part, it is worth mentioning that most of the students referred to the bankruptcies that took place in Trikoupis and Venizelos governance and only few of them to their reforms. Within this context in excerpt (f) the student attributes the Trikoupis bankruptcy to his reforms.

- e '**... it is most important to refer to the Trikoupis period of governance because of Trikoupis contribution** to Greece's politics ...', student 58
- f '**...since 1875 we have the Trikoupis governments during which massive public works were constructed, rails and the Corinthos canal, works that unfortunately put the country in debt** ...', student 109

### **The Present in the Past: Students' accounts of the history of the Greek State, reference to the national narrative**

The 2013 constructs appeared to a lower degree in this study and especially the 'resistance' pattern is underrepresented. The 'resistance' pattern is supposed to be the main pattern of the master Greek narrative. The idea is that Greece resists equally foreign occupation and cultural assimilation. In the 2013–2014 study half of the students that included the crisis in their narration of Greece's history used the resistance construct (Apostolidou, 2014, p. 81). Actually, in 2013 students were optimistic that Greece would make it in the end. The following are excerpts of the 'resistance' construct of 2016:

- g 'Greece even being through the most bitter experiences, serious problems, illnesses, and all possible scourges, **was proved to be very strong, she did not surrender ...**', student 114
- h '*...despite difficulties Greece has been **exposing consistency throughout time***', student 37
- i '*The Greek state since 1830 and till now has been through a lot ... Greece has so far been in hunger, pulled down **and has recovered many times**, stood on her legs, fallen again, been bankrupt and today for once more she is in a big danger ...*' student 107
- m '*There were various governments (after the Junta), **we joined euro on false documentation** while Simitis was the prime minister in a way that we reached our current status, year 2016*', student 54
- n '*... then a 'tremendous' development of Greece **and a nouveau-riche class** till the Olympic Games ...*' student 3
- o '*... **consumerism begins, the loans, luxuries** and we end up with the economic crisis*', student 27

One can see an effort here for self-criticism. The 'tremendous development' could refer to the 1980s when the living standards of the Greek population benefited. Many analysts attribute the crisis to the choices of the governments of the 1980s, policies that today could be thought of as populist. On the other hand, Athanasiou notices that it has always been a strategy of the liberal politicians or analysts to put the blame for the crisis on the people for their choices concerning everyday life, consumerism for example, in a sense that the living standards of the people are their own responsibility (Athanasiou, 2012, p. 47). Excerpt (n) is self-critical '**we** joined ...', but attributes responsibilities to decision makers and it could be classified as a 'politicians' construct also.

The following are excerpts of the 'politicians' construct:

- p '*And now we have reached the point not even having to eat because of the several loans, **because of the mistakes of different governments** especially the Papandreou and Karamanlis governments*', student 67
- q '*...the people after a long recession period are seeking **for a government that will help them** stand on their feet and live decently...*', student 19
- r '*... Greek **state** has always been **immature and corrupted***', student 80

If the 'self-critique' construct displayed a tendency for reflection on the causes of the economic crisis in Greece, the politicians' construct develops to the opposite direction: people put the blame on the politicians for whatever happens in the country. In my 2013–2014 there have been similar characterisations about the politicians (Apostolidou, 2014, p. 89).

According to Rüsen, selection processes are also signifying processes (Rüsen, 1993, p. 68): certain points or events from the past are selected as important and used in a framework that tells a convincing story of one's life and in our case of Greece's history from the beginnings to the crisis. To narrate is exactly a process of attributing meaning to a mere 'succession of events' that in this way becomes a 'meaningful sequence' (Cercadillo, 2000, p. 39). The criteria by which significance is attributed can vary (Cercadillo, 2000, p. 57). In our case is the crisis: while in 2013 students chose those events or patterns that helped them to articulate an optimistic narrative, in

2016 they opted for the history of bankruptcies that get repeated over and over again. Actually, students are always using their narrative but different parts of it.

### The Present in the Future: Students' predictions of life in Greece in sixty years

The present is projected in students' answers about life in Greece over sixty years: Students are making use of the present in the place of a recent past (Apostolidou, 2006, p. 260). In our case, students use the current economic crisis as the sole criterion for their predictions. I am not evaluating whether their answers are optimistic or pessimistic but how they justify their options. Thus, I classified students' answers in three categories: the optimistic ones because recovery was expected, the pessimistic ones because of the crisis and finally the optimistic ones for reasons others than the crisis. Below the frequency of appearance of the three constructs:

TABLE 3. Optimistic, pessimistic predictions for life in sixty years

Optimism that the crisis will be overcome	Pessimism because of the Crisis	General Optimism	General Pessimism
25	30	16	–

Below the excerpts exhibiting optimism that the crisis will be overcome:

- s *'In sixty years from now, as history has shown, Greece will be in progress as she will have recovered from the difficulties she now faces'*, student 6
- t *'In sixty years from now Greece will experience technological development and because of the influences she receives also financial development because of the economic recovery'*, student 28

Excerpts (s) and (t) are indicative of the 'resistance' pattern, especially (s), 'as history has shown'. We are having for once more Greek people among difficulties optimistic of overcoming them. Still students' euphoria and optimism for the future is dependent on the crisis and its recovery.

Below excerpts of the general optimism construct:

- u *'In sixty years from now Greece will be more developed compared to nowadays and this because of the immense scientific development'*, student 102
- v *'In sixty years from now technology will be more developed if compared to nowadays'*, student 114

Here one recalls research in students' stances in relation to change in history: Barton reports findings of students seeing change as 'having come for logical reasons' (Barton, 1996, p. 76), thus according to students<sup>4</sup>, technology is always developing and is also identified with progress. Askouni in her analysis of the Greek students' assessment of factors contributing to changes in history<sup>5</sup> reports Greek students' predilection for environmental and technological factors to

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4 In Barton's research students were in the end of their primary school years.

5 Greek sample of the Youth and History Project.

social factors (Askouni, 2000, p. 262). Haste and Hogan mention Gosling's comment on the "more of the same" attitude of most people when they are asked to predict changes in technology (Haste and Hogan, 2012, p. 315). Research in people's ideas of technology suggests that it is usually seen ahistorically, always in a linear and developing process, and this could be the reason why some students in this study insisted on the development of technology despite the crisis and its consequences. In other words, technology develops independently of time and special circumstances. Finally, below the excerpts exhibiting pessimism in relation to economic recovery:

- w *'In sixty years from now, we don't know **whether Greece will still exist as an independent country**'*, student 18
- x *'In sixty years from now If things in economy do not change **Greece will end up with being a third-world country ...**'*, student 19b
- y *'In sixty years from now the status of the economy will be the same, perhaps **worse, people will be divided in lefts and rights of the extreme right wind, population will have decreased, and many people will have migrated because of unemployment**'*, student 27.

Students could be understood as projecting contemporary problems to the future, thus functioning in an anachronistic way (Askouni, 2000, p. 263). Sixty years-time is a long time, still students seem to think of the crisis independently of time and special conditions. Haste and Hogan speak of 'futures that story the present' (Haste and Hogan, 2012, p. 317) and they insist that while 'professionals' future scenarios reflect their perception of their field's present preoccupations and objectives ... for young people the future is a fantasy that reflects scenarios of hope, despair or resistance', (ibid, p. 318).

To conclude the students interviewed in this study seem to have projected the crisis backwards in their narration of Greek history and forwards in their prediction of the future.

### **Students' Ideas of Historical Development**

The majority of the students that participated in this study and answered the 'lines of development' question, opted for the repetition line of development 'things generally repeat themselves'. Like the fifteen-year-old students who participated in the 'Youth and History' project of 1994 (Bodo von Borries, 1997: A 201) they saw no changes in history. According to the analysts involved in 'Youth and History', the 'decline' and 'progress' options were supposed to indicate a 'genetic' historical consciousness implying a notion of 'directed change of things in time' (Angvic and Von Borries, 1997, p. B 252) while the 'repetition' and 'cycles' lines a 'traditional' and 'exemplary' historical consciousness.

Greek school students and teachers have been repeatedly diagnosed in various studies<sup>6</sup>, with a 'traditional' and 'exemplary' historical consciousness. The new 2016 element is the rationale they use for the repetition line of development. While a percentage of the students gives no justification for the opinion 'things generally repeat themselves', almost half of the repetition pattern answers are grounded on the crisis: things are repeated because economic crises are repeated. Some students refer to the Greek example of Trikoupis, while others to the interwar period and of 1929.

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<sup>6</sup> Like in Frangoudaki and Dragona (1997) about primary school teachers (in Greek), Askouni (2000) analyzing the Greek sample of 'Youth and History' in relation to change, Kokkinos et al (2005) analyzing primary school students and their teachers (in Greek), Apostolidou (2006) about Junior High School Teachers, Apostolidou et al (2009) about history teachers of the Lyceum (in Greek).

While in my 2013 study students functioning for once more within their official national narrative's context, insisted on a 'resistance' pattern, remembering instances of their country's survival, in 2016 they chose to focus on unhappy moments, bankruptcies and other economic crises. Below students' excerpts:

- z 'Things have the tendency of **repeating themselves**, a typical example is the economic crisis since this event also happened in the mid-war period', student 89
- z1 'I believe **that things get repeated**, a typical example is the current economic crisis that had happened also in the past ending with the bankruptcy of the Greek state', student 102  
Other students referred to cycles of economy or to interchanges between phases of development and phases of recession:
- z2 'Things get repeated **as every period full of hope for change and development is followed by another one in which everything is annulled and in which insecurity and poverty prevail**', student 63
- z3 'History is always repeated **as a continuous alternation of economic wealth periods and crisis periods**', student 16
- z4 'We are having periods of crisis like in 1929 and in Greece the period 2012–2016, and periods of development like around 2004 (for Greece)', student 105
- z5 'I think 'repetition' is the most logical answer since every period of development, rise, is followed by periods of descent ..., decline', student 6

While the excerpts are typical of the 'exemplary' historical consciousness, they also echo theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries referring to the 'cycles of economy', either in terms of the Konratieff cycles, or in Braudelian terms in the sense of an alternative historical time (Braudel, 1958): 'a day or a year were adequate units of political analysis, but the study of prices, the demography, the wages ... demand larger time units (Braudel, 1958: 728)'. One should also focus on students' tendency to theorize: in 2013 and 2014 students sounded like repeating lay economic theories about the crisis in Greece, like the one about memorandums that were designed to cause recession (Panagiotopoulos, 2013, pp. 268-269). In 2016, stimulated by a task that demanded of them to sketch a big picture of history, they spoke of cycles of development and recession.

It is interesting on the other hand that students used the 'cycles' schema both when being optimistic about life in Greece in sixty years – time, and when being pessimistic about it. The excerpts below exemplify students' use of 'cycles' when predicting:

- z6 'In sixty years from now life will be better, people will live in better conditions **because after decline there is always acme**', student 95

Finally excerpt (z7) exemplifying the pessimistic view:

- z7 'In sixty years from now **a new great economic crisis will appear**, I suspect the middle class will disappear, there will be extremely poor people and extremely rich', student 112

The next excerpt is another student's attempt to theorize development in history while borrowing from the epistemological tools of other disciplines:

z8 *'I believe that **the same factors and conditions produce the same results***', student 66

Finally, the exemplary type of students' historical consciousness also comes up when students refer to mentality or to peoples' mistakes as justifications of why things do not change in history:

z9 *'As a nation, we remain stagnant, **we do not learn from the past's mistakes***', student 81

z10 *'There is repetition because the **mentalties** of the people take centuries to change and in great effort in a way that people act in similar ways*', student 90

Table 4. shows the frequency of each pattern, also including 'Repetition for other reasons' pattern: in the latter, I have classified students' excerpts referring to other events that suggest repetition like wars, conflicts.

TABLE 4. 'Things generally repeat themselves', frequencies of different constructs

Repetition (no justification)	Repetition because of Crises	Repetition for Mentalities Reasons (people make the same mistakes)	Repetition for other reasons	Circles
20	29	16	9	8

## Discussion

To sum up, Greek students when narrating their country's history, in 2016 they focused on the repetition of bankruptcies while in 2013 they had focused on the repetition of their successful overcoming of difficulties. In a similar way, they saw repetition in the 'national' future while when asked to theorize about general developments in history they also used a 'repetition' schema. Having located as the main pattern in their thinking that of repetition, a repetition equally projected backwards, in the past, and forward, (in the future), one could ask whether there is evidence of repetition in Greek (economic) history, or students opted for it for convenience: '... we constantly sift events into patterns of recurrence and repetition to create a 'space of experience', without repetition there can be no knowledge' (Zammito, 2004, p. 129).

Greek historians despite their strong position that 'history does not repeat itself and does not teach' (Dertilis, 2010) at the same time acknowledge continuities in Greek economic history and one can see repetition implied even in the titles of their books: Kalyvas' book on Greek history between 1830–2009 has as title 'The Catastrophes and Triumphs of Greek History, the Seven Rounds of Greek History', and he mentions that Greece had to spend at least half of the years after its independence till now in a status between bankruptcy and restructuring of its debts. (Kalyvas, 2015, p. 101). Dertilis speaks of a 'spiral, a cyclone, a tornado of economic crises, sustained by the same forces', often though the intensity or the appearance of the cyclone changes, (Dertilis, 2011).

Gallant in his latest book of Greek history 'Modern Greece. From the War of Independence to the Present', notes:

1990 was a second fin-de siècle for Greece as an independent state and as in the first time there was a period in which Greece reached so high, also low but in a catastrophic way. Similar developments took place in Greece in both times. Speaking of acme, equally in 1896 and 2004 Greece hosted successful Olympic Games ... in both cases one can note a simultaneous collapse of the two-parties' system and politicians' resignations, the development of the extreme right ... while [one can also note] significant parallelisms in relation to Greece's economic problems now and then.' Gallant, 2017, pp. 447-448, my translation from the Greek edition.

Actually, students could have been expected to refer to the 19<sup>th</sup> century economic crises while they repeated analogies between past and present often heard in public speech in Greece. The question is why they used the resistance pattern of the Greek national narrative in 2013 while they ended up with a pessimistic repetition schema this year: I believe that the fact that the economic crisis is not overcome has contributed to the latter transition.

From the cognitive point of view presentism and an exemplary type of historical consciousness can be detected: if Lee's and Barton's students (Lee, 2012, p. 50, Barton, 1996, p. 60) extrapolated current trends to the future mostly as a 'straightforward, linear and generally beneficial progress' (Barton, *ibid*), Greek students this year described development in time as cyclical and repetitive. Additionally, they selected those events of Greek history that fitted in a pessimistic schema and not the national successes, in a way that all three time dimensions, past, present, future were assimilated by their unbearable present. Recalling a colleague's description, '... history is a telescope, when shut, everything is a single entity / at the same time'. From that point of view the Greek students of this sample were not critical, they might have rather manipulated than creatively used the past to explain a situation of considerable duration in time, the economic crisis of the years 2010–2016.

Are we in Greece also amidst a 'crisis of hope' (Coleman and Ferreday, 2011, p. 4)? Coleman and Ferreday instead focus on Spivak's notion of crises as enabling moments that would lead to changes and not to desperation. There were students in this study that saw repetition of disaster and no way out. There have been few, seemingly self-critical, that saw the 2010 crisis as a kind of inevitable consequence of excessive public spending in the 1980s. I would opt for those ten students that referred positively to the economic and social reforms of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century because they seem to have been in an enquiry process. Those students did not repeat closed schemas either to lament for the repetition of crises (victimization) or to identify crisis with an inevitable collective punishment. Seeing solely repetitions in history or 'inevitable' consequences, prevents people from change and also from agency in relation to history: students ought to be able to see alternative 'paths' in the past and ask themselves what ought to have been done for the common good.

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