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Panagiotis Zestanakis

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# From Media Idiom to Political Argument: Uses of “Lifestyle” in the Early Years of the Greek Crisis, 2009–2015

Panagiotis Zestanakis

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## Abstract

*In Greece from the 1980s to the 2000s, “lifestyle” was as an influential media idiom that promoted conspicuous consumption and was associated with cultural Westernization and sexual liberation. This concept acquired new political valence during the early years of the Greek crisis, as various media condemned lifestyle as responsible for the popularization of a frivolous culture largely blamed for new economic hardships. The concept was employed by media sympathetic to certain political parties that maintained or increased their power during this same period: the center-right New Democracy, the left-wing SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), and the far-right Golden Dawn. Intertextual analysis combining print and electronic media reveals how these media established a common narrative, which suggested that lifestyle choices were partially responsible for the crisis. Such media approached such allegedly decadent choices in largely moralistic terms and identified them with the PanHellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). The above developments took place by means of: a) the historical relocation of the emergence of lifestyle from the late 1970s and the early 1980s to the 1990s; b) the simplification of the content of the lifestyle media idiom through overemphasis on consumption; c) the use of an approach adhering to theories of cultural hegemony, which attributed responsibility for the popularization of lifestyle to media producers and so neglected interactions between media and audiences; and d) the identification of lifestyle with journalist and publisher Petros Kostopoulos.*

*Introduction: On lifestyle*

On 17 January 1990, Petros Kostopoulos, then director of *Click*, a popular Greek lifestyle magazine in the 1980s and 1990s, described in an interview with Manolis Anagnostakis (1990) how his relationship with his father had influenced his life. Kostopoulos stated that his father was a leftist and that he therefore sympathized with people haunted by the conditions after the Greek Civil War. Furthermore, as his family often faced economic hardships, he disliked the idea of saving money. Because Kostopoulos has been deemed responsible for destabilizing the largely left-wing post-1974 Greek political culture by establishing the idea of lifestyle, a media idiom which promoted a superficial consumer culture as a popular ideal, this statement about his relationship with his left-wing father is tinged with a certain irony.<sup>1</sup>

In the English-language literature, the term lifestyle describes forms of differentiation of human subjects according to social status and consumption choices (Chaney 1996, 14). In the early twentieth-century United States, magazines such as *Esquire* promoted images of successful manhood which undermined Victorian notions of masculinity that were values-based—that is, grounded in integrity, a sense of duty, character-building, and hard work—in favor of notions of masculinity associated with mass consumption and leisure (Pendergast 2000). Lifestyle choices multiplied in postwar Western societies, where magazines promoted identities distinguished from those of “the masses” through sophisticated consumption practices. The success of *Playboy* in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, before it was disseminated in the early 1970s in many other countries such as Italy, France, and Japan, marks the best-known case (Fraterrigo 2009; Jancovich 2006; Osgerby 2006). According to Bell and Hollows (2005), the phenomenon of lifestyle rapidly proliferated after 1970, when the middle classes aesthetically refined their consumption attitudes, consumer groups became less homogeneous, and mediascapes and the advertising and marketing industries became more sophisticated.

Greece had no obvious position within these developments. In 1949, the country emerged devastated from the Civil War. The economy developed rapidly beginning in the 1950s (McNeill 1978) and, starting in the 1960s, certain developments prepared the terrain for the gradual success of media discourses that highlighted consumption, leisure, and sexuality. Tourism increased and facilitated contacts with the “swinging” 1960s (Nikolakakis 2015). Representations eroticizing (mainly) female bodies multiplied in Greek cinema (Hadjikyriacou 2013, 76). The modeling industry gradually emerged, and female clothing became more revealing thanks to the popularization of, for example, bikinis

(Kafaoglou 2018, 55 and 211–220). In the 1970s, leisure and bodily self-determination took on an even more important role. Young people were introduced to visual culture through such films as *To προξενιό της Άννας* (*The Matchmaking of Anna*, 1972) by Pantelis Voulgaris, which castigated patriarchy and advocated greater female autonomy, while music halls welcomed performances celebrating apolitical youthfulness organized around leisure (Kornetis 2013, 169, 179, and 195). Greece's sporadic participation in the 1960s and 1970s trend of sexual liberation was not unhindered. Increasing abortion levels bear witness to the fact that premarital sex was common (Valaoras, Polychronopoulou, and Trichopoulos 1969), yet many segments of society, especially men, the elderly, and working-class people, criticized the relaxation of sexual mores, particularly among girls and women (Vlontaki 1980, 271; Hirschon 1998, 106–133). Such developments gradually familiarized Greek society with expressions of sexual liberation and commercialization and contributed to the propagation of lifestyle after 1980.

In Greece, the concept of lifestyle refers to the use of a media idiom that promoted conspicuous consumption and sexual liberalization resulting in the commercialization of (hetero)sexuality. Lifestyle discourses first appeared in print media around 1980; around 1990 the use of the concept extended from print to commercial electronic media (the first private TV channels came on air in 1989–1990) and it remained in wide use through the 2000s. Its establishment coincided with the transformation of the Greek mediascape: by the early 1980s, traditional magazines had become dated in terms of appearance, production, and content. The 1980s saw the proliferation of titles specializing in consumption and leisure (Zacharopoulos and Paraschos 1993, 79–83). This development coincided with a palpable shift in consumer trends, which began to revolve around goods, such as personal hygiene products, and services such as those supplied by the travel industry. The consumption of cosmetic products increased from 10,235 tons in 1981 to 15,197 tons in 1985 (Tsakirides 2004, 511). In 1974, households spent 4.8% and 10.8% of their annual expenditures on, respectively, health and personal-care products and transport and communication services, while by 1994 these figures had increased to 7.9% and 14.8% (Alisson, Manologlou, and Tsartas 2004, 549). By about 1990, popular TV magazines had reached circulation levels of roughly 200,000 copies weekly, while lifestyle magazines *Click*, *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, and *Playboy* sold, respectively, about 72,000, 51,000, 48,000, and 42,000 copies monthly (Zacharopoulos and Paraschos 1993, 81). At the time, 37% of Greeks were regular magazine readers, 57% of whom were female. Most of the regular magazine readers were born after 1955, lived in Athens or Thessaloniki, and were at least high school graduates

(Zacharopoulos and Paraschos 1993, 79–83). Lifestyle magazines continued to sell well in the 1990s after commercial TV channels were launched. In January 1996, *NITRO*, *Max*, and *Click* sold 60,624, 32,325, and 28,135 copies respectively (Tsoutsias 1996, 32). Radio stations that focused on lifestyle, such as Kiss FM, Click FM, and Jeronymo Groovy, gripped audiences aged between 12 and 34 (*Metro* 1995a). Mid-1990s talk shows, such as «Μύθοι και Πραγματικότητα» (*Myths and Reality*), presented by journalist Dimitris Papanotas, popularized the vocabulary and aesthetics of lifestyle in commercial TV channels. The presenters of commercial TV lifestyle shows, which combined interviews with music and dance, earned astonishing salaries.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to determine exactly when the use of the term lifestyle entered into everyday vocabulary. Left-wing magazines critical of lifestyle employed the term pejoratively in the mid-1990s (for example, Georgiopoulou 1996), yet periodicals now categorized as lifestyle publications were not self-labeled as such: even in the mid-2000s they were self-labeled as trendy (for example, Semitekolo 2006). In a 2003 interview with Fotis Apergis, musician Nikos Portokaloglou described lifestyle as an influential media idiom. However, in *NITRO*'s ten-year anniversary editorial, in which Kostopoulos (2005) explained how the magazine's title added to its success, the concept of lifestyle still remained marginal. In the context of the early Greek crisis mediascape, the term was still identified with frivolity.

The present article explores how lifestyle evolved from being a popular media idiom between the 1980s and 2000s to become a term laden with political significance between the 2009 elections called by the then-prime minister Kostas Karamanlis and the January 2015 elections when the then-anti-austerity SYRIZA came into office.<sup>3</sup> The wider politics of the Greek crisis and their cultural extensions have been discussed extensively in the scholarly literature (for example, Siani-Davies 2017; Tziovas 2017). To recall some major political developments of the early crisis: «Νέα Δημοκρατία» (New Democracy) (in opposition between October 2009 and November 2011 and participant in Loukas Papadimos's transitional government from then to May 2012) won the two 2012 elections and formed a government with PASOK and «Δημοκρατική Αριστερά» (Democratic Left) in June 2012. In January 2015, SYRIZA won the elections, forging an anti-austerity coalition government with «Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες» (Independent Greeks, ANEL). After negotiations with Greece's creditors, the SYRIZA-ANEL government signed a new memorandum in the summer of 2015. SYRIZA and Golden Dawn increased their electoral power in this period, with SYRIZA receiving 36.34% of the vote in January 2015, up from 4.6% in October 2009, and Golden Dawn receiving 0.29% of the vote in 2009 and more than 6.2%

in all four subsequent elections between May 2012 and September 2015.<sup>4</sup> After January 2015, popular debates about lifestyle weakened as SYRIZA's electoral success changed the tone of public discourse.<sup>5</sup>

This article examines media friendly or affiliated to New Democracy, SYRIZA and Golden Dawn—namely, to parties which maintained or increased their power during the crisis. These media were critical of lifestyle, in contrast to center-left media friendly to PASOK, which approached the phenomenon more moderately (for example, Papadopoulos 2012). The analysis does not include minor parties whose activities enjoy limited prominence in the mediascape. Although it attempts to provide a historically sensitive account, this analysis does not aim to fully cover lifestyle's historical development. By drawing on articles from print and electronic media, it highlights the role of lifestyle in political narratives and the term's use in historical arguments. Using the terminology of Barthes (1975, 14), it explores by means of intertextual analysis how lifestyle evolved from a supposed "text of pleasure," granting euphoria, to a supposed "text of bliss," imposing a state of loss and distress. The texts under discussion were written by journalists and bloggers with clear political positions. Undoubtedly, journalists such as Nikos Xydakis (a member of parliament for SYRIZA between 2015 and 2019) or Kostas Vaxevanis (currently publisher of the pro-SYRIZA newspaper *Documento*) adopted a pro-SYRIZA agenda. Similarly, columnists publishing in *Avgi* or in *Chrysi Avgi* espoused SYRIZA's and Golden Dawn's ideologies respectively. The analysis identifies and explores how commentators shifted the positioning of lifestyle from the 1980s to the 1990s, while also homogenizing the phenomenon according to its 1990s characteristics.

The analysis here further identifies and explores the role of three simplifications as regards the phenomenon of lifestyle. First, commentators emphasized its consumerist dimension, thus marginalizing other important aspects of it, such as its sexual politics. Second, as media critical of lifestyle saw media producers and consumers as non-interacting, they treated the media as exclusively responsible for the success of lifestyle. They therefore underplayed questions of choice, overlooking how both media producers and consumers mutually shape media frames (Entman 1993; Reese 2007). Simultaneously, such analyses can be seen as reflective of theories of cultural hegemony (Carah and Louw 2018, 2–3), presenting lifestyle as a hegemonic media idiom able to manipulate the consumerist attitudes of audiences. The third simplification concerns the excessive influence attributed to publisher Petros Kostopoulos, a figure who exemplified the heyday and decline of lifestyle media (Zestanakis 2018). Kostopoulos was seen as associating lifestyle and its supposedly corrupting values

with PASOK, the party that had dominated Greek politics between the 1980s and 2000s and with which Kostopoulos had personal relations.

*A helpful time-shift: Relocating lifestyle from the 1980s to the 1990s*

*Click* was first published in April 1987. Combining a critique of the right- and left-wing political environments of the late 1980s with enthusiasm for novel consumer trends, it politicized lifestyle media, as mainstream politics had played a less clear role in lifestyle magazines published before 1987 (*Playboy*, for example). According to its publisher Aris Terzopoulos, *Click* aimed at educating consumers who had seen “jeans and Marilyn Monroe as class enemies” (interview with Trivoli 2008). With the post-Civil War ideological violence in the past and the left-wing ascetic culture of the 1970s having significantly dwindled, many consumers enjoyed a prosperous environment and needed media navigators in the growing economies of pleasure.<sup>6</sup> *Click*’s creators captured the emergence of demands for an uncontentious and de-ideologized life, which contested earlier rebellious subjectivities (Sevastakis 2004, 49). What is more, *Click* expressed a youthful skepticism towards the earlier left-wing culture, which was increasingly seen as a form of the establishment by a new generation of young people attracted by pleasure-driven consumer economies (Sakellariopoulos 2001, 472–474). State-owned electronic media (which then included two TV channels and five radio stations) were unprepared to undertake this role, as their programming devoted little time to topics such as fashion. This provided an opportunity space (Sumberg and Okali 2013) from which some entrepreneurs profited by recruiting (mainly) young journalists. *Click* was planned in the course of a few months: it was based largely on the French *Actuel* and drew inspiration from publications such as the British *Face* and the Spanish *Ajo Blanco*. Circulation was initially moderate, but took off after 1989 (Terzopoulos 2012). *Click* sold 47,243 copies per month in 1988 and 74,585 in 1989 (Zestanakis 2008, 57). During the crisis, Kostopoulos (2012) characterized the early *Click* as a marginal publication. The magazine was aimed at educated readers interested in topics such as international travel, advertising, and global media, and it encouraged the commercialization of so-called alternative subcultural trends (in music, fashion, and so on) of the kind that had been taking place in the United States since at least the 1960s (Carah and Low 2018, 49). Nevertheless, it would be an overstatement to say that *Click* targeted highly sophisticated audiences. A late-1980s survey among 68 regular *Click* readers revealed that seven had graduated at least from primary school, 33 at least from high school, and 28 held a university degree; most of them had a

middle-class background (Zestanakis 2008, 55–56). In the first *Click* editorial, Terzopoulos (1987) claimed that anybody able to read could be a *Click* reader, while Kostopoulos (1987) described *Click*'s potential audiences in such abstract terms that any readers could recognize themselves in it:

Διεκδικούμε . . . σαν αναγνώστες, αυτούς που δε φοβούνται να δούνε ότι η ζωή δεν είναι χολιγουντιανό σήριαλ ή έργο σοσιαλιστικού ρεαλισμού. Ότι είναι τόσο αντιφατική, τόσο χαρούμενη και τόσο θλιβερή, έτσι που αξίζει να τη ζεις.

We claim . . . as readers those unafraid to see that life is not a Hollywood series, nor a work of socialist realism, that the fact that it is so contradictory, happy, and sad is what makes it worth living.

*Click*'s creators therefore targeted a broad group of readers.

The success of the concept of lifestyle and its consequences were much discussed during the early years of the crisis. According to journalist and SYRIZA ex-member of Parliament Nikos Xydakis, *Click* expressed the point of view of those coming from the provinces to Athens seeking urban life and consumer pleasures (interview in *Nea Elliniki Tileorasi* 2011b). He associated *Click*'s success with the domestic migration and upward social mobility that marked the postwar decades (Maloutas 2018, 77–82). For Xydakis, lifestyle embodied the era of Kostas Simitis, PASOK prime minister and inspirer of the so-called politics of modernization (1996–2004).<sup>7</sup> Xydakis simplifies lifestyle's history by identifying it with *Click*, confusing Kostopoulos' years as director of *Click* (1987–1995) with his later career in the area of media, flattening differences and ignoring that *Click* was more politicized than Kostopoulos' later titles, such as *NITRO*:

Ας ξύσουμε τη φτηνή χρυσομπογιά που γράφει *Κλικ*, *Μαξ*, *Φλας*, *Νίτρο* . . . Ο τσίγκος από κάτω, είναι χτυπημένος με τατουάζ «ΠΑΣΟΚ forever», «χρήμα über alles», «σκυλοπόπ», «κλεπτοκρατία» (Xydakis 2012).

Scratching the cheap gold paint writing [from] *Click*, *Max*, *Flash*, *NITRO* . . . reveals underneath . . . a tattoo saying “PASOK forever,” “money above all,” “trashy pop,” “kleptocracy.”

Arguments such as that of Xydakis appeared in the early 2010s in media outlets such as the website *Antinews* and the newspaper *Dimokratia*, reflecting views held by New Democracy's right wing. In this case, the failure of Kostopoulos was seen as a vindication of the apparent rebound of the ascetic right's values. This critique was gendered: PASOK and lifestyle were castigated as undermining Greek virility. The corrosion of Greekness was viewed as a kind of feminization, while virility was identified with right-wing values such as industriousness



and self-restraint. The temporary arrest of Kostopoulos for debt in 2013 was welcomed in media critical of lifestyle.

Η συνταγή των αρχιερέων της προπαγάνδας και των εργολάβων του «εκσυγχρονισμού» ήταν πετυχημένη: ιλουστρασιόν πρότυπα ανοργασμικού περιεχομένου, ήχοι βλαχομπάροκ . . . καλά προφυλαγμένες από αισθήματα, απολαύσεις. Το άλλο φύλο, σε συσκευασία δώρου, να περιμένει . . . αρκεί οι αναγνώστες να ακολουθήσουν κατά γράμμα τις οδηγίες. Έρωτες δίχως χθες και χωρίς αύριο. . . . Όσο πιο μιτασιόν, τόσο πιο αυθεντικό. Ο σνομπισμός του φτωχομπινέ . . . που αισθάνεται μεγαλοαστός, επειδή φοράει κουστούμι Armani. Μια κοινωνία εννουχιζόταν παίρνοντας μάτι στα εξώφυλλα και τις τηλεοπτικές οθόνες. . . . [Ο Κωστόπουλος] δείχνει να είναι κι ο ίδιος θύμα των αξιών που υπηρέτησε. Οι αστικές αξίες, με την πρωταρχική τους έννοια, της σφιχτής οικονομικής νοοτροπίας, της επανεπένδυσης και όχι της χλιδάτης διαβίωσης . . . επανέρχονται στο προσκήνιο (Μ. Ο. 2012).

The recipe of the archpriests of propaganda and the orchestrators of the “politics of modernization” was successful: sterile pictures of models, vulgar sounds . . . pleasures deprived of emotions. The other sex was offered up gift-wrapped and expected to just sit there and wait . . . as long as readers followed the instructions to the letter. Affairs without past or future. . . . The more fake it was, the more authentic it seemed. The snobbishness of the broke rent-boy . . . who thinks he’s classy because he wears an Armani suit. A society was emasculated by looking at front pages and TV screens. Kostopoulos seems to be a victim of the values he promoted. Urban values, in their original sense implying restricted living and reinvestments instead of a flashy lifestyle . . . are coming again to the fore.

Χθες το πανελλήνιο [είδε] τον . . . άνθρωπο που εκπροσώπησε την Ελλάδα της ψεύτικης γκλαμουριάς . . . να οδηγείται στον ανακριτή. . . . Η νέα Ελλάδα της φτώχειας, της οικονομικής κρίσης, του συμμαζέματος του κράτους και της ελπίδας για μια καλύτερη χώρα τα επόμενα χρόνια, συγκρούεται με την προηγούμενη Ελλάδα της δεκαετίας του 1990 που ο Πέτρος Κωστόπουλος ήταν άξιο τέκνο της (*Aristeros Psaltis* 2013).<sup>8</sup>

Yesterday the whole of Greece saw . . . the man who represented the Greece of fake glamor . . . subjected to investigation. . . . The new Greece of poverty, economic crisis, the tidying up of the state, and hope for a better country in future years is colliding with the Greece of the 1990s that Kostopoulos epitomized.

Here the author does not castigate Kostopoulos’s entrepreneurial unreliability (he abandoned his company in a state of limbo) but rather his relations with PASOK. A similar critique appears in SYRIZA’s newspaper *Avgi*. Here, criticism of conspicuous consumption is associated with lifestyle’s antifeminism, as expressed in the objectification of female bodies. Lifestyle media employed

semi-nude photo shoots, occasionally in the 1980s and more systematically starting in the 1990s, which influenced television to move in the same direction: shows such as journalist Themos Anastasiadis's «Όλα» (*Everything*) are a typical example, combining chat with celebrities (from politicians and journalists to models and reality show contestants) with appearances of semi-nude dancers. These aesthetics were criticized in the 1990s by left-wing media outlets such as the magazine *Metro* (G. L. 1995). A 1996 survey published in the same magazine disclosed that only a moderate 26.9% of males and 23% of females found lifestyle aesthetics appealing (Georgiopolou 1996, 71).<sup>9</sup> For *Avgi*, Kostopoulos epitomized «την ισχυρή, γκλαμουράτη και στραφταλιζέ, μπουζουκομπιτάτη Ελλάδα και την κατάληξη της» (“the powerful, glamorous, flashy Greece of bouzoukia and its end”). He is condemned for favoring prodigal consumption, for objectifying women, and expressing the «φιλοσοφία του κώλου . . . της τσάμπα μαγκιάς που . . . αποθέωσε τον κυνικό ατομισμό ως μοναδική . . . συνθήκη επιτυχίας» (“shitty philosophy . . . of cunning which . . . deified cynical individualism as the unique . . . condition for success”; A. G. 2013; Loupaki 2013). Likewise, pro-SYRIZA journalist Kostas Vaxevanis (2011; *Nea Elliniki Tileorasi* 2011a) located lifestyle in the 1990s, defining it as «γέμισμα με κώλους . . . και ελαφρά κείμενα» (“a collection of asses . . . and trivial copy”) that transformed consumerism into culture.

Both left- and right-wing approaches to lifestyle located the phenomenon in the 1990s and identified it with Kostopoulos in an effort to criticize it more effectively. Just why Kostopoulos is so extensively identified with lifestyle will be discussed in the last section of this article. At this point, it is sufficient to point out the emergence of a clear rupture in time separating the past from the post-lifestyle 2010s. Both approaches saw the crisis as a painful, albeit cathartic process leading to a better future. For right-wing journalists, lifestyle's collapse signaled the passage from years of supposedly corrupt PASOK rule to the coming of an era of right-wing restraint. In left-wing narratives, the collapse of consumerist illusions implied the emergence of hope for a left-wing government: lifestyle expressed the establishment that SYRIZA pitted itself against. The following excerpt from an article in *Avgi* is eloquent in this regard. It also represents the appearance of discriminatory vocabulary in a newspaper that had previously avoided such means of expression, a shift criticized by journalists with different ideological backgrounds (Triantafyllou 2014; Androulidakis 2014).<sup>10</sup> The change in *Avgi*'s style marked a juncture when SYRIZA and its media adopted the confrontational vocabularies featured in earlier populist media, such as the pro-PASOK newspaper *Avriani* in the 1980s (Pantazopoulos 2013, 101–109). The author identifies PASOK with Kostopoulos's hegemonic

masculinity and implies that order is recuperated through the dissolution of his heterosexual identity.

Άλειψε, Πέτρο, με αντιγηραντική αλοιφή το μανεκέν και πρόσεξε μη χάσεις κανένα πόντο. . . . [Ο Κωστόπουλος] έγραψε ένα μακροσκελέστατο (κατάλοιπο της νεανικής του συγκατοίκησης με τον Λαλιώτη) άρθρο αυτοκριτικής του στιλ «τι μαλάκες είσαστε που δεν μου είπατε εγκαίρως τι μαλάκας ήμουνα» και μετά πήγε να πιάσει δουλειά στην τηλεόραση. . . . Χαίρομαι, γιατί. . . στην πτώση του Κωστόπουλου αντικρίζω το λυκόφως μιας ολόκληρης εποχής. Ο Κωστόπουλος είναι η φούσκα, το κενό, η οίηση. . . ο κυνισμός (Anandranistakis 2013; my emphasis).

Petros, anoint the model with anti-aging cream and *take care not to ladder your stockings*. . . . Kostopoulos wrote a long self-critical article (*reminiscent of his juvenile cohabitation with Laliotis*) criticizing himself, saying “you are idiots because you didn’t tell me in time that I am an idiot,” and then found a job in television. . . . I am happy because. . . in the fall of Kostopoulos, I see a whole era ending. Kostopoulos embodies superficiality, emptiness, arrogance. . . cynicism.

The next excerpt originates from the far-right newspaper *Chrysi Avgi* and deployed a similar argument. The author Yorgos Mastoras did not chronologically relocate the phenomenon of lifestyle, but identified it with Kostopoulos. The first excerpt criticized Kostopoulos’s choice to present the 2013–2014 season of the Mega channel TV program «Πρωινό μου» (*My Morning*), which included segments offering beauty and cooking advice. Drawing a distinction between supposedly serious male subjects versus supposedly light female topics, the author saw Kostopoulos’s choice as humiliating and a synonym of his feminization. The article contained insinuations of homosexuality regarding Kostopoulos’s cohabitation with Kostas Laliotis (a one-time PASOK cadre and minister in Simitis’s governments) when they were both students in 1970s Paris. This cohabitation was also ridiculed in far-right newspapers, which characterized Kostopoulos as a «θλιβερή λούγκρα» (“miserable faggot,” *Stochos* 2011).

Ο θλιβερός αυτός τύπος. . . γνώριζε να πουλά το απόλυτο τίποτα τυλιγμένο σε λαμπερά σελοφάν. . . Η περίπτωση Κωστόπουλου έχει και «ιδεολογικές» παραμέτρους, [που], συνιστούν όμως κάτι πολύ ευρύτερο. Ο Κωστόπουλος με τις πλάτες του μέντορα και «κολλητού» του (πιο «κολλητός» δε γίνεται. . .) Λαλιώτη. . . δημιουργεί μια νοσηρή καθεστωτική νοοτροπία. Το ΠΑΣΟΚ. . . λεηλατεί τον κρατικό μηχανισμό, χτίζοντας. . . μηχανισμούς ελέγχου και χειραγώγησης του «πλήθους» και διαφθείρει συνειδήσεις σε όλη την Ελλάδα. . . ο Κωστόπουλος αναλαμβάνει «να ντύσει» ιδεολογικά αυτές τις συμπεριφορές (Mastoras 2013<sup>11</sup>; my emphasis).

This deplorable guy . . . knew how to sell even absolutely worthless products if they were wrapped in beautiful packaging. . . . Kostopoulos' case . . . has "ideological" aspects, [which] nevertheless indicate wider trends. Supported by his mentor and "buddy" Laliotis (*they couldn't be closer "buddies"* . . .) builds a hazardous regime mentality. PASOK . . . pillaged the state apparatus, constructing . . . mechanisms of control and manipulation of the masses, and corrupted mentalities throughout Greece. . . . Kostopoulos sought to cloak such forms of behavior in ideology.

If such homophobic comments might be anticipated from far-right media, their employment by left-wing media is embarrassing. The adjective μακροσκελέστατος (very lengthy) in the first excerpt, obliquely referring to the length of a penis, implies that he is homosexual or bisexual. In addition, the phrase «πιο κολλητός δε γίνεται» ("they couldn't be closer 'buddies'") in the second excerpt invests Kostopoulos's supposed homosexuality or bisexuality with connotations of moral inferiority.

#### *Highlighting consumption, simplifying communication*

A common strategy of these narratives was to highlight conspicuous consumption instead of other features of lifestyle, such as sexual politics. One possible explanation for this is that to prioritize consumption in reevaluations of 1980s–2000s media developments during the early years of the Greek crisis meant to question the uses of such reevaluations in the prevailing political discourse. As a 2007 survey demonstrates (Mavris 2007), voters evaluated PASOK's first government administration (1981–1985) positively on the grounds of its having improved living standards in Greece and having enhanced democratic procedures. From an economic standpoint, these views are questionable. During the 1980s, growth was moderate (Economou 2004, 39) compared to the growth witnessed in earlier decades by most of those who still lived in Greece in the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> After 1981, the number of public sector servants increased (Iordanoglou 2013, 17–66); welfare state services improved but inequalities broadened (Close 2006, 303–309); and unemployment rates rose (Kzakos 2001, 357). The so-called prosperity of the 1980s must be understood more as the prospect of further consumer opportunities based on expectations of continuing socioeconomic stability and increasing consumer credit, rather than as a reality. These opportunities culminated around 2000, when consumers obtained unprecedented access to consumer (and other) loans, a development that effectively concealed the widening of income inequalities (Emmanuel 2004, 127).

When this development is considered from a transnational perspective, it becomes clear that from the 1990s higher debt ratios were needed to produce

earlier levels of growth (Streeck 2014, 170). Greece participated in the phenomenon that sociologist Wolfgang Streeck (2014, 38–39) defines as privatized Keynesianism: private debt worked as a mechanism for expanding the resource inventory of the national economy. In many developed countries, including Italy, the United States, and Sweden, the national debt remained relatively stable, while private debt rose. In Greece, private debt remained moderate by European standards, but because earlier consumption was largely based on family savings, the higher consumption rates of the 1980s–2000s constituted a shift with regard to economic mentalities (Placas 2018, 324–326). One way or another, from the 1980s on, more consumers could enjoy goods such as designer clothes or modern electronic equipment. The popularization of VCRs among middle-class and lower-middle-class consumers is characteristic of this phenomenon (Kassaveti 2016). Effectively, the optimism of the 1980s sprang from developments other than those connected with the country’s mediocre economic progress, namely from the anticipation of a better future.<sup>13</sup> In the 1980s, feelings of stability coincided with the consummation of a cycle of development that had lasted for more than thirty years. In a country where working in the private sector often implied insecurity, the rise in public sector employees meant the emergence of more self-confident and optimistic consumers.<sup>14</sup> PASOK’s 1985 pre-election pledge for «ακόμα καλύτερες μέρες» (“even better days”) capitalized on this sense of optimism. In line with the worldwide development of private consumption (Aldcroft 2007, 336–337), Greek consumers increasingly trusted consumer credit products, such as credit cards, after 1986–1987 (*Sygxroni Diafimisi* 1987; Pylarinos 1988; Konstantinou 1989). These years foreshadowed the rise of consumer credit that Greece experienced in the 1990s and the 2000s (Placas 2018, 324–326).

Although living standards rose by only 1.5% per year in the 1980s (Close 2006, 303–309), sectors related to lifestyle, such as the advertising and marketing sectors, performed comparatively better than others (Dimas 1982). This fact supported demands for the abolition of the state monopoly in public radio and television, which could not follow developments in advertising, an expectation that materialized when commercial electronic media appeared between 1989–1990.<sup>15</sup> However, lifestyle had influenced the mediascape since about 1980, although at that time it was centered more on sexual than consumer politics. The launch of the Greek edition of *Cosmopolitan* in 1979 was a key moment, signifying the passage to a mediascape where media content would combine enthusiasm for conspicuous consumption and sexual pleasure and would even promote sex toys (for example, *Cosmopolitan* 1981). Following the international model, the Greek edition focused on gender relations, fashion,

and beauty. *Cosmopolitan's* success lay in its promotion of post-class illusions in which consumers live beyond objective economic means (Ouellette 1999, 360). It is questionable whether the Greek edition's readers could adjust their lifestyles to its dictates, which required affluence. A survey showed that few of them embodied the affluent, cosmopolitan, and mobile subjectivity which was gaining ground in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom at the time (Skeggs 2004, 47–52), promoted by media outlets which, like *Cosmopolitan*, favored a “compulsory individuality” structured around utopias of consumer choice (Cronin 2000).<sup>16</sup> In late-1970s and early-1980s Greece, *Cosmopolitan's* discourses on sexuality were more appealing and provocative than its discourses on consumption, and they overturned the landscape in women's magazines. Earlier titles, such as *Gynaika*, highlighted gossip, fashion, and housekeeping (Mitsou Pappa 1979); *Cosmopolitan*, by contrast, ideologized sex-positive feminism, identifying the existence of sexual liberty in the more energetic roles women sought regarding sexual attraction and satisfaction (for example, Daskalaki 1979; Interollo 1981). In those years, then, lifestyle as a media idiom tended to emphasize sex. Unsurprisingly, the first lifestyle magazine targeting male audiences was a title focused on sexuality. The Greek edition of *Playboy*, launched in 1985, reached an average monthly circulation of 74,260 copies in its first year (Zestanakis 2008, 57) while magazines focusing on sophisticated consumption trends performed significantly worse. Titles such as *Surf & Ski*, *O Kosmos tou Video*, or *Plepsi* (initially launched in 1982, 1983, and 1984, respectively) had monthly circulation rates below 20,000 copies in the same period (*Odigos Dimosiotitas* 1985).

Lifestyle focused on sexuality addressed a need for reliable information about sex, information that was not easily accessible. Magazines such as *Playboy* collaborated with experts, offering readers valuable information about sex (Zestanakis 2017, 105). Given this, one wonders why this dimension of lifestyle is underplayed in the media focusing on the Greek crisis and why, when it is mentioned, it is usually equated with pornography. In the 1980s, political parties, and newspapers and magazines openly friendly to them, often claimed relations with lifestyle media and incorporated elements of the lifestyle media idiom. For instance, in 1984, *Avgi* launched the column «Γυναικείος Λόγος» (Women's talk), which offered advice about shopping and beauty care that adhered to *Cosmopolitan*-style aesthetics, at least according to some feminist critics (Avdela et al. 1984). After 1985, many politicians, even left-wing ones, gave interviews to *Playboy*, much to the disappointment of feminist critics (Fragkoudaki 1986). Reactions escalated (Fragkoudaki 1989) when Leonidas Kyrkos, an emblematic figure of the postwar Left, gave an interview to *Playboy* in which

he acknowledged that he liked the magazine (Chrysostomidis 1989). In terms of party politics, lifestyle media supported the market economy, engaging with New Democracy's attempt to appear more liberal after 1984 under Konstantinos Mitsotakis (Katsoudas 1987). Lifestyle magazines provided opportunities to right-wing politicians, such as Andreas Andrianopoulos (1989), claiming a liberal, technocratic identity, but they also supported politicians from all political parties seeking a fresh profile (see, for example, *Playboy* 1989). From an international perspective, lifestyle engaged with progressive neoliberalism, which appeared in the United States in the 1980s. Progressive neoliberalism, as realized in Bill Clinton's election in 1992 and Tony Blair's "New Labour" in the United Kingdom shortly afterwards, forged an alliance of entrepreneurs, suburbanites, new social movements, and youth, all proclaiming modern progressive *bona fides* by embracing diversity, multiculturalism, and women's rights (Fraser 2017).

Greek lifestyle media often viewed sexuality from a liberal viewpoint, embracing, for example, the demands of the gay movement (Zestanakis 2017, 104–106). However, during the early years of the Greek crisis, media critical of lifestyle largely categorized lifestyle media as pornographic, although in the 1980s they contained limited nudity and avoided hard pornography. From a 1980s viewpoint such a critique seems justifiable, seeing as the feminist movement analyzed and contested media images at the time (Kuhn 1985, 3) and felt uneasy about the emergent 1990s striptease culture (McNair, 2002) that was seen as undermining feminist achievements.<sup>17</sup> This culminated in a process of sexual liberalization in which the commercialization of sexuality played a key role. This process began in northern Europe in the 1960s (Schildt and Siegfried 2006, 20–22) and later affected the European South. For example, in Spain, this process intensified in the 1970s (Kornetis 2015). The early crisis critique of lifestyle employed feminist arguments underlining the objectification of female bodies and presented lifestyle's success as unavoidable, with 1980s consumers being portrayed as if they could hardly have resisted lifestyle's pioneering visual dynamics. Thus, Greek audiences were portrayed as not responsible for having consumed these discourses. From a communication standpoint, this choice had certain benefits. By aligning their critique with the feminist movement of the time, left-wing media sidelined the relations between left-wing politicians and lifestyle, and drew on the groundbreaking dynamics of the feminists.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, by highlighting the power of pornographic imagery in a society insufficiently informed about sexuality and relatively recently liberated from the restrictive cultural politics of the 1967–1974 dictatorship, these media tacitly justified the Greek audience's immoderate enthusiasm for lifestyle. If images aim

to stimulate emotions, in this case interactions between images and audiences were taken for granted, while the fact that audiences actively chose to consume such media, contributing to their popularization, was concealed. Moreover, by presenting lifestyle as a hegemonic media idiom, these media constructed audiences as unavoidably enthusiastic proponents of lifestyle, when in reality many readers had only casual exposure to lifestyle as, for instance, through information on nightlife they came across in the magazines they purchased (Zestanakis 2018). This indicates that consumers somehow negotiated representations in lifestyle discourses, pursuing those compatible with their needs, a process corroborating the fluid character of media power.

Yet in the media examined here, lifestyle is presented as part of a plan aiming at the manipulation of consumers and reinforced by emphasis on its pornographic dynamics. Such images are discussed as components of a discourse serving relations between entrepreneurs, media owners, and politicians. But because such relations did indeed exist (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002), it is difficult to make a case that lifestyle media had stronger relations with the establishment than other print and electronic media. As an editorial by Kostopoulos (1988) argues, *Click* was reluctant to host political advertising, seeing it as incompatible with its aesthetics, and in the end decided not to allow it. Political parties preferred media targeting ideologically solid audiences, though without rejecting lifestyle media whose influence on young people was evident. Before the June 1989 elections, the leaders of both PASOK and New Democracy gave interviews to *Click*, thus launching a youth-friendly profile for the publication (interviews in Kostopoulos 1989a and 1989b).

Data on the political preferences of lifestyle media consumers are fairly limited. A small survey of *Playboy* readers published in mid-1989 suggested that they came from across the political spectrum (Zestanakis 2008, 141), and early lifestyle media likewise targeted readers of all political orientations. The early 2010s critique of lifestyle by left- and right-wing media did little to address 1980s rivalries, but engaged with the politics of the early crisis years. The denigration of the role of audiences was a major aim of this critique. The charge of infantilism was often used against Greeks who turned out to protest during the crisis (Kalantzis 2015). Anti-lifestyle discourses represented Greek consumers as immature victims of the transition to a new mediascape and as adolescents in terms of media literacy. Lifestyle deceived them, anti-lifestyle discourses suggested, but they would not be deceived again now that they knew what is actually contained within glamorously-wrapped packages.

Allegations of interest in lifestyle also became common in criticisms of political opponents. In 2012, for example, both pro-SYRIZA and far-right



journalists and bloggers blamed the youth of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) for inviting rapper Nikos Vourliotis (NiVo) to its annual festival (Giamali 2012; Antiochos 2013). Vourliotis had in the past collaborated with pop singers such as Yorgos Mazonakis, and was considered an artist with close ties to lifestyle media. More simply, the early crisis anti-lifestyle media flattered audiences that included 1980s voters. These discourses, moreover, intersected with discussions of cultural hegemony theory, specifically regarding the degree to which media discourses determine consumer—and, more broadly speaking, political—attitudes. The concept of cultural hegemony implies that those with power can produce discourses that advance and confirm their interests; that they are able to create as much discursive closure as possible, and thus promote perspectives and practices that are advantageous to themselves and their allies; and that they can regulate discursive shifts in such ways that discursive change favors the interests of those already dominant (Carah and Louw 2018, 64). In recent decades, various scholars have approached the theory of cultural hegemony with skepticism, outlining the creative capacity of audience members to engage with critical media identities (Gauntlett 2002, 287–289). Nevertheless, some current studies restore the value of the theory of cultural hegemony (for example, Carah and Louw 2018). In Greece, the left-wing media covering the early crisis highlighted lifestyle media's potential to manipulate the consumer and political attitudes of their followers, a stance that subscribed to the theory of cultural hegemony and rejected other approaches that emphasized the active role played by audiences. This approach was also adopted by several right-wing media outlets.

Right-wing media rejected theoretically more liberal approaches that underscored the active role of audiences in the communication process in favor of arguments that highlighted audience passivity. While they accepted media consumers' protestations of innocence, they ignored how audiences devote time and cognitive capital to evaluating media and cultural industry products (Willet 2008, 106). By contrast, they saw lifestyle as a hegemonic, invincible media discourse. This can be interpreted as skepticism toward the popularization of the middle-class gaze in Greece, the expansion of which has been historically identified with PASOK's exercise of authority in the 1980s and the 1990s. Internationally, the middle class is often viewed as having moral flaws, including snobbery and pretentiousness (rather than attachment to traditional values, such as family, sincere interpersonal relations, loyalty, and honor). Social networking is also seen as a preeminent feature of middle-class culture (Skeggs 2004, 144 and 151). Unsurprisingly, both left-wing and far-right media, both with a populist agenda, looked for opportunities that would allow them to criticize the taste of the middle class.

This is evident, for example, in a photo that accompanies Mastoras's (2013) article in *Chrysi Avgi* and which seeks to highlight social interconnections among members of the elite and vice. Presumably taken in the context of an early- to mid-1990s social occasion, it shows Kostopoulos with Laliotis and Dimitra Liani, Papandreou's third wife. The photo aims at provoking distaste in its viewers by capturing the interweaving of political and media establishments in a luxurious environment aesthetically compatible with 1990s middle-class consumer desires. Locating lifestyle in the 1990s, such media presented lifestyle's success as the result of backroom deals between PASOK and the establishment; they thus attributed responsibility for lifestyle to journalists serving the interests of both the establishment and PASOK. The anti-lifestyle media of the crisis underplayed the audiences' participation since the 1980s in the construction of lifestyle; hence, readers interested in lifestyle during that period could be sympathetic to anti-lifestyle articles that depicted them as victims. Given the devaluation of lifestyle in the early 2010s, they were likely to approve of media publishing such articles, and the political viewpoints that these media expressed. References to the 1980s, when politicians from all parties contributed to lifestyle, were downplayed.

SYRIZA-friendly media treated PASOK's politics before and after the mid-and late- 1980s in substantially different terms. In fact, PASOK's rise to power (1974–1981) and Papandreou's communication style inspired SYRIZA in the early 2010s. As SYRIZA rose to power, it developed narratives associating the left-wing Greek Resistance in the 1940s with the anti-austerity struggle of the early 2010s. In this context, the PASOK of the early 1980s came to be viewed in positive terms (Kornetis 2019, 203–205). In 2012, *Avgi* republished Papandreou's classic article «Οι δομές της εξάρτησης» (“The Structures of Dependence”), originally published in 1977 when Papandreou argued that dependence on foreign powers was responsible for Greece's hardships. SYRIZA party leader Alexis Tsipras (who was even parodied in social media as “Tsiprandreou”) adopted elements of Papandreou's style of speaking, which included stretching the final syllables of words (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 277–286). To add further historical context, in the early 1980s PASOK and the Left had maintained good relations. In 1982, Panagiotis Lafazanis, then a member of the Communist Party of Greece and later the leader of SYRIZA's Left Platform until the summer 2015 compromise, argued that PASOK and the Left shared a common desire for “change.”<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Manolis Glezos, emblematic figure of the postwar Left and MP with SYRIZA in the early 2010s, had been elected to the European Parliament with PASOK in 1984. By disassociating the concept of lifestyle from the 1980s and connecting it to the 1990s, SYRIZA-friendly

media protected the supposed political purity of the early 1980s, which had been marked by regular contact between PASOK and the Left. This was crucial for SYRIZA, which drew symbolic elements from the early phase of PASOK as it ascended to power in the early 2010s.

*A third simplification: Petros Kostopoulos and the limits of his presumed liability*

The final question to be addressed is that of why discourses on lifestyle revolved so much around Kostopoulos. Kostopoulos had close relations with PASOK, least until 1986. A member of PASOK in the 1970s, he moved to the Greek delegation to the European Economic Community in Brussels after completing his studies in Paris. Upon returning to Athens, he worked at the General Secretariat of Youth before entering the media industry. From 1987, in his capacity as director of *Click*, he distanced himself from and condemned much of Papandreou's approach, including his ties with populist media, the overgrowth of the public sector, and the mounting corruption. His relations with PASOK improved when he supported Simitis's so-called politics of modernization. When Simitis granted an interview to Kostopoulos in 1996, Kostopoulos introduced him as the man who had changed the political discourse in Greece.

To deconstruct the identification between Kostopoulos and lifestyle one could approach narratives on Kostopoulos and lifestyle's influence as a form of public history. As historian Susan Crane (1997, 1372) argues, public history renegotiates relations between past and present by producing discourses about the past instead of analyzing it. For the purposes of the present article, the negotiation of lifestyle can be viewed as a form of public history associating the recent past with the post-lifestyle 2010s. This entails the evaluation of narratives at a juncture when media play a crucial role in social organization and political attitudes (Hjarvard 2013). The empowerment of audiences in such cases is pivotal to the proliferation of information production (Appadurai 1996, 22) and the propagation of public discourses about the past through both media and pop culture (Kurasawa 2009; Reynolds 2011). In such mediascapes, conflicts are often developed through interactive social media, and the polarized mediascape of the Greek crisis is not an exception to this rule (Zestanakis 2018). Through a process of remediation, newer media often achieve cultural singularity by mimicking and refashioning older media (Papacharissi 2010, 64). Although participatory media supposedly motivate alternative approaches to politics, users only occasionally benefit from this potential by reproducing mainstream media juxtapositions (Denskus and Esser 2013), often through novel means of

expression such as trolling. Communication strategists have argued that this condition marked the early 2010s Greek mediascape (for example, Vardoulakis 2014). *Troll*, a term that first appeared in the 1980s, although it was popularized in the social media era, describes users who disorient online discussions, pass their own messages, and irritate other participants (Schwartz 2008). Media practices such as trolling, and social media communication in general, foster short messages.<sup>20</sup> In this decentralized media environment, effective messages are those that can be easily reproduced while still maintaining their initial sense. Identifying phenomena with recognizable individuals is beneficial. The messages' content is channeled easily through short comments, jokes, or memes rather than in long, sophisticated articles and essays. The identification of lifestyle with an emblematic personality, in this case Kostopoulos, is thus facilitated by the nature of the social media landscape.

Kostopoulos is a very recognizable figure in lifestyle media and, therefore, an ideal candidate to become synonymous with the lifestyle media idiom. Besides having directed successful magazines, he also organized radio stations, such as NITRO Radio 102.5, and, unlike other publishers, he worked sporadically in television, presenting talk shows such as «Ο Πέτρος και ο λύκος» (*Peter and the Wolf*) (Star Channel 1994) and the reality show «Ο υποψήφιος» (*The Apprentice*) (Alpha 2004). He also authored cookbooks, compiled easy listening music collections, and still appears in clubs and bars as a guest DJ. All of these activities helped to make him known far beyond the readers of his magazines: to a broad audience, his name became synonymous with lifestyle. Of course, Kostopoulos did not establish lifestyle and he joined the media only in the late 1980s, as noted above. Although his projects marked lifestyle's development, it would be naïve to claim that a single media personality inaugurated a new way of life and accustomed an entire country to conspicuous consumption. Despite his at times excessive self-confidence, Kostopoulos himself made statements along these lines even when he was at the peak of his career, pointing out that media may boost existing social trends but are unable to create them from scratch (Kostopoulos 2005, 36). Lifestyle media expressed and ideologized preexisting international trends and adapted them to the Greek mediascape. According to Sophia Kinti, who worked as a journalist at *Click*, lifestyle media in the late 1980s promoted trends that many young people had already experienced. Many of *Click*'s topics were inspired by its own journalists' personal habits (interview in Eptakoili et al. 2010). If *Click*'s slogan «Η ζωή είναι πολύ μικρή για να είναι θλιβερή» (“life is too short to be miserable”) celebrated life's pleasures and valorized frivolity, the historical conditions favoring this approach to life had appeared long before the late 1980s.

The organization of the critique of lifestyle around Kostopoulos expressed wider contradictions between prior and current politics. The claims of modern lifestyle intersected with a sense of attachment to tradition, thus producing tensions. Modern lifestyle entailed increasing sexual liberation, mass entertainment, the weakening of restrictions dictated by religion, enthusiasm for international travel, and interest in global media. Lifestyle media applauded such ideas (Sevastakis 2004, 81), often in hybrid ways. For instance, in Greece such activities were often subsidized by family funds, and access to them defined intergenerational relations in an age of improving living standards: parents motivated young people to adjust aspects of their lifestyles to parental values and, in exchange, facilitated their children's enjoyment of the consumer experiences that media promoted but which young people could often scarcely afford (Panagiotopoulos and Vamvakas 2014, 119; Panagiotopoulos 2018). In *NITRO*'s commemorative millennium edition, Kostopoulos shrewdly assimilated this fact into the lifestyle idiom by highlighting family as the most important value in the new century (Kostopoulos 2000, 36). As in other Southern European societies, such as Portugal (Conde Dias, Machado, and Conçalves 2012), lifestyle media in Greece engaged with traditional relations and values. Lifestyle's volatility is also attested by its readiness to engage with the early 1990s "rhetoric of self-confidence." Inspired by reactions to the Macedonian Question praise for Greek "trendiness" acquired nationalistic connotations.<sup>21</sup> Although theoretically incompatible with lifestyle's cosmopolitan spirit, this discourse appeared in lifestyle media (Sevastakis 2004, 91–98).

It is hard to define to what extent lifestyle media's followers adopted the values that these media promoted; surely, lifestyle promoted individualism, inflaming other (usually left-wing) media in the 1980s (for example, Karakotias 1988) and after, as the example of *Metro* shows. Such left-wing voices saw lifestyle media as promoting a superficial aestheticization of the self that revolved around the concept of the fashionable (Skeggs 2004, 136) and cultivating a compulsory individuality constituted by illusions of choice in a commercializing society (Cronin 2000). This critique remained marginal before the crisis. During the crisis, however, this emphasis on individualism was condemned as alienating in both left- and right-wing media. Kostopoulos was identified with lifestyle due to his provocative media vocabulary—he used to employ words such as «μαλάκας» (*malákas*, "wanker") in his articles—and the ways he contested earlier political idioms. Further, the visibility he enjoyed, the arrogant masculinity that he frequently embodied, his relations with PASOK, his affluent lifestyle, and the unpaid debts (especially to the company's employees) that he left when closing IMAKO rendered him widely unsympathetic. However, the appeal of some of his TV projects throughout the 2010s and his current (as of late 2019) popularity

as an Instagrammer with circa 85,000 followers prove that a number of media consumers continue to take an interest in his projects and personal life.<sup>22</sup> At any rate, his identification with lifestyle contributed to the delegitimizing of a media idiom that often promoted modern ideas, albeit usually through vulgar expressions ridiculing its cultural opponents.

### *Conclusion*

This article has examined how lifestyle evolved from an influential media idiom between the 1980s and the 2000s into a political argument during the early years of the Greek crisis. As most lifestyle enterprises collapsed in the early 2010s, lifestyle and its supposed responsibility for the crisis evolved into a trendy topic of public dialogue. Lifestyle was widely identified with PASOK's political hegemony before the crisis (especially in the 1990s and the early 2000s) and with the propagation of a frivolous culture bearing moral responsibility for the crisis.

Engaging with the moralization of consumer politics during the crisis (Lekakis 2015; Zestanakis 2018), publications friendly to, or affiliated with, parties which either survived the crisis (New Democracy) or evolved during it (SYRIZA and Golden Dawn) condemned lifestyle and associated it with PASOK, which lost most of its power in the same period. These media relocated the phenomenon from the 1980s to the 1990s and identified it with PASOK's political hegemony, especially during the Simitis Era. They highlighted its consumerist dimensions and offered a narrative organized around theories of cultural hegemony and tending to underplay the active role of audiences in contemporary mediascapes. They approached lifestyle as an attractive media idiom that the supposedly immature media consumers could not resist. Finally, they identified lifestyle largely with Petros Kostopoulos and his various media projects.

After 2015, lifestyle gradually became a relatively marginal topic in public debates. The election of an anti-austerity government, which started strenuous negotiations with Greece's creditors, leading to a polarized referendum in July 2015, changed the communication agenda. Articles on lifestyle became unusual; most earlier lifestyle media personalities bowed out. Nevertheless, lifestyle aesthetics continue to influence TV programs such as the modeling reality show *Greece's Next Top Model* (Star Channel, 2018–2019) presented by, among others, Vicky Kayia, a popular top model from 1990s and 2000s lifestyle magazines. Although the crisis effectively dismantled "lifestyle" and the media apparatus around it, some of its influence still can be felt today.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For this left-wing politicization, see Papadogiannis 2015.

<sup>2</sup> According to one account, Roula Koromila and Vlassis Mponatsos, presenters of the shows «Μπράβο» (*Bravo*) and «Άλλα κόλπα» (*Other Tricks*), respectively earned 40,000,000 and 20,000,000 drachmas monthly (*Metro* 1995b).

<sup>3</sup> An outline of the political developments of this period is offered by Siani-Davies 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For the early crisis, see Siani-Davies 2017; for the 2012 elections, see Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, they did not disappear. For a recent example, see Stempilis 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Recent research argues that traces of post-civil war fears persisted even in the 1980s: see Karamanolakis 2019.

<sup>7</sup> On “politics of modernization” see Featherstone 2006.

<sup>8</sup> A similar article appeared in the Newspaper *Dimokratia* (2013). The anonymous author defines lifestyle as a reason why young people abandoned faith in homeland, religion, and family.

<sup>9</sup> To contextualize this finding, nudity was more accessible in 1990s media than in the 1980s. Commercial channels such as Antenna hosted soft-porn programs, while Filmnet, which started running in 1994, offered hard porn. 73.7% of men surveyed and 56.5% of women found erotic films the most arousing thing in everyday culture (Georgiopoulou 1996, 71).

<sup>10</sup> For another example (of fatphobic vocabulary in this case), see Politi 2013.

<sup>11</sup> As of 7 December 2019, this article had been removed from the *Chrysi Avgi* site, but was still available via the Wayback Machine: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150629013725/http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/h-thliberh-periptwsh-kwstopoulou-ws-deigma-koinwnikh-parakmhhs>.

<sup>12</sup> At that time Greece experienced some of the best development rates worldwide. See McNeill 1978.

<sup>13</sup> For surveys regarding this optimism, see Varouxi and Frangiskou 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Civil servant numbers increased by 170,000 and 210,000 over the periods 1980–1986 and 1980–1991 respectively (Iordanoglou 2013, 40–41).

<sup>15</sup> For this process, see Papapolyzos and Mourtzoukos 1997, 201–259.

<sup>16</sup> A 1987 survey among regular readers of lifestyle magazines for women revealed that readers lived lives different from those promoted by their favorite magazines. *Cosmopolitan* promoted jewelry and leisure travel but only 28% and 36% of its readers would pay for an expensive watch or a luxurious hotel or restaurant, respectively. 19% of them had traveled abroad at least once (*Cosmopolitan* 1987, 7–11).

<sup>17</sup> For an early example of such a critique, see Ziozia and Avdela 1980.

<sup>18</sup>This dynamic continues to be discussed even today. A recent exhibition on the 1970s and 1980s feminist movement gained media attention. For its context, see Repousi, Psarra, and Michopoulou 2017.

<sup>19</sup>The Left Platform left SYRIZA after the summer 2015 compromise. According to one of its members, this was a deeply traumatic experience (Kouvelakis 2016).

<sup>20</sup>For example, on Twitter, one of the most popular online news and social networking services, messages (tweets) were initially confined to 140 characters until late 2017, when the company doubled this limit.

<sup>21</sup>In 1991, North Macedonia declared its independence under the name Macedonia. This decision provoked reactions in Greece and large rallies were held in Thessaloniki and Athens in February and December 1992 respectively. In this context, references to concepts such as “Greece,” “Greekness,” and “nation” became fashionable and influenced show business. The lyrics of early 1990s hits such as «Μια Ελλάδα φως» (“Greece Full of Light”) by Konstantina (1992) and «Ελλάδα χώρα του φωτός» (“Greece, Land of Light”) by Kaiti Garbi (1993) are indicative of this spirit. Garbi’s song was selected to represent Greece in the 1993 Eurovision Song Contest. I employ the term North Macedonia in accordance with the Prespa Agreement (June 2018). In the 1990s, Greeks usually referred to North Macedonia as Skopje.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, *Reader.gr* 2013.

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