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On 80stalgia: discernments from contemporary Greece

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ABSTRACT

Nostalgia for the 1980s, or 80stalgia, is a global phenomenon. This article explores the phenomenon in Greece and approaches 80stalgia as a cultural trend that marks media and pop culture. It combines digital ethnography through invisible observation (especially using Facebook, a social medium that favours nostalgic communities) and historicised content analysis to analyse 80stalgia in its interrelation with politics, and approaches it as having been influenced by international nostalgic trends and local politics, especially the political legacy of 1980s governments. Finally, the article discusses why the economic crisis of the 2010s, an experience that triggered self-reflection on the past, strengthened 80stalgia.

In early 2017, about 80,000 Athenians rushed to 'GR80s: 1980s Greece in Technopolis' (Η Ελλάδα του ογδόντα στην Τεχνόπολη), an exhibition on 1980s Greece. Drawing on nostalgia's emotional power (Holak & Havlena, 1992; Roper, 2011; Smith & Campbell, 2017), this event called visitors to re-sense an engaging period in pop culture and memory. Through 18 stands and parallel events (including talks and parties), the exhibition offered textual, sonic, and visual stimuli to explain politics, economy, culture, and everyday life. As a sensorial nostalgic event, GR80s called visitors to feel this decade by playing arcade videogames or visiting a middle-class flat.[1] Confirming the media's passion for nostalgia (Böhn, 2007; Lizardi, 2014; Niemeyer, 2014), TV programmes, webpages and other media promoted the event that preoccupied Greece for months in the last stages of the crisis of the 2010s.[2]

This article sees nostalgia and pop culture as interrelated (Guesdon & Le Guem, 2014; Reynolds, 2011). Nostalgia's influence on pop culture is an old story: Indicatively, nostalgia for the 1950s influenced pop culture in the 1970s and 1980s (Dwyer, 2015). Such nostalgic interactions affect consumer culture and the recurrent revival of old styles in fashion confirms that (Jenß, 2013). The GR80s succeeded because they explored a decade whose pop culture surrounds us. Memory is largely a media by-product (Erll & Rigney, 2009; Garde–Hansen, 2011), and interplays between media and memory have intensified with the social media boom since the late 2000s: Facebook had 0.6 million users in 2010 and 2.8 billion in 2020. I approach 80stalgia as a pop phenomenon, which in Greece coincided with the crisis and the social media explosion, and argue that the exploration of

connections among nostalgia, economy, politics and the media is crucial to understanding the phenomenon.

Pop culture is the accumulation of cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyberculture, television and radio that many people consume (Crossman, 2019). The borders between pop and elite culture are blurred (Blau, 1989). Generalising, pop culture contradicts elite culture, cultural forms that distinguish elites, such as enthusiasm for opera, ballet, or fine art. The GR80s became the talk of the town, permitting people to nostalgically (re)feel the 1980s through parties with DJs from the 1980s or discussions with artists and intellectuals. The impact of 80stalgia is also evident in social media. For example, the Facebook page 'the old orthodox PASOK' (Παλιό ΠΑΣΟΚ - Το ορθόδοξο), which discusses the 'happy 1980s' as an outcome of the politics of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα; PASOK), has more than 150,000 members; '80s nostalgia' (80s νοσταλγία), a similar but less politicised Facebook group, has about 147,000 members.[3] Hence, 80stalgia concerns big audiences, links generations, fosters senses of collective identity and emotional attachment, and forms large communities. We can also meet 80stalgia in museums, cafes, bars (Rokou, 2015; Zestanakis, 2020a) or podcasts (e.g. Dimokidis, 2023; Kaouris, 2023). Especially, podcasts demonstrate that 80stalgia concerns younger people: 69% of podcast listeners in Greece were born after 1978 (Mellon Media, 2022).

Nostalgia is an emotion. Taking an affective turn, the analysis discusses how nostalgia interacts with other emotions such as calmness. Emotions affect memory as memory keeps emotional experiences alive (Kesinger & Schacter, 2008; Lee & Hsu, 2013; Wertch, 2008). The connections among media, memory, and positive emotions (Ekelund, 2022; Rigney, 2018; Sindbæk Andersen & Ortner, 2019) are pivotal to understanding 80stalgia. The article adds to the debates on how positive, often consumption- and leisure-focused experiences and memories affect nostalgia. The analysis employs a qualitative methodology and combines invisible observation in social media (mostly using Facebook and, to a lesser degree, other forums) and historicised content analysis. Invisible observation involves the examination of internet sites by ethnographers whose presence is physically invisible. This method does not entail the ethnographer's participation in discussions with users and permits the examination of large amounts of data and past discussions (Denzin, 1999; Garton, 1999; Kozinets, 2002; Richman, 2007). The analysis uses nostalgic social media groups seeing them as productive sites for sociological and micro-historical analysis (Stock, 2016), but I do not aim at a strictu sensu digital ethnographic study. Consequently, the analysis does not delve into the politics of the organisation of online nostalgic communities, nor examines, in depth, similarities and differences between them. To put it simply, the analysis revolves around historical and sociological questions concerning what findings from such groups can tell us about the 80stalgic turn in contemporary Greece, and not around ambitions to examine performances of nostalgia within the groups from a media studies perspective.

The study deals with the period from the late 2000s to the present, with a stronger focus on the years from the mid-2010s to now. This is because the phenomenon has densified in recent years, something shown by the continuous creation of online nostalgic groups, or in the staging of big events such as the GR80s. The communities examined started at different times between the 2000s and now: indicatively, the Facebook page named the 'Old Orthodox PASOK' started in

2014, while the group '80s nostalgia in 2021. The forum 'Retromaniax' was created in 2006. I prioritised communities which discussed nostalgia in general and were not organised around specific habits and hobbies (e.g. motorcycles, videogames, etc.), nor had a particular geographic focus (e.g. specific cities). Case study is a common method in sociological and anthropological analysis. It draws on the idea that cases can provide valuable insights to understand wider phenomena. Generalisability is crucial in such analysis (Yin, 2014, pp. 4–12), ensuring that the findings can be meaningful beyond the specific situation studies. This analysis brings the Greek case into dialogue with international 80stalgic experiences and has the ambition to demonstrate that the Greek case contributes to debates on nostalgia in other societies in crisis. Representative sampling does not fit all research situations (Bauer & Aarts, 2000, pp. 19–23) and does not apply here. The posts examined represent a collection of materials determined by the analyst by inevitable arbitrariness or a corpus, to employ a term by Barthes (1977, p. 76).

Representability is extremely difficult when we deal with large source bodies (Onta, 1998, p. 185), a common situation for digital ethnographers in the big data era. This lack of representability includes many autobiographic sources in addition to nostalgic testimonies published online. Some discussants contextualise experiences to make their arguments more convincing; still, they are the exception that makes the rule. Nostalgic testimonies are emotional discourses, and their factual validity cannot be guaranteed. On the contrary, exaggerating arguments, such as the claim that the drachma was the most powerful currency in the world, may appear.[4] Such testimonies are not a sample from which quantitative data can be distilled. As it happens, such sources as oral interviews or autobiographies (Papadogiannis, 2022, pp. 334–335) may be suggestive. When contextualised and combined with other findings, they provide nuanced understandings of the local dimensions of 80stalgia and its interactions with international nostalgia for the 1980s. The historicisation of nostalgia is pivotal in this effort. Examining the phenomenon from the vantage of a cultural historian, I aim for a historically sensitive content analysis, and I see 80stalgia as a historical phenomenon that permits us to delve into relations between society, memory, and the media (Niemeyer, 2022).

Historicised content analysis enables researchers to analyse phenomena in depth and to challenge established conventions. Indicatively, historicised analysis of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden reveals how a country which imagines itself to have almost accomplished a post-racial utopia and hegemonic colour-blindness also harbours far-right political individuals (Hübinette & Lundström, 2023, p. 309). Content analysis utilises procedures to make valid inferences and to create information from text. These inferences can be about senders, audiences, and the messages themselves. Moreover, historicised content analysis discloses differences in communication content, compares media or levels of communication, audits communication content against objectives, identifies the intentions and features of the communicators, determines the psychological state of groups or persons, detects propaganda, describes attitudinal responses to communications, reflects cultural patterns of individuals, groups or societies, reveals the focus of individual, group, institutional or societal attention, and describes trends in communication (Weber, 1985, p. 9). Nostalgia is a highly interdisciplinary field. Hence, the article draws on a bibliography from various disciplines, especially history, sociology, and media and cultural studies.

I approach 80stalgia paying attention to the consumption-driven self-reflection on the past that the crisis triggered (Knight, 2015; Lallas, 2023). The analysis has four parts: First, it discusses selected approaches to nostalgia. Second, it explains why we are so 80stalgic. Third, it analyses 80stalgia and the political legacy of the Greek 1980s. Fourth, it discusses how and why 80stalgia flourished during the crisis of the 2010s. challenging the rule that turmoil reformulates public memory. This last target requires clarification: political change affects memory. Public memory springs from interactions between elites and the public (Forest et al., 2004). Indicatively, post-socialist societies have experienced the vibrant politicisation of the past and mnemonic tensions. Post-socialist regimes impose(d) negative memories of socialism, but individual memories of socialism cannot be erased or denied: many people remember socialism ambivalently. Local memories act as 'counter-memories' (Light & Young, 2015). Greece experienced comparable mnemonic tensions in the crisis: intellectuals often designated the 1980s, and the wider period between the 1974 political changeover and the crisis, as frivolous and unaccountable. This frivolity entailed the identification of the state with PASOK, the alienation of the public sector and labour unions and an improvident economic policy favouring conspicuous consumption (e.g. Kalyvas, 2008; Kostis, 2018, pp. 812–815). People occasionally encapsulated this criticism of consumption, internalising negative emotions such as guilt and morosity (Lallas, 2023; also, see Zestanakis, 2020b). Nevertheless, many people did not embrace this memory and continue to see the 1980s through a positive nostalgic prism.

Nostalgia

In the late 17th century, nostalgia referred to a state of moral pain associated with the forced separation from family and social environment (Fuentenebro de Diego & Valiente Ots, 2014). In the 19th century, nostalgia was seen as a form of melancholy. In the 20th century, nostalgia disappeared from psychiatric nosography and after 1970 obtained a positive psychological status, stopped being seen as the equivalent of bad memory and pervaded culture as a benign pastime (Scanlan, 2004; Weiss & Ranjan Dube, 2021). Nostalgia became a master narrative in public discourse and research, explaining trends in pop culture, fashion, technology, or politics (Becker, 2018), and emerged as a key field in exploring how senses interact with memory (Swenson, 2022). Nostalgia can provoke melancholic emotions: Nostalgic memories may connote a pleasant time in the past, contradicting a stressful present (Weiss & Ranjan Dube, 2021). People are not only nostalgic for pleasant periods: Nostalgia for the austere Thatcherite 1980s is common in the United Kingdom (Farrall et al., 2021), while some people in Romania and Albania are nostalgic for aspects of the Ceausescu and Hoxha dictatorships (Dalakoglou, 2022, p. 176; Marin, 2013). For example, in post-socialist Romania, many people felt that the collapse of communism brought them a shambolically liberalising labour market, featuring high unemployment and little social protection. This justified the romanticised remembrance of the past against a gloomy present and the positive evaluation of the communist regime (Marin, 2013, p. 60). Tough and lonely times trigger nostalgia (Liu et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2008). Indicatively, the longing to return amid quarantining during the COVID-19 pandemic was strong (Weiss & Ranjan Dube, 2021). Similarly, economic crises produce stress and limit sociability strengthening nostalgic feelings (Siani-Davies, 2017, p. 283; Zestanakis, 2016b).

Research on nostalgia provides insights into how social relationships are affected by emotion-driven interplays between the present and the past. Nostalgia is constructed around relationships, changes in media and the need for belongingness. Social media revolutionised the production of memories and can build large communities around bottom-up-created nostalgic archives. The members of these communities often engage with nostalgia, and this overproduction of nostalgic discourses represents a pop culture component. Furthermore, nostalgia concerns fan cultures as fandom triggers affective connections among consumers or fans of cultural genres (Van der Hoeven, 2018). Indicatively, subcultural lifestyles inspire Facebook groups: 'New wave in Athens in the 1980s: The scene, the people the places' and '70s – 80s: Motorcycles of our heart – 20 years of original motorbikes' (70s – 80s: Οι μοτοσυκλέτες της καρδιάς μας – 20 χρόνια original μοτοσυκλέτες) had 8,300 and 32,200 members in late 2023, respectively. In such groups, nostalgia is organised around memories of youth, the restoration of feelings of youthfulness, and connection with the younger self. By becoming nostalgic, people avoid unpleasant emotional states and feel connectedness to others, self-esteem and meaning in life (Routledge, 2016, pp. 69–83). Such emotional states can provide relief during crises.

On 80stalgia

Why is 80stalgia so strong? The 1980s represent an innocent, pre-internet, pre-post-Soviet, pre-post-capitalism and pre-September 11 world and an optimistic moment when many people believed that democracy and capitalism would fulfil their promises.[5] Furthermore, 80stalgia is associated with new cultural experiences. Publicists argue that current pop culture is less interested in creating novel stylistic qualities favouring returns to stories, nostalgia, and obsession (Elastic, 2019; Sowiński, 2022). The 1980s crystallised pathbreaking cultural genres such as electronic music and new wave music, increasingly determining everyday life through new devices such as the Walkman. So, 80stalgia connects people with pathbreaking images, sounds and other stimuli.

Chronologically, the 1980s are not very far away. The kids of the 1980s are now in their fifties and spend money on nostalgic items. Sites such as 'We Are Rewind' sell small cassette players for about €150. Similarly, 1980s sneakers such as Diadora Heritage cost around €200. The fans of a generation ago are the creators of today, and many 1980s icons are around. Madonna has more than 19 million Instagram followers. In Greece, singers who launched successful albums in the 1980s marked the pop culture of the decade. These include Anna Vissi and Charis (Charoula) Alexiou who have 337,000 and 186,000 Instagram followers, respectively. Cinema connected the 1980s with the 21st century, favouring 80stalgia. In the 2000s, films like *Donnie Darko* by Richard Kelly (2001), *The Squid and the Whale* by Noah Baumbach (2005) and *This is England* by Shane Meadows (2007) aestheticised 1980s life and familiarised new generations with 1980s material culture. After 2010, movies and series such as *Dallas Buyer Club* by Jean-Marc Vallée (2013), *Black Mirror* by Charlie Brooker (2016), and the series *Stranger Things* by the Buffer Brothers (2016) strengthened this trend.[6] In Greece, the regular screening of 1980s films through initiatives such as 'Greek 1980s Nights' familiarises young audiences with the period (e.g. youfly.com Team, 2022). Television programmes such as *Our Best Years* (Τα καλύτερα μας χρόνια), show everyday life in the 1970s and 1980s, boosting

this trend. This series drew on the Spanish blockbuster 'Tell me how it happened' (Cuéntame cómo pasó), which looked at late Francoism and the transition to democracy through an average family establishing an internationally successful franchise (Kornetis, 2023, pp. 46–47). Being 80stalgic cultivates a sense of belong-ingness as a member of a huge global trend. Belonging is important for individuals: Belongingness provides emotional support that strengthens feelings of security and comfort, satisfies needs for social interaction, provides strong senses of identity to people as members of something large such as 80stalgic online communities, and fosters senses of purpose and motivation.[7] Hence, 80stalgia offers benefits regarding sociability as 80stalgic people interact online, but also in real life as 80stalgic groups organise gatherings. Such connections were even more important in the crisis when people were stressed and frustrated (Zestanakis, 2024).

In Greece, nostalgia for the 1980s is associated with memories from a culturally pluralistic era. Cultural pluralism is a concept developed to challenge the idea of American society as a melting pot. Culturally pluralistic societies respect cultural expres-sion and differences (Bernstein, 2015). Regarding ethnicity, Greece was a relatively homo-genous society with limited numbers of immigrants before the 1990s. Then, cultural pluralism referred to novel discourses through advertisements, magazines, television, video movies and other media or events such as the music festival 'Rock in Athens' in 1985 (Kassaveti, 2016; Lagos, 2010; Vamvakas & Panagiotopoulos, 2010; Zestanakis, 2017). Commercial electronic media emblematised this pluralism. Following the global renova-tion of television in the 1980s, such as the iconic moment of MTV's opening in 1981, private television started in Greece in 1989 with Mega Channel. The temporary closure of this channel due to debts in 2018 triggered countless nostalgic discussions on the cultural creativity of the late 1980s (Menegos, 2018).

Generalising, 80stalgia is associated with the consolidation of a democratic and more culturally pluralistic society. Emotions have a spatial character and are a means to under-standing practices and interpretations of the surrounding environment (Capineri et al., 2018). Consumer experiences and places such as department stores are central in 80stal-gia, energising enthusiasm, curiosity, and excitement. Places such as amusement parks or department stores are central in 80stalgic discussions. 'Christmas in Minion' (Χριστούγεννα στο Μινιόν), a joyful event for kids in a department store, triggers many 80stalgic conversations online. Indicatively, in the thread 'Minion and other retro depart-ment stores' (Μινιόν και άλλα ρετρό πολυκαταστήματα) in the nostalgic forum 'Retromaniax', users share memories and photos discussing visits to Minion, likely the most popular department store in 1980s Athens, which regularly organised happenings with artists or videogame competitions. The 1980s witnessed the adoption of personal computers and game consoles, home entertainment systems and other innovations; consequently, tech-driven nostalgia is central in 80stalgia. Technological experiences such as playing video games in department stores, cafes or the comfortable living rooms that average apartments often had (Tsiampaos, 2017), favour tech-driven 80stalgia (Van der Heiden, 2015). Still, as we will see, 80stalgia is linked to wistfulness for a less technological world. Other home-based activities such as watching video movies on colour TV sets while eating snacks were also popular (Kassaveti, 2016; Panagiotopoulos, 2010) and dominated 80stalgic narratives. As we will see, 80stalgia is connected to memories of calm life. As poverty was less common compared with the first post-war

decades, the 1980s flats offered joyful moments (Tsiampaos, 2017), being places pleasant enough to be 80stalgically remembered. Eloquently, a major 80stalgic trend concerns watching video movies, an experience that combines memories of consumer modernisation, since the VCR was an expensive and technologically advanced device, with the calm and pleasant environment that homes offered (Kassaveti, 2023).

80stalgic for the Change

In Greece, 80stalgia is identified with the political programme of the 'Change' (Αλλαγή). Change is the alteration of a condition, situation, state, or phenomenon that constitutes a difference over time (Doudaki et al., 2022, pp. 2–3). In Greece, the term has a double meaning. Established after the 1974 transition to democracy, PASOK won the 1981 elections and overturned the conservatives who had won the 1974 and 1977 elections. PASOK dominated the 1980s, promising to alter society, using Change in its slogans and remained in authority until 2004, with a break between 1990 and 1993.[8] The 1981 elections signify the passage to a period when authority could change hands without tensions.[9] Fears of a backlash to authoritarianism had faded.

PASOK implemented many of its promises voting laws in politics, education, employment, and health, including the recognition of left-wing resistance in World War II and the establishment of a National Health System (Kalogeropoulou, 1989, p. 309). Transfers from the central government to households as a percentage of the gross national product increased from 6.90% in 1980 to 13.50% in 1991 (Ketsetzopoulou, 2004, p. 471). For some scholars (e.g. Kalyvas, 2015, pp. 130–152), economic performances were controversial. The Change anaemically continued a cycle of development that started in the 1950s: gross income per capita increased from US$1,154 in 1970 to US$1,677 in 1980 and US$1,794 in 1990 (in constant 1970 prices; Ketsetzopoulou, 2004, p. 469). Greece had transitioned from a period when the economy developed quickly but the country was so poor that people only asked for basic infrastructures and education (Chatzivasileiou, 2010, pp. 375–376) to one where demands for life quality were stronger. The Change was a political claim with strong cultural connotations. Participating in the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1981, Greece was an advanced democracy where laws protected involvement in politics, civil liberties and civil rights were defended by the state, the middle class was growing, the regime was stable, and fears regarding the implication of the military in politics were insignificant. People usually lived in decent apartments (Tsiampaos, 2017), had private vehicles (Zestanakis, 2016a), and could regularly enjoy imported drinks (Bampilis, 2013). Cultural contact with migrants was regular and people were informed about how life abroad was and could compare. Still, immigration receded as life in Greece was quite attractive (Zestanakis, 2024). In 1981–1982, 72% believed that the future would be better; 64% were satisfied with the quality of life (Frangkiskou & Varouxi, 2004). Political tensions became milder within an environment that offered many people satisfaction with life and restlessness about democracy (Voulgaris, 2002, pp. 319–329). Fresh ideological currents such as ecology and feminism gained ground (Demertzis, 1995; Van Steen, 2003).

People remember the Change as transforming society, generating new sensorial experiences and a fresh pop culture open to international contacts. Foreign artists visited Greece regularly and Athens hosted big sports events, such as Eurobasket in 1987.

A beach party in Vouliagmeni attended by more than 50,000 spectators in 1983 nostalgi-cally emblematises passion for liberalisation and cultural experimentation (Krekoukias, 2023). 'Rock in Athens' united global rock stars with about 90,000 spectators (Lagos, 2010). Such experiences trigger(ed) intense emotions. Our memory prioritises eudemonic and happy events. Eudaimonic life events are occurrences in which people engage in mean-ingful activities that enable people to produce feelings of authenticity, self-expression, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life: for example, reserving an important project is a typical eudemonic event. Hedonic happy events are occurrences in which people pursue extrinsically motivated activities to experience pleasure, such as shopping, entertaining, and travelling (Sotgiu, 2016, pp. 686–687). The Change offered eudemonic and happy events that subjects remember nostalgically, let alone in crises, when opportunities to experience such events are fewer and people seek positive referents from the past. The Change offered chances for people to meet new cultural experiences. Entertainment marked lifestyle as the earlier politicised culture that often castigated consumption-driven pleasures receded (Zestanakis, 2024). PASOK presented Europeanisation as compatible with revelry (Bampilis, 2013, p. 123) and claimed that people with similar consumption habits belonged to a shared middle class (Sevastakis, 2004, pp. 99–107). Prosperity emerged as a premise that eradicated class differences and marginalised questions of inequality (Voulgaris, 2008, p. 129). This narrative seduced wide audiences.

The appeal of 80stalgia is also detected in the role of the Change in limiting insecurity. After the Civil War ended in 1949, Greece was authoritarian. Fragments of authoritarian-ism survived the 1974 transition (Karamanolakis, 2019, pp. 159–189), but post-1974 Greece was generally democratic. Recognising left-wing resistance in World War II in 1982 PASOK invoked a patriotic memory of the painful past that included all of society (Fytili, 2022, p. 206). Subjects devoted more resources to well-being and pleasure. As the governments of the 1990s and 2000s endorsed this narrative, the Change emotionally determined a longer period establishing a positive legacy. Surveys corroborate the strength of this legacy. In 2007, 36% evaluated the 1981 elections as the most important moment after 1974, as PASOK governments built the rule of law and the welfare state. Considering the period from 1974 to 2007, 40% stated that the living standards were the best during 1981–1985. For 35%, the economy was the healthiest, and for 36%, the society was the most democratic at this time (Mavris, 2007). This view survived the crisis. In 2021, 41.2% believed that Greece in the 1980s moved in the right direction. For 41.2%, the living standards were better in the 1980s. For 31.8%, the health system worked better than ever before, and for 29.8%, democracy was stronger in the 1980s than in any other decade. Similarly, 29.8% believed that Greece had a stronger position in global diplomacy at this time (Livitsanos, 2021). Ultimately, the 1980s were seen as a positive time before, but also during and after the crisis of the 2010s.

This positivity is obvious in the impact of the humorous nostalgic Facebook page 'The old orthodox PASOK'. The page emphasises the easygoingness of the 1980s and became a pop phenomenon luring the media (Pantazopoulos, 2017). Through humorous posts, the page defends the Change and its legacy. The term 'orthodox' differentiates the Change from PASOK's governments in the 1990s and early 2000s, which, led by Kostas Simitis, implemented a more restrained financial policy to achieve Greece's entry to the Eurozone. A common means is posts with nostalgic memes juxtaposing the 1980s with

nowadays. On 8 August 2020, when the government announced strict fines for the violation of measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, the page uploaded a meme with Andreas Papandreou, PASOK's leader and prime minister in the 1980s, captioned 'In the 1980s, we fined those who did not go out on Saturdays €150'. Photos from moments of joy in bouzouki and clubs or with drachma notes are used to show that life in the Change was nice and cheap.

Trolling, the act of intentionally and deliberately provoking or upsetting people online to elicit strong emotional reactions, against non-sympathisers of the Change confirms that trolls can function politically, transgressing the limits of hegemonic discourses and identities and the norms of mediated dialogue, deliberation, and critique through humour (Mylonas & Kompatsiaris, 2019). Nostalgic photos and videos are modified (e.g. through humoristic memes) and reproduced to foster PASOK's image through the dissemination of 80stalgic representations and feelings. For its creators, this 80stalgia offers a counternarrative to the critique that PASOK received during the crisis of the 2010s. The creators attribute the group's popularity to the expected 80stalgia that middle-aged people feel for their childhood and youth, which coincided with a politically positive period, as the Change offered prosperity, easygoingness, and hope (Pantazopoulos, 2017). Associating the Change with current politics through cultural memory 80stalgia is a significantly politicised phenomenon.

Crisis and 80stalgia

The Change's legacy was enforced by the crisis, which overturned an emotional regime built around expectations and memories of prosperity, safety, and democratisation: Even non-sympathisers of PASOK often see the 1980s positively, at least in retrospect. We see that in oral history findings (Zestanakis, 2024), views of politicians who do not belong to PASOK (Proto Thema, 2019), nostalgic pages, slogans such as 'We are all PASOK' (Είμαστε όλοι ΠΑΣΟΚ) and the fetishisation of PASOK-related objects (e.g. flags, keyrings) sold in platforms such as Vendora. Nostalgic sneakers with the PASOK logo (called 'BASOK' for copyright reasons) are sold for €195. The Coalition of the Radical Left (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς; SYRIZA) a party that multiplied its political influence by seven in the crisis, jumping from 5.04% to 36.34% between the October 2009 and the January 2015 elections, claimed PASOK's legacy and politically invested in 80stalgia distinguished in its rhetoric the Change from 1990s PASOK (Kornetis, 2019). Alexis Tsipras, the SYRIZA's leader, adopted elements of Papandreou's body language (Panagiotopoulos, 2013, pp. 277–286).[10] The Change surpassed the emaciation of PASOK and offered an influential nostalgic reference through attachment to a fresher political subject.

Generalising, 80stalgia expresses a debate between the 1980s as a historical experience and in retrospect perceptions of the latter between the 1990s and now. The Greek society remembers the 1980s as a period that initiated a wider historical cycle of easygoingness. In nostalgic pages, some discussants put this cycle's end in the early 2000s when Greece joined the Eurozone (a paradoxical approach given that gross domestic product grew 4–5% yearly at that time), but usually, the end is put in the crisis years. Such discussions idealise the 1980s, disregarding inequality, corruption, considerable unemployment, inflation, rising crime and other problems that troubled the public

(Transparency International, 2008; Frangkiskou & Varouxi, 2004, pp. 676–679; Zestanakis, 2024). 80stalgia silences negative memories. The human mind works selectively, focusing on good times or the good moments of hard times. People silence unpleasant memories, placing such memories and traumatic events in the unconscious to protect themselves from emotional pain (Liem, 2007, pp. 155–156). Forgetting allows for positivity and painlessness, is part of emotion regulation, and promotes subjective well-being reducing unpleasant affect (Nørby, 2015). Silencing of memories reflects breaks with the past (Van Dogen, 2005), fosters nostalgia and works as a cleansing mechanism. The past is purified from negative memories and gives subjects the chance to simplify visions of the past. The 80stalgic vision idealises a simpler life, and this idealisation of simplicity often focuses on economy or consumption.

Simplicity is an important concept here. We see simplicity positively and associate it with qualities such as clarity, elegance, lack of complexity, a focus on the essentials, and less anxiety. Nostalgia for simplicity flourishes in 80stalgic discussions in the (social) media and beyond. Nostalgia involves a longing for the past and simplicity speckles this yearning desire. Life in technologically advanced societies is sophisticated and nostalgia for simpler times and attitudes is not uncommon. Indicatively, people become nostalgic for face-to-face communication, which was commoner in the pre-internet world. Demands for simplicity can increase in crises when people feel frustrated and vulnerable. The reconceptualisation of consumer history in the crisis passed through such an emphasis on simplicity. The 1980s is constructed as combining a life that is better through higher income and consumption standards but simpler, with more joy and healthier sociability.

Longing for simplicity flourishes in the group '80s nostalgia', where innumerable posts and discussions reminisce features of the 1980s. To employ a recent example, the discussion under a post posing the question 'What do you miss more from the 1980s?' on 18 November 2023 summarises how 80stalgia is built in the group. Users feel nostalgic for a pre-internet and pre-cell phone society where communication was based on in-person interaction and flirting was happening in public places and not through dating apps. The culture of self-portraiture, a key element of social media culture (Murray, 2015), is also often castigated as evidence of postmodern narcissism. Users feel nostalgia for simpler and more tasteful cuisine and blame the loss of proximity among people and habits such as gatherings among neighbours. Some users mention that life was safer as crime was rare in the 1980s. The cliché 'We were sleeping with our doors open' appears often. This 80stalgia sometimes has nationalistic connotations criticising the multiethnic society that emerged with the arrival of immigrants in the 1990s. One user argues, 'We were caring for each other, we were Greek kids with moral values.' Here, 80stalgia reproduces arguments used by the far-right in the 2010s (Zestanakis, 2016b, pp. 264–268). Still, I would not identify 80stalgia with nationalist or far-right ideologies as the phenomenon concerns very wide audiences.

In 80stalgic narratives, the 1980s combined prosperity, safety, and optimism with a simpler and more human life. This view is simplistic: Technological anxieties, often related to information technology, were common in the 1980s (Zestanakis, 2024). Criminality increased, alarming the media, and cruel crimes of the 1980s often inspired the successful podcast series 'Real Crimes' (Αληθινά εγκλήματα) by the city press *Lifo*, which analyses shocking crimes in modern Greece. Still, in 80stalgic communities, there is consensus that the 1980s were calm years. Calmness is a crucial concept on this occasion.

People living in tensioned and polarised times, such as crises, often think in black-and-white terms, without flexibility, nuance, and recognition of the complexity of historical experiences. Crises favour simplistic juxtapositions of 'good' and 'bad' times and ahistorical perceptions of the past. The designation of the 1980s as a calm period can be seen as the outcome of thinking about the recent past from a tense vantage. Calmness is a mood or affective attitude that appears more easily in conditions of economic security, is characterised by a lack of agitation and disturbance, consists of not striving to control things that are beyond our sway, and is often linked to happiness (Kambartel, 2017; Mogliner et al., 2012). In 80stalgia, calmness is not seen as linked with desires for a quiet or ascetic, home-oriented life. In the 1980s, people were going out a lot and experiencing new products and services, largely due to systematising contacts with the EEC. People experienced a more sophisticated and international consumer environment largely due to the gradual technologisation of life and easier consumer credit. In the crisis, consumers often reconsidered such advancements traumatically, experiencing excruciating emotions such as morosity (Lallas, 2023). The complexification of consumer attitudes and Europeanisation are discussed as harmful in the long run, and the 1980s are seen as the last calm decade. In this vein, nostalgia for the drachma (Greece's national currency until 2002) is seen as an important material referent and a key part of this simpler and calmer life. Nostalgic posts with drachma notes provoke nostalgic comments deifying the drachma. On 5 January 2024, a user posted a photo with such a note, writing (my translations):

> Once upon a time, with 5,000 drachmas, you could go to the supermarket, buy cigarettes, coffee, and souvlaki, and you still had money left. You were a lord. Now we are Europeans.

Three days later, another user comments, speaking to a 5,000 drachma note:

> I love you although they divided us. [...] We were going out and we were hotshots. [...] Coffees, drinks, beers, shouts to bints, pita-gyros, shebeens. And they came when we were in our heydays. Ignoble lenders. I still love you, my 5,000 drachma note.

According to recent surveys, a significant minority (33%) supports a return to the drachma and believes that life was better at that time. Interestingly, those born between 1988 and 2005 are the most supportive (Kontarinis, 2022). Even a quick glimpse at 80stalgic groups confirms that users with no memories from the 1980s feel intrigued by this decade and argue that life was better then. This shows that 80stalgia connects those who lived in the 1980s with those who know the decade through friends, their parents, art, or the media. Hence, 80stalgia is largely based on post-memories (Hirsch, 2012) and reproduced through them. The roles of post-memories in 80stalgia is a large topic demonstrating the potential of the concept of post-memory in the examination of memories of consumption and could inspire a separate study.

Conclusion

This article discussed 80stalgia in Greece from the late 2000s to now, a period that largely overlapped with the economic crisis of the 2010s. This 80stalgia interacts with the global 80stalgic wave and draws on interplays between the pop culture of the 1980s and the pop culture nowadays through the cultural industry. Hence, 80stalgia is embedded in current pop

culture and is a pop phenomenon that can mobilise large audiences. Moreover, in the Greek context, 80stalgia is a politicised phenomenon expressing the continuous popularity of the Change. This finding challenges the assumption that societies experiencing economic or political crises drastically reconsider the past, or, at least, demonstrates that this reconsideration can verify earlier opinions about a historical period. The Greek 80stalgia corroborates the earlier popularity of this decade and the political heritage of the Change surrounding it with a nostalgic aura that leads to the further idealisation of the period. This nostalgia often revolves around specific material referents such as the drachma, Greece's currency before 2002. Generally speaking, 80stalgia in Greece seems to have some common points with nostalgia for socialism in Eastern Europe, which represents a retrospective utopia, a wish and hope for safety, true communication, and well-being in general (Velikonja, 2009).

As a largely social media-driven phenomenon, Greek 80stalgia is a child of the memory of the multitude, a memory featured by technological connectivity (Hoskins, 2018). The popularisation of Facebook, particularly, influenced the proliferation of nostalgic communities, facilitated the establishment of nostalgia as a major cultural trend, and boosted nostalgic interactions between media audiences of different ages, namely those who lived in the 1980s and younger users who experienced them through nostalgic interchanges. Photos are crucial for 80stalgic communities confirming the importance of the visual in the memory of the multitude and in social media particularly (Birkner & Donk, 2020). These 80stalgic communities are digital spaces where people discuss history, feel and share emotions, and develop belongingness. They confirm that nostalgia is an interactive emotion developed through communication and is based on common interests and beliefs (Holak & Havlena, 1992) and that enthusiasm for history and the recent past encourages connectivity (Brown et al., 2003). This connectivity is organised around general liking, positive attitude, and favourable effect towards objects, people, places, and things that were more common, popular, fashionable or widely circulated when people connected were younger and offers positive emotions to subjects (Holbrook & Schindler, 2003). These nostalgic emotions revolve around (post)memories of the political programme of the Change, which remains identified with prosperity, optimism, and easygoingness, and seem to be built on contradictions of negative feelings springing from a tougher present. To conclude, mentioning an important thinker who recently passed away, 80stalgia reminds us of Bauman's (2017) argument on the power of 'retrotopia' in our societies: Utopian aspiration is projected towards the return to a better past more than towards the construction of a happier future.

Notes

1. For details see Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos (2016).
2. Bibliography on this crisis is long (e.g. Siani-Davies, 2017; Tziovas, 2017) and cannot be presented here. I consider the 2008 revolt and the end of the bailout agreements in 2018 as the crisis' symbolic beginning and end. Greece will not return to pre-crisis prosperity before the 2030s (Thomsen, 2019).
3. Data taken in December 2023.
4. See, indicatively, the answers below the question 'With which currency was life better (euro or drachma)?', in the group 'Nostalgic people for the 1980s and 1990s' (1 March 2024).
5. For the most discussed account of this climate see Fukuyama (1989). For a re-evaluation see Mason (2015).

6. See analytically Papageorgiou (2018).
7. For this importance also see Antonsich (2010) and Lambert et al. (2013).
8. This programme is fully presented in PASOK (1981).
9. For the 1981 elections as a historical milestone also see Raptis and Mitralexis (2023).
10. On the rise of SYRIZA also see Spourdalakis (2014).

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