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Citation for final published version:

Kyriakidou, Maria 2017. Remembering global disasters and the construction of cosmopolitan memory. *Communication, Culture and Critique* 10 (1) , pp. 93-111. 10.1111/cccr.12142 file

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12142> <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12142>>

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# Remembering Global Disasters and the Construction of Cosmopolitan Memory

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*This article critically engages with the concept of cosmopolitan memory, and it provides an empirical contribution to the relevant debate by drawing upon a study of focus group discussions with Greek audiences remembering global disasters. The article argues that focus group participants' memories of these events place them within a global community of viewers simultaneously witnessing the same events. However, their framing of these events does not necessarily challenge the primacy of the nation as a moral community, therefore lacking the moral dimension implicit in the concept of cosmopolitan memory.*

Discussions on the relationship between media and memory have recently infiltrated broader debates on globalization and the potential of the media to create global publics. The media have been widely recognized as significant mnemonic devices, linking members of a community to historical experience (Sturken, 1997; Zelizer, 1992, 1998). At the same time, the global reach of media raises the question of whether media representations can form the basis of globally shared memories and, therefore, contribute to the construction of a postnational and cosmopolitan memory. Such discussions are concerned with the potential transformation of collective memory through global media in a way that might expand the boundaries of imagined communities beyond the constrained boundaries of the nation to create more expansive global publics (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Volkmer, 2006).

These discussions can be contextualized within a broader moral turn in the field of media and communications over the last decade. Reflecting on the relationship between media and globalization, a number of theoretical arguments and empirical studies have questioned the potential of the media to act as a globally shared public space and enhance a global cosmopolitan culture (Chouliaraki, 2006; Kyriakidou, 2008, 2009; Silverstone, 2007). For Levy and Sznajder (2002, 2006, 2010), the possibility for such a mediated cosmopolitan culture partly lies with

the globally shared experience of traumatic events, which can form the basis for moral debate and discussions about human rights on a global scale, as well as what these scholars have called "cosmopolitan memory." Studies on the mediation of distant suffering have illustrated how globally broadcast media images of suffering and trauma differently engage viewers in a moral relationship with distant others and can potentially expand moral imagination (Chouliaraki, 2006; Höijer, 2004; Scott, 2014). As these studies have largely focused on the reporting of specific media stories and images, Levy and Sznajder's (2002, 2006, 2010) claim that the cumulative shared experience of these stories can enhance cosmopolitan memory remains largely unexplored in empirical terms.

It is this question of cosmopolitan memory that the present article addresses. It does so through an empirical study of television audiences in Greece, who, in discussing news stories of disasters, draw upon a variety of traumatic events, remembered in diverse ways and in different moral tones. In this context, the empirical contribution of the article is twofold. In the first place, it empirically illustrates the complexity of the theoretical concept of cosmopolitan memory and the challenges of a genuine cosmopolitan outlook. At the same time, the article contributes to debates on the mediation of distant suffering, illustrating not only how audiences engage with different disasters but also how these events are (re) constructed in audience memory and, therefore, how audiences make sense of them beyond the point of audience reception.

The first section of the article unpacks the concept of cosmopolitan memory and situates it within a broader research agenda on cosmopolitan culture. The second section discusses the concept of global media events, which Levy and Sznajder approach as instrumental to the construction of cosmopolitan memory. The remainder of the article empirically explores the relationship between disasters as global media events and the possible construction of cosmopolitan memory. The discussion illustrates how Greek audiences remember global disasters. The article argues that experiencing traumatic events through the media induces a feeling of belonging to a global community of viewers simultaneously witnessing the same events. However, it is only rarely that such media experiences translate into contestations of the nation as the primary moral community of affiliation or into nation-transcending identifications with distant others.

## Cosmopolitan memory and postnational solidarity

The concept of "cosmopolitan memory" has been employed by Levy and Sznajder (2002, 2006, 2010) to describe the new form of collective memory, which emerges due to processes of globalization. This kind of cosmopolitan memory, the authors argue, is shaped by globally shared historical experiences that have given rise to "shared understandings of and responsibilities for the significance of the past" and shared focus on the concerns of the global community, and goes hand-in-hand with the emergence of a global human rights discourse (2010, p. 4). In that respect, cosmopolitan memory is not only expressive of a global common past, mostly understood on the basis of catastrophes and atrocities, but also forms the basis for emerging transnational forms of solidarity (Levy & Sznajder, 2002, 2006). It exists alongside nationally bound memories but also transcends national and ethnic boundaries (Levy & Sznajder, 2002).

The Holocaust has been theorized as the epitome of such events that form the basis of a "transnational movement of memory discourses" (Huysen, 2003, p. 14). The Holocaust's globally shared memories, it is argued, are central in the construction of a global moral space, where distant others become part of a common global past and "new cosmopolitan sensibilities and moral-political obligations" emerge (Levy & Sznajder, 2002, p. 103; see also Zelizer, 1998). The "memory imperative" of the Holocaust, namely the need for it to be remembered as the demarcation of absolute evil in order for the global community to safeguard itself from similar atrocities in the future, has also established an "universalistic minimum" of substantive norms, such as the sanctity of human life and avoidance of cruelty, which constitute a "cosmopolitan common sense" (Levy & Sznajder, 2011, pp. 200–201).

In this context, the concept of cosmopolitan memory is partly an expansion of Halbwachs's arguments on collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). If, as Halbwachs describes, memory is created through the interactive relationship between individuals and society and its construction is only possible within shared social frameworks (1992), as these frameworks are increasingly shared at a global level, memory cultures are expanding and collective memory becomes a cosmopolitan one. There is, however, a further moral dimension in the concept of cosmopolitan memory as one that stems from a group's ability to evaluate their own past critically (Misztal, 2010) and presupposes the "conscious and intended inclusion" of others, their history and their suffering (Levy

& Sznajder, 2010, p. 104). Cosmopolitan memory transcends national narratives through a process of a national community's self-reflection and through the acknowledgement of the moral relevance of the history of distant others. It is the conflation of these two dimensions into the concept of cosmopolitan memory, namely the expansion of the social frameworks of collective memory to the level of the global, on the one hand, and the dialogical imagination that makes possible the inclusion of the other as part of the collective narrative, on the other hand, that I wish to problematize here. These two aspects are not always compatible. Cosmopolitan dialogical imagination presupposes the questioning of the primacy of the national as the locus of moral community, whereas the expansion of historical memory to the global does not necessarily undermine the primacy of the local. The possible tensions between the two dimensions have been partly addressed by Levy and Sznajder (2002) in their acknowledgment of the primacy of the local context in framing the identification with and inclusion of the other in local narratives. In that respect, the Holocaust as part of the cosmopolitan memory is not a totalizing signifier but rather its construction as such includes both nation-specific and localized interpretations of it, as well as nation-transcending commonalities (2002).

Empirical research has illustrated such tensions, when national memories resist or contradict the construction of a global narrative. Misztal (2010) describes how the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship relies on two often contrasting projects, one highlighting the importance of memory of different groups in safeguarding plurality and richness of traditions of a global community, the other arguing for the importance of forgetting past atrocities and conflicts in ensuring global cooperation and harmony. In a similar vein, Ashuri (2007) illustrates how the tensions between the national and the global appear impossible to discount using the example of a coproduced documentary on the Arab-Israeli war, the production of which was turned into a battle over competing memories and interpretations of those events. This body of research not only illustrates the complexity of cosmopolitan memory as both localized and nation-transcending but also the occasional incompatibility of these often competing frameworks.

Such concerns over the transformation of memory cultures beyond the local are part of a broader cosmopolitan research agenda, which stems from the assumption that processes of globalization have profoundly altered the

nature of modern societies, in what has been described as "internal globalization" within the nation-state (Beck, 2002, p. 17) or the internalization of difference within society (Beck, 2004). This understanding of cosmopolitanism differs from a normative one, as it does not oppose the national but presupposes it, while at the same time positions itself as a sociological reality rather than a philosophical idea. Beck and Levy (2013) describe cosmopolitanization as "a constitutive feature for the reconfiguration of nationhood" (p. 5), through processes that are both banal, such as transnational movements or the consumption of global goods, and coercive, as in the case of the recognition of common global risks. In that sense, "instead of an idea of detachment" from the national community, Robbins (1998) has argued, "actually existing cosmopolitanism is a reality of (re) attachment, multiple attachment or attachment at a distance" (p. 3). Whether these multiple attachments, however, have the moral gravitas of the kind that Levy and Sznajder attribute to cosmopolitan memory is open to empirical investigation.

### Global media disasters and the global public

Levy and Sznajder (2011) place global media at the heart of the cosmopolitanization of memory, as "their immediate speed and imagery ... facilitate a shared consciousness and cosmopolitan memories that span territorial and linguistic borders" (p. 206). In a way, this argument parallels Anderson's (1989) ideas on national imagined communities. If the print press became the basis of a sense of shared space and, therefore, a feeling of belonging in a national community, modern media and communications, global in their reach, can promote similar imagined affiliations at the global level (Beck & Levy, 2013).

Central to this construction of postnational imagined affiliations, according to Levy and Sznajder (2011), are media events broadcast and shared at a global level, expanding local imaginaries and rendering distant others part of everyday life. Media events are defined as the television genre of the broadcast of ceremonial events, which interrupt the routines of daily media flow and attract large numbers of audiences brought together by the simultaneous viewing activity (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Examples of such events include the Olympic Games or the Eurovision Song Contest, the moon landing or the funeral of Princess Diana and JFK. They are all preplanned events that are transmitted live and are of high dramatic and ritual significance, ultimately celebrating and reproducing the social order (Dayan & Katz, 1992). The narrow focus of the concept on

ceremonial occurrences has been expanded by later critiques to include unplanned, sudden, and even traumatic events such as disasters and disruptive episodes (Cottle, 2006; Katz & Liebes, 2007; Liebes, 1998). It is the experience of common and simultaneous viewing of these events that bring audiences around the world together "into the compass of a global community" (Silverstone, 2006, p. 83). At the same time, these shared experiences create, according to Levy and Sznajder (2011) the repository of a postnational, cosmopolitan memory.

Volkmer (2006) and her colleagues have illustrated how such repositories of postnational memory are shared by what they call *Global Media Generations*. In a comparative global study, the researchers have recorded the ways media-related memories can formulate a common ground for perceiving the world. The authors argue that formative news memories, such as the Vietnam War, the moon landing, or the death of Princess Diana, provide a framework for peoples current perception of the world, which is generation specific. In the same vein, and following Mannheims (1952) argument on how the experience of historical events holds generations together, Edmunds and Turner (2005) have argued that traumatic events, globally experienced through new media technologies, form the basis for the emergence of global generational consciousness.

It is such traumatic events that this article engages with by exploring how audiences in Greece remember distant disasters that have been globally reported. As such, the events addressed here can be described in terms similar to what Cottle (2006) identifies as "media disasters," namely, "disasters that are publicly signalled by different media as major, often traumatic and, on occasion, historically momentous happenings, [which] also frequently exhibit high media performativity, circulate potent symbols, and invoke and/or mobilize solidarities" (p. 421). In exploring how audiences in Greece discursively construct the category of 'global disasters' and their memories of them, I wish to illustrate the cosmopolitanization of memory on the basis of the experience of globally broadcast traumatic events. Such cosmopolitanization, the discussion below illustrates, takes place through a double process, which on the one hand positions viewers as members of a global audience, and, on the other hand, localizes the meaning and significance of global events.

At the same time, however, I wish to problematize the conceptualization of cosmopolitan memory as both a process of transcending nationally bound collective memory, through the mediated experience of global

media events, which is largely unintended—and often not reflected upon—and a self-reflective, active inclusion of the history of others as part of collective memory in a way that “causes a belief in, and then willingness to act on, universal values” (Levy & Sznajder, 2002, p. 92). Such an approach to the formation of cosmopolitan memory on the basis of global media events seems to reproduce the functionalist assumptions of the media events theory, which have been at the center of the criticisms the concept has raised since its inception (Cottle, 2006; Couldry, 2003; Scannell, 1995). Dayan and Katz’s (1992) initial account of media events assumes a rather straightforward relationship between media coverage and audience endorsement, obscuring the ideological construction of social order as well as the challenges implicit in media events. These challenges are even more pronounced in the context of a globally mediated public space (Hepp & Couldry, 2010). This space is fragmented and undermined both by nation-bound forms of citizenship and solidarity (Fraser, 2007) as well as communication practices and infrastructures contained within national frames (Couldry, 2014) and characterized by national and cultural stereotypes (Volkmer, 1999). In this context, globally broadcast events serve to bring into existence a “transnational public imaginary,” where the nation still plays a prominent role (Mules, 1998, p. 38).

The collective “we” formulated on the basis of the globally shared experience of media events is, therefore, a construction open to empirical investigation and not to be taken for granted. It can refer to the imagined community of the global audience, more often a Western audience, but does not necessarily include the other whose suffering the audience witnesses on the screen. This is not to say that such moments of simultaneous experience of a global disaster might not lead to genuine moments of cosmopolitan solidarity with the distant sufferer and the construction of reflective cosmopolitan memories. Taking this link for granted, however, would be a mistake.

The research project

The discussion that follows draws upon a research project designed to explore the ways audiences in Greece engage with news stories of distant suffering. The study explored the way Greek viewers construct their moral agency vis-à-vis human suffering they witness through television news and was empirically based on focus group discussions. As the research focus was on the mediation of distant suffering, participants were

questioned on their impressions of and engagement with different disasters and their possible contributions to humanitarian campaigns.

Focus group discussions were employed to explore audience discourses on the premise that in the interaction of the discussion a greater diversity of views is being expressed and common sense assumptions are being challenged and negotiated (Billig, 2002). At the same time, the active construction of meanings among discussants places the focus on viewers as participants in the process of mediation. Twelve focus groups were conducted amounting to 47 participants in total. The participants were selected on the basis of purposeful sampling, in order to maximize diversity of opinions, and were recruited through the snowballing method. They varied in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, and age, with the younger cohort comprising of people in their 20s and the older of people in their 40s and 50s. These criteria reflect theoretical assumptions stemming from the relevant literature that have discussed age (Skrbis, Kendall, & Woodward, 2004; Volkmer, 2006), gender (Gilligan, 1993; Höijer, 2004), and education and status (Hannerz, 1990) as factors associated with different cosmopolitan dispositions and types of engagement with distant others. The groups were mostly homogeneous and consisted of peers, on the assumption that their existence beyond the research setting contributes to their discussions being more illustrative of their everyday nature (Sasson, 1995). The discussions, as illustrated below, did not show considerable differences among the groups with regard to how mediated disasters were remembered.<sup>1</sup>

Discussions were triggered by questions on three major disasters, namely the Asian Tsunami of 2004, Hurricane Katrina, and the Kashmir earthquake in 2005. In discussing these disasters, participants drew upon a variety of other events they found similar. At a later point in the discussions, participants were asked to mention other global disasters they could remember. Some of these events were remembered vividly and discussed in detail, whereas others had faded in viewers' memory. Although participants were not directly asked where they drew their memories from, television images were often part of their narratives. What I am interested in here is how the category of 'global (media) disasters' was constructed by participants in conversation. In particular, the discussion focuses on the events participants described as global disasters but also on the ways they constructed their memories of these events. In doing so, I will also illustrate how such

global memories might differ from cosmopolitan memory.

### Global media disasters

The 2004 Tsunami and the two big disasters of 2005, Hurricane Katrina and the Kashmir earthquake, were chosen as triggers for the discussion due to their relative recent occurrence at the time of the focus group discussions, despite their differences in terms of nature, aftermath, recovery plans, and mode of reporting. These three events were discussed in greatly divergent ways. The tsunami, albeit less recent, was remembered in great detail, whereas the hurricane and the earthquake had mostly faded in audience memory (Kyriakidou, 2014). This was not attributed to a view of the two more recent disasters as irrelevant but mostly to their perceived ordinariness as natural disasters that preoccupy the media, in contrast to the extraordinary and unprecedented nature of the Tsunami as an unusual phenomenon never witnessed before.

During the discussions, participants kept making references to two other traumatic events, actively expanding and constructing the category of 'global disasters' according to their own understandings; these were September 11 and the Izmit earthquake, which took place in northwestern Turkey in 1999, claiming the lives of 17,000 victims. The two events were remembered as significant global disasters, but were also discussed in different ways. September 11 was mentioned alongside the 2004 Tsunami as two events extraordinary in character, and remembered in visual detail as witnessed through the media, especially amateur footage, which provided the media coverage a sense of immediacy (Kyriakidou, 2015). The Izmit earthquake, on the other hand, as will be further illustrated below, was discussed in relation to the humanitarian support provided by the Greek population, as a symbol of overcoming national hostilities between Greece and Turkey in the face of human pain.

In addition to these two events that were discussed by virtually every focus group, participants were asked to mention other 'global disasters' they could recall. The question led to the collective construction of a list of events participants considered fitting with the discursive category of 'global disasters.' Events as diverse as the Chernobyl accident in 1986 (groups 1, 7, 10, 11, 12) and the Gulf War of 1990 (groups 2, 6) fell under this label in audience discussions. The events ranged from manmade, such as the terrorist attack of the Madrid train bombings in 2004 (Groups 10 and

12) to natural disasters, such as a volcano eruption in the Philippines in 1991 (Group 11) and from old disasters, such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 (Groups 7, 10, 11), to contemporary events, such as the 2006 war in Lebanon (Groups 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Interestingly, in a great number of groups, there was a discussion of climate change and its concomitant environmental risks as a kind of 'manmade' global disaster (Groups 1, 2, 4, 6, 12), confirming the emergence of an environmental discourse as integral to the experience and construction of the global (Beck & Sznaider, 2006). Typically, discussants would collectively construct the category of 'global disasters' through interruptions and interventions and often without drawing connections

between the different events, as is evident here:

What other global disasters come into mind? Sofia: Hiroshima and Nagasaki!

Gerasimos: But Hiroshima was not a natural disaster! It was caused by the nuclear bomb!

Sofia: OK, and all the wars, of course ... Gerasimos: Chernobyl...

Sofia: Huh ... the wildfires ... that were huge – of course, ours were not smaller either but ...

Gerasimos: In the US?

Sofia: In Los Angeles, around there. Wildfires burning millions of acres ... I remember this vividly.

(Mixed, in their 50s, middle-class, FG11)

The conversation seems to fluctuate among events, from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the nuclear accident of Chernobyl in 1986 to the wildfires in California in 2005. The environment seems to be the link for the association of these three disasters with each other, although all three of them are remembered on different grounds: The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are landmark historical events not experienced by participants but part of global history, the ecological disaster of Chernobyl is an event that affected Greece among others, and the California wildfires are remembered in terms of their media images. Interestingly, although the national framework is not prevalent here, it is still at play and indicated by the deictic "ours," referring to the wildfires that occur in Greece every summer.

## Connecting to the global audience

There are different meanings attributed to disasters that construct them as global. Some of the participants discussed the category of 'global' as affecting populations around the world. This was the case, for example, with environmental disasters such as the ones mentioned above, where the global community is constructed as a 'community of fate.' For others, it was the worldwide broadcasting of disasters and crises that rendered some events global. This interplay of attributes is evident in the extract below, which indicates how participants are again collectively constructing their memories of global disasters:

What other global disasters come into mind? Ilias: The earthquake in Turkey?

Thanos: The bombing of Serbia, Yugoslavia. The war. Those bombings.  
Dimos: The war in Iraq, in Kuwait.

Pavlos: Look, the word "disaster" now ... for example, for me, in the broader sense of disaster, I do think that it was a disaster when an entire submarine was lost then in Russia, with all the people inside, and the way this happened.<sup>2</sup> Or when, let's say, the spacecraft perished in the air<sup>3</sup> ... When, let's say, you have for entire days a submarine with people inside slowly dying, and you feel like you cannot help, you can't do anything, and then it finally ends ...

Ilias: Yes, true ...

Pavlos: Also the environment! The environment. It's a disaster of a much bigger scale ... It depends on how one sees it. What you consider to be a disaster.

(Male, in their 40s and 50s, middle-class, FG6)

Wars was a category of events conspicuous in the list of global disasters as constructed by participants and it comes up in the discussion here both in terms of a geographically proximate (Serbia) and a distant (Iraq) war. What is mostly interesting, however, is the distinction between disasters in the "broader sense" such as the loss of Kursk submarine and the Challenger space shuttle explosion and disasters such as environmental ones. The latter are described as global, because they are of a "much bigger scale." What renders the loss of the Russian submarine a global disaster, however, as described here by the participant, is the fact

that, through its global broadcasting, it places viewers around the world into the position of witnesses (Kyriakidou, 2015). This sense of virtually unmediated witnessing is expressed through temporal and spatial deixis (“you have for entire days a submarine with people inside slowly dying,” “and then it finally ends.”), as well as the sense of helplessness created by the spectacle of death (“you feel like you cannot help, you cant do anything”). What constructs this event as a global disaster is “the way this happened,” namely, that it took place in front of the viewers’ eyes, which converted into an act of intimate witnessing by global audiences.

This global reach of the events through their media broadcasting was an aspect of the global disasters that was extensively discussed by the focus groups. In some ways, what is really global in these events is their access to audiences around the world through their broadcasting and media reporting. In this way, global disasters were constructed as moments of “mechanical solidarity” among viewers around the globe, as described by Dayan and Katz (1992, p. 196), based on the fact that “all those within reach of a television set are simultaneously and equally exposed, and they share the knowledge that everybody else is too” (p. 197). In the extract below, one of the participants describes how he believes that during disasters such as the Tsunami people around the world might feel for their fellow human beings:

Dimitris: And I am not saying this just for myself! I believe that then, during such disasters, lets say like the Tsunami, it is as if all the nations of the world were united.

Tasos: Exactly!

Dimitris: I mean that everyone united felt for the victims ... Tasos: You realize your emotions as a human being!

Dimitris: Not just me! I mean, even a murderer that might have committed a murder the previous night will ... will sit down and watch this thing for a couple of hours! Not just me! Everyone!

(Male, in their 20s, middle-class, FG8)

There is a sense that the “whole world is watching” such globally mediated events, both in terms of nations (“all the nations of the world were united”) as well as individual spectators (“everyone!”). The viewer here positions himself not only in relation to the suffering witnessed but also to the “imagined community” (Anderson, 1989) of fellow viewers around the

world. This imagined community is even elaborately described as the 'global village' in another discussion:

Menelaos: When disasters like these take place, the scale of which is much bigger and they surpass the borders of a country, for example the Tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, of such a scale, they cannot only preoccupy the country itself. At this moment, that big, that global village that we refer to as the mass media and communications is being activated!

(Male, 26, middle-class, FG12)

In narrating their experiences of global disasters, participants simultaneously position themselves in relation to a community of viewers around the world, connected to each other through the practice of simultaneously viewing the same events, witnessing the same instances of distant suffering. This does not necessarily assume a functionalist role of media memory in creating and sustaining a 'global community' (Hepp & Couldry, 2010, p. 5). Rather, what is emphasized here is that in remembering events of a global scale, viewers position themselves not only in terms of their already constituted national community but also as members of a global audience. In that respect, viewers also participate in the construction of a global collective memory. While being categorized as global, however, the same events were simultaneously contextualized by participants within local frameworks of reference. This process of particularizing and localizing media disasters was prominent in the way participants reconstructed their memories of them.

### Localizing the global

The category of global disasters as constructed by participants included both events remote in time and space and events that took place in close proximity to the participants' locale. The 1999 earthquake in Turkey was the most prominent of these proximate events; other examples included the Serbian bombings of 1999, which were described as taking place in the participants' 'neighbourhood' (Groups 1 and 9), and, most notably, the Chernobyl nuclear accident of 1986, which albeit distant affected participants in their everyday lives. Chernobyl was especially mentioned by the group of the younger age cohort. Given that the participants in these groups were about 5 or 6 years old when the disaster took place, it was an event implicated with childhood memories, as is evident in the extract below:

Menelaos: Chernobyl comes to mind. Stathis: Oh, that's a good one!

Menelaos: Nuclear disasters, not only Chernobyl, the trials that France conducted in Mururoa, what was their name ... And ... the environment, in general, whatever can affect a lot of people. There are many events like that.

Interviewer: You mean these events affect you as well? Kostas: Not me, not at all.

Stathis: I remember Chernobyl, I was running in the rain, when I was little. And my parents were shouting "come, get the umbrella!"

Kostas: Yes, more those with nuclear stuff and the ones that are in our neighbourhood, like this, they affect us as a country.

(Male, in their 20s, middle-class, FG12)

The Chernobyl disaster is initially constructed as part of a broader category of environmental disasters affecting the globe. As such, the speaker positions himself as one of the "lot[s] of people" that can be affected by such events. Later on in the discussion, however, Chernobyl becomes a disaster implicated in autobiographical memory, as well as national and local life. By localizing their memory of Chernobyl in this way, participants embed global disasters into national and local frameworks. Through the use of spatial deixis ("in our neighbourhood") and the use of metonymy("us as a country") to describe themselves as members of their national community, viewers highlight the fact that events become significant as long as they are implicated in their everyday lifeworld. In this case, the adoption of local and national frameworks in memory places the viewers in a limited world of everyday affairs.

Notably, local frameworks were also employed in discussions of events that had not had an effect on the local or national community. This interplay between the global and the local or national is best exemplified in the quote below, where the two are intertwined. The discussion is initially focused on the Tsunami, described as "the greatest ever global disaster," only to turn to the issue of national disasters.

Giota: I'm telling you, the Tsunami hit there and it immediately found itself elsewhere, so many kilometres afar, at the other end of the world. And usually these things take place in the Pacific! That's it! In the Pacific Ocean. So don't think that they will ever happen to us. Don't expect this!

Mary: If it ever happened, that would be it for Greece!

Giota: It's only earthquakes that happen here. Earthquakes and wildfires. And floods!

Vicky: Oooh, I can't stand it with the fires now!

Giota: Look, it was on the news again yesterday that the ice is melting and Africa is beginning to slowly connect with Cyprus and Crete. They are starting to raise slowly, the plates.

Vicky: We're gonna sink all of us.

Giota: Yes, in some years! I hope it doesn't catch up with our children! Vicky: I do believe this ... that it will happen.

Giota: Yes! It was on the news yesterday!

Vicky: I was so sad now with [the wildfires in] Halkidiki!

Giota: Oh, yes! Everything was completely burnt! And it was so nice there! (Female, in their 20s, working-class, FG7)

In the course of the discussion, the focus turns from the global (the tsunami "in the Pacific Ocean" or the "ice ... melting") to the local and the national (the wildfires in Halkidiki or Africa slowly connecting with Cyprus and Crete), while the participants retain their national collective frameworks, positioning themselves as Greeks throughout the discussion ("they will ever happen to us," "we're gonna sink"). According to Beck and Levy (2013), "cosmopolitan nations are reimagined through the anticipation of endangered futures" (p. 6). The acknowledgement of global risks has become incorporated in the way participants think of their future as members of the national community; it is, however, the national that is reflectively prioritized rather than the common global future.

Based on a study of public memories of global events around the world, Teer-Tomaselli (2006) argues that the most important influence on what was remembered by the audiences in different countries was cultural proximity (p. 235). Distant events were more easily recalled when they exhibited a sense of local relevance but, even when not related with the immediate national area, they were often recalled in terms of factors associated with the nation. This way of "localizing" or "particularizing" the memories of global events was prominent in the focus group discussions here. It was also expressive of the significance of national collective frames in the way focus group participants discussed global disasters. As members of a national community, viewers reconstruct their media

memories within the social frameworks of the national collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). In this context, remembering global media disasters becomes the practice of articulating and weaving together mediated and personal, national and global memories.

Cosmopolitan memory: Incorporating the “Other” in collective memory

This prevalence of the national element in the construction of collective memories, even when these are of globally shared events, is not problematic for the concept of cosmopolitan memory, as envisioned by Levy and Sznajder (2002, 2006). On the contrary, the authors emphasize the ‘overriding importance of the local context’ and the ‘ethnocentric focus on events’ as a necessary precondition for the connection between the global and the local in a common moral universe (Levy & Sznajder, 2002, p. 92). The process of localization of global disasters, as discussed above, can be seen as an example of what the authors call ‘deterritorialization’ of memory, which they argue ‘goes hand in hand with reterritorialization, which is made possible partly by awareness of catastrophes that threaten all humanity’ (Levy & Sznajder, 2006, p. 27). However, what is missing from the discussion extracts above is a self-reflective approach to memory and the conscious and intended inclusion of others, their history and their suffering (Levy & Sznajder, 2010). This omission was observed on two grounds: First, as global media events, distant disasters situate the viewers within the global community of fellow audiences around the world, rather than within the universe of distant others whose suffering momentarily becomes an object of concern. Second, and related to that, the victims of these global disasters, when remembered, were discussed as part of a media narrative and in terms of media visuals, as witnessed on the screen, rather than as historical subjects, whose experiences have become part of the participants’ collective memory.

There is one event, however, that was exceptional in the way it was discussed by participants, as it was illustrative of not only an instance where the suffering of the other becomes a cause of concern but also of self-reflection, namely the earthquake in Izmit in 1999. The disaster was remembered not only due to its geographical proximity to Greece but also mostly in terms of its symbolic significance. The aid pledges by the Greek people and rescue workers sent by the Greek government were discussed by the public and the media as an example of how human suffering brings otherwise hostile populations closer. Less than a month after the Turkish

earthquake, Athens was also struck by one, which, although of a much smaller scale and death toll, is the deadliest earthquake in recent history in Greece. The Turkish response to the disaster was analogous to the support received after the Izmit earthquake by Greece, which was celebrated in the media as an instance of "disaster diplomacy" (Kelman, 2011). Despite the simplifications that such a discussion entails about the actual impact of the earthquakes on diplomatic relations (Ker-Lindsay, 2000), it is within this discourse that the Izmit earthquake was remembered by the research participants.

Dimitra: What has stuck with me from that event, besides the Richters and stuff, is that we were constantly talking about the relationship between Greece and Turkey, that Greece had helped a lot.

(Female, 54, middle-class, FG5)

Unlike the Tsunami and September 11, the Turkish earthquake was not discussed in terms of media stories and specific images of suffering. The participants did not situate themselves as audiences but rather as members of a national community. In that respect, the Izmit disaster was embedded in broader national and political discourses. At the same time, however, it was discussed as an exemplary case of the compelling nature of mediated suffering and its potential to connect people across geographical and cultural borders under the idea of a common humanity, as evident in the following extract:

Litsa: I sent help to Turkey, after the earthquake in Turkey. Dina: Of course, its a neighbouring country!

Litsa: And I'm saying that, because I think it's interesting ... I highlight the fact that it was in Turkey, because we are Christians, I don't know whether you can write this, they are ...

Popi: Muslims! Peni: Turks!

Litsa: They were Turks! I mean, another religion and enemies, so to speak. But I didn't care about that, it didn't affect me ... I didn't care at all! Human beings felt for other human beings without caring about what and who they [the victims] are ...

(Female, in their 40s and 50s, working-class FG2)

What is of interest in the extract above is the interplay between national and uni-versalistic frames of reference. The participants construct the

disaster in Turkey as an instance when national hostilities became irrelevant in the face of human pain. At the same time, however, they distinctively position themselves as members of the national community, when remembering the disaster. As such they identify themselves in opposition to the Turkish victims, who are still defined as the "other," as "another religion," as the "enemy," even in order to negate the significance of such categorisations when judged against the urgency of human pain. The recognition of boundaries of otherness goes hand-in-hand with the articulation of the discourse of a common humanity, by way of illustration of the "both/and" principle of cosmopolitan experience (Beck, 2006), within which "there arises a space of overlapping but incompatible frames of reference and meanings" (Beck, 2002, p. 33).

The national context is used here as the "social framework of memory" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38), within which participants place themselves. However, it is a national framework reflected upon and reimagined to include the "Other" as part of the collective memory. In this context, the Izmit earthquake constitutes a "critical incident" in collective memory, as it becomes a moment "by means of which people air, challenge and negotiate their own standards of action" (Zelizer, 1992, p. 4). The Turkish earthquake of 1999 is such a moment, during which audience members negotiate their moral agency vis-à-vis the suffering of distant others, in this case as members of a national community, who are asked to overcome traditional hostilities in order to feel for the "enemy."

It is, therefore, only when positioning themselves as members of a national community that reflexivity becomes part of the collective process of remembering, and cosmopolitan memory, as defined by Levy and Sznajder (2002, 2006, 2010), is actualized. The Izmit earthquake was constructed in audience memory as a "landmark" event, being at "the point of intersection of an increasing number of reflections" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 61), and symbolizing the morally compelling nature of human suffering in the face of which national historical hostilities can be overcome. If in remembering other global disasters audiences transcended the national to connect with the global audience and momentarily with the victims on the screen, in the case of the Izmit earthquake, viewers both identified with the victims and transcended the national by reflecting on its limitations as an exclusive moral community.

Conclusion: Cosmopolitan memory or cosmopolitanization of

audience experience?

The way Greek audiences discuss and construct their memories of global disasters provides an illustration of the formation of global memories enabled through the media. Globally broadcast disasters and stories of human suffering are exemplary cases of the kind of media events Levy and Sznajder (2011) put at the center of their conceptualization of cosmopolitan memory. They create a space of engagement with the distant other, whose suffering is witnessed through the media, and a sense of belonging to a global audience that is simultaneously sharing the same mediated experiences. However, it is mostly the latter aspect, of globally shared experiences, that is prominent in audience memories of distant disasters. The moral dimension of self-reflection and 'conscious and intended inclusion of the suffering of the Others' in local and national narratives is only realized in the case of the Izmit earthquake, as remembered by participants here (Levy & Sznajder, 2010, p. 193).

The concept of cosmopolitan memory, therefore, conflates two dimensions that are not necessarily intertwined, that of the process of expanding memory through shared cultural resources beyond the nation, and the moral decision to transcend national narratives in order to include the other. Beck's distinction between cosmopolitanization and what he calls the 'cosmopolitan outlook' is analytically useful in unpacking them. Beck (2006) describes cosmopolitanization as the "latent ... , *unconscious* ... , *passive* cosmopolitanism" (p. 19, emphasis in the original), which is largely an unintended effect of market decisions at the global level or of the acknowledgement of global risks, such as climate change or terrorism (Beck, 2005, p. 249). The cosmopolitan outlook, on the other hand, refers to "the awareness" of this latent cosmopolitanism, "its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition" (Beck, 2006, p. 21). The fact that we live in largely cosmopolitanized societies, Beck argues, does not necessarily mean that we automatically become cosmopolitans. Indeed, he warns against this "cosmopolitan fallacy" (2006, p. 89), which equates cosmopolitanization to cosmopolitan consciousness. What the latter requires is "*dialogical imagination* in everyday practice," namely, "situating and relativizing one's own form of life within other horizons of possibility" and seeing "oneself from the perspective of cultural others" (Beck, 2006,

p. 89). How this transcendence from cosmopolitanization to reflexive cosmopolitanism is taking place is, according to Beck, a crucial question

open to empirical investigation.

The construction of global memories on the basis of globally broadcast events and shared mediated experiences can be seen as part of the process of cosmopolitanization and unintentional consequence of exposure to media images. The conscious inclusion of the suffering of others in collective memory is an expression of the dialogical imagination of the cosmopolitan outlook, as described by Beck (2006). In the case of the Greek audiences and their memories of the Izmit earthquake discussed here, the move from cosmopolitanization to a reflexive cosmopolitan outlook presupposes national identification, on the basis of which otherness is recognized and acknowledged but also overcome in the construction of a narrative that includes the other as part of a common history. This does not in itself defy the possibility and promise of cosmopolitan memory, but points to the complexity of the concept and the optimism that underlines the assumption that it is a direct outcome of globally mediated events. At the same time, the study here points to the specificity, national and cultural, of the construction of global memories. As such, it further highlights the need for more empirical research in a hitherto largely theoretical debate.

#### Notes

There were some differences in the way participants were negotiating their emotional engagement with distant suffering, with younger participants often positioning themselves as more detached, but this discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

The participant refers here to the loss of the Russian submarine Kursk, which sank together with its 118 crew members after an explosion on the 12 August 2000. Rescue efforts were delayed and for a week it was uncertain where the submarine was located and whether there were any survivors.

The reference here concerns the 1986 Challenger space shuttle, which exploded seconds after its launch—which was covered live by the media—resulting in the death of its seven members of crew.

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