

# Attributing Responsibility in the Debate on the Eurozone Crisis: Nationally confined or Europeanized?

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## 1 Introduction

Greece is struck by one of the biggest crises in its history. Due to a massive austerity policy, the ability of the state to provide services and provisions of any kind is tremendously reduced. At the same time, the country's economy is in a strong recession. Both developments reinforce each other. Unemployment rose from 9.6 % in 2009 to 27.5 % in 2013, with the respective rate for people of 25 and under rising from 25.7 % (2009) to 58.3 % (2013).<sup>1</sup> The rate of people who command little resources for making their living and therefore qualify for the Eurostat category of "people at risk of poverty or social exclusion" rose from 27.6 % (2009) to 34.6 % (2012), while numbers for 2013 are not yet available though the rate will be rather higher than lower.<sup>2</sup> The sharpest rise is again among the young people (16 to 24 years) from 32.2 % (2009) to 45.8 % (2012). The rate of people under "severe material deprivation" rose in Greece from 11.0 % (2009) to 19.5 % (2013). While 2009, the year before the crisis in Greece, was the end point of a longer improvement process in the country, also in comparison to 2004 unemployment rates, "risk of poverty" rates and "severe material deprivation" rates have risen considerably or sharply.

Reactions to such a massive social change are manifold, from protest (Kousis 2014, Rudig and Karyotis 2013, Diani and Kousis forthcoming) to apathy, from devastating poverty to resilience in multiple forms (Kousis/Paschou 2014, Papadaki 2014). One aspect to understand better reactions to this situation is the interpretation people have of this crisis. What and who have caused the crisis? Who is responsible? Who can contribute to overcome it or at least to alleviate its burden? These are crucial questions, also for the future path the Greek society will take.

The interpretation of this situation is open. On the one hand, we have an exceptional situation in Greece, which is hit harder by the crisis than any other country, though other countries have massive problems as well. This special severity in Greece could lead to an interpretation focusing on national circumstances, national actors – for the causes of the crisis as well as its handling. However, as the crisis in Greece is embedded in the banking crisis of 2007 and following years, the public debt crisis in connection with

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<sup>1</sup> These and the following data are taken from the Eurostat online database ([epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database), 8.9.2014).

<sup>2</sup> The EU's official term "risk of poverty or social exclusion" is somewhat misleading as it insinuates a prospect for a future condition while it represents the current situation of people and does not take any likely future developments into account.

the Euro currency crisis, it is very well plausible to understand the crisis as part and outcome of a European crisis or even a crisis of the world economy and world economic system. A wide range of interpretations is possible and can be substantiated by pointing to some facts.

This broad and fundamental openness of interpretation is the core character of a crisis. A crisis is *an unusual situation which is temporarily limited in which societal structures of general impact are perceived to be questioned and unstable* (cf. Hay 1999, Kreps 2001, Pearson and Clair 1998; see Roose et al. 2014 for details and detailed references). This questioning of fundamental structures and taken-for-granted world views puts the search for interpretations of the situation – new interpretations or gradually updated interpretations – at the top of the agenda. Interpreting the austerity policy, the causes leading to this policy and its effects, are by no means straight forward but to a considerable extent open and subject to contentious interpretation.

This process of interpretation does not happen in a vacuum, rather people use and refer to what they are offered. Mass media reporting is a constant offer for understanding what is going on. Media itself and actors whose perspectives are found in the reporting offer suggestions how to make sense of what is going on, discuss starting points of the crisis, causal chains, responsible (and accountable) actors etc. As these interpretations are far from straight forward, especially in a societal crisis, and different actors appear in the public, offered interpretations are multiple and we can find a contention about how to make sense of the crisis, its causes, effects, and the measures taken with their respective effects.

How people interpret the situation is highly consequential. They develop an idea of who is to blame, what should be done, who should act. Not only but especially for politicians and political institutions this struggle about interpretation is of major importance. The “discursive struggle” (Alexander 2006) in the public sphere influences chances for being (re-)elected, for gaining or losing reputation. It is important, which interpretations are on offer, which interpretations become dominant.

While the discursive struggle in politics is a normal and usual, even needed part of democracy, the Eurozone crisis is special in three respects. Firstly, as already described, the need for interpretation in a crisis situation is stronger than usual. Secondly, due to the direct and uprooting impacts of the austerity policy the importance of the discursive struggle rises. Thirdly, and for this paper most importantly, the Eurozone crisis sets the scene for a

new constellation of the discursive struggle, involving a national and a European dimension and therefore opening up an interpretative space of possibility. It is at this multilevel constellation for interpreting the crisis in the public, at which we want to look at in this paper.

How the European multilevel polity is mirrored in mass media reporting has been discussed in the literature on a European public sphere (Eriksen 2005; Machill et al. 2006; Peter/Vreese 2004; Risse 2010, 2014; Sifft et al. 2007). The importance of this question derives from the role of a public sphere in democracy. The accountability of office holders to the public, the electorate, is one of the characteristics of democracy. To make a grounded decision, e. g. whom to elect in the next vote, people need to be informed about what has been going on and especially what actors have done with which effects. „Each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating (within the time permitted by the need of the decision) the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizen’s interest” (Dahl 1989:112). Furthermore, the public sphere has been regarded as “the social room that is created when individuals deliberate on common concerns” (Eriksen 2007, p.23). Not only information is provided but the exchange of arguments, their validation and mutual critique provides the ‘raw material’ for voters to come to well founded assessments and decisions. In a democratic system people need the public sphere to get to know the debate, to form an opinion based on the realm of arguments on offer. Accordingly, also the European polity needs a public sphere with reporting on European political developments, with an exchange of arguments between European and national actors and across borders.

In the past, the EU had only a minor role in the public sphere. EU institutions and EU politics attracted only moderate or less attention. Reporting in the media has by and large focused on national politics (Machill et al. 2006, Roose 2012). However, the Eurozone crisis might be a turning point for this pattern, a critical juncture (Collier/Collier 1991) for the Europeanization of the public sphere. The intensive involvement of European institutions in the highly contested reactions to the Eurozone crisis might result in new reporting patterns.

With this debate as a background, we want to look at the interpretation of austerity policies within the Eurozone crisis in two countries most severely involved, though from two very different sides: Greece and Germany. Greece has been hit by the consequences of austerity policy most severely

with uprooting social effects. Germany, on the other hand, is the largest net payer in the EU and even more so guaranteeing the largest sum for backing state bonds. At the same time Germany has pushed hard for austerity policies (and structural changes in the economic and welfare systems) to be combined with the support by the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and European Stability Mechanism (ESM) respectively.

In particular, we focus on the attribution of responsibility. We regard the attribution of responsibility as a core of sense making which relates actors to issues and evaluates this combination with major impact on the wider structure of interpretations and with major impact for the reputation for concerned actors (cf. also Roose et al. 2014). Who is made responsible in the sense of having caused the crisis, but also in the sense of being in charge to decide and implement generally or in specific cases measures to overcome the crisis or relieve the social strain.

In the following, we will spell out in more detail our hypothesis on which European and national actors will be blamed and how we expect the two compared countries, Greece and Germany, to differ in respect to variants and aspects of Europeanization in the public sphere (2.). Then we will shortly introduce our data which stems from a running project and therefore provides only preliminary results (3.). After a short overview on the structure of our material (4.), we will test the hypotheses (5.) and draw some conclusions (6.).

## **2 Theoretical Approach**

Classically, the attribution of responsibility has been regarded as an issue for psychology. The self-serving bias (Forsyth 2008), is the well substantiated hypotheses that people try to establish a positive self concept by attributing success to own input while explaining failure by circumstances and other people's activities. While this behavior also depends on personality traits (Ficham/Hewstone 2002), people voicing their views publicly can be expected to do this more strategically and that means more in line with their interests derived from their respective structural situation. In general, we can therefore expect actors to blame others and claim success for themselves.

In respect to the addressees of requests, we can also expect a general structure. Requests as calls for specific action will tend to be addressed to others. A request addressed to oneself insinuates a failure to deliver up to

now and therefore could be understood as a way of self criticism. Request directed at others is a way to signal that the problem could not be resolved by the respective actor voicing this respect but needs the action of others. Weaver (1986) in his classical article suggested exactly this strategy to avoid blame. Overall, we can expect for negative causal attributions and request attributions a tendency to address externally, while positive causal attributions are likely to be addressed to the actor himself/herself.

The distinction of external attribution and self-attribution is dependent on the definition of an actor. We know not only individual actors but also collective actors. Which collectivity develops the internal coherence and solidarity to avoid negative self attribution, depends on structures of collective actors, history and cultural traits, etc. E.g. a coalition government could either form a coherent collective actor so that government members avoid accusing other government members of wrong doings as this would imply a negative self-attribution. Or the parties in the coalition remain coherent actors while the government in whole is not, resulting in blaming of one government party against the other. In this paper, we focus on whole countries as actors and take a closer look at the extent in which countries, in particular Germany and Greece, blame or request from other actors within the country or across borders.

The European Union puts the blame game and the competence delegation in a specific constellation. Blame and request attribution can not only be addressed to other national actors but also across borders. The developments of the Eurozone crisis suggest such an interpretation. The crisis hits not only a single country (though Greece unquestionably most severely), but a whole group of Eurozone countries. The structure of the Eurozone, its rules and the ECB as a core powerful player in the constellation, are European and not national. Finally, the handling of the crisis and austerity policy in particular are decided on a supranational level with a strong power by European actors, namely the Troika and the ECB. The factual developments of the Eurozone crisis offer the opportunity and possibly even calls for a highly Europeanized debate including blaming, requesting and competence attribution across borders. The result could be an attribution pattern in which countries appear as fairly coherent collective actors and blames as well as requests are primarily directed across borders.

Looking at the situation through the lens of strategies for responsibility attribution, this expectation is even reinforced. Firstly, the further away the

addressee for blame and requests the lower the chance of overlapping group memberships and prior common involvement which in the end fire back as kinds of negative self-attribution. Secondly, those addressed by the blame can strike back. Public interpretations are, as we said, a discursive struggle and it is likely that those who are made responsible for past wrong doings or confronted with requests and ascribed competencies for risky policy will defend themselves by rejecting the attributions and possibly reverse them. The less risky attribution strategy is to blame and request from an actor who is unlikely to strike back – the classical scapegoat. In the multilevel polity of the European Union there are two kinds of classical scapegoats at hand: EU institutions which have proven to be comparatively weak in interfering in national debates (Hoesch 2003; Gramberger 1997) and governments of other countries who focus their attention and their publicity activity on their respective national population which is at the same time the electorate. Blaming or requesting from EU institutions or other national governments is fairly safe and accordingly the scapegoats are at hand.

The arguments guide us to expect blame and requests across borders in the context of the Eurozone crisis and austerity policy as the norm rather than the exception. However, the reasoning has a clear – and intended – limitation. We start with the background hypothesis of fully self-interested, strategic attribution of responsibility. Aspects of solidarity, moral limitations, normative commitments, cultural traits and established perspectives etc. are not part of this simplified concept. In these respects we could find strong counter forces which result in a completely contrary picture. The extent to which the debate is imprinted by cross border accusations and demands is, however, highly relevant for emerging stereotypes and hostility between the European countries. Attribution strategies may set the path for a cognitive disintegration in Europe. Therefore, it is worth taking a very close look at cross border attribution of responsibility.

The cross border links in public discourses have, up to now, been observed in the discussion on a Europeanization of public sphere. Mass media systems are in respect to their outlets and audiences by and large nationally confined, not the least due to language barriers. A transnationalization of national public spheres would be “(...) a process that enlarges the scope of public discourse beyond the territorial state” (Brüggemann et al. 2006: 5). Within the EU this Europeanization of public spheres could follow two



dimensions (Gerhards 1993, Koopmans/Erbe 2004): horizontal and vertical. The *horizontal* dimension means that journalists from one EU-country do not only pay attention to events and debates in their own country (Brüggemann, Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009: 29) but cover the public discourse in other European countries as well. This could happen by simply reporting on issues happening or being discussed in other countries or by directly interviewing or citing actors from another EU member state. Furthermore, Koopmans and Statham distinguish a weak and stronger variant of horizontal Europeanization: “In the weak variant, the media in one country cover debates and contestation in another country, but there is no communicative link in the structure of claim making between actors in different countries. In the stronger variant, there is such a communicative link, and actors from one country explicitly address or refer to actors or policies in another European country” (Koopmans, Statham 2010: 38).

*Vertical* Europeanization means that nation state actors pay closer attention to what is happening in Brussels (Brüggemann, Kleinen-von Königslöw 2009: 29). Koopmans and Statham again distinguish two basic version of this form: “a bottom-up one, in which national actors address European actors, make claims on European issues, or both; and a top-down one, in which European actors intervene in national public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests“(Koopmans, Statham 2010: 38).

Empirical studies have shown overall little Europeanization, vertically as well as horizontally (Brüggemann et al. 2006, Machill et al. 2006, Roose 2012). However, the crisis may have changed the situation. Three factors may contribute to a change: impact of European integration, impact of European institutions and controversy on policies with the involvement of the EU.

First, the *impact of European integration* has visibly increased in the course of the crisis. It is more than obvious now that the common currency led to a common affectedness by currency turbulences. The situation on markets for state bonds became also more connected and the situation of one country is affecting the situation for others leading to a possible contagion effect. The European policies and policies of member countries affect other member countries, this seems to be one message from the crisis. The mutual dependence is likely to increase mutual attention to developments in other countries – even if it is motivated from self-interest. The effect would be at least a weak form of horizontal Europeanization, but also a

strong form of horizontal Europeanization with attempts to influence decisions in other countries due to their effects beyond its borders become more likely.

Second, *European but also transnational institutions* have practically and formally gained much more influence in some member countries. This applies to the European Central Bank in respect to all Euro currency countries. It applies even more to the Troika, the joint commission of European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund, which supervises the developments in countries under the umbrella of the EFSF/ESM, i.e. in our case Greece. This important influence by European institutions should lead to vertical Europeanization.

Third, the *controversy* around the austerity politics and its impacts will foster a Europeanization of mass media reporting. Even before the crisis, conflict has been hypothesized as well as empirically proven to be a driving force for the Europeanization of national public spheres (Berkel 2006, Roose 2012, Trenz/Statham 2013). The controversy around the crisis and austerity policy is going beyond anything we have seen before. A level shift in Europeanization of public spheres could be a likely outcome.

Overall, we have good reason to believe, that the Eurozone crisis results in the frequent appearance of blames and requests across borders and directed at EU institutions, i.e. vertically and horizontally Europeanized attributions. These three factors (impact of EU policy, impact of EU institutions, controversy) apply to both countries, Greece and Germany, however to different extent. Accordingly, we may expect differences in the levels of Europeanization and in the kinds of Europeanization in the public spheres. In general, the impact of the crisis and as part of that the impact of EU policies, impact of EU institutions and also the controversy will be stronger in Greece than in Germany.

To specify our hypotheses, we combine the kind of attribution, i.e. blame attribution vs. request attribution, the situation of the actors in the two countries, and the kind of Europeanization.

First we turn to the attribution of blame, which comprises of blame for the crisis but also blame for problems which arise during its handling. As the crisis impacts are stronger in Greece, the need for blaming as part of sense-making in the crisis will be stronger in Greece. The first, quite straight forward hypothesis is:

*H1: Blaming activity is stronger in Greece than in Germany.*

The most active blamers will be the national governments as to them it is most pressing to divert blame from themselves. Their policies are the visible political activities in the course of the crisis and political decisions prior to the crisis can become a target of criticism. Additionally, national governments are dependent on electoral support, increasing their interest in positive self-presentation. This tendency applies to the national governments in both countries respectively:

*H2: Each national government is the most active blame sender in its respective country.*

As the austerity policy has such fundamental impacts in Greece and the debate is likely to be much more controversial under such circumstances we can expect more different actors participating in the sense making in Greece.

*H3: The senders are more diverse in Greece than in Germany.*

The EU institutions have a particular role in the discursive battle on the Eurozone crisis. Though highly influential, the EU institutions have little motivation for blaming in the respective national governments. In particular, the European Commission and the ECB are not bound to a specific electorate and therefore are less dependent on a positive self-presentation. This will reduce their inclination to blame others. The EU institutions, particularly the Commission and the ECB, will appear only very seldom as blamers. Similarly, other national governments are not dependent on a positive self-presentation beyond their respective borders and therefore will not engage in blaming.

*H4: EU institutions, particularly the Commission and the ECB, and other national governments are the least frequent blame senders.*

For the addressees of blaming, we can also derive some assumptions from the theoretical framework. Blame avoidance strategies would imply a blaming primarily of external actors, i.e. European institutions and other national governments. However, the implication of blaming either one or the other is not identical. While criticizing EU institutions and EU policy implies a criticism on a structural level whereas criticizing another national government focuses on misbehavior (or misperception) in a specific situation but does not necessarily question the institutional structure as such. Due to the fundamental impact of the crisis in Greece, one would rather expect a fundamental questioning of the system which led to the problems, Greece is currently experiencing. In Germany, which does not

suffer from the crisis directly (up to now), the blaming of specific national governments for singular misbehavior in an overall by and large adequate system would better serve a self-interested position.

*H5: Blaming of EU institutions makes up a larger share in Greece than in Germany.*

*H6: Blaming of other national governments makes up a larger share in Germany than in Greece.*

Hypothesis 6 can be further specified in respect to the targeted national governments. In Greece, we would expect the national governments as addressees which are influential to decide on the general approach, the austerity measure in particular. Accordingly, Germany's government should be a very prominent target. In Germany, rather the crisis countries will be targeted. Following the idea of interpreting the crisis as caused by a country's individual wrong doing and thereby discursively defending the general system from which Germany profits, we would expect solely Greece rather than all crisis countries as the addressee of blame.

Summarizing these hypotheses on blaming, we expect to find more signs of a horizontal Europeanization in Germany than in Greece, especially in the form of addressing foreign national governments while the appearance of foreign blame senders will be overall weak.<sup>3</sup> The vertical Europeanization in its bottom-up variant will be stronger in Greece than in Germany, while the top-down vertical Europeanization is expected to be weak in both countries.

In respect to request attribution, the structural incentives are slightly different. Again, we are looking at a crisis situation with high stakes. That applies not only to Greece in its highly difficult situation but it also applies to Germany as the bail out of Greece and possibly further crisis countries would be extremely costly. At the same time the situation is highly complex, highly difficult, and chances to find a good solution are fairly small. Therefore, not being in charge of solving a problem which cannot easily (maybe not at all) be solved is not attractive. And in this constellation Germany is as strongly involved as Greece. Accordingly, we expect:

*H7: Request attribution is similarly often in both countries, Greece, and Germany.*

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<sup>3</sup> A distinction between strong and weak horizontal Europeanization is not possible with our preliminary data due to small case numbers.

The main senders of requests attributions can be expected to differ between the countries. In Greece, the whole society is struck by the crisis and austerity policy. Accordingly, we expect a wide range of actors requesting action and ascribing competences. In Germany society is not directly affected by negative outcomes of the crisis. Rather, the debate concerns potential threats and political measures to be taken. Therefore, we expect a concentration of sending requests and competence attributions to the political system.

*H8: In Greece a broad range of actors sends request attributions. In Germany, senders of request attributions are found dominantly within the political system.*

European/transnational actors, especially the Troika but also others, have been made the guardian of austerity policy in the countries under the umbrella of the EFSF/ESM. They have an important and influential role in the surveillance of austerity policy including its transposition. Accordingly, we can expect them to appear frequently as request senders in the Greek public sphere. A particular attention to their requests as well as to the requests of foreign actors would reinforce a picture of foreign powers imputing austerity policy on the Greek society. As the crisis is not that pressing in Germany and consequences are rather potential or abstract, we expect less media coverage for requests attributions by European and foreign actors.

*H9: European actors and foreign actors as senders of request attribution appear more often in Greece than in Germany.*

The addressees of requests are usually political actors, namely the government. It is the government's role to solve problems by reallocating money and implementing generally binding rules. Also in a Europeanized crisis situation, we expect the national government to be a frequent addressee for requests attributions. This applies to both countries.

*H10: In both countries, the national government is the most frequent addressee for request attributions.*

However, the European multilevel system adds foreign actors and EU institutions on this list. Again, as the crisis is more pressing in Greece, we expect a stronger incentive for strategically attributing responsibility externally, i.e. to foreign actors and European institutions.

*H11: In Greece attribution to foreign/nonEU actors and EU institutions is more frequent than in Germany.*

Overall, in respect to request attribution, we expect more horizontal Europeanization and more vertical Europeanization of both forms, top-down and bottom-up, in Greece.

The hypotheses depict in sum a core pattern how attribution of responsibility in respect to the Eurozone crisis is expected to influence the degree and form of Europeanization of the respective public spheres. In Greece, this Europeanization can be expected to be considerably stronger than in Germany. However, these assumptions are derived from an assumption of strategic attribution of responsibility only. On purpose, we did not theorize intentions of reservation, common solidarity, commitment to European integration and cooperation etc. Also, we neglected all considerations on cleavage structures and traditions of heated or disimpassioned conflicts. To which extent such process imprints the debate in the respective countries and counters our hypotheses will be discussed on light of our findings.

### **3 Discursive Actor Attribution Analysis**

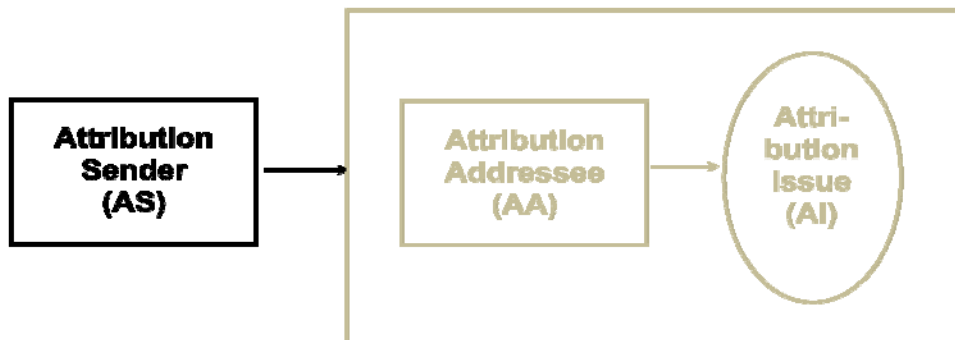
The discursive actor attribution analysis (DAAA) is a tool for the standardized measurement of the backbone of a controversial discourse: the attribution of responsibility.<sup>4</sup> It restructures the information provided in the source to answer the question: Who makes whom responsible for what?<sup>5</sup>

This actor attribution is the core unit of analysis. It is the combination of an attribution sender (AS) stating the attribution, an attribution addressee (AA) to whom the attribution is directed, and the attribution issue (AI). These three parts are linked in the guiding question: Who (AS) makes whom (AA) publicly responsible for what (AI)?" This trias forms the core of an actor attribution (figure 1).

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<sup>4</sup> This section is a condensed version of arguments fully spelled out in Roose et al. (2014). See also the project website [www.ggcrisi.org](http://www.ggcrisi.org) for further details. The method builds on an earlier approach to attribution analysis by Gerhards, Offerhaus and Roose (Gerhards et al. 2007). For comments on refinements and changes, see also Roose et al. (2014).

<sup>5</sup> The full core question to restructure the information is: "Who makes whom responsible for what on which occasion based on which reasons?" However, in this paper we do not use the information on occasions/events or reasons.



**Figure 1: Attribution Trias** (adapted from Gerhards, Offerhaus and Roose 2007: 111)

Actor attribution occurs permanently in social reality and in reporting on this reality. All witnessed action can be regarded as an actor attribution: as soon as a spectator (sender) sees/reports the action of an actor (addressee) with a content (issue), we would have an actor attribution. This would inflate the analysis by a lot of self-evident relations. The discursive actor attribution approach only relates to *discursive* incidents of actor attribution. That means subject of analysis are only instances of actor attribution in which the issue and addressee are evaluated. The discursive actor attribution analysis is therefore limited to those cases in which the attribution becomes the issue of a debate.

Actor attributions can appear in different forms. Blame as a kind of classical form establishes a causal link between the attribution addressee and the fact which is negatively evaluated. Praise or credit in the classical sense would be identical except a positive evaluation.<sup>6</sup> These kinds of attributions are causal as they regard the attribution addressee as having caused the evaluated attribution issue. Alternatively, the addressee can be called to action. These requests are request attributions as they not only want something to happen but the request is directed at an actor making specifically this actor responsible for the action to be taken. Finally, the competence attribution is the ascription of a general competence for action beyond the specific case.

The actor attributions are reconstructed in newspaper reporting on the Eurozone crisis. For each constellation of an attribution sender, attribution addressee and attribution issue, we coded a case with information on the kind of sender and addressee, the issue, the kind of attribution and some further information. As the coding procedure is not restricted to sentences

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<sup>6</sup> Blame and credit can not only be diagnostic but also be prognostic, i.e. the addressee is blamed/credited for an expected fact in the future. Here we combine these forms.

or paragraphs, we use all information provided in a newspaper article to reconstruct this information for each constellation of attribution sender, attribution addressee and attribution issue we can find.

The Data for this paper stems from the research project “*The Greeks, the Germans and the Crisis (GGCRISI)*”, a joint Greek-German project, funded by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports of Greece and the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF).<sup>7</sup> The project focuses mainly on quality newspapers between 2009 and 2013. The data for this paper stems from the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the Greek *Eleftherotypia* and *Ta Nea* (for 2012, the year that *Eleftherotypia* stopped operating). So far we covered 30 issues of both newspapers evenly spread through our enquiry period. The coders are instructed to include only those articles containing relevant attributions in terms of our Eurozone crisis definition.<sup>8</sup> For this paper we focus on the 30 issues of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Eleftherotypia/Ta Nea* which are so far coded. Currently, we can use only one sixth of the sample which will be covered at the end of the project. Therefore, all our analysis has to be regarded as preliminary and in a later stage we will be able to present more detailed analysis, which is currently impossible due to small case numbers.

## 4 Results

The bases of our analysis are 424 articles with 1,211 attributions (ca. 2.9 attributions per article). Table 1 shows how the attributions are spread across the different types. Most of all, attributions occur in the form of blame. In the Greek case more than half of the attributions and in the

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<sup>7</sup> The project is coordinated by Maria Kousis (Greece) and Jochen Roose (Germany), and conducted by Franziska Scholl, Moritz Sommer (Germany), Kostantinos Kanellopoulos, Marina Papadakis and Stefania Kalogeraki (Greece). We want to thank our student assistants and coders for the excellent work they did so far. Student assistants and coders are: Bettina Hesse, Malte Hilker, Jenny Lehmann, Marika Melisch, David Niebauer, János Rimke, Leonie Wolbert (Germany), and Efthymia Katsouli, Amanda Kritsotaki, Angelos Loukakis, Konstantinos Kogkakis (Greece). Martin Wettstein (University Zürich) provided his very helpful coding tool ‘angrist’ to facilitate the coding process. For his extensive help we are also very thankful.

<sup>8</sup> We define the Eurozone crisis as a societal crisis in the Eurozone. A societal crisis is an unusual situation which is temporarily limited in which societal structures of general impact are perceived to be questioned and unstable. A detailed description of the sampling procedure and the coding instruction can be found in our codebook which will be published on our website in winter 2014.



German case almost 40 per cent. The second biggest type is positive request attributions. The share of positive diagnostic and prognostic attributions is a bit higher in the German newspaper than in the Greek ones.

**Table 1: Different types of attribution**

	GR	DE	Total
Success	11.3 %	15.9 %	12.5 %
Blame	54.3 %	38.2 %	50.1 %
Ambivalent	1.3 %	2.5 %	1.7 %
Positive Request	28.7 %	30.3 %	29.1 %
Negative Request	1.9 %	3.8 %	2.4 %
Competence	2.1 %	8.3 %	3.7 %
Rejection Competence	0.4 %	1.0 %	0.6 %
N	897	314	1211

#### **4.1 Blaming in the Eurozone Crisis: Greece and Germany Compared**

The first set of hypotheses focuses on blames, i.e. attributions in which actions, decisions, or the behaviour of the addressee are evaluated as negative by the sender. Firstly, as we expected (H1) the blaming activity is higher in Greece than in Germany. In our preliminary data set we collected 607 blames in both countries, of which 487 were found in the Greek newspapers *Eleftherotypia/Ta Nea*. In the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* we found only 120 blames.

The issues on which actors were blamed cover a wide array. We reduced the huge variety of issues to ten broad categories, distinguishing some policy areas from politics and political behaviour in general, Eurozone crisis measures, austerity policy, and European integration in general. The broadest category is subsumed under 'culture and values' for blames concerning e.g. equality, solidarity and democracy.

Most blames are made on the issue 'Eurozone crisis measures' (almost a fifth of all blames), followed by blames on politics or political behaviour in general and then 'culture and values' (table 2). Nearly ten per cent of the blames go each to austerity and economic policy followed by fiscal policy. In only four per cent of the cases the addressee gets blamed on the 'socio economic situation'. Even less blames are made on social policy and welfare and on European integration issues. Comparing the countries, it is remarkable that politics in general/political behaviour and culture and values attract considerably more blaming in Greece than in Germany. The

blaming in Germany concerns relatively more often policy areas, namely austerity, economic and fiscal policy. Also the German debate blames relatively more around the issue of European integration.

**Table 2: Blame issues in Greek and German newspapers in per cent of blames**

	GR	DE
Eurozone Crisis Measures	20.1	19.2
Politics General/Political Behaviour	20.1	10.0
Culture and Values	15.6	9.2
Austerity Policy	6.4	9.2
Economic Policy	5.7	11.7
Fiscal Policy	5.3	9.2
Socio Economic Situation	3.7	3.3
Labour Market Policy	3.5	0.0
Social Policy and Welfare	1.6	3.3
European Integration	1.0	5.8
Other	16.8	19.2
N	487	120

The first set of hypotheses refers to the senders of blame. We expected the national government to be the most active sender in each respective country (H2), a more diverse range of senders in Greece than in Germany (H3) and the EU institutions, EU commission and ECB in particular, to be the least active blame senders (H4).

**Table 3: Blame senders (selected) in per cent of blames**

	GR	DE
Nat. Government (GR/DE)	6.8	5.8
Parties (GR/DE)	21.0	4.2
Parliament (GR/DE)	9.7	3.4
Other national actors (GR/DE)	17.6	8.4
Media (GR/DE)	28.7	20.2
Media from other countries	1.2	2.5
EU member state governments	1.6	2.5
EU/Eurozone actors	3.4	3.4
Troika	0.4	5.9
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	3.3	10.1
Other actors from other countries	6.3	33.6
N	485	119

In the Greek newspapers *Eleftherotypia*/*Ta Nea* the great majority of senders is Greek actors. They split up in three big sending groups: journalists and media, political actors, and civil society actors (including trade unions and oppositional parties). Overall 82 per cent of all blames stem from Greek actors. The blaming activity is in its source by and large nationally confined while actors from abroad or from the European level appear only very seldom as blame senders. This applies for German actors as well as EU actors. Senders from other EU member states including Germany and from EU or Eurozone institutions are almost negligible. This is in line with H4.

Also in German newspapers, most blames stem from German actors, especially from journalists and media and from political actors. However, they make up less than half of all blames. Additionally, a broad range of foreign actors appear as blame senders in the German media. Almost one third of all reported blames are sent from an actor from another European Union country. Most frequently cited are Spanish and Greek actors. Only a few blames derive from European actors and the Troika, supporting H4 also for the German case.

The national governments are among the most active single actors, supporting H2. However, the account only for a small share of blame attributions. In Greece, we find a wide range of actors. Most important blame senders are parties and in the legislative struggle blame is sent frequently. In Germany, also party actors and the parliamentary debate contribute to blame sending, but to a much lesser extent. Overall, in fact the debate in Greece is nationally much more diverse than in Germany, with a large range of actors blaming others. In Germany, the reporting is much more international in its coverage. Miscellaneous actors from other EU countries and even non-EU countries appear in the press with their blaming. While in Greece the blaming struggle is a national one involving a wide range of actors, the German reporting resembles to a considerable part of foreign news reporting.

A vertical top-down Europeanization in respect to blaming can neither be found in Greece nor in Germany. EU actors are, as we assumed, not very active blamers. Interesting is the finding in respect to horizontal Europeanization. In Greece, foreign actors are practically inexistent as blame senders, while in the German reporting, a considerable share of the blame senders is of foreign origin.

For the addressees of blame, we assumed relatively more blame to EU institutions in Greece (H5) and more blame to other national governments in Germany (H6). In Greece we expected the German government (respectively Germany) and governments of other countries supporting the austerity policy as a frequent target, while in Germany we expected the crisis countries and Greece in particular as a frequent addressee of blame.

The findings tell a different story. More than 70 per cent of all blames in Greek newspapers go to Greek actors (table 4), mostly to the Greek government. The Greek government alone receives nearly half of all blames. Another frequently addressed group is actors from other European Union member states wherein German government plays a significant role. EU and Eurozone actors are blamed slightly less (5.9 %) followed by the Troika with 5.4 per cent of all blames received. Other transnational economic actors like IMF, World Bank or rating agencies only play a minor role in Greek newspapers. So our assumptions are challenged in multiple ways. Firstly, not only the senders but also the addressees in Greece are in most of the cases national. Blaming foreign powers is the rare exception rather than the norm. We regard this as the most remarkable finding of our preliminary analysis. Besides that, it is not the EU institutions being blamed but other EU member states with Germany in a prominent position. This contradicts our assumption H5, while we did expect Germany to be the most prominent addressee among other EU member states – which of course was an easy guess.

In the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* the picture looks totally different. The addressees of blame are dominantly found abroad. Only one fifth of the blames is addressed to German actors. The largest group of blame addressees with more than 50 per cent is other EU member states. Greek actors alone account for 19 per cent of all blames (not in the table) with the Greek government accounting for the largest share of these, followed by Spanish actors with a remarkable 13 per cent (not in the table), again most prominently the Spanish government. Also European actors and the Troika are harshly criticized in German papers, receiving together more blames than German actors. Though the senders of blames directed against foreign actors stem from other countries themselves, still the overall impression for German readers is that blame is found mainly in other countries and on the European level.

**Table 4: Addressees getting blamed in per cent**

	GR	DE
Nat. Government (GR/DE)	47.0	12.9
Parties (GR/DE)	13.5	3.4
Parliament (GR/DE)	1.7	3.4
Other national actors (GR/DE)	6.6	2.6
Media (GR/DE)	0.8	1.7
Media from other countries	0.8 (DE)	0.0
EU member state governments	7.9 (DE: 4.8)	33.7 (GR: 12.1) (ES: 9.4)
EU/Eurozone actors	5.9	18.0
Troika	5.4	2.6
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	5.2	7.7
Other actors from other countries	6.0	14.0
N	485	119

The addressees of blaming are, as our initial assumption of external blaming suggested, more Europeanized than the senders. However, the difference is much smaller than we would have expected and especially the country comparison turns out to be contrary to our expectations. It is not in Greece, where we find most external blaming. Rather in Germany the addressees of blame are dominantly found in other EU member states and to a lesser extent but still remarkably often on the European level. In Germany, the Eurozone crisis led to a horizontally Europeanized blaming as well as to a vertical bottom-up Europeanization regarding addressees of blame.

Blaming may be the most important form of attributing responsibility as it is intended to point to wrong doings of the addressed actor. However, pointing to solutions and even more so to actors in charge of bringing solutions around is also a crucial part of interpretation in the crisis. This is where we turn to now.

#### **4.2 Finding ways out of the crisis: Greece and Germany compared**

Here, we focus on request attributions: Who asks whom to do something? This can be a specific action, a measure or decision but it can also be a more general competence assigned to an actor who should be in charge of

handling an issue. Altogether, we find 352 request attributions in the German and Greek newspapers.

Firstly, we assumed that we find these kinds of attributions similarly often in both countries because both of them are deeply involved in the crisis and its handling (H7). Again, we are mistaken. In Greece, much more request are reported than in Germany. Our preliminary sample contains 257 request attributions in Greece and only 95 in Germany.

Regarding the senders of request attributions we expected in Greece a wide range of senders and dominantly political senders in Germany (H8). European actors as senders of requests are expected more often in Greece than in Germany (H9).

The distribution of senders in the case of requests is remarkably different from that of blames. Overall, the pattern is nearly identical in Greece and Germany. In both countries national actors make up the largest share of senders with roughly the same size in both countries. Given the differences in respect to blames this is an interesting finding. Greek newspapers report slightly more request attributions by senders from other EU member states. Blames from the Troika are more often in Greece (4.7 per cent) than in Germany (2.1 per cent) but the difference is not overly large. The country difference hints in the direction of our assumption H9 but we regard these minor differences not as substantial support for our arguments. Regarding the specific countries sending requests, we can finally spot a country difference. In Greece the requests stemming from other EU member states are focused on one country: Germany. Requests from Germany account for 8.9 per cent of all requests while requests from all other EU member states in sum make up only 7.0 per cent. In Germany the situation is different. While requests from other EU member states make up a similar share, these requests are widely spread across senders from various countries.

Regarding the senders, we find in both countries a very moderate level of vertical top-down Europeanization as well as horizontal Europeanization. Mainly senders of requests come from the respective country but accounting for only a bit more than half of the request attributions, it leaves considerable room for vertical and horizontal Europeanization.

**Table 3: Senders of Request Attributions in per cent**

	GR	DE
Nat. Government (GR/DE)	16.0	17.0
Parties (GR/DE)	15.2	8.5
Parliament (GR/DE)	5.8	3.2
Other national actors (GR/DE)	14.0	12.8
Media (GR/DE)	7.4	17.0
Media from other countries	0.8	0.0
EU member state governments	9.8	6.4
	(DE: 5.1)	(GR: 1.1)
EU/Eurozone actors	11.0	12.2
Troika	4.7	2.1
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	8.9	11.7
Other actors from other countries	6.4	9.1
N		

Finally, we take a look at the addressees of requests. For both countries, we expected the national government to be the most important addressee (H10) but for Greece we expected a higher share of request attributions directed abroad to other EU member states and European actors than in Germany (H11).

Regarding the addressees of request attributions, we are back to similar country differences like in the case of blames. In Greece requests are dominantly addressed to national actors while in Germany the addressees are dominantly foreign or European. 72.4 per cent of all requests in Greece are addressed to Greek actors. In Germany, only a quarter of the request attributions targets German actors.

**Table 6: Addressees of Request attributions**

	GR	DE
Nat. Government (GR/DE)	47.8	17.8
Parties (GR/DE)	8.7	0.0
Parliament (GR/DE)	2.0	0.0
Other national actors (GR/DE)	12.7	4.4
Media (GR/DE)	0.4	0.0
Media from other countries	0.0	0.0
EU member state governments	8.3	10.0
	(DE: 2.8)	(GR: 3.3)
EU/Eurozone actors	7.9	37.7
Troika	1.2	0.0
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	3.2	13.3
Other actors from other countries	7.8	16.8
N		

Also the handling of the crisis and solutions called for are to a large extent nationally confined in Greece and Europeanized in Germany. Accordingly, our hypothesis 11 clearly fails. It is not Greece where the addressees are dominantly beyond the national borders but Germany. In particular, the EU institutions and Eurozone actors are addressed in Germany, rather than other national governments.

In line with our assumption, in Greece the national government is clearly the most frequently addressed actor for requests. Nearly half of all request attributions in Greece are directed towards the government. Interestingly, in Germany the situation is different. The German national government is also among the most frequently addressed actors for requests but it only accounts for 18 per cent of the requests. In Germany the requests are much more spread across different actors. The assumed focus on national governments (H10) is only confirmed for Greece, not Germany.

Regarding the addressees of request attributions, the Greek public sphere is less Europeanized than the German one. While in Germany we find considerable horizontal Europeanization and even more bottom-up vertical Europeanization, the Greek debate is dominantly a debate addressing Greek actors for requests. To a much lesser extent other EU member states are requested to act while requests directed at EU institutions are even less often. Interestingly, the European actors who directly and massively interfere into Greek national politics are only seldom addressed for requests.



## 5 Conclusion

The Eurozone crisis is European in its very core. Maybe, like never before this situation calls for a Europeanized debate, talking in a European perspective with each other across borders. The high salience of the issue and the fundamental questioning of former interpretations by the crisis situation further increase the need for a debate, a Europeanized debate. The Eurozone crisis seems to be *the* context to expect extensive references to actors in other Eurozone member states (horizontal Europeanization) and EU institutions (vertical Europeanization).

In this paper, we particularly focus on the attribution of responsibility as we regard it as a core part of sense making. In the context of the Eurozone crisis we expect a high degree of responsibility attribution across borders. More specifically, we expected the direction and extent of Europeanized responsibility attribution to be structured by the specific situation of the respective actors.

Overall, our assumptions did not do overly good. The most remarkable deviation from our expectations is the national orientation of attributing responsibility in Greece. The Greek situation could be a clear motivator for external attribution. The crisis is closely connected to the Eurozone, austerity policy is imposed and enforced by European actors, namely the Troika. Still, blaming as well as request attributions are exchanged nationally in Greece. This applies equally to senders and addressees of blame and request attributions. Our first analysis of the public attribution of responsibility in the Greek Eurozone debate does not indicate a strong tendency to attribute responsibility across borders, neither towards other national governments nor to EU institutions. Of course, these actors are addressed in the Greek debate, but they are not dominantly addressed. Rather, we found a controversial national debate in Greece. A broad range of different actors appear as senders of attributions but also as addressees.

In Germany, the debate looks considerably different. Here the debate is more Europeanized in various dimensions. Contrary to our expectations the addressees are more Europeanized in Germany than in Greece. Though the situation is much, much less problematic in Germany than in Greece, still attributions which are directed externally across borders towards other member states or EU institutions are more frequent. A hint to the solution of this puzzle is a look at the senders who are also more frequently found beyond the national borders. The reporting style in German media

resembles more of foreign news reporting, covering how foreign actors discuss among each other.

Why did our expectations, derived from the attractiveness of external attribution and the structural situation of actors, is not well represented in our data. Leaving aside the possibility, that findings change along a more complete data base, we could assume another explanation. In our simple theoretical proposition we left intentionally aside all considerations of cultural traits, conflict histories and alike. Our findings could be understood as a hint, that these conflict cultures and path dependencies are considerably influential, especially in the public sphere. The Eurozone crisis may raise and reinforce a long standing national conflict with a rather polarized political spectrum with considerably strong actors at the political outer poles. The situation in Germany is very different, and this is not limited to the debate on the Eurozone crisis. Rather the political spectrum in Germany is focused on a political centre with competition in a comparatively narrow range of political positions.

The analysis we presented here is a preliminary analysis, that should be kept in mind. With data collection proceeding further, some findings may turn out to be different and especially rising case numbers will allow more complex analysis targeting some points more precisely. To date, our preliminary analysis points out some interesting findings which are worth further investigation.

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