

# The Attribution of Responsibility in the Debate on the Eurozone Crisis: Comparing the Europeanization of newspaper reporting in Greece and Germany

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# 1 Introduction

Greece is struck by one of the most serious 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. 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 those at risk of poverty or social exclusion rose from 27.6 % (2009) to 34.6 % (2012).

Reactions to such a massive social change are manifold, from protest (Kousis 2014, Rüdig and Karyotis 2013, Diani and Kousis 2014) to apathy, from social breakdown to resilience in multiple forms (Kousis and Paschou 2014, Papadakis 2014). One aspect to better understand 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. Greece is in an exceptional situation: the country is hit harder by the crisis than any other country in Europe. National structures and national actors are part and parcel of this crisis scenario. However, the Greek crisis extends far beyond the national borders: the crisis in Greece is directly embedded into a *common European* crisis, into the banking crisis of 2007 and the following years, into the public debt crisis and the Euro currency crisis. It is very well plausible to understand the crisis as part and outcome of a broader European crisis or even a crisis of the world economic system. A wide range of interpretations is possible and can be substantiated by pointing to one fact or the other and to one geographical / political context or another, be it national, European or transnational.

The broad and fundamental openness of interpretation is the core characteristic of a crisis. A crisis is *an unusual situation which is temporarily limited in which societal structures of general impact are perceived to be unstable and questioned* (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 at the top of the agenda. Interpreting the crisis, its causes, countermeasures and effects, is 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. Much rather people use and refer to what they are offered. Mass media reporting is a constant offer for understanding and constructing reality. The media itself and actors whose perspectives are found in the reporting provide suggestions for how to make sense of what is going

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<sup>1</sup> These and the following data are taken from the Eurostat online database, available at: [epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database) (last checked: 8. September 2014).

on and how to assess crisis triggers, causal chains and responsible (and accountable) actors.

How the public interprets the situation is highly consequential. People 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 debate about interpretation is of major importance. The discursive struggle in the public sphere influences chances for being (re-)elected, for gaining or losing reputation. For these actors it is crucial, which interpretations are on offer and 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 by definition stronger than usual. Secondly, due to the direct and uprooting impacts of the crisis 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. This multilevel constellation for public crisis interpretations lies at the core of this paper.

How the European multilevel polity is mirrored in mass media reporting has been discussed in the literature on the Europeanization of public spheres<sup>2</sup> (Eriksen 2005; Machill et al. 2006; Peter and Vreese 2004; Risse 2010; Sifft et al. 2007; Trenz 2004). The theoretical relevance of this topic derives from the democratic function of the public sphere. The accountability of office holders to the public is a core characteristic of democratic systems. To make a grounded decision, e. g. about whom to elect in the next election, people need to be informed about what has been going on and especially what actors have done what 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 form opinions and to arrive at well-founded assessments and decisions. The transfer of political competences to the European level during the crisis further increases the demand for an informed debate about European issues including the exchange of arguments between European and national actors and across national borders.

In the past, the EU and European issues only played a minor role in national public spheres. EU institutions and European politics attracted only moderate attention. Reporting in the national media has by and large focused on national politics (Machill et

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the categories "national public sphere", "crisis debate" or "national media reporting" are sometimes used interchangeably. It should be clear that in all instances we refer to the basic object of our empirical study, namely the national newspapers' coverage of the Eurozone crisis (see section 3).

al. 2006, Roose 2012). However, the Eurozone crisis might be a turning point for this pattern, a critical juncture (Collier and Collier 1991) for the Europeanization of national public spheres. The intensive involvement of European institutions in the highly contested reactions to the Eurozone crisis and the European wide impact of the crisis are likely to result in new, Europeanized reporting patterns. It is important to note that in the following we examine Europeanization on the actor and not on the issue dimension (Pfetsch and Heft 2014).

Against this background, we examine public crisis interpretations in two countries severely involved in the crisis, though from two oppositional sides: Greece and Germany. Greece has been severely hit by the crisis with uprooting social effects. Germany, on the other hand, is the largest net payer in the EU and guarantees 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 from the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and European Stability Mechanism (ESM) respectively.

In particular, we focus on the public attribution of responsibility which we regard as a core of sense making. Moreover, we limit much of the analysis to the attribution of blame as one central dimension of causal responsibility attribution: Who is responsible for the crisis and who is to blame for the much disputed austerity diktat? In the following, we spell out in more detail our hypotheses for attribution senders and addressees and how we expect the two compared crisis debates to differ in respect to variants and aspects of Europeanization (2.). Then we shortly introduce our data (3.). After a short overview on the structure of our material (4.), we will test and discuss the hypotheses (5.) and draw some conclusions (6.).

## **2 Theoretical Approach**

Classically, the attribution of responsibility has been regarded as a psychological topic. The self-serving bias (Forsyth 2008) is the well substantiated hypothesis which describes that people try to establish a positive self-concept by attributing success to themselves while explaining failure with reference to external circumstances and other people's activities. While this behavior also depends on personality traits (Ficham and Hewstone 2002), people voicing their views in public can be expected to do this more strategically and in line with their interests deriving from their respective structural, systemic position. In general, for public discussions we can therefore expect actors to blame others and claim success for themselves.

In his classical article Weaver (1986) suggests this attribution pattern as the classical strategy of blame avoidance next to other strategies such as requesting others. In this article we mainly focus on negative causal attributions (blame). Overall, for negative causal attributions we can expect a tendency to address externally (other actors).

The process of European integration changes the rules of the blame game. Attributions can not only be addressed to other domestic actors but also across borders, towards the European Union and other national arenas. 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 and its rules are European and not national. Finally, the supranational actors such as the Commission and the ECB are crucial players when it comes to European crisis management. The factual developments of the Eurozone crisis suggest a highly europeanized debate including attributions of responsibility across borders.

Looking at the situation through the lens of strategic responsibility attribution, this expectation is even reinforced. Firstly, the weaker the connection between senders and blame addressees, the lower the chance of overlapping group memberships and of prior common involvement which could fire back as negative self-attribution. Secondly, those addressed by the blame can strike back. Public interpretations are a discursive struggle and it is likely that those who are made responsible for past wrong doings will defend themselves by rejecting attributions and possibly reversing them. Therefore, it is less risky to blame actors who are unlikely to strike back – the classical scapegoats. In the multilevel polity of the European Union there are two kinds of 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 electorate. Therefore, blaming EU institutions or other national governments in the national public sphere is fairly safe.

Both aspects, the factual crisis situation and the strategic use of responsibility attribution, guide us to expect blaming across borders in the debate of the Eurozone crisis to be the norm rather than the exception. Whereas the first assumption applies to all participating actors, blame avoidance strategies and in particular the strategic blaming of foreign scapegoats is expected to be particularly pronounced for government actors and here, even more so for the Greek government. But other actors, too, are likely to apply these strategies: Most of the main parties and other legislative actors used to have some government responsibility and many other political, economic and societal are aligned to the large state apparatus in Greece. In this scenario, the shifting of blame to foreign scapegoats helps to obscure agencies. For the Greek debate in general, the discussions about alleged “hatred of Germans”<sup>3</sup>, a widespread increase of Eurosceptic feelings among the population (Clements et al. 2014) and a proliferation of anti-European parties further underline the expectation of a European scope of responsibility attribution in general and of blame attribution in particular.

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<sup>3</sup> In the field of contentious politics, the protest banner which likened Merkel to Hitler served as the prime evidence of this new wave of “Anti-Germany demonstrations” against “the new bogeyman of Europe” (translation by the authors). Deutsche Welle (2013), available at: <http://www.dw.de/merkel-wie-hitler/a-16739703> (last checked: 19 September 2014).

This reasoning has one clear – and intended – limitation. We start with the background hypothesis of fully self-interested, strategic attributions 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 patterns may set the path for a cognitive disintegration and increasing North – South divides in Europe. Therefore, it is worth taking a very close look at these cross border attributions of responsibility.

The cross border links in public discourses have been studied in the discussion on the Europeanization of national public spheres. 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 or Europeanization of national public spheres implies “(...) a process that enlarges the scope of public discourse beyond the territorial state” (Brüggemann et al. 2006: 5). Understood as a gradual process, Europeanization describes the extent to which European actors become visible and to which European issues become salient in the national public spheres of European countries. As mentioned before, in the following we focus on the actor dimension.

This Europeanization of public spheres can follow two dimensions (Gerhards 1993, Koopmans and 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 actors in other European 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 covers 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 national reporting pays 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 a limited degree of Europeanization of national public spheres, 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 foster the Europeanization of public spheres: the impact of European integration, the role and impact of European institutions and controversy on policies with the involvement of the EU.

First, the *impact of European integration* and EU policy has visibly increased with the crisis. The introduction of 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 possible contagion effects. The mutual dependence is likely to increase mutual attention to developments in other countries. 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.

Second, *European institutions* have practically and formally gained more influence in some member states. 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. The crisis has in fact led to a further transfer of power to the European level (Schimmelfennig 2014) and this significant influence of European institutions is likely to trigger patterns of vertical Europeanization. As we will further spell out, for responsibility attributions we expect the bottom-up version with European institutions addressed by national actors to be dominant vis-à-vis the top-down variant.

Third, the *controversy* around the austerity politics and its impacts is likely to 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 and Statham 2013). The controversy around the crisis and austerity policy is going beyond anything we have seen before. A new phase in the Europeanization of national public spheres is a likely outcome.

Overall, we have good reason to believe that the Eurozone crisis results in the frequent appearance of responsibility attributions across borders, directed at other European countries or directed at EU institutions. This having said it remains difficult to assess the degree of Europeanization of national public sphere for which “[t]o date no scale has been developed” (Machill et al. 2006, 79). Moreover, we do not have data at hand to directly compare pre-crisis levels of Europeanization with crisis levels. Nevertheless, the systematic comparison of Greece and Germany allows formulating expectations for different patterns of Europeanization for these two cases. The aforementioned factors (impact of EU policy, impact of EU institutions, controversy) apply to both countries, Greece and Germany, but 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, the impact of EU policies and of EU institutions is expected to be stronger and consequently the debate is likely to be more controversial



in Greece than in Germany and a strong European bias is assumed for the addressees in the Greek blame game.

To specify our hypotheses, we look at the general structure of the debate and its overall attribution pattern, the situation of the actors in the two countries, and the kind of Europeanization in the two national debates.

First we turn to the overall attribution pattern and in particular, the attributions of blame or in other words, negative causal attributions. Those comprise blames for the crisis in general but also blames for specific problems and consequences throughout its course. In a highly politicized situation in a country severely hit by the crisis we can expect a more heated and controversial debate where the indignant public awaits a rigorous accounting for past errors and a clear identification of culprits. As the crisis impact is stronger in Greece, we do not only expect it to be a more salient issue in Greece but that the need for blaming as part of the sense-making in the crisis context will be stronger in Greece. The first, quite straight forward hypothesis is:

*H1: The blaming activity is stronger in Greek newspapers than in German newspapers, both in absolute and in relative terms.*

A controversial character of the debate and an alleged politicization of the situation in Greece are not only expected to lead to a greater salience of crisis issues and to a dominance of blame attributions, we furthermore hypothesize an impact on the structure of domestic actors participating in this debate. The pressing need for public sense making extends to all kinds of societal actors and under such circumstances we can expect a broader range of domestic actors participating in the public attribution of responsibility in Greece. This applies to both, the overall attribution pattern and the attribution of blame.

*H2: The range of national attribution senders is more diverse in the Greek debate than in the German debate.*

The EU institutions have a particular role in the discursive contest on the Eurozone crisis. Though highly influential, the EU institutions have little motivation to engage in the blame game. In particular, the European Commission and the ECB are not bound to a specific electorate and therefore they are less dependent on a positive self-presentation on the public stage. This will reduce their inclination to blame others. The EU institutions will rarely appear 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 in foreign public debates.

*H3: In both the German and the Greek context respectively, EU institutions and foreign national governments rarely appear as blame senders when compared to domestic political actors.*

While the preceding hypotheses focused on the overall structure of the debate and the senders, in the following we focus on blames and in particular, on the addressees of blames. This touches the core question of the publically perceived responsibility for the crisis situation. For blame addressees, too, we can derive some assumptions from earlier

remarks and from the theoretical framework. The stronger impact on the crisis and the stronger presence of European institutions and the Troika and their promotion of unpopular austerity measures suggest that European institutions will be at the center of critique in Greece. In line with this expectation, the blame avoidance strategies as outlined above would imply a significant scapegoating of external actors, i.e. European institutions and other national governments. Compared to the attribution senders where we expected a dominant presence of national actors, the degree of Europeanization is expected to be much higher for the addressees of (blame) attributions. When comparing Germany and Greece the former arguments and those outlines earlier lead us to expect that in Greece the blaming of external actors outside of the national context is more pronounced than in Germany:

*H4: Overall, the blaming of actors beyond the national borders makes up a larger share in Greek newspapers than in German newspapers.*

However, we have to distinguish between the different targets of Europeanized blaming. The implications of blaming either European Union governments or European Union institutions are not the same: Criticizing single European governments in the Eurozone Crisis focuses on individual misbehavior of these single countries in specific situations. Here, the crisis is understood as an accumulation of national crises, mainly national state debt crises and the Eurozone crisis is disconnected from the broader European framework and its institutional structure as such. In this reading of the crisis, the culprits are corrupt national politicians, a flawed and unsustainable economic policy (“living beyond one’s means”) or risk prone investments but not the European monetary integration per se, or its institutional design. On the other hand, criticizing EU institutions and EU policy tendentially includes (but is not limited to) a criticism on the broader structural European level and a discontent with its functional design. Due to the heavy impact of the crisis in Greece, one would rather expect a fundamental questioning of the broader European system and its European institutions that implement the notorious austerity program.

In Germany, which does not directly suffer from the crisis in this sense, the blaming of other national governments for individual misbehavior in an overall by and large adequate European / Eurozone framework would better serve a self-interested position. This assumes that as an export oriented economy Germany mainly profits from the structure of the Eurozone and the common currency and for mainstream political actors we assume a limited interest in fueling Euroscepticism. Moreover, the German influence in European Union institutions is significantly higher than that of Greek institutions and again, at least for the German government, we expect a certain overlap of positions which decreases the likelihood of blaming European institutions in the German debate.

*H4a): In the Greek debate, blaming EU institutions is more common than blaming actors from other European member states.*

*H4b): In the German debate, blaming actors from other European member states is more common than blaming EU institutions.*

Combining H4 and H4b we can formulate a further expectation for the comparison of the Greek and the German case:

*H4c): Blaming EU institutions makes up a larger share in the Greek debate than in the German debate.*

Hypothesis 4a) and b) can be further specified in respect to the targeted national governments. In Greece, we would expect those national governments to be addressed which are influential to decide on the general crisis management and the austerity measure in particular. Accordingly, the German government should be a very prominent target in this group and in the overall pattern of blame addressees. In Germany, it is the crisis countries that will be targeted. Following the interpretation of the crisis as caused by countries' individual wrong-doings and thereby indirectly defending the general European framework from which Germany profits, we expect the main crisis countries (Portugal, Ireland, Greece, Spain and later Cyprus and Italy) as the main targets of responsibility attributions.

In sum, the hypotheses depict how responsibility attributions in respect to the Eurozone crisis are expected to shape the degree and form of Europeanization of the respective public spheres. In Greece, the overall degree of Europeanization is expected to be stronger than in Germany. This mainly relies on our expectation for the pattern of attribution addressees, namely that many blames are directed at actors outside of the country. Especially 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; much rather than as attribution senders, European institutions will appear as attribution addressees. We expect horizontal Europeanization to be relatively strong in the German newspaper reporting, especially in the form of addressing foreign national governments.

However, these hypotheses derive from the assumption of strategic attribution behavior only. On purpose, we did not theorize normative incentives such as common solidarity or commitment to European integration etc. Also, we neglected all considerations on national political cultures, cleavage structures and traditions of heated or disimpassioned conflicts. To which extent such processes imprint the debate in the respective countries will be discussed in the light of our findings.

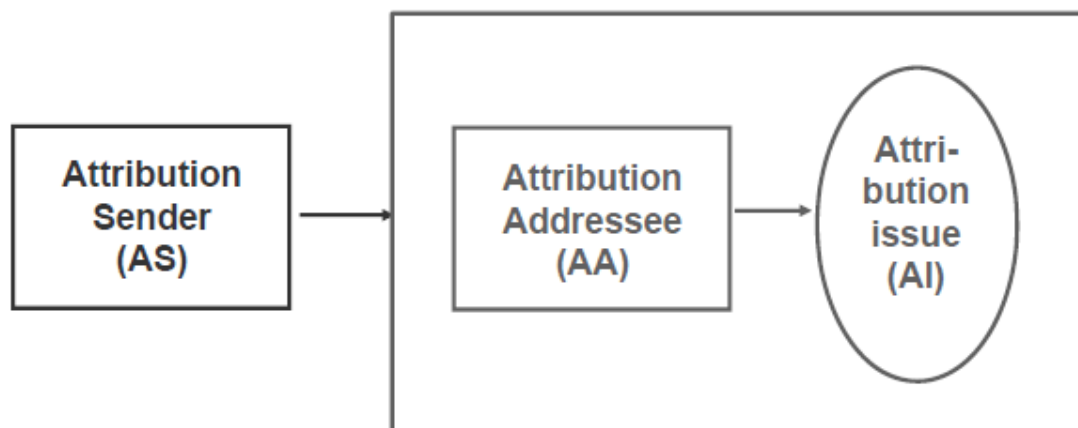
### **3 Discursive Actor Attribution Analysis**

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).

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



Actor attributions occur 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) evaluates the action of an actor (addressee) including certain content (issue), we would have an actor attribution. The discursive actor attribution approach only relates to *discursive* incidents of actor attribution. That means that the subjects of analysis are those actor attributions in which the addressee’s handling of an issue is discursively evaluated in public. The discursive actor attribution analysis is therefore limited to those cases in which the attribution is part of a public 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 issue 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

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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.

<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 (see appendix). Here we combine these forms.

addressee as having caused the evaluated attribution issue. Alternatively, the addressee can be called to action (request attribution). Finally, the competence attribution is the ascription of a general functional competence 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 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*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Die Zeit*, and the Greek *Eleftherotypia*/*Ta Nea* (for 2012, the year that *Eleftherotypia* stopped operating), *Kathimerini*, and *To Vima*. The coders are instructed to include only those articles containing relevant attributions in terms of our Eurozone crisis definition.<sup>8</sup>

## 4 Results: Debating the Eurozone Crisis

### 4.1. Responsibility Attributions in Greek and German Newspapers

*H1: The blaming activity is stronger in Greek newspapers than in German newspapers, both in absolute and in relative terms.*

The basis of our analysis is 7,628 attributions. Table 1 shows how the attributions are spread across the two media landscapes and across the different attribution types.

First of all, the number of attributions we found is almost two times higher in Greece than in Germany. In Greek newspapers we coded 4,816 attributions, for the German newspapers we coded 2,812. However, the number of articles with crisis related content

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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 coding tool ‘angrist’ to facilitate the coding process. For his extensive help we are very thankful.

<sup>8</sup> 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 2016.

is much higher in Greece which shows the pressing need for public sense making in the country. Recalling our understanding of a crisis which we define as a *situation in which societal structures of general impact are perceived to be unstable and questioned*, the overall picture seems to fit. Part of this sense making is the attribution of responsibility and a stronger crisis impact unsurprisingly increases the number of responsibility attributions in the public sphere overall.

**Table 1: Types of attributions in %**

	GR	DE
Success**	12.0	16.2
Blame**	51.2	42.1
Ambivalent causal attribution	1.7	1.5
Positive Request	28.5	32.7
Negative Request	3.3	3.4
Positive Competence	2.9	3.1
Negative Competence	0.3	1.0
N	4,816	2,812

Notes: \*\* Chi<sup>2</sup>, p<0,01

Our first hypothesis focuses on blame attributions, in which actions, decisions, or the behaviour of addressees is negatively evaluated on behalf of the sender. We assumed a more intense debate and a greater dominance of blame attributions in Greece compared to Germany. As expected (H1) the blaming activity is significantly higher in the Greek debate (51.2% vs. 42.1% - Table 1), both in absolute and in relative terms. The importance of the blame game in Greece illustrates that the

Greek debate is more heated and more controversial. The highly strained situation and the growing anger in the population require a thorough identification of culprits in the public; accordingly, these questions of causal responsibility (*“Who is to blame [for the crisis]?”*) are at the core of the debate and dominate over all other attribution types. This overall picture confirms earlier findings by Vasilopoulou et al. (2013, p.13) who conduct a frame analysis of political speeches in Greece. Blames are followed by request attributions and positive causal attributions (“success”, 12%). In the German media, too, blames are central but much less frequently stated. In comparison to the Greek debate, questions of problem solving are almost as important as questions of causal responsibility (success or blame). Next to the higher share of (positive and negative) request attributions in Germany (*“What is [not] to be done by whom?”*), a more detailed look at the attribution types and at its temporal focus further underlines this difference between the two national debates. Firstly, competence attributions (*“Who should [not] be in charge?”*) account for 3.1% of all attributions in the German debate, compared to 2.9% in Greece. Secondly, the temporal focus of the blame game strongly differs; while almost all blames in the Greek public sphere refer to *past* errors and policy failures (92.8% vs. 7.2% prognostic attributions, *not displayed in Table 1*), the German debate is to a higher extent characterized by discussions about *future* policy outcomes (30.8% prognostic attributions among blames). Overall, H1 can be confirmed and the data illustrate further significant differences in the overall character of the debates.

## 4.2. Attribution senders in Greece and Germany

*H2: The range of national attribution senders is more diverse in the Greek debate than in the German debate.*

*H3: In both the German and the Greek context respectively, EU institutions and foreign national governments rarely appear as blame senders when compared to domestic political actors.*

While the former section focused on the *overall attribution structure* of the debate, we now turn to the participating actors, namely the attributions *senders*. We expected a more diverse range of national senders in Greece than in Germany (H2). Moreover, we expected the EU institutions to be weakly involved in the debate and in particular, in blaming others (H3).

Table 2 shows the distribution of senders for all kinds of attributions; Table 3 focuses on the senders of blames only. Overall, the results show significant differences between the German and the Greek debate.

**Table 2: Attribution senders in %**

	GR	DE
Domestic Government	11.2	9.4
Domestic Parties**	14.4	4.0
Domestic Legislat. Actors**	7.9	4.8
Other domestic actors	13.4	14.6
Domestic Media	22.2	23.0
EU Member State Governments	7.8	8.8
Other nat. actors from other EU countries**	5.3	12.4
EU/Eurozone Actors	7.8	13.9
Troika	2.4	0.9
Transnational Actors, non-EU	4.8	5.9
Other Actors, non-EU**	2.4	2.3
N	4,659	2,747

Notes: \*\* Chi<sup>2</sup>, p<0,01

**Table 3: Blame senders in %**

	GR	DE
Domestic Government	7.8	5.7
Domestic Parties**	17.5	4.5
Domestic Legislat. Actors	9.4	6.5
Other domestic actors	14.0	13.6
Domestic Media	33.2	33.3
EU Member State Governments	4.5	6.3
Other nat. actors from other EU countries**	5.2	16.5
EU/Eurozone Actors	4.0	7.9
Troika	0.9	0.8
Transnational Actors, non-EU**	3.4	4.8
Other Actors, non-EU	0.2	0.2
N	2,361	1,142

Notes: \*\* Chi<sup>2</sup>, p<0,01

Starting from the broader picture (Table 2, *second column*), the numbers for the German newspapers show that about a third of all responsibility attributions stems from German actors and another 23% from the German media. Among the political actors in Germany, the discursive dominance of the German executive is noteworthy when compared to other national, political actors such as the parties and legislative actors. The latter's relative absence might be a hint that the Eurozone Crisis has not become part of the day-to-day domestic political struggle. At the same time, attribution senders from other EU countries are quite present with almost 21.2% of all attributions.

The distribution of blame senders in the German newspapers roughly confirms the overall attribution picture (Table 3, *second column*). In the blame game the share of national actors further decreases (30.3%) at the expense of actors from European Union countries who author more than 20% of all blame attributions in the German public sphere. Most frequently cited are blames from Spanish and Greek actors (*not in the table*). In line with H3, European Union actors remain relatively absent when compared to other main actors in the debate. Overall, H3 can only partially be confirmed due to the strong presence of EU member state governments and other national actors from EU member states. Another 4.8% is covered by transnational actors such as the IMF.

Overall, the range of actors is quite manifold and the share of national actors (excluding the media) is lower than expected, pointing to a relatively high degree of overall Europeanization on the sender side. When the participation of national domestic actors is concerned, the government stands out against the party actors and other legislative actors.

In the Greek newspapers *Eleftherotypia/Ta Nea* the great majority of attributions stem from Greek actors (table 2, *column 1*). The debate is much more dominated by domestic actors (46.9% + 22.2% domestic media) and in line with H2 the composition of these actors is more diverse when compared to the German debate. The presence of national parties even outnumbers that of the national government. It seems, indeed, that the controversial character of the debate and the pressing need for public sense making translate into an extension of the debate to a wide scope of actors. The openness of the crisis situation allows more actors to participate and to push their crisis interpretation forward. In this sense the crisis seems to provide an opportunity to get heard and to participate in the public interpretation process. The share of European Union actors and that of the domestic media broadly equal the situation in Germany but actors from other European countries and transnational actors are less active in relative terms.

Again, the structure of blame senders largely confirms this picture (table 3, *column 1*). The blaming activity is by and large nationally confined on the sender dimension. Almost 50% of all blames derive from national political actors and including the large share of the domestic media (32.3%), national actors are responsible for more than 80% of all blames. National actors from abroad (9.7%) or actors from the European Union level (4%) rarely appear as blame senders. Again, this pattern is in line with H3, namely the expectation that European level actors have few incentives to engage in the national blame game when compared to other actors in the debate.

Overall, hypothesis H2 can be confirmed. H3 can only be confirmed for European Union actors and less for Germany than for Greece. In Greece, the debate is nationally more diverse with a broader range of national actors whereas in the German debate, at least in the broader attribution picture, the German government dominates vis-a-vis other domestic actors. The more interesting finding for our analysis and for the Europeanization perspective concerns the overall composition of senders and the relation of national actors, European Union actors and actors from other European



Union countries. The debate in Greece is not only more diverse in its national dimension; the overall picture reveals that in general national actors prevail on the sender dimension. Neither in Germany nor in Greece, can we find signs for a significant vertical top-down Europeanization where European Union actors appear on the national stage. EU actors are, as we assumed, not very active blamers. Interesting is the finding in respect to horizontal Europeanization. In Greece, actors from other European countries appear significantly more seldom as blame senders, replicating what we observed for European Union institutions. The contest of responsibility attribution and the more specific blame game are primarily national on the sender dimension. In Germany, on the other hand, the reporting is much more international in its coverage of foreign attribution senders. In comparison to the Greek debate, the data reveals larger shares for all categories, for those of the horizontally Europeanized dimension (especially other national EU member states actors) as well as for vertically Europeanized dimension (especially the Troika). Overall, this view on the German reporting on the Eurozone Crisis resembles foreign news reporting where national actors seem to have little to contribute. Still, the analysis of the sender dimension is not sufficient to assess the crisis' impact on the Europeanization of the Greek and the German public sphere. Therefore, in the next step we take a detailed look at the *addressees of blames* in both countries. On the addressee dimension, especially for Greece, we expected indicators of a Europeanization of the national newspaper reporting to be stronger in comparison to the actor dimension.

### **4.3. Blame addressees in Greece and Germany**

*H4: Overall, the blaming of actors beyond the national borders makes up a larger share in Greek newspapers than in German newspapers.*

*H4a): In the Greek debate, blaming EU institutions is more common than blaming actors from other European member states.*

*H4b): In the German debate, blaming actors from other European member states is more common than blaming EU institutions.*

*H4c): Blaming EU institutions makes up a larger share in the Greek debate than in the German debate.*

For the addressees of blame, we assumed a more Europeanized pattern in Greece overall (H4). Among those external blames and distinguishing between vertical and horizontal Europeanization, we expected relatively more blames directed at EU institutions in Greece (H4a) and a higher share of blames to other national governments in Germany (H4b). Moreover, when comparing Greece and Germany we expected a higher blame share for EU institutions in Greece (H4c). For the horizontal dimension in particular, we expected the German government (respectively Germany) to be a frequent target in

Greece, while in Germany we assumed the crisis countries and especially Greece to be a frequent addressee of responsibility attributions.

**Table 2: Blame addressees in %**

	GR	DE
Domestic Government**	46.3	21.1
Domestic Parties**	16.0	2.8
Domestic Legislat. Actors	2.0	2.2
Other domestic actors	11.8	7.3
Domestic Media	0.9	0.4
EU Member State Governments**	7.0	21.9
Other nat. actors from other countries**	2.7	17.2
EU/Eurozone Actors**	5.9	19.4
Troika**	3.5	0.6
Transnational Actors, non-EU	2.8	6.1
Other Actors, non-EU**	1.1	1.0
N	2,318	1,060

Notes: \*\* Chi<sup>2</sup>, p<0,01

The findings tell a different story. Table 4 provides an overview about the addressees on the basis of our initial composition of actor categories. Table 7 later provides a further broad overview about the geographical/political level of addressees in the Greek and in the German newspapers.

In the Greek newspapers, more than 77% of all blames go to Greek actors, mostly to the Greek government that alone receives nearly half of all

blames. The blaming of domestic parties is significant, too. Among those ca. 30% blames that are directed to actors outside of Greece, supranational European actors including the Troika appear slightly more seldom as blame addressees than European member state governments and other national actors (3.5% vs. 7.0%). This is in line with H4a. Other transnational economic actors like IMF, World Bank or rating agencies only play a minor role in Greek newspapers. Our assumption H4 is challenged in multiple ways. Firstly, not only the blame senders (section 4.2.) but also the blame addressees in Greece are predominantly national. Contrary to our general assumptions, the blaming of foreign actors is the rare exception rather than the norm. We regard this as the most remarkable finding of our preliminary analysis. Overall, the general degree of Europeanization seems lower than initially expected. How does the Greek picture compare to the German one?

In the German newspapers the picture looks totally different. The addressees of blame are dominantly found abroad. Only slightly more than one fifth of the blames is addressed to German actors. The largest group of blame addressees with more than 39% is other European member states and especially their governments are significantly overrepresented. Greek actors alone account for 12.5% of all blames (*not in the table*) with the Greek government holding the largest share among these. This finding is in line with H4b) and the expectation that the crisis interpretation in the German media is predominantly focused on individual wrong-doings of single countries. But European Union actors, too, are harshly criticized in German papers, receiving together with the Troika about the same blame share as the German government (20%). Compared to the share of 9.4% in the Greek debate this clearly contradicts H4c) in which we expected the blaming of EU actors to be relatively more important in Greece.

The overall impression for German readers is that blame is mainly found in other countries and on the European level.

In the overall picture, the addressees of blame are, as our initial assumption of external blaming suggested, more Europeanized than the senders. However, especially the results from the country comparison turn out to be contrary to our expectations. It is not in Greece where we find most external blaming. Rather in Germany the blame addressees 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 the addressees of blame. As mentioned before we cannot compare the current degree of Europeanization to pre-crisis levels but our theoretical assumptions led us to expect a higher level in the Greek debate. This can clearly be rejected. At least in Greece, even a highly European topic such as the current Eurozone Crisis does not significantly alter the traditional national bias in national news reporting.

The crosstabs (table 5+6) further illuminate the picture by connecting the blame senders to their actual targets. Because of the limited data available at that stage we further condensed the actor categories to large geographical/political groups that align with our focus on Europeanization. This pattern allows making further inferences about the kind and level of Europeanization in the respective public spheres. Table 6 once more illustrates the extraordinary position of domestic actors in Greece. When domestic actors engage in blaming in the Greek debate, more than 80% of these blames are directed at other domestic actors. Here, we have to keep in mind that the Greek media as a significant blame sender is part of this group<sup>9</sup>. The predominantly national focus of the blames, however, is not restricted to the media, the parties or the legislative actors. The shares for the Greek government replicate the general picture: More than 75% of blames sent by the Greek government are directed at the political parties, former national governments and other domestic actors (*not in the table*). In the Greek media, the crisis is predominantly framed as a national crisis. Again, the data show that when actors engage in external blaming the European institutions (+ Troika) are the main target. But regarding the sheer dominance of the inner-Greek conflict, most other categories seem negligible at this early stage of the research.

Again, the picture for Germany is reversed and here, the more evenly distributed pattern of blame senders and blame addressees and the high level of Europeanization overall allow some tentative conclusions about strong and weak forms of horizontal Europeanization. First of all, the inner-national debate is much less pronounced when compared to the Greek debate. Domestic actors (including again the media) *do* accuse German actors for failures but even for them the focus of critique lies on Eurozone member states (strong horizontal Europeanization) and supranational European actors

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<sup>9</sup> Journalists and the media are only coded as independent attribution senders if they explicitly and clearly evaluate other actors' handling of an issue.

(bottom-up vertical Europeanization, 27.7% of blames each). Again, this hints at a comparatively low level of domestic politicization of the crisis debate.

**Table 5: Who blames whom in German newspaper reporting?**

			Blame Addressee					total
			Domestic Actors DE	EU/Eurozone Member State Actors	EU/Eurozone Actors + Troika	Transnat. Actors, non-EU	Other Actors, non-EU	
sender	Domestic Actors DE	number	297	183	143	34	8	665
		%	44.7%	27.5%	21.5%	5.1%	1.2%	100%
	EU/Eurozone Member State Actors	number	26	171	32	11	0	240
		%	10.8%	71.3%	13.3%	4.6%	0.0%	100%
	EU/Eurozone Actors + Troika	number	19	36	23	3	0	81
	%	23.5%	44.4%	28.4%	3.7%	0.0%	100%	
	Transnat. Actors, non-EU	number	7	17	7	10	2	43
		%	16.3%	39.5%	16.3%	23.3%	4.7%	100%
	Other Actors, non-EU	number	4	2	5	1	5	17
		%	23.5%	11.8%	29.4%	5.9%	29.4%	100%
total		number	353	409	210	59	15	1046
		%	33.7%	39.1%	20.1%	5.6%	1.4%	100%

**Table 6: Who blames whom in Greek newspaper reporting?**

			addressee					total
			Domestic Actors GR	EU/Eurozone Member State Actors	EU/Eurozone Actors + Troika	Transnat. Actors, non-EU	Other Actors, non-EU	
sender	Domestic Actors GR	number	1623	64	136	24	2	1849
		%	87.8%	3.5%	7.4%	1.3%	.1%	100%
	EU/Eurozone Member State Actors	number	47	105	29	22	0	203
		%	23.2%	51.7%	14.3%	10.8%	0.0%	100%
	EU/Eurozone Actors + Troika	number	49	27	15	7	2	100
	%	49.0%	27.0%	15.0%	7.0%	2.0%	100%	
	Transnat. Actors, non-EU	number	25	15	13	8	0	61
		%	41.0%	24.6%	21.3%	13.1%	0.0%	100%
	Other Actors, non-EU	number	6	9	12	3	0	30
		%	20.0%	30.0%	40.0%	10.0%	0.0%	100%
total		number	1750	220	205	64	4	2243
		%	78.0%	9.8%	9.1%	2.9%	.2%	100%

Overall, the crisis framing has a strong transnational bias. The earlier impression that reporting on the crisis in Germany follows the logic of foreign news reporting is once more underlined: Actors from other European member states appear quite often as senders and a high share of more than 70% of their blames is again directed at this same category of actors (usually to actors from their own national reference system). This is what Koopmans and Statham describe as the weak form of horizontal Europeanization. Despite Germany's strong involvement in the European crisis scenario, German actors and even the German government, successfully stay away from the focus of blame and critique. Much rather the media draws the image of foreign, often inner-domestic controversies where German actors are only marginally involved. It is furthermore noteworthy that German actors seem to face no serious critique from supranational European institutions or transnational institutions (top-down vertical Europeanization). Here, further data will show whether this picture holds but this first overall tendency suggests a rather uncontested German position in the European crisis constellation, at least in the German media. This might of course be due to the strong German influence in these very institutions.

All in all, the analysis of the sender-addressee relations (table 5 + 6) once more illustrated the high degree of Europeanization in the German media including significant instances of horizontal Europeanization (weak but also strong), and vertical Europeanization (predominantly bottom-up).

These findings do not only hold for blame attributions. The picture is furthermore confirmed when we take a step back by looking at the distribution of addresses of all responsibility attributions according to broader geographical/political levels. Table 7

**Table 3: Geographical / political level, addressees in %, all types**

	GR	DE
Germany**	4.8	28.9
Greece**	73.0	11.0
Spain**	1.0	5.1
Ireland	0.4	1.5
Portugal	0.6	1.1
Cyprus	0.8	0.5
Italy**	0.7	5.4
France**	0.8	4.5
other EU**	1.6	4.4
EU**	6.0	14.9
Eurozone**	3.0	9.7
Troika**	2.8	0.5
Other**	4.4	12.4
N	4,816	2,812

Notes: \*\* Chi<sup>2</sup>, p<0,01

again shows that in the Greek media Greek actors build the largest reference group by far (73%). This group is distantly followed by actors from Germany (4.8%, mainly the Government and the German media) and European Union/Eurozone institutions (9%). Even the Troika, for many the incarnation of the austerity diktat in Greece, is only rarely addressed. Regarding the fact that the rescue packages for Greece are formally negotiated with these supranational actors, their minor role as attribution addressees is surprising. Actors from other crisis states remain completely absent as addressees.

Again, the table shows a diametrically opposed pattern for the German debate. Together, Greek and Spanish actors are addressed equally often as German actors. It is striking, however, that actors from other crisis countries such as Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus are only rarely addressed. Together the EU and the Eurozone

level receive more attributions than German actors. The addressees of responsibility attributions are much more European in the German debate.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

The Eurozone crisis is European in its very core. There is a number of good arguments that led us to expect that the Eurozone Crisis can be considered as a paradigmatic case for a European wide public discussion. Maybe, like never before this situation calls for a Europeanized perspective and a debate across borders. The high salience of the issue and the fundamental questioning of former interpretations in the crisis situation further increase the need for a European wide process of sense making. The Eurozone crisis seems to be *the* context to expect extensive references to actors in other Eurozone member states (horizontal Europeanization) and to EU institutions (vertical Europeanization).

In this paper, we focused on the attribution of responsibility that we regard as a core part of sense making. In the context of the Eurozone crisis we expected a high degree of responsibility attribution across borders. In particular we expected a European wide scope of addressees, for Greece more than for Germany. We expected the direction and extent of Europeanized responsibility attribution to be structured by the specific situation of the two countries.

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 was expected to be a clear motivator for external scapegoating. Moreover, the crisis affects all countries in the Eurozone and austerity policy is imposed by European/transnational actors, namely the Troika. Still, attributions of responsibility in general and attributions of blame in particular are exchanged nationally in Greece. Not only the senders but also the addressees of blame attributions are mainly domestic. The analysis of the sender-addressee relation even reinforced this picture with more than 80% blames sent by Greek actors directed at this same group. This 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 by no means as strongly as we expected. Hysteria in the German public about an alleged anti-German zeitgeist in the south of Europe seems misplaced<sup>10</sup>. Germany is indeed an important focus of critique when blames extent beyond the Greek context, but given its overall share, Germany is far from being the central scapegoat. Rather, the dominance of the *inner-Greek* debate suggests that the Eurozone crisis is to a large extent framed as a Greek affair. In the light of the significant impact of the European Union institutions, including the Troika and the theoretically high incentives

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<sup>10</sup> We have to keep in mind that at this stage only quality newspapers are part of the sample. It remains to be seen if this picture holds once we include Greek tabloid newspapers.

for external scapegoating this finding is astonishing. The data showed that the debate focuses on the question of “Who is to blame?” and answers to this question are mainly found among Greek actors. The debate is highly politicized in the national arena with a broad range of domestic actors but European Union actors and actors from other European member states remain outside the spotlight of the national blame game.

In the German newspapers, the debate looks totally different. Here the debate focuses on “What is to be done?” and in general the debate is more Europeanized in various dimensions. Most interestingly and contrary to our expectations the addressees of blames are more Europeanized in Germany than in Greece. Causal responsibility for the crisis situation is mainly assigned to actors beyond the German borders. Although the situation is much less problematic, still attributions directed at other member states or EU institutions are more frequent in relative terms. The analysis of relational dimension (table 5+6) underlines that the reporting style in the German media resembles of foreign news reporting, covering how foreign actors discuss among each other. In the German newspapers, the Eurozone Crisis is framed as a crisis “of the others”. The public interpretation of the European crisis scenario focuses on individual national crises, most notably in Spain and Greece but European institutions, too, are hold responsible. Apart from the German government, German actors remain relatively absent from the debate: Overall, the limited involvement of party actors and legislative actors points to a limited level of domestic politicization and a rather low level of domestic contention around the topic. The role of the German government is only rarely contested domestically. This hints to the traditional consensus of almost all political actors in Germany around the topic of European integration (Statham, Koopmans 2009) and it shows that before the background of the skeptical German public these actors have few incentives to make the Eurozone crisis a matter of contentious debate. It remains to be seen in how far the emergence of the eurosceptic party AfD (Alternative for Germany) will change this picture.

In both, the Greek and the German media German actors seem to successfully disconnect themselves from the crisis blame game. Given Germany’s strong position in the European crisis constellation, this is a surprising outcome.

Why are our expectations, derived from the attractiveness of external scapegoating and the structural situation of actors, not well represented in our data? Leaving aside the possibility that findings change along a more complete data base, we could assume other explanations. Recalling the definition of a crisis as a critical juncture for possible processes of radical transformation, political actors in Greece concentrate on the domestic adversary in an intense struggle for future influence in the country. The government, moreover, depends on support from Germany and the EU and even in the national discursive arena publically blaming these actors might be consequential.

The afore-mentioned point about the traditional pro-European consensus in Germany points to another possible answer; in our simple theoretical proposition we intentionally left aside all considerations of political culture, conflict histories and alike.



Our findings could be understood as a hint that these conflict cultures and path dependencies are influential, especially in the public sphere. In Greece, rather than generating new, Europeanized conflict structures, the Eurozone crisis seems to reinforce long standing national conflicts with a rather polarized political spectrum with strong actors at the political outer poles. Pappas (2013) argues that the history of the Greek political system is characterized by political polarization. Since the end of the civil war, the political discourse culture is to a large extent dominated by populist confrontational rhetoric. The crisis seems to have reinforced this dynamic. In this adversarial system “Greek politics became contested on the basis of a populist division” (ibid, p.4). The delegitimation of domestic adversaries and the shifting of blame is part and parcel of this populist rhetoric (Vasilopoulou et al. 2013). The discursive strategies of political parties are central. In line with both Pappas’ theoretical argument and our central findings, Vasilopoulou et al. show that in political speeches between 2009 and 2011 the crisis blame game is predominantly one between the two mainstream parties *PASOK* and *Néa Dimokratía*. But even for the left wing challengers from SYRIZA the blaming of external elites is surprisingly low; SYRIZA’s arising opportunities to gain power “entailed that it would primarily target its domestic competitors” (ibid, p.11).

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 center with competition in a comparatively narrow range of political positions, especially when it comes to issues of European integration.

All in all, the prospects of a Europeanization of public spheres in the Eurozone crisis are ambiguous. The crisis did not lead to significant levels of Europeanization on the actor dimension in the Greek media. In Germany, the debate is Europeanized but it mainly remains stuck in a weak form of horizontal Europeanization with a limited involvement of German actors. There is one different, further outcome of this analysis: In neither of the debates we observed signs of a growing polarization between the European North and the European South, between the main donor and the main debtor country. At least when it comes to the public attribution of responsibility in qualitative newspapers, the fear of a growing divide in the EU cannot be substantiated.

The analysis we presented here is preliminary. Rising case numbers will allow more complex analysis targeting some points more precisely.

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## Appendix

Figure 2: The attribution tree

