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# The Calibanisation of the South in the German public 'Euro crisis' discourse

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## ABSTRACT:

This article highlights the renaissance of the essentialist topos of the 'lazy and irrational' 'Südländer' (Southerner, Southern countries, South) in the German political and media discourses during the 'Euro crisis'. It argues that it served to legitimate the political and economic measures taken in Southern European countries that pushed them into still more peripheral positions within the European Union (EU) and deepened the cleavage between North and South. Culture, or better culturalism and racism as its political ideological version, thus were used as a trap, as an intellectual battleground for justifying extremely complex economic and political decisions in a simplistic fashion throughout a crucial period of European history. The article furthermore demonstrates how a postcolonial reading may productively decode the processes of *Othering* taking place within Europe itself, especially between the so-called core and peripheral countries.

## KEYWORDS:

Calibanisation of the south, Euro crisis, postcolonial studies, process of *othering* within Europe

## Introduction

The 'Euro crisis' in the second decade of our millennium not only proved to be an economic crisis that shook the continent but also a deeply cultural matter. Old lines of conflict, such as that between North and South Europe,<sup>1</sup> The negative topos of the South in Europe stands for character traits such as lazy, emotional, chaotic, dirty, untrustworthy and even criminal. See, for example, the image of Rome and Romans in German protestant circles, the image of Spain propagated in the 'leyenda negra' or the descriptions of the 'Südländer' [Southerner] migrant workers, the so-called guest workers, in the second half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Volker Reinhard, *Luther. Der Ketzer. Rom und die Reformation*, München: Beck, 2006, Wolfgang Reinhard, "'Eine so barbarische und grausame Nation wie diese". Die Konstruktion de Alterität Spaniens durch die Leyenda Negra und ihr Nutzen ...', in Hans-Joachim Gehrke (ed), *Geschichtsbilder und Gründungsmythen*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2001, pp 159–177, Karen Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität*, Essen: Klartext, 2001. View all

notes suddenly experienced a swift revival. The power of stereotypes in Europe became so rampant that Mario Monti, the economist and Italian prime minister, pleaded in 2012 for a European summit to be held in order to combat the prevalence of stereotypes.<sup>42</sup> 'Monti fordert Gipfel gegen Populismus', *Der Spiegel*, 8 September 2012. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/eu-schuldenkrise-monti-will-gipfel-gegen-populismus-a-854737.html> (accessed 15 July 2013). View all notes Basically, the South was in the media of the North homogenised, essentialised and 'downgraded' in a binary discourse of we–they, friend–enemy, which is well known from colonial contexts. This included its portrayal as lazy, irrational, emotional, sexualised, wasteful, backward, whereas the speaker in this binary construction, in this case Germany, appeared as industrious, rational, frugal and modern. Therefore, while the other deserved patronising and punishing, so the subtext, oneself (i.e. Germany) should be rewarded. Even though there were certainly issues to find fault with in Southern European countries, the reductionist and culturalistic discourse – the 'Calibanisation of the South' as we call it – did not aim at depicting or properly representing them but rather to degrade Southern European countries in generic terms.

Based on Jürgen Link's and Siegfried Jäger's critical discourse analysis<sup>43</sup> See Jürgen Link, *Elementare Literatur und generative Diskursanalyse*, München: Fink, 1983, Jürgen Link, 'Diskursanalyse unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Interdiskurs und Kollektivsymbolik', in Reiner Keller et al., *Handbuch sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse*, Wiesbaden: VS, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft, 2011, pp 433–458 and Siegfried Jäger, *Kritische Diskursanalyse*, Münster: Unrast 7th edition, 2015. View all notes and on postcolonial theory, the article aims at showing this discursive degradation in media and politics in its historical context, the mechanisms behind it and its function. Link and Jäger understand, similar to Michel Foucault, discourses as a flow of linguistic messages that are the product of historical processes and have been consolidated institutionally. Topoi or cultural stereotypes like the 'Südländer' are seen as discursive collective imagery that offer perception patterns of the surrounding world. In this sense, Link's and Jäger's discourse analysis submits collective imagery and the flow of linguistic messages to a critical reading; it studies their linguistic and iconographic devices and looks for their contradictions and silences. Since discourses do not merely reflect reality but can develop a life of their own as they influence individual and collective actions and thus form social reality, their impact and their relation with hegemony are also taken into account. Link's and Jäger's poststructuralistic analysis will be complemented with postcolonial approaches as they help to identify the mechanisms of *Othering* behind the topos of the South and put it in a historical and trans-European context.

In the light of this, the focus of the analysis will be put on the revival of the topos in statements of key politicians and public personalities about the Euro crisis as well as contributions in printed media with an unquestionable impact on the German public opinion. Due to the massive amount of data available, this will be done in an exemplary fashion by considering mainly two high impact German media, namely *Der Spiegel* und *Die Bildzeitung* or just *Bild*, as it is known in Germany, at two critical moments of the Euro crisis namely the Spanish banks bailout in 2012 and the Greek elections and Greek bailout in 2015.

*Der Spiegel* is the most relevant news magazine in Germany and one of the most influential 'leading medium', often quoted and reproduced by other media. It has a circulation of ca. 900,000 copies, whereby a copy finds supposedly ca. 6.3 million readers<sup>44</sup> Jens Schröder, 'Analyse. Der typische Spiegel-Leser', *Meedia.de*, 2013. Available at: <http://meedia.de/2013/01/15/print-analyse-der-typische-spiegel-leser> (accessed 8 August 2014). View all notes and is a singular case in the media landscape as 50% of it belongs to the employees themselves and 25% the founder's heirs. Besides, *Der Spiegel* owns a further significant impact factor, namely the second most visited a news portal in

Germany, *Spiegelonline* or just *Spon*, with approximately 230 million visits per day. It also maintains close contacts to politics, all the more so since it has opened an office in Berlin. As for the daily tabloid *Bildzeitung*, or just *Bild*, it is the German and Europe's, biggest newspaper and is owned by the powerful and conservative editor group *Springer*. Although its circulation has been decreasing in the last decade, it has ca. 2 million editions and it is read by around 10 million people. Moreover, *Bild* is the most visited news portal in Germany with more than 355 million visits per day.<sup>55</sup> 'IWF: Anzahl der Visits (Online + Mobile) der Nachrichtenportals in Deutschland im Dezember 2016', *Statista. Das Statistik-Portal*. Available at: <https://de.statista.com> (accessed 10 January 2017). View all notes

By considering the most influential news magazine and newspaper in Germany, two powerful media houses, a large and diverse readership will also be taken into attention. Whereas *Der Spiegel's* readers are well-educated professionals (more than half of them has 'Abitur', the high school graduation in Germany that allows pupils to progress directly into a German university and more than one-third holds a university degree), tended to be left or socially liberal and have high purchasing power, the *Bild* readers are conservative and their education level is lower: only 13% has 'Abitur' in a country where the average is 26%. Most of them hold a primary school or a lower secondary school certificate, are skilled workers and have lower purchasing power.<sup>56</sup> Jens Schröder, 'Analyse. Der typische Bild-Leser', *Meedia.de*, 2013. Available at: <http://meedia.de/2013/01/24/analyse-der-typische-bild-leser/> (accessed 7 August 2014). View all notes However, both media are influential and feared by politicians, not only because of their wide reach but also due to their political and investigative character, in the case of *Der Spiegel*, and its 'gutter journalism' as well as the weight of its owner, the Axel Springer media group, in German politics and society in the case of *Bild*.<sup>57</sup> See, for example, the ARD reportage on BILD's 60th anniversary: Christiane Meier and Sascha Adamek, BILD. MACHT. POLITIK, ARD, 16 April 2012. The ambiguous title is telling, it means both 'Bild, power and politics' and 'Bild makes politics'. View all notes

Despite the focus on them, references to other relevant media such as the three biggest daily newspapers, the social liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (circulation of 299,196), the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* (219,666), the right conservative *Die Welt* (93,289) as well as the liberal intellectual weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* (417,520)<sup>58</sup> Jens Schröder, 'IVW-Blitz-Analyse Zeitungen', *Meedia.de*, 2016. Available at: <http://meedia.de/2016/10/20/ivw-blitz-analyse-zeitungen-bild-welt-und-f-a-s-verlieren-mehr-als-10-bei-den-abos-und-am-kiosk/> (accessed 6 January 2017). View all notes will also be made in order to show that they were no exceptions, quite the opposite. Voices that denounced the discursive degradation of the South, even if sparsely and mostly in alternative media, will also be considered.

Before moving on to the next section, four methodological points shall be briefly clarified in order to avoid misunderstandings that are otherwise recurrent in debates on the matter. First, the intention of this article is not to analyse a – however defined – reality behind those stereotypes but instead a focus on what the topos stands for, its mechanisms and the function this fulfils in the German context. We have already seen that discourses do not necessarily reflect reality but can rather lead an own existence. Accordingly, the topic of this article is thus not understood as some means of representing the multifaceted, complex realities of the many and diverse Southern European countries but mainly as a linguistic and cultural construct which serves to meet a need in a particular context and which requires decoding. As Nico Carpentier and Erik Spinoy pointed out, there is a close connection between discourse theory's focus on signification, identity construction and culture as 'an assemblage of imaginings and meanings that may be consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous'.<sup>59</sup> Nico Carpentier and Erik Spinoy, 'Introduction: From the Political to the Cultural', in Nico

Carpentier and Erik Spinoy (eds), *Discourse Theory and Cultural Analysis*, Cresskill: Hampton, 2010, pp 1–28. View all notes However, this does not mean that culture and the topos of the South are to be seen in opposition to materiality and reality, as they influence individual and collective practise and are related to power. This opens up the scope for an approach and the evolution of a language that enables discussion of the economy, politics, power and culture as integrated and not separated processes. In the current neoliberal times, in which an economic logic has penetrated each and every area of our society, this has again gained special importance. By analysing the revival of the ‘Südländer’ in its context and considering historical processes that generated it, our approach displays the advantage of reminding how culture after the ‘cultural turn’ in the Humanities does not constitute a separate domain either from the economy or from political and social processes but always remains strongly interdependent in a complex manner.

Second, this article deals with a North–South binary, which ought not to be stressed by in the end employing a dichotomous argumentation. On the contrary, the intentions involve deconstructing this to clearly render how this does not result from any essentialist differences but rather from historical processes and power disparities.

Third, and in the same line of thought, the aim reaches beyond the nation and culture levels in order to grasp the world-system theory perspective. This has necessarily been perceived as multiformed, multilocated and relational, with winners and losers on both sides even while the centres still dominate and subjugate due to their concentrations of economic and political power. In other words, there is also a ‘South’ in the centre, specifically those located on the margins of the system just as how there is also a ‘North’ in the South, made up of the few who deploy the same instruments to profit from the situation in the South.<sup>10</sup> Boaventura Sousa Santos and Paula Meneses (eds), *Epistemologias do Sul*, Coimbra: Almedina 2nd edition, 2010, p 13. View all notes

Fourth, the focus on the German context does not reflect this negative topos of the South as some exclusively German product. The fact that this stems from a *longue durée* phenomenon in European history and, indeed, the current discourse on ‘wasteful Southerners’ emerged from the Anglo-American world, as did the pejorative acronym PIGS, or PIIGS for the countries of Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain (and later including Italy as well) in finance discourses,<sup>11</sup> The term was used by *Financial Times*, *Barclays Capital*, *The Economist*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Newsweek*. See: Robert Holloway, ‘Pigs in Muck and Lipstick’, *AFP*, 15 August 2008. View all notes thus conveying how this is not any uniquely German peculiarity.

### **A postcolonial reading**

Postcolonial theory, combined with the transnational concept of the centre and the periphery of power by the US-American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein as part of his world-system theory,<sup>12</sup> Wallerstein draws on the concept of ‘core–periphery’ developed by the United Economic Commission for Latin America and the subsequent ‘dependency theory’. He regards this concept as an important contribution of ‘Third World Scholars’, especially of Raúl Prebisch. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis. An Introduction*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, p 11. View all notes proved a helpful framework of analysis to address this topic and in so doing expand the above-mentioned discourse analysis.

At first glance, it may seem paradoxical and even provocative to apply postcolonial and decolonial theories to a European context and especially to countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, which in the past played leading roles in colonising the world. However, postcolonialism,

in a broader sense, provides the best frame to analyse the asymmetrical power that a political and economic centre in Wallerstein's sense can exercise by imposing policies on the periphery against their will, using certain discursive and linguistic strategies to legitimate them.

Significantly, the mechanisms of discursive degradation of Southern Europe show many parallels to those used in colonial contexts not because these countries were 'colonies' in a material formal sense, but rather because they were also object of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms that the European discourse on modernity – which underlaid and legitimated colonial discourse, too – set in motion. As well known, the modernity discourse has nurtured a line of separation not only between genders – in fact, similar character traits were also attributed to women – Europeans and non-Europeans,<sup>13</sup> Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, London: Routledge, 1995. View all notes but also between Southern and Northern Europeans. This dividing line has been naturalised, culturalised and thus ideologised over the course of centuries and become a master trope susceptible to reactivation whenever necessary. Consequently, the modernity narrative served to stratify and downgrade not only extra-European but also European societies themselves, those perceived as peripheral by 'core societies'.

From the eighteenth century onwards, and especially in the nineteenth century, Europeans nurtured feelings of superiority not only towards African, Asian and Arabic civilisations but also towards some regions in Europe themselves. In their eyes, Eastern Europe and some parts of Southern Europe were not yet modern, developed societies, either in economic terms or in the political sense. The models of modern societies were essentially Great Britain, France, Germany, Northern Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium – Hegel saw protestant Germany and Prussia as the leaders in terms of development.<sup>14</sup> Heinz Gollwitzer, *Europabild und Europagedanke*, Munich: Beck, 1951. View all notes

Thus, not surprisingly, Southern European scholars such as the Maria Todorova, Boaventura Sousa Santos, Roberto Dainotto and Franco Cassano have been inspired by postcolonial thought to tackle processes of *Othering* WITHIN Europe that the modernity discourse triggered off. Their approaches will be briefly introduced here as there are points of contact with them and their theories are hardly known in German Studies, including in the *Germanistik*, with its continued preponderance of theoreticians from the Anglo-American space.<sup>15</sup> Gabriele Dürbeck, 'Postkoloniale Studien in der Germanistik. Gegenstände, Positionen, Perspektiven', in Gabriele Dürbeck und Alexander Dunker, *Postkoloniale Germanistik. Bestandaufnahme, theoretische Perspektiven, Lektüren*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2014, pp 19–70. View all notes

The Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova demonstrates in her book *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) how South-eastern Europe, more precisely the Balkans, became an 'other' within Europe and, as such, associated with barbaric violence, ethnic and religious divisions, in sum a threat to European civilisation. Inspired by Edward Said's work, especially his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978) in which he argues that the West was discursively born in opposition to a fabricated and essentialised view of Oriental culture,<sup>16</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978. View all notes Maria Todorova defends how this also proved the case for the other peripheries of modernity, for example South-Eastern Europe.

In a similar line, the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura Sousa Santos states that postcolonial theoreticians ignore how there are different 'Europes' and unequal relations between different European countries.<sup>17</sup> Boaventura Sousa Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity', *Luso-Brasilian Review*, 39(2), 2002, pp 9–43. View all notes He warns that postcolonial theory runs (into) the danger of 'essentialising' Europe by treating it as a unity in opposition to non-Western societies.<sup>18</sup> Boaventura Sousa Santos, 'Vom

postmodernen zum Postkolonialen. Und über beides hinaus', in Horst Brunkhorst and Sérgio Costa (eds), *Jenseits des Zentrums und Peripherie. Zur Verfassung der fragmentierten Gesellschaft*, Munich: Hampp, pp 197–220. View all notes Therefore, he draws attention to the need to overcome a rigid dualism Europe/others and to more deeply consider the ambivalent cases. He exemplifies this by the Portuguese example. The Portuguese coloniser has always been simultaneously colonised: on the one hand, Portugal stands as one of the oldest colonial powers – and a country that contributed to slavery and racism. On the other hand, Portugal had de facto been a semi-colony of the British Empire, thus becoming a subaltern colonialist, and also attributed qualities normally otherwise only assigned to non-Europeans. Santos draws on the postcolonial interpretation of the two well-known characters from William Shakespeare's drama *The Tempest* (1611/1623) to characterise Portugal's semi-peripheral condition: Prospero, who stands for rationality and culture and his slave Caliban, symbol of the primitive, uncontrolled nature: 'The Portuguese Prospero is not just a Calibanized Prospero; he is a very Caliban from the viewpoint of the European super-Prosperos':<sup>19</sup> Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban', p 17. View all notes

The features invoked by the Portuguese to construct the image of the primitive and savage peoples in their colonies from the fifteenth century onwards are quite similar to those ascribed to themselves at the time by North European travelers, traders and monks: underdevelopment and precarious living conditions, sloth and sensuality, violence and affability, poor hygiene and ignorance, superstition and irrationality.<sup>20</sup> Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban', p 17. View all notes

Applying a similar approach to Todorova, the Italian philologist Roberto M. Dainotto argues in *Europe (in theory)* (2007) that the modern European identity with its values of progress and rationality emerged not only in opposition to the Orient but also against an essentialist idea of a Catholic, backward and despotic South. Thus, the South became the 'indispensable internal Other'<sup>21</sup> Roberto Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, p 4. View all notes in a process to which Montesquieu's climate theory provided a central argument. In this French philosopher's opinion, the Mediterranean weather brought forth passivity and individualism, whereas the Northern climate encouraged a spirit of enterprise and cooperation.

The sociologists Franco Cassano and Boaventura Sousa Santos also identify reasons for the diminution and exclusion discourse of the 'South' in the epistemic models of modernity. They do not simply reproach this but rather contemplate the revival of 'Southern Thought' or of the 'Epistemologies of the South' as a necessary, emancipatory project.<sup>22</sup> Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012 [first published in 1996], Santos and Meneses, *Epistemologias do Sul*. View all notes In Franco Cassano's monograph *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (1996), the South appears 'no longer [as; C.E.] a belated, imperfect and not yet-North' but as 'the space of a differential, autonomous identity to be recovered and rediscovered'.<sup>23</sup> Cassano, *Southern Thought*, p xii. View all notes He correspondingly grasps the return to Europe's often repressed Mediterranean roots as a way of rediscovering the space for diversity and for the economic and cultural plurality that had historically resisted the imposition of unifying and totalising visions. To his mind, this task is 'Not to think of the South in the light of modernity, but rather to think modernity in the light of the South'.<sup>24</sup> Cassano, *Southern Thought*, p xii. View all notes

It is mainly these four scholars' focus on the exclusion mechanisms of modernity towards the South, particularly in a diachronic perspective, which proves useful for the approach here, as it helps to see the discourse on the South in a historical context. As stated above, it shows that it

is a *longue durée* phenomenon, a product of a European discourse on Modernity which has been revived during the Euro crisis.

However, the intention does not involve comparing the South to a colony in any formal sense or downplaying colonialism. Nor does this seek to idealise the South. This rather strives to acknowledge that we in fact live in postcolonial times<sup>25</sup> Pankaj Mishra, *The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*, London: Penguin, 2012, António Sousa Ribeiro, 'Von Kerneuropäern und den anderen: Konstellationen des Gedächtnisses im (post)kolonialen Europa', Paper at the University Hamburg, 13 June 2013. View all notes and that this has been causing a tectonic shift in the way the world is ordered and necessarily also impacting on Europe, especially Southern European countries, for example, as reflected in their processes of deindustrialisation in favour of, for example, China. In other words, postcolonialism takes account both of colonialism as the initiator and motor of globalisation and of the international order as we know it today and has gained even more relevance in recent decades, both on a material as well as on an epistemic level. Postcolonialism has thus the further advantage to provide a trans-European, global perspective. In this sense, it serves as an insightful complement to Jürgen Link's approach, who takes basically a German and European perspective.<sup>26</sup> This can be seen in, for example, Jürgen Link's book, *Anteil der Kultur an der Versenkung Griechenlands. Von Hölderlins Deutschschelte zu Schäubles Griechenschelte*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2016. Link puts Schäuble's treatment of Greece in a German and European context by describing it in opposition to Hölderlin's criticism of Germany. Although this is a rewarding approach, the focus is essentially national. In my view, this stands in the German tradition of overseeing the relevance of colonialism as the forerunner of globalisation. See Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust*, Hamburg: Lit., 2011. View all notes

A postcolonial approach is thus open to what Aníbal Quijano has called the 'coloniality of power', that is, the unequal relations of the former colonial system and its colonial mindset did not completely disappear with the abolition of formal colonialism but rather that these continue in multiple forms in the succeeding societies in the form of hierarchies as well as in systems of knowledge and cultural forms.<sup>27</sup> Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 2000, pp 533–580. View all notes Furthermore, any postcolonial order can also affect the former colonial countries.

This becomes all the more relevant as power between centres and peripheries is not nowadays practiced as openly and symbolically as in the nineteenth century, but rather discretely, behind the scenes so to say. This mainly deploys means of economical potency and concentration, as well as mechanisms that remain practically almost invisible to the public eye, for example highly complex trade agreements, international institutions such as central and world bank(s), the International Monetary Fund and organisations such as expert commissions, think tanks, lobby groups and very often media campaigns also deserve their place on this list.

In the cases of the European bailouts of Southern Europe, for example, the most important decisions did not get taken in the respective national centres of power but rather in Brussels, led by the mightiest European member states. With regard to the third Greek bailout in July 2015, the European Troika, which has never been elected, went so far as to impose their conditions on this country even after the Greek people had rejected them in a referendum. Nowadays, a fund supervised by the European Stability Mechanism controls all of the country's public assets, including public infrastructures, harbours, airports, public beaches and natural resources for the next 99 years.

As the European Stability Mechanism is a supranational entity, it answers neither to any parliament nor to any elected body. The Greek parliament can neither decide over the national budget nor pass tax legislation independently. Should the fiscal targets set by the EU, the International Monetary Fund and the European Stability Mechanism fail to be achieved, these institutions may trigger automatic cuts without parliamentary participation. Ultimately, Greece is no longer a sovereign country. Many Greek politicians and intellectuals have even called its current status a 'debt colony',<sup>28</sup> Especially during the discussions about the 2015 Greek bailout, Greece was often referred to as 'debt colony'. The Greek Minister of Energy Panagiotis Lafazanis called it a 'debt colony in a German-supervised EU', the Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias also used this term in interview with Alexander Smoltczyk, and the Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis also accused Troika of treating Greece as a 'colony'. See: Agence France Press, 'Greek MP in Quandary as Harsh Reforms Pit Him Against Own Party', *The National World*, 13 July 2015. Available at: [www.thenational.ae<http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/greek-pm-tsipras-in-quandary-as-harsh-reforms-pit-him-against-own-party](http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/greek-pm-tsipras-in-quandary-as-harsh-reforms-pit-him-against-own-party)(accessed 22 October 2016), Alexander Smoltczyk, 'Wir sind arm, aber gleichberechtigt', *Spiegelonline*, 9 February 2015. Available at: [www.spiegel.de>http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-aussenminister-nikos-kotzias-im-interview-a-1017342.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-aussenminister-nikos-kotzias-im-interview-a-1017342.html) (accessed 8 April 2015); Renee Maltezos and Francesco Guarascio, 'Denials Fly in War of Nerves Over Greek Debt Talks', *Reuters*, 28 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eurozone-greece-bailout-idUSKCN0Q21EM20150728> (accessed 22 October 2016).View all notes meaning they consider the bailout conditions are basically colonial or semi-colonial practices that are now, in the twenty-first century, getting imported into Europe, into the so-called first world. The historian Jamie Martin even sees parallels between the debt mechanisms imposed on Greece and those applied in colonies such as Egypt, Turkey and China from the nineteenth century onwards.<sup>29</sup> In his contribution 'The Colonial Origins of the Greek bailout', Martin draws parallels between the model imposed on former colonies like Egypt in the late nineteenth century and the Greek bailout. He reminds that, in 1876, the Khedive Ismail Pasha agreed to the creation of an international commission, staffed by Europeans, to supervise the Egyptian budget and even control over certain sources of public revenue in order to avoid bankruptcy. Intended to ensure the timely servicing of foreign debts, this model in fact opened the way to a stronger European intervention in Egypt. The 'Caisse de la Dette Publique' was only abolished in 1940. According to Jamie Martin this case served as a model for the intervention in Austria in spring 1921. However, in this case, the League of Nations was installed as a 'neutral' external mediator and supervisor given that Austria was a Christian, and European state and also in order to secure its acceptance among the Austrian population. Jamie Martin identifies in the League of Nations intervention the model for the International Monetary Fund and in those interventions the model for several structural adjustment projects, including the European bailouts, which he calls a semi-colonial model. Jamie Martin, 'The Colonial Origins of the Greek Bailout', *Imperial and Global Forum*, 18 December 2015. Available at: <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2015/07/27/the-colonial-origins-of-the-greek-bailout/> (accessed 23 March 2016). Inspired by Kwame Nkrumah's thoughts on neo-colonialism, the political scientist Jonas Van Vossle calls this process neo-colonialism. Jonas Van Vossle, 'Framing PIGS: Patterns of Racism and Neocolonialism in the Euro Crisis', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 50(1), 2016, pp 1–20. I thank Van Vossle for this indication when I presented my paper on the topic on 9 December 2016 at the University of Coimbra.View all notes And the German sociologist Stephan Lessenich sees in the Greek bailout of 2015 the comeback to the European continent of the colonial political economic model practised by European imperialism overseas and the U.S.A. in Latin America, by means of the structural adjustment programmes – a process that he even calls the 'internal colonisation of Europe'.<sup>30</sup> Stephan Lessenich, 'Mexikaner Europas', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 July 2015, p 9.View all notes

Finally, postcolonial theory has also proven the most suitable analytical paradigm to highlight the discursive mechanisms of *Othering* contained in the 'Calibanisation of the South' from a synchronic perspective. As is well known, postcolonialism owes post-structuralism the constructivist view that human beings think in terms of certain tropes and constructed meanings. Thus while being compliant with Michel Foucault's, Jürgen Link's and Siegfried Jäger's poststructuralistic concepts of discourses and collective imagery and while defending that cultures ought to be 'read' as texts even while ideology attempts to naturalise them, postcolonial theories offer nevertheless a better theoretical and methodological apparatus and thus better tools to describe processes of *Othering* as well as the rhetorical mechanisms behind them. Especially Edward Said's classical work *Orientalism* has demonstrated how processes of *Othering* are preceded by practises of homogenisation, essentialisation of the 'other', who is seen as emotional, corporeal, idle and irrational as if these were natural and immutable characteristics. These are then set in a binary and inferiorising opposition to oneself, which is considered rational and thus superior. These unequal positions between the 'other' and the 'self' establish automatically a hierarchy which is used to legitimate asymmetrical power constellations. As the next section will show, it is precisely this mechanism which is behind the topos of the South during the Euro crisis.

### **'Siesta' and 'sexy Alexi': the discursive degradation of the South**

The Cold War and the process of European enlargement and integration gradually shaped a new political and economic order. The main ideological and physical division in Europe became that between West and East. Southern Europeans, the Portuguese, Spanish and Greek peoples became increasingly perceived as partners in Europe, at least on an ideological and discursive level. Italy constitutes a good example of this change in perceptions. The country of the poor, of spaghetti and 'donkey stables' as they got called in the Germany of the 1950s<sup>31</sup> Yvonne Rieker, 'Südländer, Ostagenten oder Westeuropäer? Die Politik der Bundesregierung und das Bild der italienischen Gastarbeiter 1955–1970', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 40, 2000, p 256. View all notes became the country of successful and popular Europeans, a place with a life style and the elegance of 'made in Italy'. Thanks to the post-war economic success of Italian industry, European integration and the increasing West German openness both to tourism in Southern Europe and its gastronomy, West German society began to ever more idealise Italy as the country of the 'dolce vita', a kind of escape from the day-to-day German *tristesse*.<sup>32</sup> Oliver Janz and Roberto Sala (eds), *Dolce Vita? Das Bild der italienischen Migranten in Deutschland*, Frankfurt/M, New York: Campus, 2011, pp 7–8. View all notes

However, this image improvement of Southern European countries during the construction of the EU was not to last. What started out as a financial crisis in 2008 due to overheated property sectors in the United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Iceland and Spain due to wrong counselling and unrealistic financial expectations, began, steadily and relentlessly, to get as a national debt problem incurred by nations that lived above their means and, consequently, as stemming from differences in the mental and cultural dispositions between Northern and Southern Europeans. The crisis thus revealed how resilient old stereotypes are and how quickly negative discourses may become reactivated, adapted to new contexts and exert influence on them. Whereas Eastern Europe had – up to the Fall of the Berlin Wall – been perceived as the 'other Europe', this role has gradually been transferred to Southern Europe.

The repeated references to the 'Südländer' as laidback, emotional and unserious type proved even more noticeable if one considers that there is also a positive topos of the South in German history and the importance it held in German intellectual history. As Dieter Richter, scholar of German Literature, expressed this in his book *Der Süden. Geschichte einer Himmelsrichtung* (The

South. History of a Cardinal Direction), '[f]or centuries Europe's mental map has been centered on a North–South-axis'.<sup>333</sup> Dieter Richter, *Der Süden. Geschichte einer Himmelsrichtung*, Berlin: Wagenbach, 2009, p 9. View all notes This cardinal direction has proven an extremely productive facet to German culture and arts especially in classical times. The South, especially Italy, became a 'Sehnsuchtsort' (place of longing) for the educated German middle class, especially from the eighteenth century onwards. Interestingly, Dieter Richter's comments in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* during the Euro crisis described a *Mediterranee* that was no longer the cradle and the host of civilization:

The splendour of the South is fading away. The classical praise for this cardinal point - for centuries, German mythical geography has been thwarted by a political definition, which approaches the European 'Südländer', as they are now called, as crisis regions, in which mismanagement, laziness and corruption are daily problems.<sup>34</sup> Dieter Richter, 'Alles eine Frage der Klimazone', *Die Zeit*, No. 25, 14 June 2012. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2012/25/Mentalitaeten> (accessed 15 June 2015). View all notes

The German chancellor was among the first to draw on the negative topos of the 'lazy backward' South worthy of getting patronised. On 17 May 2011, at a spring party conference, Angela Merkel demanded that Southern Europeans should not only incur less debt but also take fewer holidays and retire later. She thus implied that they should follow the German example and work harder: 'We cannot have a single currency and the one has many holidays and the other few. This does not work out in the long run.'<sup>35</sup> Florian Gathmann and Veit Meidick, 'SPD und Grüne werfen Merkel Stimmungsmache vor', *Spiegelonline*, 18 Mai 2011. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/kritik-an-suedeuropaeern-spd-und-gruene-werfen-merkel-stimmungsmache-vor-a-763334.html> (accessed 20 Mai 2011). View all notes In a maternalistic manner, Merkel declared with regards to the debates on credits for Southern European countries: 'Yes, Germany helps, but Germany helps only if all make an effort. And this needs to be proven.' This derogatory attitude was widespread: The Christliche Demokratische Union (CDU) party whip Volker Kauder stated that the Greeks should do their homework, and the German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble's son-in-law and chairman of Baden-Württemberg, Thomas Strobl, commented that 'The Greeks have long got on his nerves.'<sup>36</sup> Katharina Schuler, 'Der Grieche hat genug genervt', *Die Zeit*, 14 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-07/griechenland-strobl-union> (accessed 30 July 2015). View all notes

Merkel's observations were perceived as an unexpected paradigmatic shift with regard to discourses on Europe as the subsequent criticism from journalists<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Johannes Aumüller, Javier Caceres, 'Ausflug ins Populistische', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 18 Mai 2011. Available at: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/geld/angela-merkel-kritik-an-verschuldeten-euro-laender-ausflug-ins-populistische-1.1098887> (accessed 14 June 2014). View all notes and politicians conveys: The journalist David Gerginov wondered what might have caused Merkel's reaction and why the so reserved chancellor had suddenly attacked the South in this manner. He called it a 'Hau-Drauf-Rhetorik, populism', a simplistic, populist and misleading rhetoric.<sup>38</sup> David Gerginov, 'Bundeskanzlerin Merkel attackiert die Süd-Schiene', 18 Mai 2011. Available at: <http://www.gevestor.de/news/bundeskanzlerin-merkel-attackiert-die-sued-schiene-501748.html> (accessed 24 August 2014). View all notes The Social Democratic Party leader, Sigmund Gabriel, criticised the chancellor for stirring up anti-European resentment and for overlooking those really responsible for the crisis: exchange rate speculators and investment bankers. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a French-German politician of the Green Party, commented that Merkel should leave cheap populism at home and make concrete proposals for solving the problem.<sup>39</sup> Gathmann and Meidick, 'SPD und Grüne werfen Merkel Stimmungsmache

vor'. View all notes However, the internet readers' forums of well-respected media outlets show the extent of readers' support for Merkel's view at that time. For instance, reader Kber commented at 12:30: 'That's right, Monti should relax employment protection against wrongful dismissal first and many other things. Always demanding but giving nothing back, that's our dear "Südländer". They know nothing else. Monti and co are junkies and their drug is money.'<sup>40</sup> See, for example, readers' comments on Carsten Volkery, 'EU-Gipfel: Merkel lässt Monti abblitzen', *Spiegelonline*, 28 June 2012. Available at <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/eu-gipfel-bundesregierung-laesst-monti-abblitzen-a-841474.html> (accessed 23 Mai 2013). View all notes Although Spain's national budgetary position was more solid and holding less debt than Germany prior to the outbreak of the financial crisis, the German public held hardly any awareness of this due both to the complexity of the topic and the lack of politicians' efforts at enlightening them. Furthermore, the German media, concentrated in the hands of a couple of powerful families, corporations and conglomerates and influenced by the crisis prevailing in the sector as a whole, instead did little to change the situation. Well researched and enlightening articles about the situation in the respective European countries were only ever rare, whereas culturalistic discourses proliferated in public discourse. The following examples taken from German central publicistic organs will illustrate this.

The most widely read political magazine in Germany, *Der Spiegel*, which once used to stand out as a positive example of investigative journalism in the former G.F.R. and often took a social and left perspective, led the way in drawing on culturalistic patterns. At this crucial time in European history, this magazine published articles on the 'siesta', for example, which suggested that the Spanish had different work ethics to the German population and this might be the reason for their difficulties. In fact, discussions took place in Spain about adapting their working schedule to the rest of Europe in order to make it more family and consumer friendly. However, most Spanish people do not take a siesta and a high rate of Spanish people and Southern Europeans in general, especially younger workers, were unemployed and wished for work and jobs. Besides, many Spanish people and Southern Europeans had emigrated to Germany in the 1960s and spent most of their lives in Germany labouring as 'guest workers'. Many of their descendants had meanwhile actually become German citizens. Yet, all of these aspects played no role and seemed to fall entirely beyond the scope of the collective German memory – and conveying along the way a good example of just how discourses and realities can easily lead existences independent of each other. Instead, on 19 November 2011 *Spiegelonline* printed an article with the title 'Stop the Siesta' in which the journalist Daniel Woolls suggests that the siesta constitutes the reason for Spain's problems with unemployment, debt levels and low productivity. Therefore, this journalist recommends its abolition: Spanish people should give up on their siestas, leave the office and go home earlier, do some sports and play with their kids. They would be calmer, more motivated, more productive and thus able to contribute to the economic recovery of Europe's fourth largest economy.<sup>41</sup> Daniel Woolls, 'Schluss mit der Siesta', *Spiegelonline*, 19 November 2011. Available at <http://www.spiegel.de/karriere/spanische-mittagsruhe-in-gefahr-schluss-mit-der-siesta-a-798620.html> (accessed 19 November 2011). View all notes Beatrix Hasse's article 'Shut the door, time for a nap' on 4 March 2013, also in *Spiegelonline*,<sup>42</sup> Beatrix Hasse, 'Tür zu, jetzt wird geschlafen', *Spiegelonline*, 4 March 2013. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/forum/karriere/mittagspause-barcelona-tuer-zu-jetzt-wird-geschlafen-thread-84353-1.html> (accessed 19 Mai 2015). View all notes drifts in the same direction even though her message proves slightly more nuanced than that of Woolls'. She begins by mentioning that Spanish working habits have adapted to the rest of Europe, especially in metropolises like Barcelona. Nevertheless, her article as a whole gives the impression that the siesta still plays an important role in Spain. This is especially true for its closing passage in which she describes a competition run by the national association of friends of the siesta awarding those achieving the loudest snoring and best sleeping positions. Therefore, Hasse's article

ultimately conveys that same message, especially when considering that many recipients only read headings and not entire articles in our accelerated, attention-demanding times.

Another crisis-era article in *Der Spiegel* that cements this idea of the importance of the siesta in Spain and of the Southerner's different lifestyle comes with the essay 'Siempre la Siesta' by Max A. Höfer, published both in the online version as well in the print edition of the weekly political magazine on 26 June 2013. Tellingly, *Der Spiegel* did not engage either a research journalist or an expert in Southern Europe affairs to report on the crisis but rather a neoliberal economist and political scientist from a lobby organisation. Höfer was not only the former director of the politics department of the economic magazine *Capital*, the director of its Berlin office as well as director of the German Institute for Health Economy, but also managing director of the neoliberal lobby group *Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (the New Social Market Economy Initiative), financed by the metal and electrical industry employers association.

Höfer starts his contribution with some reflections on the *siesta*, proceeds with the observation that Spain and South European countries have in general been changing and adapting to the Northern way of life, and ends up by identifying how they have been sacrificing their supposedly laid back life style in favour of capitalism and the protestant work ethic. Although Höfer expresses empathy towards the Spanish people and what he describes as their way of life, he basically reduces Spain to the *siesta* at a critical moment of European history and proposes this habit as synonymous for lazing around – a symptom, so to say, of the differences in mentality between Spain and Germany. Ultimately, and in spite of a few empathic observations, Höfer presents a culturalistic explanation for the crisis instead of highlighting the responsibilities of politics and the financial system. He legitimates this by drawing on the old Max Weber thesis about the different work ethics of catholic and protestant cultures. Thus, Höfer not only reproduces but also cements alleged differences between religions, cultures and countries. No wonder that Spanish readers felt offended by it<sup>43</sup> Rosalía Sánchez, 'Der Spiegel asegura que España tiene que quitar la siesta por la presión de la Troika', *El Mundo*, 29 June 2013. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/06/29/espana/1372502255.html> (accessed 23 August 2014). View all notes despite his attempts to reassure the Iberian press that it had not been his intention, quite the contrary.<sup>44</sup> 'El autor del artículo sobre la siesta se declara "amigo de la forma de vida latina"', *El Mundo*, 3 June 2013. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/06/30/espana/1372612173.html> (accessed 26 August 2014). View all notes

Höfer's engagement for this essay, its contents and the way *Spiegel* placed it all reveal that this magazine intended to pass on the message of the different, lazy South to its readers and how ambiguous *Spiegel* journalism has become. Actually, the way *Spiegel* editors illustrated it and chose its titles becomes more problematic than the contents of the essay itself. Thus, when browsing through this *Der Spiegel* print edition, the reader bumps into a suggestive text and a picture of the South immediately on the first page. Right after the table of contents, the following short announcement of the essay under the biased title 'Hard Work Instead of Siesta?' ('Schuften statt siesta?'), which polemically opposes Northern and Southern Europeans, reads:

For centuries, the Südländer have been defying the midday heat with an extended nap. However, they suspect that the Northern Europeans begrudge their traditional siesta in times of crisis. Work instead of lazing around? In his essay, the Berlin economist Max A. Höfer explains why this is no solution in the long term.<sup>45</sup> Max Höfer, 'Siempre la siesta', *Der Spiegel*, 26, 2013, p 128f. View all notes

To the right of this short summary, a picture conjures up a *fin de siècle* atmosphere that emphasises the message of the lazy South: It portrays a middle-aged man in a dark jacket, white

trousers and white shoes sleeping at the foot of some huge column. Behind his sleeping body, a woman dressed in black with a white apron, supposedly his maid, is also taking a nap. The sentence at the bottom of the picture: 'Dormants in Rome around 1910' leaves no doubt about what this is about, namely siesta makers in Italy. Some pages further on, the reader comes across Höfer's essay, also adorned with a *siesta*-themed picture, more precisely, a photo of a gondolier sleeping under a parasol in a chair with his feet up on an advertising board for gondola trips. A similar photo was chosen for the English version in *Spiegelonline International* on 28 June 2013 depicting two young gondoliers sleeping on a public bench with the caption: 'Southern Europeans see their traditional way of life as under threat' underneath. The title of this international version, 'Viva la Siesta: Should Southern Europe Really Be more German?', is even more specific and nationalist than the German original. By deploying the term 'Southern Europeans' and 'Southern Europe' and by illustrating this essay about Spain with photos of Italy, *Der Spiegel* made this stereotype valid to all Southern Europeans. The essay's subtitle serves to confirm this: 'Southern Europe feels itself and its Latin lifestyle under threat.'

By presenting the essay in such a frame, *Spiegel* editors directed the readers' attention to alleged Southerner laziness. Höfer and *Der Spiegel* did not only homogenise and essentialise Southern Europe – Spain stands for Southern Europe and Southern Europeans for this lack of working ethics – but also reduced Europe basically to binary opposites 'lazy' versus 'industrious', 'Southern Europe' versus 'Northern Europe'. As postcolonial theory has drawn attention to, homogenisation, essentialisation and binarity all constitute different facets of downgrading processes. This means that, at a crucial time in European history, *Der Spiegel* not only anthropologised and culturalised the image of the South but also actually fuelled resentment in Germany. They stressed European differences in parody fashion and added a considerably nationalistic arrogant tone by suggesting that Germany amounted to the example worth following.

However, *Der Spiegel* was far from being the only media outlet to take this path. The right conservative, pro-government newspaper *Die Welt*, owned by the publishing group *Springer*, which also owns *Bild*, also led the way in this discourse about the 'lazy South'. The article 'Max Weber. Finanzkrise. Katholiken können halt nicht rechnen' (Max Weber. Financial Crisis – Catholics Cannot Calculate) on 7 December 2010 – merely exemplifies how the newspaper adopted a similar pattern early on and did not shy away from controversial and even offensive articles. As did Max Höfer, the article's author, Berthold Seewald, also draws openly on Max Weber's thesis about Southern work ethics to explain why these countries were not in trouble and why capitalism failed to achieve success in Southern European catholic countries. Henrik M. Broder, known for his polemical style, conveyed basically the same idea in his controversial article 'Nordeuropa arbeitet – und zahlt für den Süden' (Northern Europe Works – and Pays for the South) on 3 August 2012 in *Die Welt*. Broder argues herein that any union between Southern and Northern European countries is destined to fail due to their respective cultural differences: 'Southern European café culture is much more fun than Northern discipline. However, by attempting to homogenise the living conditions in Europe, the bill is passed on to the North.'<sup>46</sup>46 Henrik M. Broder, 'Nordeuropa arbeitet – und zahlt für den Süden', *Die Welt*, 3 August 2012. Available at: <https://www.welt.de/kultur/article11445181/Finanzkrise-Katholiken-koennen-halt-nicht-rechnen.html> (accessed 03 August 2012). View all notes Approximately one month later, *Die Welt* published an article under the equally polemic title 'Euro-Krise. Der Stolz der Südländer auf die Verschwendung' (Euro Crisis. Southerner's Pride at Waste)<sup>47</sup>47 Wolf Lepenies, 'Euro-Krise. Der Stolz der Südländer auf die Verschwendung', *Die Welt*, 6 September 2012. Available at: <https://www.welt.de/kultur/history/article109019027/Der-Stolz-der-Suedlaender-auf-die-Verschwendung.html> (accessed 6 September 2012). View all notes on the history of the Southern and Northern Europe conflict lines by the sociologist Wolf Lepenies, a

member of the Axel Springer Supervisory Board and an exclusive author for its newspaper, for *Welt am Sonntag* and *Berliner Morgenpost*.<sup>48</sup>48 Axel Springer's press communiqué, 'Wolf Lepenies Autor für DIE WELT/ WELT am SONNTAG', 24 February 2004. Available at: <http://presseservice.pressrelations.de/pressemitteilung/wolf-lepenies-autor-fuer-die-weltwelt-amsonntag-148051.html> (accessed 2 September 2016).View all notes In order to stress this alleged difference and wasteful Southern lifestyle at the cost of Germans, die *Welt* illustrated Lepenies's contribution with a picture of dancers at a luxurious ball taken from the film 'The Leopard' (1963), based on Giuseppe Tomasi Lampedusa's book with the same title. The sentence 'Heading for decline with rapturous parties' at the bottom of the picture made sure the message of the wasteful South could not be misunderstood and further resentments were duly stirred up. The journalist Leo Wieland also wrote a biased arrogant article on Spain 'Schlafanzug, Nachttopf, Vaterunser' (Pijama, Chamber Pot, Our Father) for the conservative *FAZ* on 27 July 2014. Even the renowned social liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which generally speaking published the most balanced articles on the Euro crisis,<sup>49</sup>49 Sebastian Schoepp, 'Unter dem Olivenbaum', *SZ, Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 February 2012, p 13; Sebastian Schoepp, 'Die Stärke des Südens', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 June 2012, p 4; Sebastian Schoepp, 'Hilfe vom grünen Ritter', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13 August 2012, p 13; Martin Baumeister and Roberto Sala, 'Der Süden und die Krise', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 July 2013; Lessenich, 'Mexikaner Europas', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 July 2015.View all notes drew on this discourse, as Thomas Urban's article 'Spanien schafft die Siesta ab', especially the beginning, 'Shopping instead of sleep' and his statement that a nap after lunch has always been sacred to Spanish people', illustrates.<sup>50</sup>50 Thomas Urban, 'Spanien schafft die Siesta ab', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 July 2012. Available at: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/reaktion-auf-schuldenkrise-spanien-schafft-die-siesta-ab-1.1425781> (accessed 12 November 2013).View all notes

Nevertheless, these articles about Spain actually appear as moderate in comparison to the German media coverage of Greece. In fact, since 2010, political and media populism against Greece has been overwhelming in Germany and reached a peak bordering on hysteria during the negotiations over the third Greek bailout in 2015. Instead of highlighting the extremely complex supranational and even globalised economic and political ramifications and contexts, the press and politics basically reduced the problem to simplistic images and structures, mainly to the simplistic dualism of 'we–they', 'friend–enemy'. The roles were neatly divided: The first group, the Germans, stand for the positive, the diligent, the latter, the 'Südländer', for the negative, the lazy, the wasteful. Furthermore, the media coverage was highly emotionalised and personalised with an offensive tone, and with resentments as well as 'Schadenfreude' shining through.

The tabloid *Bild*, the most widely read newspaper in Germany, with approximately 10 million readers, as already mentioned, played a central role in shaping German public opinion on Greece. In 2010, this newspaper was already publishing articles on Greece that suggested that Greeks enjoyed abundant lifestyles at the expense of Germans. For instance, on 27 April 2010, the *Springer* tabloid put out an article with the telling title: 'Dispute over Billions Aid: Why Do We Pay the Greeks' luxurious pensions? So fortunate are Greek pensioners.'<sup>51</sup>51 Dirk Hoeren and Oliver Santen, 'Warum zahlen wir den Griechen ihre Luxus-Renten?', *Bild*, 27 April 2010. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/wirtschaft/wir-zahlen-luxus-rente-mit-milliarden-hilfe-12338430.bild.html> (accessed 2 January 2016).View all notes In the same month, *Bild* launched a campaign to 'give the Greeks their old currency back'. They sent the young *Bild* reporter Paul Ronzheimer to Athens to enact this message so the newspaper could announce: 'Bye-bye Euro. *Bild* gives the bankrupt Greeks their Drachma back.'<sup>52</sup>52 Paul Ronzheimer and George Kalozois, 'Tschüss Euro. *Bild* gibt den Pleite-Griechen die Drachmen zurück', *Bild*, 27 April 2010. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/wirtschaft/bild-gibt-den-pleite-griechen-die-drachmen-zurueck-12338432.bild.html> (accessed 5 January 2016).View all notes *Bild* also advised the Greeks to sell

their assets and history to finance their debts: 'Sell your islands, you bankrupt Greeks, and the Acropolis, too.'<sup>53</sup> 'Verkauft doch Eure Inseln, Ihr Pleite-Griechen, und die Akropolis gleich mit', *Bild*, 27 October 2010. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/wirtschaft/griechenland-krise/regierung-athen-sparen-verkauft-inseln-pleite-akropolis-11692338.bild.html> (accessed 5 January 2016). View all notes Symptomatic of the quality of *Bild* journalism, in May 2011, the journalist Paul Ronzheimer was honoured with the Herbert Quandt media prize – a prize awarded by the business-friendly Quandt foundation – for his coverage on Greece.

When the Greek crisis became particularly dramatic in autumn 2011, when it became known that the Prime Minister Giorgos Papandreou was planning a referendum on the austerity measures, *Bild* intensified its attacks on this Southern country. On 1 November 2011, this tabloid wrote polemically: 'Euro-Gambler Papandreou triggers a further crisis. Does the Greek prime minister want to take the piss out of us?'<sup>54</sup> Paul Ronzheimer, 'Euro-Zocker Papandreou löst neue Krise aus. Will uns der Griechen-Premier verarschen?', *Bild*, 1 November 2011. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-krise/volksabstimmung-in-griechenland-papandreou-der-euro-zocker-20759592.bild.html> (accessed 5 January 2016). View all notes Two days later, on 3 November 2015, *Bild* insisted:

Take the Euro away from the Greeks, Frau Merkel. We want a referendum. We had enough! We are liable as guarantors for hundreds of billions of Euros in order to save the bankrupt Greeks - and they first want to clarify in a referendum whether they want to be saved at all. Now we want a referendum as well: no more billions for Greece, Greece out of the Euro!<sup>55</sup> 'Nehmt den Griechen den Euro weg! Frau Merkel, wir wollen auch eine Volksabstimmung', *Bild*, 3 November 2011. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/geld/wirtschaft/griechenland-krise/volksentscheid-in-deutschland-20790162.bild.html> (accessed 6 January 2016). View all notes

In this context, *Bild* did not mention that the bailout money primarily saved German and French banks which had invested in Greek government securities and which would have faced critical liquidity issues without that capital. Nor did the article report that the Greek government had already put reforms and austerity measures into practice. After Papandreou gave up on the idea of the referendum due to internal and external pressures, on 4 November 2011, Nikolaus Blome and Paul Ronzheimer triumphantly proclaimed in *Bild*: 'Is the Euro crisis over? Greece gives in to Angela Merkules. Papandreou builds emergency government, no referendum.' In a rejoicing, nationalistic manner, they added: 'The unveiled threats were successful. Chancellor Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy make the Greeks see reason. An amazing Herculean effort. Now the chancellor is indeed ANGELA MERKULES!'<sup>56</sup> Nikolaus Bloeme and Paul Ronzheimer, 'Euro Krise beendet? Griechen kuschen vor Angela Merkules. Papandreou bildet Not-Regierung; Volksabstimmung abgesagt', *Bild*, 4 November 2011. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-krise/griechen-kuschen-vor-merkel-20811288.bild.html>. (accessed 5 February 2016). View all notes

After the election of the left-wing government led by Prime Minister Alexis Tsirpas in January 2015 and in the course of the negotiations between the Syriza government and Brussels, media coverage on Greece became even more personalised. Prime Minister Tsirpas and finance minister Yanis Varoufakis were often depicted as frivolous gamblers, tricksters, ultimately as children who had to be called to reason.<sup>57</sup> Antonia Schäfer, 'Anflüge von Wahnsinn. Professor wirft Tsirpas unverantwortliches Verhalten vor', *Focusonline*, 19 June 2015. Available at: [http://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/staatsverschuldung/banken-professor-hans-peter-burghof-das-geld-hat-in-griechenland-voellig-falsche-anreize-gesetzt\\_id\\_4762797.html](http://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/staatsverschuldung/banken-professor-hans-peter-burghof-das-geld-hat-in-griechenland-voellig-falsche-anreize-gesetzt_id_4762797.html) (accessed 1 July 2015), Sasha Lehnartz, 'Alexis Tsirpas spielt "wer bremsst, verliert"', *Die Welt*, 23 June 2015. Available

at: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article142967426/Alexis-Tsipras-spielt-Wer-bremst-verliert.html> (accessed 2 July 2015), Alexander Müllhauer, 'Warum Tsipras griechisches Roulette spielt', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/kommt-nun-der-grexit-griechisches-roulette-1.2521618> (accessed 12 July 2015). View all notes On 28 January 2015, *Bild* introduced the government's main members under the title: 'Greek Radicals' – the German word 'radikalos' is a pejorative colloquial expression for radical – and presents the 'Tsipras cabinet's oddballs'.<sup>58</sup>58 'Griechos Radikalos. Bild erklärt die schrägen Typen im Tsipras-Kabinett', *Bild*, 28 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/alexis-tsipras/griechenlands-regierung-der-nationalen-rettung-griechos-radikalos-39531384.bild.html> (accessed 15 July 2015). View all notes Other *Bild*'s expressions included 'mad coalition' ('verrückte Koalition')<sup>59</sup>59 Peter Tiede, 'Yanis Varoufakis. Der Lügner', *Bild*, 18 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/yanis-varoufakis/der-luegner-40198380.bild.html> (accessed 15 July 2015). View all notes and 'squad' (die Truppe).<sup>60</sup>60 'Griechenland-Wahlkampf. So missbraucht Tsipras-Truppe ihre Macht', *Bild*, 3 July 2015. View all notes The disrespectful names for Yanis Varoufakis were numerous: 'Greek Radical Naked Bike Rider' ('Griechenland Radikalo-Naked-Bike Rider'),<sup>61</sup>61 Mats Schönhauer, 'Die Radikalos-Kampagner der Brandstifter Journalisten', 28 February 2015. Available at: [www.bildblog.de](http://www.bildblog.de) (accessed 12.07.2015). View all notes the 'radical Greek' ('der Radikalo Grieche'), 'the Greek money-grubber' ('Grieche-Raffkes')<sup>62</sup>62 'Endlich sagt mal einer nein zu den Pleite-Griechen. Deutschland sagt: Danke Dr. Schäuble!', *Bild*, 20 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/wolfgang-schaeuble/deutschland-sagt-danke-wolfgang-schaeuble-39843002.bild.html> (accessed 15 February 2016), 'Griechen-Raffke beißt sich an Schäuble die Zähne aus', *Bild*, 17 February 2015. View all notes and a liar, in particular a Greek liar: 'Jetzt ist er der Lügen-Grieche'.<sup>63</sup>63 Tiede, 'Varoufakis der Lügner'. View all notes Similar to colonial contexts, the 'other' was seen as an infant unable to look after itself properly and in need of patronising.

Although less stridently and more quietly, the news magazine *Der Spiegel* nevertheless basically followed the same line as *Bild* in its reporting on this crisis. On its magazine cover of 31 January 2015, the new Greek prime minister was even labelled as 'Europe's nightmare' and the 'wrong-way driver'.<sup>64</sup>64 Nikolaus Bloeme et al., 'Europa: Der Wutgrieche', *Der Spiegel*, No. 6/2015, 31 January 2015, p 19. View all notes In keeping with the personalising and infantilising tendency of journalism on Greece, the main article of this *Spiegel* edition 'The Raged Greek' ('Der Wutgrieche') dedicated more attention to the appearance of Tsipras and Varoufakis than to any objective description of the Greek situation. Tsipras was basically depicted as 'sexy Alexi', as the smart, good-looking politician, to whom female voters feel attracted. Similarly, the Varoufakis style of dressing also became the object of numerous malicious articles and comments. Emphasising someone's corporality or sexual appeal in the way *Bild* and *Der Spiegel* did serves as a means of diminishing and even excluding someone from the allegedly rational spheres of power, as postcolonial theory has repeatedly pointed out.

It is of no little importance in this context to mention that the *Bild* journalist Nikolaus Bloeme co-authored this article. Bloeme is in charge of the economic and political portfolio of *Bild*, its deputy editor-in-chief and co-writer of many polemic articles on Greece with Paul Ronzheimer in this tabloide. *Der Spiegel* had appointed the *Bild* journalist as a member of its main editorial board and head of its Berlin office until *Spiegel* journalists internally rebelled against this nomination. In this particular article on Greece, Bloeme and its co-authors employ a polarising strategy, which closely resembles the controversial style characterising *Bild*. Merkel and Tsipras are depicted as the two poles in the EU,<sup>65</sup>65 Bloeme, 'Europa: Der Wutgrieche', p 19. View all notes on the one side stand Merkel and the Northerners and on the other side Tsipras and the Southerners. In the authors' view, the conflict between Northerners and Southerners will persist

due to their different expectations of the Euro: The Germans expect this currency to be an XL version of the German Mark, whereas Southerners see it as an escalator leading to prosperity.<sup>66</sup> Bloeme et al., 'Europa: Der Wutgriecher', p 26. View all notes They add in a disrespectful tone: 'The Germans feel forced to feed the wasteful rogues, and the Greeks feel like a colony of Merkel's austerity imperium.'<sup>67</sup> Bloeme et al., 'Europa: Der Wutgriecher', p 20. View all notes Therefore, Tsipras, the furious Greek ('der Wutgriecher'), and his government, in fact a coalition of left-wing radicals and right-wing populists, will fight against Merkel's 'Spardiktat', the authors forecast. Basically, *Der Spiegel* reduces the hard negotiations then ongoing between the Greek government and Brussels to a duel between Yanis Varoufakis and the German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble.

In an anthropological, culturalistic manner, personal characteristics are applied to national economies: On the one hand the self-confident, athletic, flamboyant, tricky Southerner, on the other hand, the serious, the trustworthy, the rigorous Northerner as personified by Schäuble. Again, Varoufakis gets depicted as the prototype of the Southerner, a bon-vivant and unserious gambler, Schäuble as the ideal of the serious, thrifty, (protestant) prudent Swabian housewife, who is frugal and hates debt. With nationalistic and malicious glee, *Bild* commented on the hard negotiations among EU-Finance ministers over the Greek bailout with the following words: 'Greek money-grubber has a tough time against Schäuble' and illustrated the text with Varoufakis's image complete with Dracula teeth.<sup>68</sup> 'Griechen-Raffke beißt sich an Schäuble die Zähne aus', *Bild*, 17 February 2015. View all notes Wolfgang Schäuble's role in the donation or corruption scandal of his party, the CDU, under Helmut Kohl's chancellorship thus seems to have been both forgotten and forgiven. In an article entitled 'Hail, the Swabian Housewife' on 1 February 2014, even the English language news magazine *Economist* went so far as to draw on Max Weber's concept of the protestant work ethic to put forward the thesis that the ideal of the 'prudent and protestant Swabian housewife' was influencing German positions and negotiation style during the euro crisis. It reminded readers how Schäuble is from Baden-Württemberg, a Pietist region, and that Merkel is a pastor's daughter, which may have played a role in their impetus to teach Southern Europeans a 'good Pietist gospel of saving, hard work and self-improvement'.<sup>69</sup> 'German Mentality. Hail, the Swabian Housewife', *The Economist*, 1 February 2014. Also available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21595503-views-economics-euro-and-much-else-draw-cultural-archetype-hail-swabian> (accessed 5 July 2015). 'Hail, the Swabian Housewife', 1 January 2014. View all notes

Such biased and polarising journalism about Greece's new government proved the rule rather than the exception in other German media. The renowned conservative *FAZ* also wrote disrespectfully about Yanis Varoufakis and Alexis Tsipras. On the day of the Greek election, on 25 January 2015, the *FAZ* journalist Michael Martens in Athens accused Tsipras of unrealism.<sup>70</sup> Michael Martens, 'Eine Überdosis Hoffnung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/tsipras-versprechen-fuer-die-wahl-13388517.html> (accessed 25 February 2015). View all notes One day afterwards and visibly irritated by Tsipras's refusal to wear a tie, a topic that the *FAZ* made a subject of multiple comments,<sup>71</sup> Tobias Piller and Jörg Bremer, 'Eine Krawatte für bessere Zeiten', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/tsipras-in-rom-eine-krawatte-fuer-bessere-zeiten-13407519.html> (accessed 15 February 2015). View all notes he portrayed the Greek prime minister as an unserious anti-German populist.<sup>72</sup> Michael Martens, 'Der Populist meidet antieuropäische Töne', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/europaeische-union/syriza-chef-alexis-tsipras-hat-viel-versprochen-13390128.html>. (accessed 23 February 2015). View all notes Some days later, his colleague Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger even called Tsipras and Varoufakis 'young rowdies from Athens'.<sup>73</sup> Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger, 'Halbstarke in Athen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*,

at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/griechenland-wirf-troika-raus-halb Stark-in-athen-13401226.html> (accessed 15 June 2015). View all notes After the Greek bailout negotiations, in October 2015, the tone did not change, as the article with the ironic title 'The Charming Herr Varoufakis' by Hennig Peitsmeier right at the beginning shows: 'Aggressive and belligerent: that's how whole Europe has the former Greek finance prime minister in mind.'<sup>74</sup> Henning, Peitsmeier, 'Der charmante Varoufakis', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 October 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/eurokrise/griechenland/giannis-varoufakis-spricht-bei-einer-diskussion-in-muenchen-13882102.html> (accessed 13 December 2016). View all notes The social liberal, pro-European weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* was more moderate and not as offensive in tone as the *FAZ*. It also showed more interest in social topics and even gave space to sceptical voices on the Troika measures.<sup>75</sup> Marc Brost, 'Teufel an der Wand?', *Die Zeit*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/04/euro-draghi-tsipras-griechenland-ezb> (accessed 15 January 2016); Heike Buchter, 'Ein Riesenfehler', *Die Zeit*, 3 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/27/joseph-stiglitz-grexit-griechenland-deutschland> (accessed 15 July 2015). Charlotte Gashke, Chatzis Panagiotis, Ch., 'Ein Sommer wie immer?', *Die Zeit*, 23 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/28/kinderzeit-griechenland-familie> (accessed 30 July 2015). View all notes Yet, in many articles the Greek politicians were not taken seriously and many articles stroke a strong polarising tone between the German and Greek nation and culture, instead of pointing out that it was essentially a problem between creditors and debtors.<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Matthias Krupa, 'Alexis Tsipras: Wie gefährlich ist dieser Mann für Europa?', *Die Zeit*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/04/alexis-tsipras-portraet-syriza> (accessed 3 July 2016), Mark Schieritz, 'Allein in Europa', *Die Zeit*, 5 February 2015. Marc Brost, 'Teufel an der Wand?', *Die Zeit*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/04/euro-draghi-tsipras-griechenland-ezb> (accessed 15 January 2016), Michael Thumann, 'Das linke Märchen', *Die Zeit*, 18 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2015/25/griechenland-regierung-europaeische-union-verantwortung> (accessed 2 February 2016). View all notes Marlies Uken even compared Brussels' EU politicians at the bailout negotiations to naughty children in an untidy playroom whom 'mum Merkel' had to call to order.<sup>77</sup> Marlies Uken, 'Griechenland-Verhandlungen. Wie bei ungezogenen Kinder', *Zeitonline*, 25 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21595503-views-economics-euro-and-much-else-draw-cultural-archetype-hail-swabian> (accessed 14 February 2016). View all notes The Berlin newspaper *Tagesspiegel* reported on 13 June 2015 that the leader of the CDU parliamentary group had called Tsipras 'a cheeky small boy',<sup>78</sup> Albrecht Meier and Sigrid Kneist, 'Volker Kauder nennt Premier Alexis Tsipras "freches Bürschchen"', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 13 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/griechenland-volker-kauder-nennt-premier-alexis-tspiras-frech-buerschchen/11911334.html>. (accessed 14 February 2016). View all notes *Die Welt* inquired in a generalising way as to just why Greek politicians seemed to behave like machos,<sup>79</sup> Ulf Poschardt, 'Warum griechische Politiker den Macho geben', *Die Welt*, 5 February 2015. Available at: <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article137165421/Warum-griechische-Politiker-den-Macho-geben.html> (accessed 14 February 2016). View all notes and the news magazine *Focus* cited a professor who accused Tsipras of 'signs of madness' ('Anflüge von Wahnsinn').<sup>80</sup> Antonia Schäfer, 'Anflüge von Wahnsinn. Professor wirft Tsipras unverantwortliches Verhalten vor', *Focusonline*, 19 June 2015. Available at: [http://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/staatsverschuldung/banken-professor-hans-peter-burghof-das-geld-hat-in-griechenland-voellig-falsche-anreize-gesetzt\\_id\\_4762797.html](http://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/staatsverschuldung/banken-professor-hans-peter-burghof-das-geld-hat-in-griechenland-voellig-falsche-anreize-gesetzt_id_4762797.html) (accessed 1 July 2015). View all notes

In other words, Greek politicians were deemed to lack in both sincerity and rationality and thus had to be taken by the hand and told what to do. This media populism reached a climax

when *Bild* started the campaign against credit aid for Greece under the motto: 'We say no to further billions for Greece' on 26 February 2015. As part of this, this tabloid invited readers to take a selfie and send it to the newspaper as a sign of protest against the 'greedy Greeks' ('die gierigen Griechen') before the vote on the Greek bailout took place in the German parliament.<sup>81</sup> 'Neue Milliarden für Griechenland. Wir sagen NEIN!', *Bild*, 26 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.bild.de/politik/inland/griechenland-krise/diese-deutschen-sagen-nein-zu-neuen-milliarden-39931320.bild.html> (accessed 16 February 2016). View all notes

### Internal criticism of the coverage on Greece

The coverage on the Greek crisis assumed such defamatory dimensions that some citizens, journalists and scholars in Germany criticised the poor performance of *Bild* and the German media in general.<sup>82</sup> See '[www.Bildblog.de](http://www.Bildblog.de)', [www.stefan-niggemeier.de](http://www.stefan-niggemeier.de), [www.nachdenkseiten.de](http://www.nachdenkseiten.de), Tobias Lachmann, 'Blinde Flecken. Warum in der Eurokrise die Bevölkerung Griechenlands unsichtbar bleibt', *Berliner Gazette*, 7 July 2015. Available at: <http://berlingazette.de/europakrise-griechenlands-volk-unsichtbar> (accessed 15 October 2015) View all notes

The mordant commentary 'Thilo Sarrazin: Southerners as Subhumans' ('Thilo Sarrazin: Südländer als Untermenschen'), published in the polemic column 'Die Wahrheit' ('The Truth') in the independent left newspaper the *taz* on 18 June 2012 constitutes one such example. It was written as a reaction to Sarrazin's guest article in the conservative, business-friendly newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (FAS) one day earlier.<sup>83</sup> Thilo Sarrazin, 'Griechen, Euro und die deutsche Schuld', *FAS*, 17 July 2012. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/gastbeitrag-von-thilo-sarrazin-griechen-euro-und-die-deutsche-schuld-11788263.html> (accessed 12 March 2013). View all notes As it describes common manipulative discursive methods and identifies the main mechanisms of *Othering* quite well, it will be presented below in more detail.

It must be mentioned beforehand that Thilo Sarrazin is a well-known figure in Germany. He is a national economist, a former Social Democratic politician, a former Senator for Finance of Berlin and an ex-member of the executive board of the German Federal Bank. He became famous with his bestseller book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (How Germany Abolishes Itself) in 2010, in which he both broke unspoken taboos in Germany and propagated provocative racist ideas against minorities in Germany, especially against Muslims, which many readers apparently shared but had not previously felt free to express. His media impact in Germany became so significant that the *European Commission Report on Racism and Intolerance* mentioned it as an example of 'Hate Speech' in public discourse and criticised the German press for having given this book great attention even though 'the arguments put forward were shown to be close to the theories of eugenics espoused by the National Socialists' and for having failed to firmly condemn this book in public as would have been necessary given that 25.1%, a broad section of the population, shared those opinions.<sup>84</sup> ECRI. *European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance Report on Germany*, 25 February 2014. Available at: <https://www.coe.int> (accessed 4 February 2015), p 19. View all notes

According to the *taz* journalist, the FAS had used Sarrazin in order to get out a biased message about the South and the finance crisis without actually having to formulate it itself. In particular, this alleged the 'Südländers' are responsible for the Euro crisis and their problems, therefore, they should solve on their own instead of expecting German support. Southern European countries should choose deflation and price decreases as the best remedy instead of devaluing German savings for the sake of consolidating their economy. Tellingly, the *taz* journalist's

criticism concentrates primarily on Sarrazin's vocabulary as he sees this as the means which the FAS employs to undertake media manipulation. According to him, Sarrazin's subtle choice of words causes resentment and the devaluation of others. By deploying the negative term 'Südländer' for countries as well as for people, Sarrazin establishes a perverse double meaning. The FAS editors stress it by having left out one part of Sarrazin's following sentence, so the *taz* journalist further advances: 'Everybody knows that in the "Südländern" a devaluation of costs and prices must take place', specifically the 'of the prices and costs' part and reducing it to a shorter version: 'Everybody knows that a devaluation must take place in the Southern countries'. By doing this, the FAS implicitly suggests the need to not only devalue costs and prices but also people as in Sarrazin's eyes 'Südländer' only amount to 'Untermenschen', subhuman, inferior, the *taz* journalist commented. He concludes this is basically discursive degradation that aims ultimately at opening and justifying the way to economic and social degradation.

Already in 2010, thus before press defamation actually began peaking, the media analysts Hans-Jürgen Arlt and Wolfgang Storz had published a study on *Bild*'s performance on the Greece crisis for the Otto Brenner Foundation entitled: 'Printed Matter, Bild – A Label and Its Maids. Bild's Presentation of the Greek and Euro Crisis 2010.'<sup>85</sup> Hans-Jürgen Arlt, Wolfgang Storz, *Drucksache Bild – Eine Marke und ihre Mägde. Die Bild-Darstellung der Griechenland- und Eurokrise 2010*, Frankfurt/M: ColorDruckLeimen, 2011. Also available at: [https://www.otto-brenner-shop.de/uploads/tx\\_mplightshop/2011\\_04\\_06\\_Bildstudie\\_Otto\\_Brenner\\_Stiftung.pdf](https://www.otto-brenner-shop.de/uploads/tx_mplightshop/2011_04_06_Bildstudie_Otto_Brenner_Stiftung.pdf). View all notes The authors conclude that *Bild*'s articles on Greece do not deserve the name of journalism but rather agitation. *Bild* had again proven to be a political instrument that does not describe Germany but rather produces it, they concluded.<sup>86</sup> Arlt and Storz, *Drucksache Bild*, p 12. View all notes In a further study about business journalism, the authors criticise not only *Bild*, but also the German press in general, particularly the business and finance departments for not having informed the public properly about the financial crisis.<sup>87</sup> Hans-Jürgen Arlt and Wolfgang Storz, *Wirtschaftsjournalismus in der Krise – Zum massenmedialen Umgang mit der Finanzmarktpolitik*, No. 63, Frankfurt/M, 2010. Also available at: [https://www.otto-brenner-shop.de/uploads/tx\\_mplightshop/AH63.pdf](https://www.otto-brenner-shop.de/uploads/tx_mplightshop/AH63.pdf). (accessed 3 March 2015). View all notes They include in their criticism serious institutions such as the *Deutsche Presseagentur*, the German Press Agency, and the joint organisation of Germany's regional public service TV broadcasters, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ARD).

After five years of intense campaigning against Greece, the German Press Council decided to reprimand *Bild* for it. The German Journalist Association, Bernhard Remmers, the Director of the Catholic School of Journalism, the trade unions, and the Jusos, the young social-democrats, condemned the tabloid for promoting sedition against one entire country and its population and wanting to directly influence politics.<sup>88</sup> Deutscher Journalistenverband, 'Selfie-Aktion von bild.de. Sofortiger Stopp gefordert. Pressemitteilung', 26 February 2015. Available at: <https://www.djv.de/startseite/profil/der-djv/pressebereich-download/pressemitteilungen/detail/article/sofortiger-stopp-gefordert.html> (accessed 24 October 2015), Remmers in interview with Christian Schlegel on 'domradio' (2015), 'Kirche kritisiert Anti-Griechen-Kampagne der Bild. Blanke Polemik', *domradio*, 27 February. Available at: <https://www.domradio.de/themen/ethik-und-moral/2015-02-27/kirche-kritisiert-anti-griechen-kampagne-der-bild> (accessed 16 August 2015). Jusos Münster, 'Jusos Münster sagen Nein zur Hetze gegen Griechenland in der Bild-Zeitung. Pressemitteilung', 1 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.jusos-muenster.de/meldung.php?meldung=6500&page=> (accessed 20 October 2015). View all notes 'Colleagues, you have failed' was how the journalist Robert Misik summed up his colleagues' performance during the Euro crisis. He accused them of not having

reported properly on negotiations with Greece and of having overlooked the national chauvinism that is destroying the European project.<sup>89</sup> Robert Misik, 'Kollegen, ihr habt versagt', *taz*, 3 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.taz.de/!5089947/> (accessed 3 July 2015). View all notes On 27 February 2015, Axel Schäfer, the deputy chairman of Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) parliamentary group, also sharply criticised *Bild's* action and coverage on Greece in the German parliament. However, some months later by the summer of 2015, the 'game was already over'. The German government had asserted its position in the negotiations, and, in the German eye, Merkel and Schäuble were by far and away the most popular politicians.<sup>90</sup> 'Griechenland-Verhandlungen. Merkel und Schäuble punkten bei den Wählern', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/griechenland-verhandlungen-merkel-und-schaeuble-punkten-bei-den-waehlern-13710006.html> (accessed 8 September 2016). View all notes

### **'It's the culture, stupid!': conclusion**

During the Euro crisis at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the negative topos of the South experienced a sudden revival in politics and the media. Various European countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal (and initially even Ireland) were lumped together and homogenised into one group, the PIIGS or the 'Südländer'. At the same time, they were object of a process of essentialisation, that is, they were attributed negative characteristics such as lazy, emotional, irrational and wasteful, which were seen as their 'second nature' and as such immutable and unchangeable. Especially Varoufakis and Tsipras were presented as the prototype of the 'Südländer': irrational, irresponsible, unserious and aggressive. Accordingly, physical characteristics such as their attractive looks and their outfits were often highlighted. The casting of the 'Südländer' into the role of the 'other' established an opposition to one's own identity, to the industrious and rational German, so to say, the model to follow. In short, the articles mentioned demonstrate how the topos conveyed basically the message that Southern Europeans have different work ethics and lead wasteful lives. They are emotional, irrational, oversexualised and cannot calculate. Therefore, they are deemed unfit for the modern system of the 'centre' and are to blame for their problems and peripheral situations. This process went beyond 'mere' denigration, it denied the 'Südländer' those typical characteristics of the 'Same'. It dehumanised them and opened the arena for patronising and exploitation in the form of neoliberal reforms and privatisations.

Generally speaking, the more mainstream, politically conservative and (neo)liberal (in the economic sense) the media are, the more biased and degrading their discourse on the South was. This also applied to 'quality press' such as *FAZ*, *Die Welt* and *Die Zeit*. Thus, there was no direct correlation between this discourse and the readers' level of education. In fact, the *FAZ*, *Die Welt* and *Die Zeit* readers have a high education level: The *FAZ* is written for a conservative elite of finance and of decision makers. *Die Welt* readers are supposed to be also decision makers, executive employees and independents. *Die Zeit's* readers belong mainly to the educated middle class, interested in arts and culture. As already mentioned, many *Der Spiegel's* readers have 'Abitur'.

Given the suddenness and its mass presence in the German media and political discourse, that this was the result of a concerted media campaign to influence German public opinion cannot be ruled out and as Hans-Jürgen Arlt and Wolfgang Storz indeed suggest in their work.<sup>91</sup> Arlt and Storz, *Drucksache Bild*, p 12. View all notes The already mentioned concentration and weight of the German media in the hands of influential families and conglomerates, the importance that foundations and think tanks play in shaping politics nowadays,<sup>92</sup> Uwe

Krüger, *Meinungsmacht. Der Einfluss von Eliten auf Leitmedien und Alpha-Journalisten – eine kritische Netzwerkanalyse*, Köln: Halem, 2013. View all notes make this hypothesis plausible.

What can be certainly said is that the present crisis of journalism, the decline of advertising revenues, the media concentration and homogenisation in the branch have certainly not contributed to critical and investigative journalism on the Eurocrisis and make journalism more vulnerable for external influences.

It is striking that media like *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, which used to be classified as left liberal and had a heart for social topics, followed a similar path as the conservative and press. Nikolaus Bloeme's nomination in *Der Spiegel* and articles of his such as 'The Raged Greek' (Der Wutgriechen) are symptomatic of the tabloid and neoliberal character that this magazine has assumed in recent years. Although this magazine continues to be a singular case in the German media landscape, it seems it has not been able to escape the crisis of journalism and media concentration: meanwhile 25% belong to the biggest and most powerful publishing house in Europe, the Bertelsmann Group. The newspapers which provided a fairer and more balanced coverage were the social liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the left alternative *taz*, which belongs to a not-for-profit and independent corporation. However, the *taz* has a rather limited range of readers (circulation of 51. 653) and *die Süddeutsche* was not free from this discourse.

It became clear that it dominated a nationalist perspective on a European problem. This basically confirms Ulrich Beck's diagnosis in 2012 that one of the main problems of the European Union is that it was a transnational project which has to operate within national frames and has no proper equivalent transnational architecture.<sup>93</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Das deutsche Europa*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012, pp 31–36. View all notes

At the same time, well-researched articles based on economic and social facts were extremely rare. Culturalistic and racist argumentation proliferated. It is striking that many journalists drew in their articles on Weber's work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1905) about the different work ethics in protestant Northern and Catholic Southern Europe and the importance of Protestantism for the emergence of capitalism. Thus, Weber's book plays also a role in the process of *Othering* of Southern Europe as it puts forward a central argument for excluding the South from the modernity discourse: the South is 'lazy' and 'backward' not only because of the climate that Montesquieu had pointed at – an aspect shared in common with 'colonial subjects' – but also because of its religion, Catholicism, which is not seen as compatible with the principles of capitalism as Protestantism. Accordingly, the protestant North stands for efficient capitalism, rationality (sciences), modernity and the prosperity one should aspire to, whereas the Catholic South stands for a backward, wasteful and irrational way of life and a poverty that they deserve. It was not mentioned in this context that Greece is not a Catholic country.

It would be a rewarding project to research the reason for Weber's popularity among German journalists. What can be said at this point is that Weber's thesis seems at first glance to provide an economic and sociological argument; nevertheless, in reality 'religion' serves as a second nature similar to 'race', as a deterministic argument merely used to homogenise and culturalise Southern European countries.

This specific research output complies with Andrew Zimmerman's interpretation of Max Weber. He defends that the German sociologist was probably the first theorist of what Étienne Balibar has called 'neoracism', that is, 'a racism that denies the importance of biological race while working out a system of cultural differences that functions as effectively as race as means of underwriting political and economic inequality'.<sup>94</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, 'Decolonizing

Weber', *Postcolonial Studies*, 9(1), 2006, p 53. View all notes Significantly, Zimmerman sees the impact of Weber's religious and cultural determinism not only in German and US political economy before the first world but also today for example in works by Samuel Huntington who evokes Weber's 'scholarly approach to empire to support what is instead a pragmatic agenda within empire.' Authors such as Huntington or David Landes tend to counterpose Weber to what they call dependency theory, by which they mean that international political and economic inequalities contribute to global poverty, so Zimmermann further.<sup>95</sup> Zimmerman, 'Decolonizing Weber', p 53f. View all notes

As already hinted at and as poststructuralistic and postcolonial theories stress, nationalist and culturalistic discourses such as the one about the lazy South tend to say more about the 'speaker', the 'centre', than about the peripheral countries themselves. The mere fact that the topos embraces such different Southern countries with such diverse histories and presents shows how reductionist, fallible and unsuitable this proves for representing those countries.

Factors such as the power constellation in Europe, the weight of financial institutions as well as lobby groups in shaping policies, the Euro crisis and the critical situation of the media and ambiguous role of the press at that time indicate how the culturalistic topos of the indulgent, lazy, unreliable 'Südländer' was reactivated in order to justify solutions for financial problems, specifically states having to step in and save financial institutions with tax payers' money and accumulating considerable debts in this process. By mimicking and sticking to that culturalistic and even racist discourse, politicians, financial institutions and the media managed to ensure public opinion perceived the 'financial crisis' primarily as a 'Staatschuldenkrise', that is, as a national debt and character problem. This diverted attention away from the big players and thus enabling the financial system to escape their responsibilities for the consequences of high-risk lending.<sup>96</sup> Harald Schumann and Árpád Bondy, *Staatsgeheimnis Bankenrettung*, first sent on 26 February 2013 by arte; Gabriele Simon, 'Die Schmarotzer aus dem Club Med', *Freitag*, 10 August 2012, Wilfried Herz, 'Wie aus der Finanz- eine Schuldenkrise gemacht wurde', *Cicero*, 12 Mai 2012. Available at: <http://www.cicero.de/kapital/wie-aus-der-finanz-eine-schuldenkrise-gemacht-wurde/49258> (accessed 23 August 2013). View all notes Therefore, this proved a master stroke that places the victims of the Euro crisis on both sides against each other whereas those responsible and the winners on the respective sides were never brought to account for their decisions. German workers, pensioners and savers put the blame on people who had lost their jobs in the deindustrialisation processes of their countries, saw their social benefits cut, pensions reduced and healthcare systems deteriorating.

The topos of the lazy South also fulfilled a domestic function, in particular, to symbolically discipline and compensate the German population with subtle nationalist rhetoric. Especially since the neoliberal reforms, that is, the labour market and social welfare changes that began at the beginning of the millennium, a feeling of insecurity has spread among the German population – a mood that the financial crisis of 2008 accentuated. The partial liberalisation of labour markets and significant reductions in the formerly generous welfare state fostered a sense of disorientation and volatility in German society that affects not only the poorer but also an ever expanding proportion of the middle class. At the same time, the civil democratic culture has weakened alongside the emergence of an 'everyman for himself' attitude.<sup>97</sup> Gabriele Goettle, 'Konfliktforscher Wilhelm Heitmeyer. Rette sich, wer kann', 28 February. Available at: <http://www.taz.de/!5099708/> (accessed 8 September 2016) View all notes According to the sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer, this feeling of insecurity has not been transformed into protest against its causers and instead fed into what he calls contempt and misanthropy ('gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit') towards the socially weaker and poorer, the homeless, minorities, migrants and foreigners. This correspondingly produced a discourse that turns the 'victims of the economic system into offenders who scrounge benefits from the state

without giving any service in return' – a process that Heitmeyer calls 'Verrohung der Bürgerlichkeit', that is, a 'brutalising process of the middle class'.<sup>98</sup> Wilhelm Heitmeyer, *Deutsche Zustände*, Volume 5, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2006. View all notes

Thus, the latent economic nationalism, based on the discourse of the hard-working German in contrast to the idle 'Südländer', also served as symbolic and thus cheap nationalistic compensation for the German population for the disadvantages of the aforementioned reforms and for the German tax payers' money put into the bailouts. This furthermore effectively conveyed the message that the German economy was better off than the Southern countries thanks to the controversial neoliberal Hartz IV reforms and correspondingly meaning that salary stagnation, low interest rates and all the other sacrifices had been worthwhile in exchange for laying the foundations for Germany's export records and favourable economic situation in comparison to Southern countries. The nationalist discourse as regards the superiority of Northern working ethics, their products and advanced economies elevated and compensated people ideologically without actually having to satisfy them anything substantial in return. Additionally, this had an encouraging and disciplining effect in suggesting to Germans that the right path involved continuing to work hard and make sacrifices.

Taken from this perspective, the negative topos of the South during the Euro crisis thus inherently implied the criticism that those countries lacked in Germanic qualities, alongside the strong and uncorrupted state necessary to putting them into practice. The South thus becomes peripheral and almost irrelevant – unless as an almost exotic sunny holiday place for a break away from life in the centre. Approached from this perspective, the South is deficient, even to the extent of needing monitoring. This economics-led discourse is utilitarian and darwinist in nature and bears little resemblance to the humanistic and positive topos of the South that Goethe once laid out. Neither Southern Humanism nor Greek ethics nor the aesthetics (or better to say, what they perceived of as the South) were any longer sources of inspiration for the German national identity, which rather propagated economic pragmatism and self-assertion in the face of hard global economic competition. The revival of the 'Südländer' topos in the Euro Crisis has thus unveiled something else, in particular a country in the process of cementing its national identity following Reunification – as the writer Maxim Biller put it, Germany developed a negative identity after World War II.<sup>99</sup> Maxim Biller, 'Heiliger Holocaust', *Die Zeit*, 8 November 1996. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/1996/46/bill46.19961108.xml> (accessed 12 September 2014) View all notes – and in Europe on the basis of national economic values and strength. At the same time, this also demonstrates how the educated middle class with its idealised view of the South and national subjects such as the *Germanistik* (German Studies) are not those now positioned to shape national values and public discourse but rather the political, economic and media players.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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*Werk Thomas Bernhards* applies the aesthetic concepts of the carnivalesque (Bachtin) and Shock (Benjamin, Bohrer) to Bernhard's work. Dr Ervedosa is senior researcher at the *Centro de Estudos Sociais*, University of Coimbra, where she is currently carrying out an interdisciplinary project on the culturalistic semantics of the 'Southerner' topos.

## Notes

1 The negative topos of the South in Europe stands for character traits such as lazy, emotional, chaotic, dirty, untrustworthy and even criminal. See, for example, the image of Rome and Romans in German protestant circles, the image of Spain propagated in the 'leyenda negra' or the descriptions of the 'Südländer' [Southerner] migrant workers, the so-called guest workers, in the second half of the twentieth century. See, for example, Volker Reinhard, *Luther. Der Ketzer. Rom und die Reformation*, München: Beck, 2006, Wolfgang Reinhard, "'Eine so barbarische und grausame Nation wie diese". Die Konstruktion de Alterität Spaniens durch die Leyenda Negra und ihr Nutzen...', in Hans-Joachim Gehrke (ed), *Geschichtsbilder und Gründungsmythen*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2001, pp 159–177, Karen Schönwälder, *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität*, Essen: Klartext, 2001.

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7 See, for example, the ARD reportage on BILD's 60th anniversary: Christiane Meier and Sascha Adamek, BILD. MACHT. POLITIK, ARD, 16 April 2012. The ambiguous title is telling, it means both 'Bild, power and politics' and 'Bild makes politics'.

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10 Boaventura Sousa Santos and Paula Meneses (eds), *Epistemologias do Sul*, Coimbra: Almedina 2nd edition, 2010, p 13.

11 The term was used by *Financial Times*, *Barclays Capital*, *The Economist*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Newsweek*. See: Robert Holloway, 'Pigs in Muck and Lipstick', *AFP*, 15 August 2008.

12 Wallerstein draws on the concept of 'core–periphery' developed by the United Economic Commission for Latin America and the subsequent 'dependency theory'. He regards this concept as an important contribution of 'Third World Scholars', especially of Raúl Prebisch. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis. An Introduction*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, p 11.

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17 Boaventura Sousa Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39(2), 2002, pp 9–43.

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19 Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban', p 17.

20 Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban', p 17.

21 Roberto Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, p 4.

22 Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2012 [first published in 1996], Santos and Meneses, *Epistemologias do Sul*.

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24 Cassano, *Southern Thought*, p xii.

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26 This can be seen in, for example, Jürgen Link's book, *Anteil der Kultur an der Versenkung Griechenlands. Von Hölderlins Deutschenschelte zu Schäubles Griechenschelte*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2016. Link puts Schäuble's treatment of Greece in a German and European context by describing it in opposition to Hölderlin's criticism of Germany. Although this is a rewarding approach, the focus is essentially national. In my view, this stands in the German tradition of overseeing the relevance of colonialism as the forerunner of globalisation.

See Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust*, Hamburg: Lit., 2011.

27 Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 2000, pp 533–580.

28 Especially during the discussions about the 2015 Greek bailout, Greece was often referred to as 'debt colony'. The Greek Minister of Energy Panagiotis Lafazanis called it a 'debt colony in a German-supervised EU', the Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias also used this term in interview with Alexander Smoltczyk, and the Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis also accused Troika of treating Greece as a 'colony'. See: Agence France Press, 'Greek MP in Quandary as Harsh Reforms Pit Him Against Own Party', *The National World*, 13 July 2015. Available at: [www.thenational.ae<http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/greek-pm-tsipras-in-quandary-as-harsh-reforms-pit-him-against-own-party](http://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/greek-pm-tsipras-in-quandary-as-harsh-reforms-pit-him-against-own-party) (accessed 22 October 2016), Alexander Smoltczyk, 'Wir sind arm, aber gleichberechtigt', *Spiegelonline*, 9 February 2015. Available at: [www.spiegel.de>http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-aussenminister-nikos-kotzias-im-interview-a-1017342.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-aussenminister-nikos-kotzias-im-interview-a-1017342.html) (accessed 8 April 2015); Renee Maltezos and Francesco Guarascio, 'Denials Fly in War of Nerves Over Greek Debt Talks', *Reuters*, 28 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eurozone-greece-bailout-idUSKCN0Q21EM20150728> (accessed 22 October 2016).

29 In his contribution 'The Colonial Origins of the Greek bailout', Martin draws parallels between the model imposed on former colonies like Egypt in the late nineteenth century and the Greek bailout. He reminds that, in 1876, the Khedive Ismail Pasha agreed to the creation of an international commission, staffed by Europeans, to supervise the Egyptian budget and even control over certain sources of public revenue in order to avoid bankruptcy. Intended to ensure the timely servicing of foreign debts, this model in fact opened the way to a stronger European intervention in Egypt. The 'Caisse de la Dette Publique' was only abolished in 1940. According to Jamie Martin this case served as a model for the intervention in Austria in spring 1921. However, in this case, the League of Nations was installed as a 'neutral' external mediator and supervisor given that Austria was a Christian, and European state and also in order to secure its acceptance among the Austrian population. Jamie Martin identifies in the League of Nations intervention the model for the International Monetary Fund and in those interventions the model for several structural adjustment projects, including the European bailouts, which he calls a semi-colonial model. Jamie Martin, 'The Colonial Origins of the Greek Bailout', *Imperial and Global Forum*, 18 December 2015. Available at: <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2015/07/27/the-colonial-origins-of-the-greek-bailout/> (accessed 23 March 2016). Inspired by Kwame Nkrumah's thoughts on neo-colonialism, the political scientist Jonas Van Vossle calls this process neo-colonialism. Jonas Van Vossle, 'Framing PIGS: Patterns of Racism and Neolocolonialism in the Euro Crisis', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 50(1), 2016, pp 1–20. I thank Van Vossle for this indication when I presented my paper on the topic on 9 December 2016 at the University of Coimbra.

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