

# *Attributing the Crisis. A Greek-German Comparison*

Workshop “Europe’s Crisis: The Conflict-Theoretic Perspective“  
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University of Freiburg

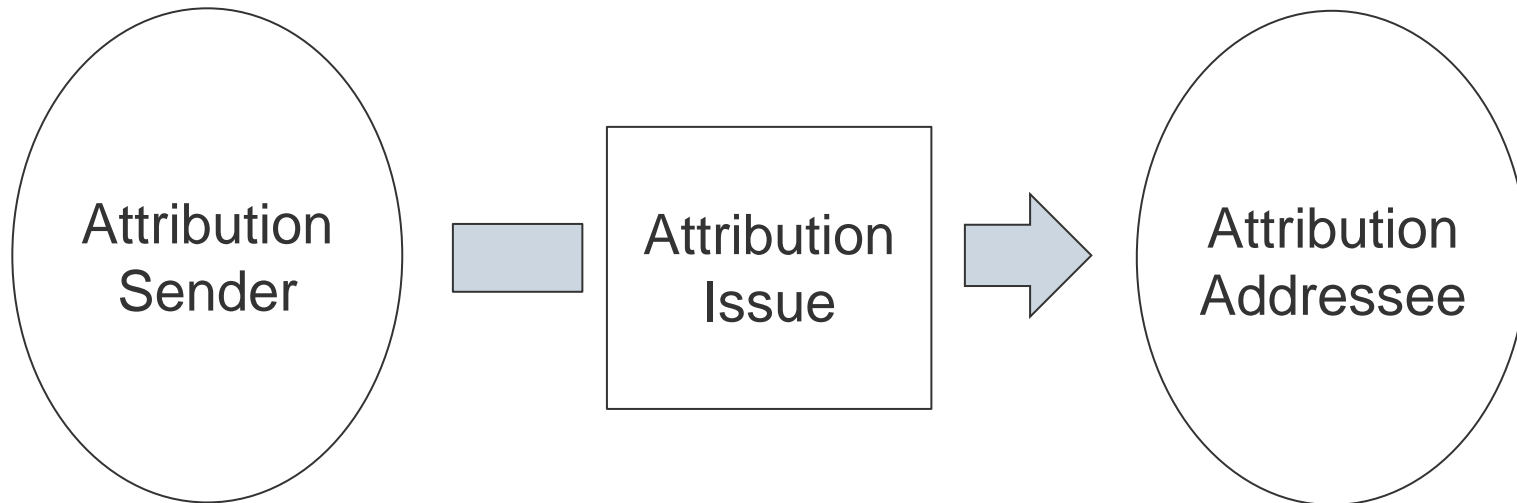
# Crisis and conflict

*A crisis is a situation in which fundamental societal structures are perceived to be unstable and **questioned***

# Discursive Actor Attribution Analysis

- **standardized content analysis**
  - focusing on **public interpretation processes**
  - in the sense of **discursive attributions of responsibility**
- **Who makes whom publically responsible for what issues**
  - based on what **reasons**
  - and embedded in which **events**?
- **Actor centered approach** focusing on senders *and* addressees and their **strategic interests**

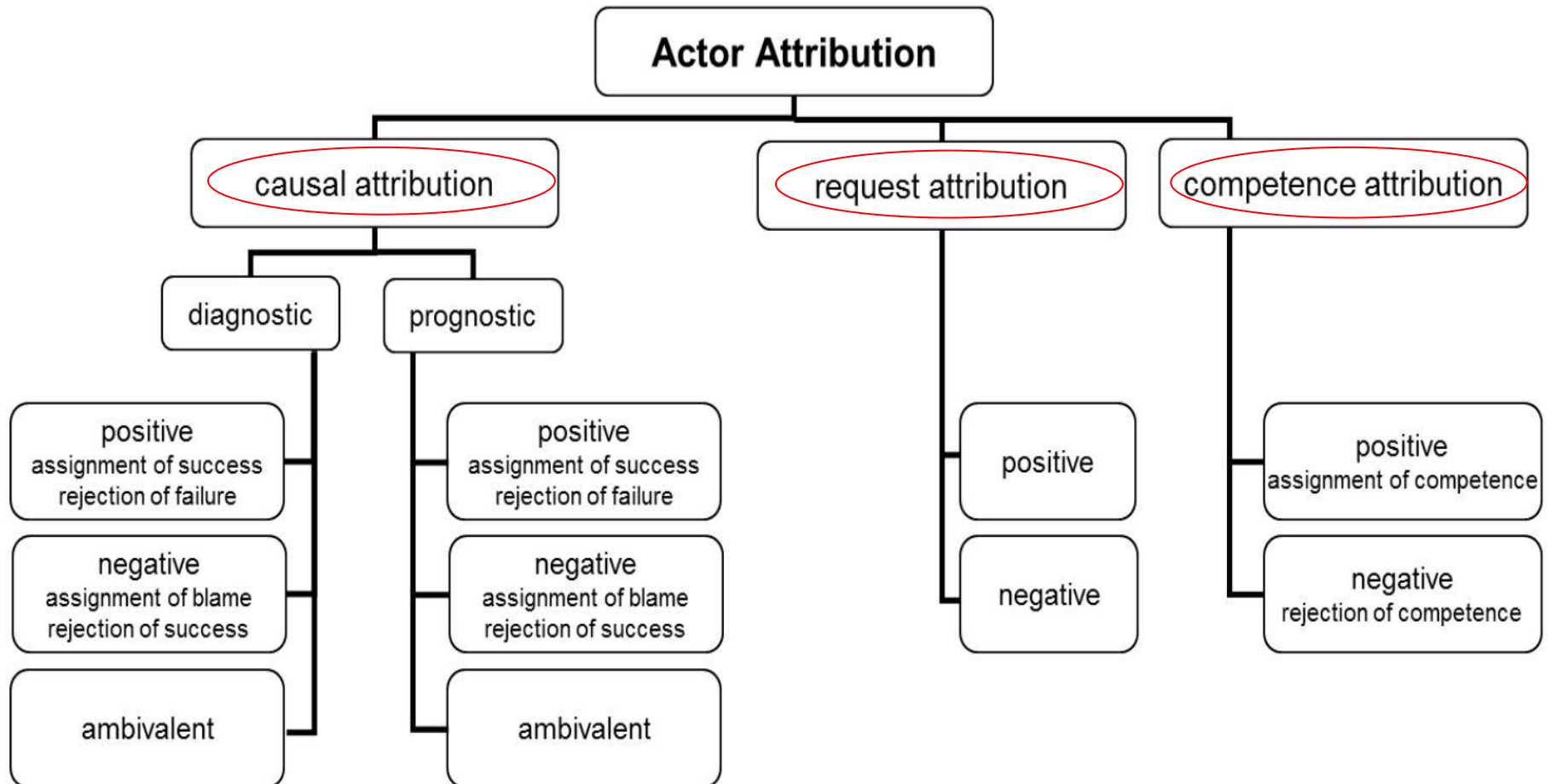
# The Attribution Trias



# Discursive Actor Attribution Analysis II

- The attribution of responsibility is a **social construction**
- The attribution of responsibility is about **evaluation and judgement**
- The attribution of responsibility is linked to **strategic interests** and **structural positions**
- Responsibility distribution influences the **public perception** of the crisis and **public support** for political actors

# The Attribution Tree



# Attribution types

- **Blame** (negative causal attribution – diagnostic)
  - *The **prime minister** of Luxembourg **Junker** accused **Germany** of blocking necessary **reforms of the monetary union***
- **Praise** (positive causal attribution – prognostic)
  - *In a **parliamentary debate on Monday**, **Merkel** assured that the **German** tough stance on **austerity** will be the only way to solve the crisis*
- **Request** (positive request attribution)
  - *The **German chancellor** urged the **Bundestag** to approve plans to boost the firepower of the **rescue fund***

# GGCRISI – the Greeks, the Germans and the Crisis

- Greek – German Research Project based in Berlin and Crete
- DAAA of newspaper reporting and online material on the Eurozone Crisis between 2009 and 2013
  - *U.a. SZ, FAZ, ZEIT, BILD, Reuters, Eleftherotypia, Katherimini, Tha Nea, Proto Thema*
- Qualitative interviews



[www.ggcrisi.info](http://www.ggcrisi.info)





# Comparing Greece and Germany – some basic hypotheses

## ▪ Attribution Patterns (H1)

- *a) In absolute terms, responsibility attributions are more frequent in the Greek crisis debate*
- *b) in relative terms “blame” attributions are more frequent in the Greek crisis debate.*

## ▪ Attribution Senders (H2)

- *a) In Greece, domestic actors are more dominant in the debate.*
- *b) In Greece, the composition of domestic actors participating in the crisis debate is more diverse.*

## ▪ Attribution Addressees – **Blame** (H3)

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

## ▪ Communication Strategies – Domestic Governments (H4)

- *Blame-shifting and Credit-Claiming make up a larger share for the Greek than for the German government ..*

# Attribution Patterns in the crisis debate

**Table 1:** Attribution Patterns in the crisis debate

	<b>GRE</b>	<b>DEU</b>
Success	11.3%	16.7%
Blame	54.3%	37.3%
Request (+)	28.7%	31.0%
Competence (+)	2.1%	7.3%
other	3.7%	7.7%
<b>N</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>314</b>

Prognostic: 30.3%  
Diagnostic: 69.7%

Prognostic: 7.2%  
Diagnostic: 92.8%

# Attribution Senders in the crisis debate

**Table 2:** Attribution Senders in % of attributions

	GRE		DEU	
Domestic Government	13.4	} 70.8	10.1	} 40.5
Domestic Parties	16.2		3.5	
Domestic Leg. Actors	9.5		2.2	
Other domestic actors	13.4		9.6	
Domestic Media	18.3		15.3	
EU / Eurozone governments	7.1 ( <i>DEU: 4.9</i> )		10.7 ( <i>GRE: 3.1</i> )	
Other nat. actors, other EU countries	4.0	} 11.1	12.2	} 22.9
EU / Eurozone actors	7.8	} 10.0	16.0	} 19.5
Troika	2.2		3.5	
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	3.5		8.1	
<i>Other actors from other countries*</i>	4.6		8.0	
<b>N</b>	<b>897</b>		<b>314</b>	

# Attribution Addressees in the crisis debate - *Blames*

**Table 3:** Blame Addressees in % of blames

	<b>GRE</b>		<b>DEU</b>	
Domestic Government	47.0	} 69.8	12.9	} 24.0
Domestic Parties	13.5		3.4	
Domestic Leg . Actors	1.7		3.4	
Other domestic actors	6.6		2.6	
Domestic Media	0.8		1.7	
EU / Eurozone governments	7.9 (DE: 4.8)	} 11.9	33.7 (GR: 12.1)	} 42.8
Other nat. actors, other EU countries	4.0		9.1	
EU / Eurozone actors	5.9	} 11.3	18.0	} 20.6
Troika	5.4		2.6	
Transnat. political actors, non-EU	5.2		7.7	
<i>Other actors from other countries*</i>	2.0		4.9	
<b>N</b>	<b>485</b>		<b>119</b>	

# Attribution Addressees in the protest events

**Table 4:** Addressees in Greek Protest Events in %

German Government	2.0
Greek Government	49.0
Greek Parliament	2.0
Greek Courts	4.1
Greek Parties	10.2
Other Greek pol. Actors	8.2
Other Greek Actors	10.2
EU actors	14.3
<b>N</b>	<b>49</b>

N = all blames and request attributions sent in Protest Events in Greece

# Communication strategies by actor, Greece

**Table 5:** Communication strategies by actor, Greece

	<i>Credit Claiming</i>	<i>Credit Granting</i>	<i>Admitting mistakes</i>	<i>Blame Shifting</i>	<i>Request others</i>	N
Ex. DEU	2.8%	22.2%	8.3%	16.7%	41.7%	36
Ex. GRE	16.7%	13.9%	4.6%	21.3%	25.0%	108

**N = all attributions sent in Greece**

# Communication strategies by actor, Germany

**Table 6:** Communication strategies by actor, Germany

	<i>Credit Claiming</i>	<i>Credit Granting</i>	<i>Admitting mistakes</i>	<i>Blame Shifting</i>	<i>Request others</i>	N
Ex. DEU	12,5%	12,5%	0,0%	21,9%	43,8%	42
Ex. GRE	42,9%	0,0%	0,0%	42,9%	14,3%	14

**N = all attributions sent in Germany**

# Conclusion: Comparing Crisis Discourses in Greece and Germany

		Greece	Germany
<i>H1a</i>	<i>Crisis debate</i>	Very high salience	Moderate salience
<i>H1b</i>	<i>Att. patterns</i>	<i>“Who is to blame?”</i>	<i>“What is to be done?”</i>
<i>H2 a</i>	<i>Att. Senders</i>	Dominance of domestic actors	Dominance of foreign actors
<i>H2 b</i>	<i>Att. Senders / domestic diversity</i>	Diversity / Domestic politicization and conflict	Executive dominance
<i>H3</i>	<i>Blame Addressees</i>	Dominance of domestic actors (dom. Government!)	Dominance of foreign actors (EU governments!)

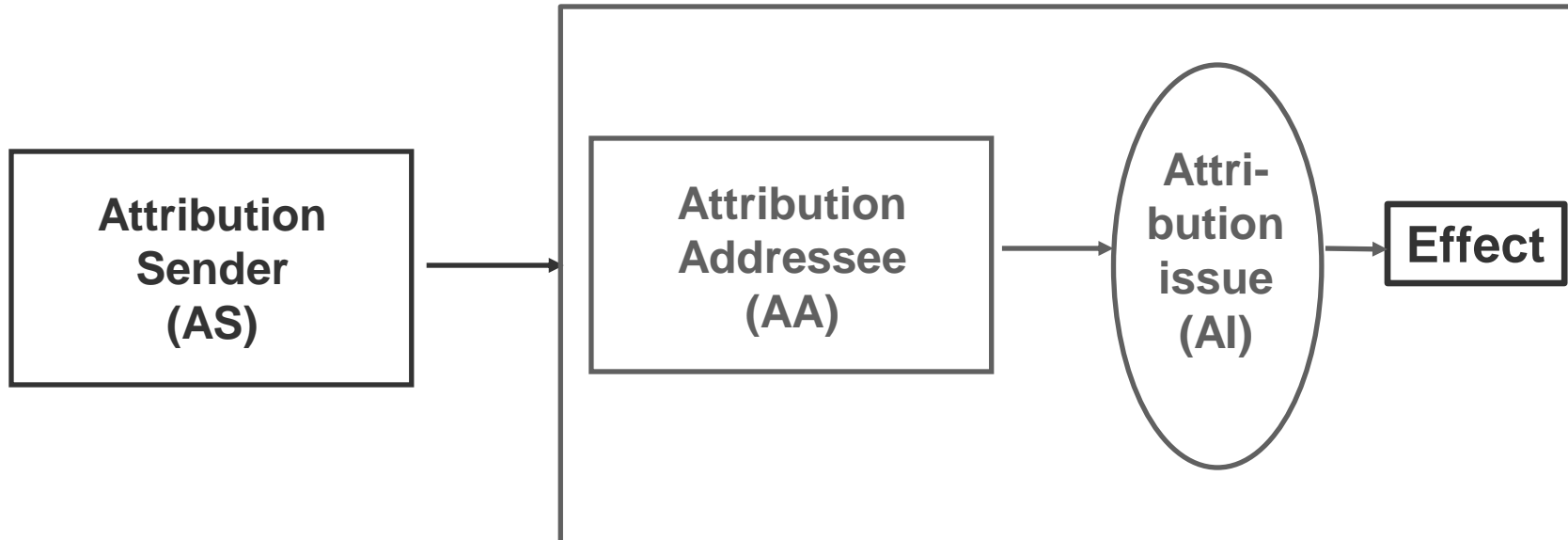


# Conclusion

- Crises require interpretation and public sense making: DAAA helps to analyze the „discursive struggle“
- **„Who makes whom responsible for what in the crisis debate?“**
- **Germany**
  - *vertical + horizontal Europeanization*
  - *Limited degree of domestic politicization*
- **Greece**
  - *Nationally confined: low levels of Europeanization (relative terms)*
  - *High degree of domestic politicization*
  - *Crisis seems to reinforce national conflicts rather than generating new, Europeanized ones*

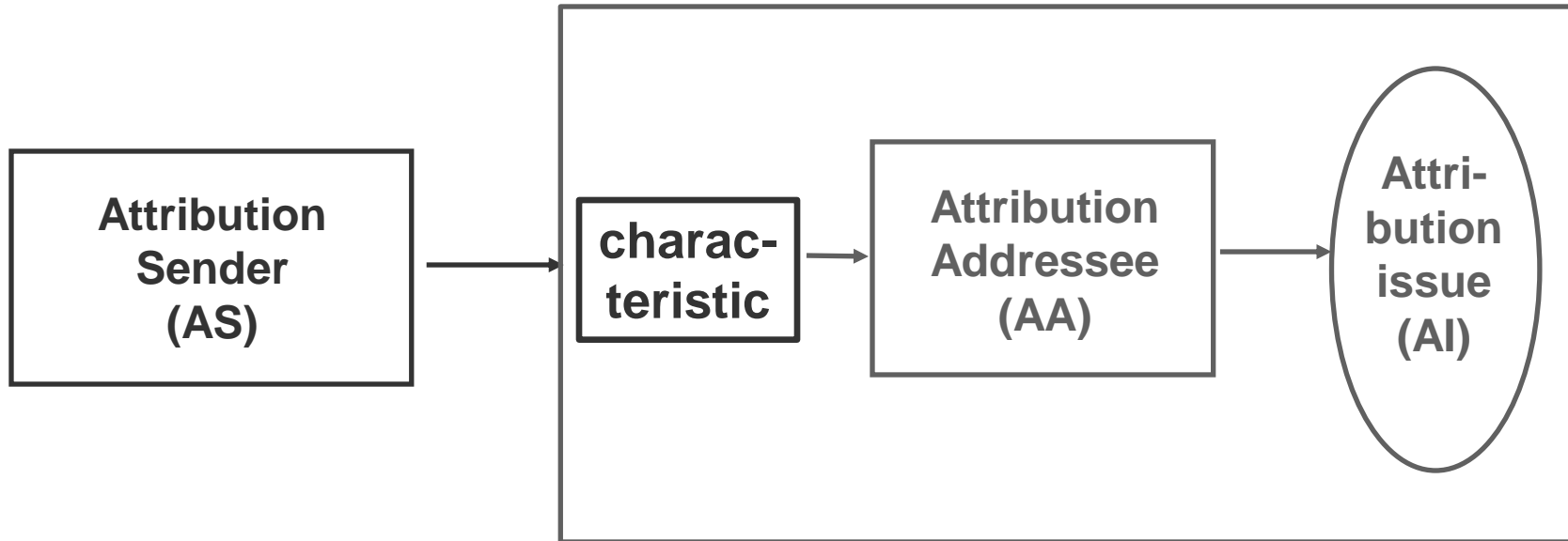
# Coding Reasons

## Object-related Reason



# Coding Reasons

## Actor-related Reason



# Three Level Coding

**Article Level**

**Event Level**

**Attribution Level**  
including Reasons

## Events and Reasons

- At a demonstration march on Wednesday, the leader of the Spanish Communist party **attacked the German government:** „Austerity kills“, he claimed and underlined its negative impact on public health.
  - **Event Context:** Demonstration March
  - **Attribution Trias:** Communist Party leader (AS) blames the German government (AA) for austerity (AI)
  - **Reason:** based on the reason that austerity has a negative impact on Public Health (Reason Content)