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Constructing difference and animosity: The Greek financial crisis in the Greek and German printed press

In 2010, in a few months after the first reports on the Greek public debt by the German media, a whole new image of Greece was created in Germany. Media comments on Greece and the Greeks abounded in negative connotations and managed to establish in a very short time a series of linguistic and social stereotypes. Since then, their use brings back automatically the image formed in people's minds in spring 2010, according to which Greeks lead a carefree life on the expense of the rest of euro zone, unconcerned of whether they may jeopardize the whole Europe.

Creating social stereotypes through the use of language is a natural process. To take advantage of this process, however, in order to stigmatize a group of people is particularly worrying since it triggers the shutting-out of the stigmatized group and jeopardizes the cultural, political, social and economic relationships between the social groups and the citizens of the countries involved. How is this powerful speech of difference and animosity constructed?

A research team from Greece and Germany and specifically from the schools of German language of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Leipzig University of Hannover respectively working within the framework of critical discourse analysis studied approximately 600 German and Greek articles published in the print and electronic press around that period. The analyses reveal, among others, the semiotic means which facilitate the rhetoric consolidation of difference and lead to a clearer understanding of the Greek media reactions to German press articles. The juxtaposition of the German and Greek articles reveals that they are in a kind of dialogue, which on the one hand, mainly contributes to reactivating stereotypes, biases and historical wounds, and on the other, to a more limited extent, criticizes this discourse of differences and focuses on similarities and convergence.

Part of the findings is presented in the book below, published in Germany:

Hans Bickes, Eleni Butulussi, Tina Otten, Janina Schendel, Amalia Sdroulia, Alexander Steinhof (2012): *Die Dynamik der Konstruktion von Differenz und Feindseligkeit am Beispiel der Finanzkrise Griechenlands: Hört beim Geld die Freundschaft auf? Kritisch-diskursanalytische Untersuchungen der Berichterstattung ausgewählter deutscher und griechischer Medien.* (Constructing difference and animosity - The case of Greece: Does friendship stop when money issues start? Critical discourse analysis studies in selected articles from the German and Greek press.) München. iudicium. (237 pages, 25 euros, ISBN: 978-3-86205-080-2)