

The wall of prejudice

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What's a stereotype? It's not so easy to explain. In terms of printing it's simply a duplicate impression of an original typographical element. The stereotype in a culture is a "common way to think about something", short phrases to classify something or someone. The connection with typography is really interesting: let's suppose that I have just one printing press and a document : I can duplicate my original sheet of paper infinitely. Like a common idea: lots of people think and say the same things, always in the same way, like a sort of chant. In French this situation is called "cliché", but the connection is the same, in fact the word tries to emulate the sound of a printing press.

The sad thing about stereotypes is that they are often negative. The positive one is that stereotypes are false. At least, we talk about generalisations, so they may be true for a specific person, but not for a nation!. It's true that in Italy there are people who work for the Mafia, but not everyone. Chinese men maybe are not so tall, but the tallest man in the world is a Chinese and he is 2.40 meters more or less! Moreover, not every German eats potatoes or sauerkraut...

Sometimes a common idea can be funny, amusing, like a sort of caricature, but stereotypes can be really cruel: a real obstacle for communication, integration in a country, travels. Yes, travels.. "You are Italian? -can think someone when you are visiting his country- Ok, so you like pasta, you are noisy and of course you work for the Mafia." Now it's an exaggeration, but it's better to avoid every form of generalisation, positive or negative, because every person is different, unique, unrepeatable. Not like a piece of paper for typography!

Let's think about it!