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*The Public Administration of Immigration*

**Title of the paper**

*Policy Implementation and the Greek Refugee Crisis*

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## **DRAFT ! Comments Welcome**

Why have efforts to address the Greek refugee crisis mostly failed to produce the desired results? Adapting Edwards' (1980) framework of implementation to incorporate external influences, I argue the complex and transnational nature of the refugee issue coupled with economic austerity in Greece and lack of administrative capacity pose nearly insurmountable problems to effective policy implementation.

The refugee crisis is important because it has received inadequate scholarly attention so far and because its main cause (the Syrian civil war) represents what António Guterres, the current UN Secretary General, claimed to be “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era” (Edwards, 2014). By October 8, 2016, 315,928 migrants had crossed the Mediterranean into Europe (1,015,078 in 2015) rendering it the biggest movement of people in Europe since World War II. Of those, 61 percent (87 percent for Greece) came from the world's top 10 producing refugee countries (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and others) while 28 percent (37 percent for Greece) are children. In 2016, 3,604 people (425 for Greece) have died or are missing during the sea crossing mostly trying to reach Italy. As of October 8, 2016 an estimated 60,441 migrants remain in Greece (UNHCR, 2016b). I focus on Greece (2012-2016) because it has been at the center of the refugee crisis and because migration patterns have shifted dramatically during this period from the Central Mediterranean Route (Italy) to the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Greece). Figure 1 shows the shift in trends in the last two years.

The case deeply affects the Schengen Agreement, which is the current policy of free people movement across Europe. It forms the core of European integration as one of the four freedoms embodied by the European Union (EU) – the others are free trade and freedom of capital and service provision across national borders. As an ambassador of a large EU country poignantly stated: numerous EU member states have re-introduced national border controls effectively “redefining the Schengen space. It's about getting control of the Greek borders. If this doesn't happen, some say the Schengen system could collapse fully” (quoted in Traynor, 2016).

Although it is commonly referred to as the refugee crisis not all those affected are refugees. I

use the generic term migrant to refer to persons crossing national borders with the intent to stay and work. Some experts use the term irregular migration to refer to sometimes temporary entry, residence, or work in a country without the necessary authorization or immigration documents; these migrants often fall prey to human smugglers (Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012: 5). Refugees cross national borders because they flee armed conflict or persecution. Of course not all migrants are refugees. I first outline a theoretical framework of implementation and specify expectations. Then I proceed to probe the argument, using empirical evidence since 2012. The findings have implications for theories of implementation, migration, and the future of European integration.

### **A Framework of Policy Implementation**

To understand the paucity of results in migration policy, I focus on implementation. While there exist numerous definitions of implementation, many scholars adopt Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983: 20) definition as "the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions." Decisions are usually implanted in statutes and clarify problems, objectives, and process structures that link objectives to desirable outcomes. Effective implementation of migration policy is defined as achievement: has policy reasonably accomplished its objectives within the accountability and political parameters of the system (Ingram and Schneider, 1990)? Despite the inherent ambiguity in laws and occasionally in implementation (Zahariadis, 2008; Matland, 1995), Greek migration policy has two objectives, articulated in the European Agenda on Migration (European Council, 2015) and further expanded in the Bratislava Declaration (European Council, 2016). The first aims to bring down the number of irregular migrant crossings and strengthen the EU's (Greek) external borders as enshrined in the 2012 Greek Operation *Xenios Zeus*. The second objective is to provide adequate support to migrants and refugees including expeditious processing of their cases – reasonable accommodations, material, and psychological support. It stems from Greece's obligations under UNHCR and EU treaties as well as the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and statements by the Greek minister in charge of migration, Yannis Mouzalas (2016). The greater the flow of refugees, the more ineffective is policy

implementation. The more plentiful the accommodations or conversely the fewer interethnic or other problems in refugee camps, the more effective is implementation.

Edwards (1980) provides an implementation framework that stays within the above parameters but with the added benefit of being simple; hence it travels well across policy domains. It eschews the usual top-down/bottom-up division that dominates the field (Winter, 2012). For example, while it places emphasis on stakeholders and dispositions of agencies, it does not assume clarity of message or central actors are the main key to success. At the same time, it takes into account resources available to local delivery structures as important elements of implementation. The framework also bypasses efforts to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches (e.g., Goggin et al, 1990; Elmore, 1985) that tend to be highly complex.

But the framework focuses solely on domestic context. Do external influences change predictions? In a closed national system, the omission might make sense, but the EU and national authorities are tightly coupled in many policy domains, e.g., banking, industrial policy, and others. Consequently, the study contributes to the literature by exploring the implications of external influences on domestic implementation.

The framework emphasizes four inter-related elements: communication, disposition of agencies, resources, and administrative capacity (Edwards called the latter bureaucratic structure). Communication contains the problem, objectives, and the organizational process linking the two. Communication within organizations and policy systems fulfills five major functions: monitoring and compliance, motivation, problem solving, conflict management, and sense making (Neher, 1997). The message needs to be consistent throughout every turn of the process to effectively perform these functions and create certainty among stakeholders and proponents of the policy. Frequent shifts in problem definition or outcome indicators signal confusion to stakeholders, discourage compliance, and increase political conflict (Zahariadis, 2008). Different messages encapsulate different cause and effect chains, which can be used as evidence of internal conflicting goals, high interdependence, and disagreement or ignorance about solutions. For example, proclaiming migrants are temporary and then

claiming the need for them to be socially integrated sends mixed messages as to temporary status and creates confusion which undermines vital local support. Because social integration is a highly complex and uncertain process, building more refugee centers sets in motion a politically volatile and long process with dubious results that agents may hesitate to implement.

Communication affects and is affected by the disposition of implementing agents. Greater policy ambiguity increases agency involvement and makes implementation more reliant on agent dispositions through informal discretion (Bastien, 2009). It is critical to build support for policy in order for agents to comply with policy maker demands. By implication, more agents must be convinced they (their agencies or communities, however defined) will gain or at least not lose resources or prestige. As new actors enter the process, they may raise new issues and point to unexplored deleterious implications if implementation proceeds as planned. Goal displacement makes issues more complex and agents likely more cautious, reducing accountability and compliance (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984).

*H1: More consistent messages and clearer links between objectives and outcomes help build political support and improve the likelihood of more effective implementation.*

Turning attention to EU impact, in a multi-level governance system, the addition of another layer of political authority increases issue complexity (Stephenson, 2013). More agencies with perhaps different preferences are likely to dilute or at least provide different shades of meaning to the message, obfuscating responsibility. Such complexity of joint action will likely highlight coordination problems (O'Toole, 2012). The difficulty is amplified by the transnational nature of such involvement. As issues and agencies cross national boundaries they become entangled with national and transnational politics. Objectives begin to diverge when national and transnational aims clash. For example, transit countries are less interested in stopping migration flows than destination countries. The process creates ambiguous jurisdictions giving rise to spillover effects (Ackrill et al, 2013). It intensifies political conflict over objectives and control of the process, undermining local support. Over time, trust in the policy erodes, slowing down or even derailing implementation (Exadaktylos and Zahariadis, 2014).

*H2: Transnational issues likely obfuscate consistency of message and logic of process, hampering implementation effectiveness.*

Resources refer to material tools and human resources available to government to complete the proposed tasks. Falkner et al (2004) found that resources explain non-compliance to EU law better than political opposition. Food has to be purchased and stored, agents have to be compensated for work performed. Transportation equipment must be secured in timely fashion before migrants can be moved from place to place, as needed. Sometimes, there is inadequacy of expertise. For example, registering and deciding on asylum-seekers are tasks that require legal competence. Security operations, such as patrolling territorial waters, have to be performed by appropriate personnel. If they don't exist in adequate numbers, implementation will suffer. Paucity of resources clearly affects and is affected by political support. Fewer resources available to a project chip away political support because they magnify cost or are used as indicators of lack of political interest to see the project through. When the economy shrinks, resources dry up. They in turn hamper implementation effectiveness by causing registration delays or leading to overcrowding conditions in the migration case.

*H3: Economic austerity reduces implementation effectiveness.*

Administrative capacity refers to two elements: coordination and legal tools. Perhaps the most important task of implementation is coordination or steering: the ability to get agencies to effectively perform tasks when they are needed in the right sequence. For example, feeding refugees involves a significant amount of coordination as food needs to be bought and stored, then prepared, and finally distributed. It hampers the process if volunteers show up to distribute food that has not yet been bought or food that has been bought but not properly stored, and hence wasted. In addition, legal and administrative tools need to be built and already operating for implementation to work effectively (May, 2012). For example, legislation needs to be passed before the military can be brought in to manage migrant camps. Infrastructure, such as adequate facilities, need to be built and operate before migrants can stay there. Adequate sanitation infrastructure must be available to ensure a relatively

frictionless reception center. Hille and Knill (2006) have found that capacity is more important than nature of political system in explaining implementation of EU laws in countries prior to EU accession.

*H4: Lack of administrative capacity decreases implementation effectiveness.*

Multi-level governance can have positive effects because implementation networks take over tasks that span different jurisdictions bringing participation, expertise, and experience to national structures that sorely lack them. Pooled resources and expertise are likely to generate positive implementation outcomes (O'Toole, 2012). Placing more experts in security patrols, for example, will increase the likelihood of stemming refugee flows. Hiring more staff to register and perhaps decide on asylum cases will certainly speed up the process. Complex partnership arrangements in environmental projects or regulatory frameworks could be viewed as examples of effective, transnational implementation (Newig and Koontz, 2014). However, the formidable coordination and accountability problems will likely temper effectiveness (Papadopoulos, 2008). Nevertheless, as long as coordination problems are addressed early on in the process, more external resources and capacity are more likely to accomplish goals, especially in times of economic austerity.

*H5: Additional external resources and capacity will on balance increase the likelihood of effective implementation.*

### **Why Greece and Why Now?**

Why have Greek efforts to implement a migration policy mostly failed to produce the desired results? The time period under examination includes 2012 to the present (October 2016). I chose 2012 as the first year of analysis because of important changes in the composition of migrants and the tightening of Greek borders at the time following reprimands by the European Court of Justice. The design also permits examination before and after the EU's robust intervention in March 2016 to more clearly illuminate external influences on domestic implementation.

Three sources of information are utilized to assess the empirical validity of expectations in line with case study research (Yin, 2014). The first includes archival material and data from

international organizations. The second involves statements and interviews by policy makers and EU officials in the media. The third includes nine interviews in June 2016 in the island of Lesbos with local and regional officials, volunteers, NGO members, and Greek voters, two interviews in Thessaloniki with one university academic and one NGO member in May 2016, and two interviews in Athens with two university academics in June 2016. The majority of migrants have crossed into Greece through Lesbos. Interviews with refugees in relocation camps required special security clearance which I was not able to obtain. Information from each source was triangulated to improve internal validity and reliability. The aim is to probe hypotheses and identify representative patterns of interaction that may be later validated in larger samples of cross-case analysis (Gerring, 2007: 93).

Greece has been an important first EU country of arrival for migrants and refugees heading west to northern Europe for the last 15 years. Whereas the number of migrants crossing the Greek border has waxed and waned, it skyrocketed to almost ten times the average in 2015 (see Figure 1). It should be noted the figure records apprehensions rather than migrants; so the same migrant may be counted twice if he/she crossed illegally, was caught and repatriated, and then crossed back into Greece. The majority of migrants used to arrive in Greece by boat mainly from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, and Afghanistan and by land through Albania and Turkey. Sources of migrants changed substantially in 2012 when Syrians broke into the top five nationalities of legal and illegal crossings. Fully 46.2 percent of all apprehended illegal migrants in the first five months of 2016 came from Syria while the second largest group (23.9 percent) came from Afghanistan (Hellenic Police, 2016).

Figure 1 about here

The reasons for these shifts vary over time, illustrating the issue's transnational nature. Using the push-pull model of migration (Massey et al., 1998), we may discern several complex causes behind the decision to migrate. On the pull side, the large influx of migrants from Albania and large parts of Asia and Africa prior to 2010 saw Greece as the gateway to the EU. Economic reasons propelled the majority of Albanians, Palestinians, and Pakistanis to seek a better future in the EU. However, as economic conditions in Albania improved, the flow of those migrants dampened while



keeping the numbers of Palestinian migrants unaffected. On the push side, many refugees made the perilous journey across Turkey to seek asylum in Greece, fleeing persecution and civil war in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. In this case, the flow of Somalis and Pakistanis waxed and waned depending on security and other conditions in transit countries, making the final number of migrants reaching Greece highly dependent on a host of complex and transnational factors.

### **Implementing policy in turbulent times**

#### **Migration policy before 2015**

Prior to 2012, Greek migration policy was largely *ad hoc*, indifferent to EU conventions, and shaped by domestic political considerations which discounted social consequences and public opinion (Triandafyllidou, 2009; Linos, 2003). The situation changed in 2012 for three important reasons. First, Greece tightened immigration procedures and brought drastic changes in detention and repatriation policies. Stung by a European Court of Justice decision in 2011, which found that 90 per cent of all irregular entry into Europe was through the Greek borders (IOM, 2016b), the Greek government began implementing more stringent detention policies and tighter security controls. Confirming the hypothesis of external involvement, EU resources helped increase implementation effectiveness by lowering migration flows. Consistent with migration flows, the dip in apprehensions from 2011 to 2013 demonstrates the point (Figure 1). Frontex, the EU's external border force, supplemented Greek patrols of sea routes in the Aegean (many Greek islands are just a few miles off the Turkish coast). Following the path of least resistance, crossings changed from sea to the land border with Turkey along the Evros River, where a security fence, again with support and funding from Frontex, was constructed to dissuade migrants from coming. In addition, a bilateral visa agreement reduced the flow of illegal migrants from Albania. Detention and repatriation policies were tightened to more closely follow EU directives and the Dublin II treaty, which deals with immigration in the EU (McDonough and Tsourdi, 2012). As expected, there was a reduction in the flow of migrants.

Second, the economic crisis and consequent austerity measures had a significant impact on implementing Greek migration policy. As the economy dove into a tailspin – Greek real income has

fallen by more than one-fourth since 2009 and unemployment soared to more than 25 percent in 2012 (Zahariadis, 2015) – social and political good will evaporated. The far-right political party Golden Dawn capitalized on social discontent and set up food banks but only for Greek citizens. Moreover, government policy was heavily criticized for deficiencies in asylum processes, maintaining inappropriate conditions in detention camps, and following often arbitrary and irregular repatriation policies (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Confirming the expected effect of economic austerity and lack of administrative capacity, all of my interviewees (June 2016) deplored the lack of Greek central government planning and preparedness exacerbated by austerity.

Third, geopolitical developments in the region, especially the implosion of Qaddafi's regime in Libya and the civil war in Syria, reshuffled routes and sources of migrant origin. Italy bore the brunt of refugee waves in 2012-2013 largely following the deteriorating situation in Libya. However, as Syria's war intensified and as the number of deaths increased among those crossing the Mediterranean, refugees began seeking alternative and safer routes through Greece.

### **Greek migration policy since 2015**

The year 2015 was a watershed in migrant flows. A new government in Greece and heavy bombardment by Russian planes in Syria precipitated a mass exodus of Syrians seeking asylum in neighboring lands and in Europe. After winning national elections in January 2015, the coalition government in Greece between the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the party of Independent Greeks (ANEL) signaled a change in policy. The Minister in charge of migration policy, Tasia Christodouloupoulou, noted the government's intention to stop indiscriminate detentions, gradually releasing asylum-seekers and illegal migrants that have been detained for long periods. The aim was to follow a more humanitarian approach and offer alternatives to detention, such as open shelters and voluntary returns.

Figure 2 about here

As a result, flows in migration routes changed. Figure 2 shows the differences between Italy, the route preferred by migrants up to 2014, and Greece, the route preferred since 2015. Whereas

numbers in Italy stayed relatively low throughout 2015 with a shallow dip between August 2015 and January 2016, numbers in Greece exploded during the same period, reaching a peak in October 2015. Considering the fact that the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy is significantly more dangerous, the shift toward Greece is not surprising. UNHCR (2016b) data illustrate the point. When taking the Eastern Route (Greece) in 2016 the chances of not reaching Europe – dead or missing –are 1 in 400 while they stand at a staggering 1 in 43 when taking the Central Route (Italy).

The Greek government predictably lost control of the situation as migrants arriving from the Turkish coast surpassed every expectation. It proved unable or unwilling to stop the flow. When asked about the waves of migrants washing on Greek shores, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras stunningly quipped during a press conference in September 2015: “What borders? Does the sea have borders we didn’t know about” (*Proto Thema*, 2015)? Indicative of the magnitude of the problem is the simple fact that in July 2015 alone Greece received more refugees than the entire previous year. Moreover, the Greek government was unprepared and unable to find the resources to provide alternative accommodations. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were left to fend for themselves in the streets of Athens and other big cities while many residents of Greek islands bitterly complained about the lack of suitable accommodations, planning, and funding (Tagaris, 2015). By August 2015, the UNHCR described the situation in the Greek islands as “total chaos” with completely inadequate accommodation, water, medical, and sanitation infrastructure (BBC, 2015). Clearly, Greece’s migration policy had failed miserably.

### **The EU steps in**

Despite initial trepidation to concede failure, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras finally admitted Greece’s inability to cope with the refugees calling the situation “a humanitarian crisis within a crisis” (Kambas, 2015). After seeking EU help to address the problem and encountering stern reprimands for lack of infrastructure, preparation, and administrative competence, he made the decision to ease the strain on resources by organizing transfers of refugees to the Greek border *en route* to other European countries. The decision ended up being the straw that broke the camel’s back,

further dampening implementation effectiveness.

On the one hand, NGO volunteers filled the void left by the lack of resources and administrative capacity. Volunteers in many islands staffed posts, welcoming refugees and transferring them to the main ports to be shipped to the mainland. This helped the situation but also created confusion and disillusionment amidst accountability concerns. In a statement echoed by a local official I interviewed in Lesbos, the mayor of Mytilene noted in early 2016: “More recently I have seen many NGOs and individuals coming without official registration and showing no cooperation with our municipality. This causes everyone upset and these NGOs arouse doubt and mistrust among the residents of Lesbos. I would say their presence is disruptive rather than useful” (Nianias, 2016). Eventually more professionally run networks of responders, such as the International Rescue Committee and Doctors without Borders, assumed greater responsibility by providing expert manpower and more resources (Hernandez, 2016). But security concerns remain. Although all perpetrators of the Bataclan massacre in Paris in November 2015 are believed to have been EU citizens, two of the attackers posed as migrants to enter Europe through Greece using fake Syrian passports. More recently, the Afghan teenager who went on a slashing spree on a train in southern Germany in mid-July 2016 was an unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor. These and other incidents have raised fears that the waves of refugees and Greece’s inability to stem the flow increased the risk of terrorist elements going undetected.

On the other hand, the incredible numbers of refugees walking their way to countries in central and northern Europe prompted robust actions by several EU states. The EU’s collective failure to draw up a coherent strategy prompted individual member states to unilaterally renationalize the EU’s immigration policy. Up to October 2015, refugees made their way through member states relatively freely, under Schengen rules, until they reached Germany where they sought asylum. EU leaders tried to reach an agreement to relocate refugees among different member states. The sheer numbers, however – Germany was due to receive over 800,000 refugees in 2015 – raised suspicion among some governments that they would be stuck with what they considered to be unwanted trespassers. Consistent with findings from security studies (e.g., Avdan, 2012), states tightened controls when

faced with trafficking threats. Hungary was the first to close its border to new migrants followed by a domino effect of other border closures reaching all the way south to Greece. Confirming the hypothesis, the transnational nature of the issue led to implementation ineffectiveness. Greece proved unable to stem migration flows, provide reasonable accommodations or a welcoming environment. Following border closings, it was stuck with thousands of destitute migrants who kept on coming, did not want to stay, could not leave, and refused to go back.

### **The EU-Turkey Agreement**

After months of negotiations, the EU finally struck a deal in March 2016 among member states and between the EU and Turkey (Collett, 2016). Turkey agreed to stem the tide of refugees flooding Greek shores in exchange for financial aid (€6 billion over three years, €3 billion more than what it was offered in October 2015), easing of EU visa controls, and accelerated negotiations for EU membership. In exchange for more resources, expertise, and relocation promises, Greece agreed to stop prompting migrants to leave for other EU states, let NATO forces patrol the Aegean in search of refugee boats, and build reception/registration camps (“hotspots”) in the islands and relocation camps in the mainland that could provide adequate housing for thousands of refugees who waited to have their cases registered and assessed. Asylum-seekers (normally from Syria) would receive priority while the majority of remaining nationalities arriving after March 20, 2016 would be voluntarily or forcibly repatriated to Turkey or their country of origin. In the meantime, EU member states would have to agree on a formula to distribute migrants amongst themselves.

The transnational agreement was met with substantial criticism by NGO’s, international organizations, some EU states, and even members of the governing party, undermining local political support (Collett, 2016; *To Vima*, 2016). Some NGO’s and more spectacularly the UNHCR ceased operations in the Greek islands (but the UNHCR later returned), complaining the agreement did not do enough to protect the rights of refugees while forcible repatriation violated EU and UN principles. Others complained that Turkey did not provide enough safety protection to repatriated individuals while still others thought the agreement did not do enough to address the causes of refugee

movements. Nevertheless, my local interviewees and NGO volunteers acknowledged the lack of government resources and the consequent need to maintain a strong NGO presence to supplement state activities, especially in staffing first responder centers and in dealing with vulnerable populations (families, unaccompanied minors, and migrants with special needs). But as I will show below, friction eventually undermined the NGO's role in the process of implementation.

The agreement has so far been reasonably successful in reducing the flow of migrants to a trickle (see Figure 2). External resources (funds, Turkish help, and NATO patrols) and capacity (expertise) had a positive impact on effectiveness, as the hypothesis predicts. Apprehensions of illegal migrants in Greece fell by a spectacular 86.4 percent from March to April 2016 although they have picked up in recent months and are almost twice as high as those of 2011 (Figure 1). Nevertheless, the situation remains precarious at the time of writing (October 2016), limiting Greek, and more generally EU, options (Lamb, 2016). While the flow of refugees has slowed down dramatically, all those interviewed in the island of Lesbos (June 2016) expected it to fail. They believed the flow would resume once the weather improved – indeed refugee boats began to arrive again in June but not in the extreme numbers recorded in 2015. As time wore on, my interviewees argued, Greeks felt abandoned by the Greek government and the EU because tourism has suffered dramatically in islands affected by refugee flows, such as Lesbos, Kos, and Chios. This is all the more intriguing, as an NGO volunteer told me in Lesbos, “because islanders benefited enormously by the presence of hundreds of paying volunteers in the non-touristic winter months” – many volunteers have since left in protest or because of lack of incoming refugees. Two interviewees in Thessaloniki pointed to the same temporary economic benefit to Idomeni, a tiny community in the Greek border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Trying to disentangle the impact of external and domestic factors, the statement by Greek Deputy Minister for Migration Policy, Yannis Mouzalas, to SYRIZA's party conference is very insightful: “We [the government] have a plan as long as the EU-Turkey agreement holds” (*To Vima*, 2016). The implication is that effectiveness depends crucially on the external agreement over which Greece has little control (as two interviewees in Lesbos also pointed out). More to the point, domestic

capacity has not improved much, leading to dismal predictions for the months ahead. Consistent with our expectations, lack of administrative capacity hampers effective implementation. In terms of coordination, Mouzalas, admitted so: “the main problem may be poor coordination among ministers and ministries” (*To Vima*, 2016).

In terms of accommodations, the situation remains “tragic,” according to Amnesty International’s head of the Office of European Institutions, Iverna McGowan. Echoing one of my local government interviewees in Lesvos, she added a political dimension to lack of capacity: “Millions of euros have been spent and there is no improvement. Hence the issue is political, not economic. They don’t want to help so as not to encourage others to cross into Europe” (*Proto Thema*, 2016). Figure 3 demonstrates the paucity of resources. It shows numbers of refugees and capacity to house them in five first reception and identification centers (or “hotspots”) in Greek islands in October 2016. Hotspots are designed to provide temporary shelter and process paper identification. All camps, including the 45 housing camps which are located in mainland Greece and operated by the Greek military, are open-type, meaning migrants must stay for an initial twenty-five days after which they are free to walk out although they are not allowed to leave the island/country without permission.

Figure 3 about here

What is shocking is the difference between number of residents and accommodation capacity, which reaches almost 160 percent in the case of Lesvos. Notwithstanding Mouzalas’ claim that “things are manageable” (*To Vima*, 2016), local opposition has been vociferous to housing more refugees. In an interview amidst the worst of the crisis in September 2015, Mytilene’s mayor, Spyros Galinos, stated ominously: “I have requested ships and chartered planes to transfer them but they [Greek state authorities] won’t provide them... I have asked to call the situation as a ‘state of emergency.’ They won’t do it. The situation is out of control” (quoted in Chrysopoulos, 2015). He expressed exactly the same sentiment in September 2016 when he wrote in a letter to Ministers of Defense, Citizen’s Protection, and Migration Policy of his “categorical opposition to any such effort or to even any intention of the relevant ministries to create a new refugee and migrant reception facility on the island”

*(Ekathimerini, 2016).*

Because of continued lack of capacity, especially in registration and processing, and suspicion temporary camps will become permanent, implementation effectiveness has declined. Although camps have been built where none existed before (the only camp in Amygdaleza was closed down when SYRIZA came to power in 2015 but since re-opened), perceptions matter. Despite initially showing solidarity with refugees, small communities mostly turned because they did “not wish to see the establishment of [relocation] camps in their neighborhoods/regions which have every chance of becoming permanent” (Economides quoted in Gill, 2016). My interviewees added that the duration of the crisis (almost two years) has dampened expectations. Overcrowding and perceived lack of interest by state authorities have poisoned relations between many locals – especially those living close to camps or in villages that have been hardest affected by incoming migrants, such as Molyvos – and refugees (seven of nine interviewees in Lesvos mentioned this point), leading to protests and violent clashes. In addition, several instances of inter-ethnic killings, rapes, and general riots among migrants have been recorded in the most crowded camp of Moria, Lesvos (Harris, 2016). The more the refugee crisis persists, the stiffer the political opposition and the less effective implementation is likely to be.

Figure 3 about here

Confirming the effects of transnationalism, the precarious situation in Turkey further dampens effective implementation following the attempted military coup in July 2016 and that government’s crackdown on judges, the military, academics, and generally civil servants. Echoing one of my academic interviewees in Thessaloniki, the EU-Turkey refugee agreement is now caught in broader political issues of EU-Turkish politics, reducing Greek control over outcomes and increasing volatility and the chances of failure. To make matters worse, the British decision to leave the EU has emboldened nationalist and xenophobic political parties in countries such as Hungary, France, Poland, Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic to block any EU-mandated refugee relocation scheme. Indicative of this turn are the results from two Council of the EU decisions in September 2015 to relocate migrants from frontline EU member states. A year later, only 5,871 out of 160,000 persons (4



percent of the total) have been relocated – 4,603 from Greece and 1,268 from Italy (UNHCR, 2016a).

## Conclusion

Why has the Greek government largely failed to effectively address the refugee crisis? Using Edwards' (1980) framework to examine the implementation of migration policy in Greece (2012-2016), I have argued the complex and transnational nature of the issue in addition to economic austerity and lack of administrative capacity have lowered the effectiveness of policy. I also found EU involvement in the form of additional resources and expertise had on balance positive effects. The findings have implications for implementation and migration theories, and the future of European integration.

First, the findings confirm but also amend expectations by adding an external dimension. Indeed, resources, capacity, communication, and dispositions are important elements of implementation and affect it in crucial ways. However, external factors must be also accounted. We found that EU resources and capacity on balance supersede the impact of domestic variables by adding to implementation effectiveness despite problems with accountability. NGO capacity at the local level has been important but has had mixed effects entangled in politics and mistrust. It was crucial in providing initial capacity, where none existed, but perceptions have shifted over time mainly due to lack of trust, information, and coordination. Moreover, government ministers have openly complained in Greek parliament about the accountability of some NGOs (without naming them), noting EU funds flow directly to NGOs rather than being channeled through the government. As one local official in Lesbos wryly quipped: "What do NGOs do? Do they collect donations? Are they playing doctors?" EU involvement also renders implementation effectiveness to an extent "hostage" to broader EU regional political calculations that Greece cannot possibly control. In this way, external factors temper the positive effects on national implementation.

Second, the case demonstrates the value of Castles' (2010) argument that migration prompts significant social transformation. Greece is a prime example of a society socially and politically transformed by extraordinary waves of migration. Enabled by complex government policy calculations

(Hollifield, 2008), such transformation has raised significant political cost and has created new rifts in an already polarized society. Since the EU-Turkey agreement, Greece is no longer strictly a transit country. Rather it finds itself “stuck” with growing numbers of migrants whom it has to integrate into Greek society. Data by Hellenic Police (2016) show in the first seven months of 2016, less than 1 percent (10,658 out of 179,140) of migrants illegally crossing into Greece have been deported and/or returned to their country of origin – 51 percent of whom are Albanians. Unwilling or unable to send migrants back to Turkey – only 1,602 returned in 2016, of whom 45 were Turkish citizens (Avgi, 2016) – Greece finds itself needing to socially integrate them amidst economic crisis and without the necessary social dialogue.

Indicative of potential trouble is growing resistance to Greek relocation schemes. Despite initial tolerance and a welcoming attitude, resistance to more refugees has increased dramatically, especially in the islands. Of course not all islands or parts of Greece have been affected equally. As one government interviewee told me in Lesbos, the closer geographically people are to migrant crossings, the stiffer local resistance is likely to be to incoming migrants. How does one achieve relatively frictionless integration with minimal or simplistic public dialogue and in a country where, according to a poll by the Pew Research Center (Wike, Stokes, and Simmons, 2016), 55 percent think refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism? Similarly, 78 percent think Muslims do not want to adopt local customs – most refugees are Muslim and opinions on Muslims and refugees closely track each other throughout Europe.

Following previous patterns of dismissing public opinion (Linos, 2003) and illustrating Sager and Thomann’s (2016) contention that policy inheritance affects problem perceptions, Greek government officials have publicly downplayed resistance as isolated racism. But the likely cost of integrating migrants for the long-term raises concerns about draining precious resources amidst economic austerity. A majority of 72 percent expect refugees to adversely affect the country because they take away jobs and social benefits (Wike, Stokes, and Simmons, 2016). On a local level, the impact on tourism has robbed locals of valuable income adding to implementation’s woes. Despite temporary income flows from volunteers, locals expect the refugee crisis to negatively affect the

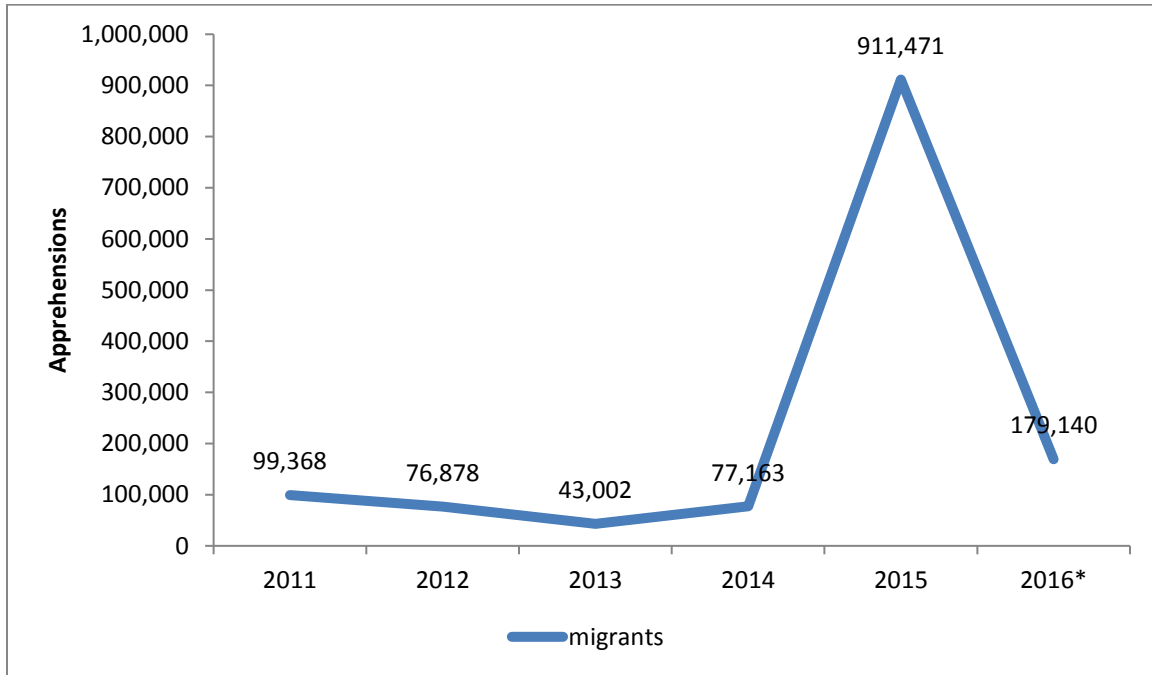
Greek economy. For example, tourist arrivals for summer 2016 in Lesvos dropped by 70 percent (Kolasa-Siklaridi, 2016). The end result is the transformative power of transnational migration and the Greek government's inability to control it have on balance adverse effects on social cohesion, economic prosperity, and political discourse, which in turn further undermine implementation effectiveness.

Finally, the issue has important implications for the future of European integration. The case reveals the power of migration as a political tool for affecting European discourse and reversing (or potentially having the power to reverse) EU integration. In the absence of addressing the Syrian crisis, which will likely bring refugee numbers down to more manageable levels in the short and long term (as an academic interviewee in Athens concurred), it is probable that human waves of destitute and desperate migrants will continue to flood EU shores (Figure 2). Greece's inability to stem the flow of migrants has generated significant political conflict as some countries, especially the so-called Visegrad EU members, have vocally opposed relocation schemes. At the same time, the re-introduction of national border controls in some countries because of migrant and security concerns risks undermining the free movement of people across the EU. In this way, the refugee crisis has had similar effects as the sovereign debt crisis. It has given rise to asymmetric intergovernmentalism, whereby national preferences and political calendars have undermined collective EU crisis management (Zahariadis, 2013). In addition to the North-South division, which resurfaced as a result of the economic crisis but reinforced by the refugee crisis, the issue seems to create yet another rift in the EU between so-called "Old" and "New" Europe. Paradoxically, by getting more involved in the refugee crisis to help national governments, the EU has opened rifts that may end up undermining it. Whether the EU can narrow these rifts remains to be seen. But one thing is certain. The EU policy of open internal borders promised by the Schengen Agreement is likely to be revisited and with that possibly the nature and pace of European integration.

Figure 1

Number of apprehensions of illegal migrants crossing into Greece

(Land and sea)

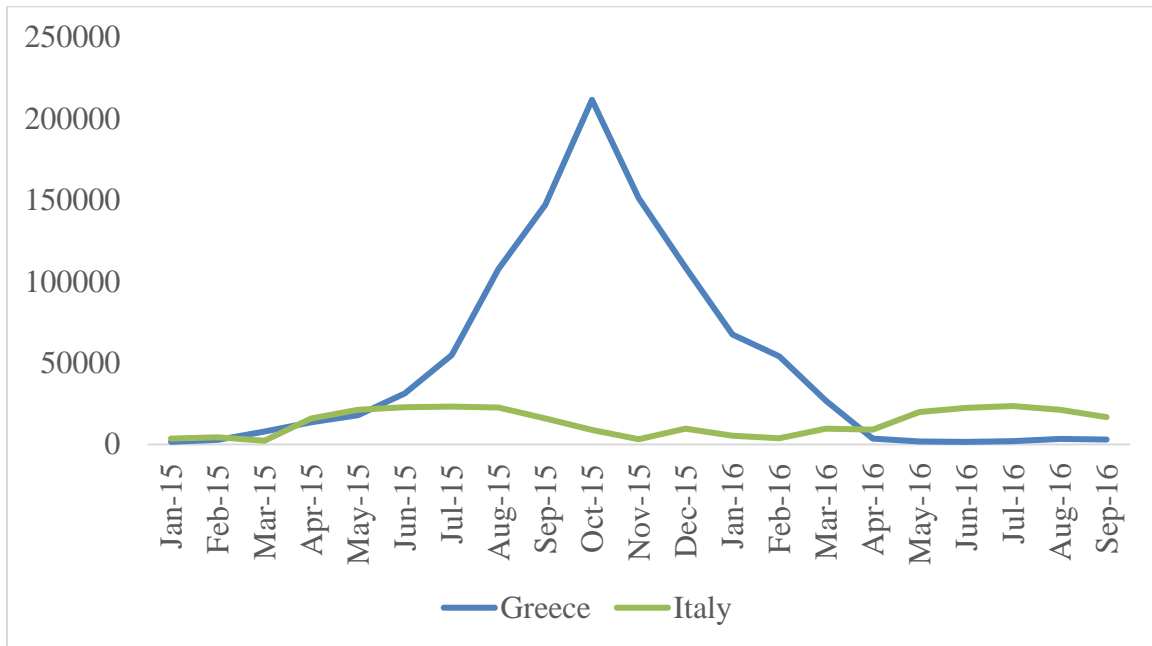


\* January-July 2016

Source: Hellenic Police (2016)

Figure 2

Land and sea migrant crossings into Italy and Greece, 2015-2016

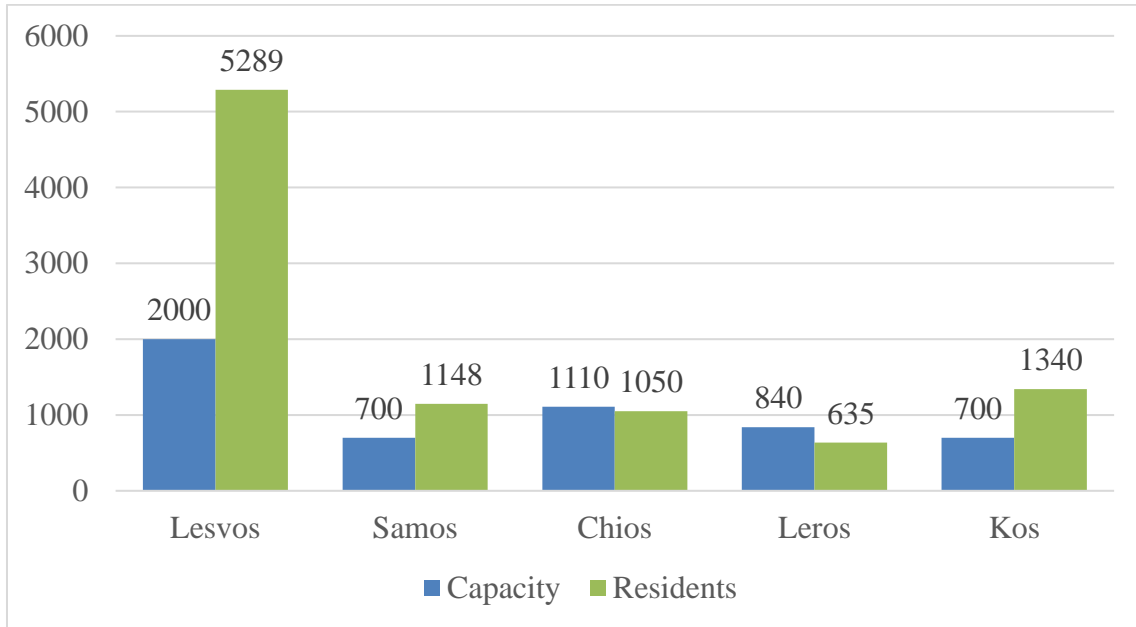


Source: UNHCR (2016b)

Figure 3

Accommodation capacity and number of residents in Greek island first reception centers, as of 7

October 2016



Source: Hellenic National Defense General Staff (2016)

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