Migration Policy in Practice:
Identity Conflicts and Discretionary Decisions at the Front Lines

Aikaterini Glyniadaki

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Abstract

The importance of bureaucratic discretion has long been at the focus of public administration scholars of street-level bureaucracy. This thesis explores the mechanisms through which front-line actors make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty. It does so by examining what determines the discretionary behaviour of front-line actors in Athens and Berlin, during the 2015-2017 period of the so called 'European Migration Crisis'. Using an extensive number (149) of qualitative interviews with individuals working at the front lines of migration management (legal professionals, caseworkers, care-workers, administrative employees), it identifies some of their patterns and mechanisms of decision-making.

By drawing on insights from social psychology and the existing literature on street-level bureaucracy, this thesis advances the argument that the identities of front-line actors (be they role, social or person-related) play a critical role in shaping their discretionary decisions. In a field as socially and politically contested as that of migration management, these actors often encounter unprecedented challenges, for which there are no clear guidelines or solutions. These challenges then translate into identity conflicts, as the actors often respond based on their self-understandings in a given context. These self-understandings are also influenced by the communities of practice within which the actors operate, as well as by the structural conditions surrounding these communities (economic capacity, welfare state, policy framework, etc.).

This research contributes to the field of street-level bureaucracy in two ways. First, it makes a case for paying close attention to those at the front lines of service delivery, including not only public servants but also private contractors and members of the civil society, whether formally organised or spontaneously mobilised. To capture this diverse range of actors, it introduces the term 'front-liners'. Second, it emphasises the significant role of front-liners' multiple identities, while also providing an overview of the several levels of analysis at once. By doing so, and by providing also a cross-city comparison, it draws conclusions that allow for greater generalisability.

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To all the women in my family who, as girls, did not have the chance to finish school.

And, to all those who, in the face of great adversity, find the courage to step up and step in.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction:
Europe's Migration Crisis as a Magnifying Glass

The so called 'European Migration Crisis' has presented a great challenge, not only to those involved in the management of migration but also to the existing scholarly accounts of social service delivery at the front lines. Because, as an unprecedented wave of migrants creates new and unfamiliar administrative problems, the existing organisational norms and practices are likely to fall short in offering suitable solutions. And, as the public bureaucracies cannot respond to the migration crisis alone, public servants suddenly find themselves working alongside civil society members as well as private sector employees. Moreover, the clients are no longer local citizens, but international migrants. Although these developments are not entirely new in the provision of human services, the migration crisis functions as a lens that magnifies ongoing dynamics, making them even more conspicuous. By extension, it offers the opportunity to revisit and reconsider some of the relevant literature's main assumptions.

In recent decades, the theoretical framework of 'street-level bureaucracy' (Lipksy, 1980) has provided a useful tool for understanding and explaining front-line service provision. Within this framework, the discretionary behaviour of those who work at the front-lines and who have direct contact with clients, is known to shape policy outcomes. In that regard, Lipsky (1980) argued, "street-level bureaucrats are the ultimate policy-makers". Following this line of research, many public administration scholars have sought to understand and explain the discretionary behaviour of front-line actors, over the years (e.g. Brehm & Gates 1999; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Brodkin, 2012; Evans & Hupe, 2019). In doing so, some have focused on the socialisation of bureaucrats within public agencies, others on the influence of supervisors and colleagues and, yet others, on the interactions between public servants and local citizens. However, as the European Migration Crisis has come to underscore, the conditions within which today's front-line actors operate are much more complex and ambiguous than originally conceptualised.

A question that arises for researchers, then, is how today's front-line actors make discretionary decisions within such a fluid and changing environment. Put differently, *what is it that shapes their discretionary behaviour under conditions of high uncertainty?* This is the central research question I shall examine in this thesis. I embark on this endeavour by employing a social psychological angle and by focusing on two European capitals that have been at the epicentre of the 2015-2017 Migration Crisis, namely Athens and Berlin. From a methodological standpoint, I take a qualitative research approach, using an extensive number of in-depth interviews with front-line actors from the two capitals and conducting a 'contextualised comparison' (Locke & Thelen, 1995). Although I acknowledge the unique contextual idiosyncrasies of the two settings, my primary goal is to 'decode' the decision-making mechanisms of these diverse front-line actors or, as I call them here, the 'front-liners'.

The argument I shall develop in this thesis is two-fold. First, under highly uncertain conditions, the individual identities of front-liners play a critical role in guiding their discretionary behaviour. When the daily dilemmas they encounter are not proportionate to their routinised repertoire of responses, front-liners feel the need to come up with novel coping strategies. When the existing recourses, organisational protocols or professional role prescriptions cannot provide appropriate answers, it is the front-liners' individual sense of 'Self', within the given context, that comes into play. The 'Self', of course, is not a monolithic entity, but encompasses identities of different bases: *role* (e.g. social worker), *social* (e.g. German) or *person*-related (e.g. moral) (Burke & Stets, 2009; see also Chapter 2). Under especially pressing and strenuous circumstances, and while interacting with clients from very dissimilar backgrounds, front-liners are likely to experience identity conflicts. The outcome of these identity conflicts, this thesis suggests, constitutes a major influence on front-liners, shaping their discretionary behaviour to a large degree.

The emphasis of micro-level dynamics notwithstanding, I maintain that the front-liners' discretionary behaviour can only be adequately understood within the specific social and structural contexts in which front-liners operate. On the one hand, I suggest, the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which front-liners are embedded frame their understandings of the concept of discretion and encourage a particular set of behaviours. On the other hand, the structural conditions (e.g. economic capacity, welfare state, policy framework) that surround these communities also enable and constrain the individual front-liners' course of action. Front-liners from different social and structural

contexts may, therefore, share common decision-making mechanisms, but they may still hold somewhat different conceptualisations of discretion, thereby exhibiting different discretionary behaviours in practice.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I begin by providing a brief background of the literature on social service delivery at the front lines and I discuss how Europe's migration crisis presents an analytical opportunity to review and to develop this literature further. After that, I describe the methodological approach and the research context of this thesis, and I explain the various steps of data collection and analysis followed. Next, I discuss the broader relevance of this research and I conclude by offering an outline of the rest of the thesis.

1.1 Delivering Services at the Front Lines

1.1.1 Theoretical Background

Policy in theory is not the same as policy in practice. Whether a matter of design or of execution, the policy output often does not correspond to the policy outcomes intended (Grumm, 1975). This is something policy implementation scholars have long identified and sought to examine. However, while the top-down approach to policy implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1981; Wildavsky, 1973) has historically dominated the relevant literature, the proponents of the bottom-up approach have questioned this hierarchical, goal-oriented view, underlining instead the importance of the human factor at the street level (Lipsky, 1980; Winter, 1986). It is the latter approach that I take on in this thesis, with the aim to enhance it by shedding light on the multiple – and often contradictory— dimensions of what it means to be a 'human' policy implementer.

As Lipsky (1980) suggested nearly four decades ago, the public service employees who interact directly with clients and who have some room for discretion while executing their daily tasks are the ones who ultimately shape policy outcomes. These 'street-level bureaucrats', as he called them, almost always operate under suboptimal conditions, facing vague or contradicting policy frameworks, having access to limited resources or being confronted with a growing demand for services. To overcome these challenges, Lipsky said, street-level bureaucrats develop a series of coping strategies, such as selecting to help certain clients but not others (creaming) or

making strategic decisions regarding the distribution of resources (rationing). This is what makes them the 'ultimate policy makers', he noted.

Having acknowledged that the street-level bureaucrats' use of discretion is critical in shaping policy outcomes, the question that follows next is what shapes their discretionary behaviour. There are various factors that have been identified until now, resting at several levels of analysis (see Gofen, Sella & Gassner, 2019; see also Chapter 2). Beginning from the macro-structural level, as already noted, there are instances when the policy framework itself enables the discretionary decisions of street-level bureaucrats, due to its gaps or 'grey areas' (see also Chapter 3). In addition, further structural conditions may come into play, such as the economic capacity of a country or the size, type and strength of its welfare state (see also Chapters 2 and 6). The few relevant studies that engage in cross-country comparisons indeed suggest that differences in institutional structures do translate into different implementation practices and discretionary behaviours at the street level (Jewell, 2017; Jordan, Strath & Triandafyllidou, 2003; Rutz, Mathew, Robben & Bont, 2017).

At the meso-analytical level, a considerable amount of research seeks to explain how intra-organisational dynamics shape bureaucratic discretion at the street level. Some studies find, for instance, that an organisation's mission and values influence the street-level bureaucrats' behaviour towards their clients (e.g. Meier, Pennington & Eller, 2005). The socialisation of employees within a bureaucracy, thus, does form their discretionary behaviour, although it depends also on their particular professional roles (Oberfield, 2014). Other studies with an organisational focus underline, instead, the influential role of managers and the principal-agent dynamics (e.g. Riccucci, 2005). And, yet others, emphasise the importance of interactions among colleagues and the shared norms that develop as a result (e.g. Alpes & Spire, 2015). Regardless of the particular angle these studies take, they all consider intra-organisational processes as the key determinant of the street-level bureaucrats' use of discretion.

Perhaps even more attention is dedicated to the study of individual street-level bureaucrats and their interactions with their clients. Despite the undeniable pressures exerted by structural and organisational influences, bureaucrats are also individual agents with their own views and preferences. Often, these preferences play a critical role in shaping bureaucratic discretion. Bureaucrats' opinions on the policy they are meant to implement, for example, may influence directly their willingness to implement it (May &

Winter, 2009). And, their views of the target population they serve may shape their behavior towards this population (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Jilke & Tummers, 2018; see also Chapter 5). In a similar fashion, their specific understandings of their own role as street-level bureaucrats, may determine whether they prioritise the interests of the state or of their clients (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; 2012; see also Chapter 4). This micro-interactional focus will be at the core of this thesis, too.

Although the existing research on bureaucratic discretion at the street level covers a wide range of perspectives and foci, there are a few important points that are still missing. First, the existing studies do not cover the entire range of today's complex nexus of front-line service providers. Although the public-private interplay has long been addressed (e.g. Smith & Lipsky, 1993), there are some forms of informal and unpaid social service delivery which are of vital significance to service-receivers and which are worthy of further empirical scrutiny. Second, the observations these studies make cannot always be extrapolated to a wider set of cases. As most of them focus on a specific profession, organisation or sector within a single country, their findings are almost always context-dependent. Third, the majority of these studies discuss a single level of analysis, often overlooking the multi-level processes that take place simultaneously during a policy implementation process.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, the existing literature pays little attention to the increasingly uncertain conditions under which today's front-line actors operate, and to the ways these conditions shape their individual discretionary behaviour. The European Migration crisis of 2015-2017, as it is often called, has presented a pertinent analytical opportunity to address these shortcomings.

1.1.2 Europe's Migration Crisis

In 2015, over a million people arrived in the European Union seeking refugee asylum, the majority of whom came from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The total asylum applications doubled from 2014, remained equally high in 2016, and only subsided in 2017 (Eurostat, n.d.), after the EU-Turkey statement[1]. From a humanitarian perspective, the continuously increasing death toll of migrants who did not succeed in crossing the

[1] According to the European Commission, "On 18 March 2016, EU Heads of State or Government and Turkey agreed on the EU-Turkey Statement to end irregular migration flows from Turkey to the EU, ensure improved reception conditions for refugees in Turkey and open up organised, safe and legal channels to Europe for Syrian refugees." (European Commission, 2019a, p.1).

Mediterranean Sea has been a devastating development, while equally problematic have been the living conditions of those who remained stuck in poorly managed refugee camps for years (Niarchos, 2019). Moreover, at societal level, many host societies have struggled with the sudden increase of migrant populations, the arrival of whom has become a contested topic. In turn, this is something that many politicians seized the opportunity to capitalise on, as the recent rise of far-right populist parties in Europe indicates.

Acknowledging how complex and multi-dimensional the issue of migration is, this thesis approaches it primarily from a public administration perspective. From this point of view, the abovementioned developments exposed a weak governmental response system to emergencies of such proportion, both at local and at international level. From transit countries at the gates of Europe, such as Greece, to destination countries at the heart of Europe, such as Germany, the unprecedented number of arrivals found the local authorities under-prepared and unready. This was especially obvious in the capitals of these countries, where most relevant services are concentrated, and where most migrants tend to gather. Chaotic scenes of asylum applicants queuing for days outside public offices became a common sight across Athens and Berlin, as well as across many other major European cities.

With the heightened politicisation of the issue, the language to describe this steep increase of arrivals also became a contested arena. Newcomers are often described as refugees, asylum seekers, (illegal) immigrants, or migrants. The latter is the most inclusive of these terms; it is essentially an umbrella term that includes all of the previous categories and captures more accurately the mixed migration flows that dominated during this period. Indeed, not only did the migrants come from many different countries and regions, but their movement was also motivated by a variety of reasons, not necessarily fitting the official 'refugee' definition[2]. Although we do know that certain groups fled war, most notably the Syrians, most other migrants did not share a common 'push' factor. Moreover, obtaining asylum might have been their goal in certain countries (e.g. Germany), but in others (e.g. Greece) their intention was most likely to merely 'pass through'. Since these kinds of differentiations are beyond the scope of this thesis, the use of the term 'migrants' is the most appropriate.

[2] According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is someone who is "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion…" (See discussion in Chapter 3).

Accordingly, the word ‘crisis’ is also a highly contested term (see Scholten & van Nispen, 2015). Given that less affluent countries host a much higher proportion of refugees in relation to their population (e.g. Lebanon, Jordan, Uganda), the use of the term ‘crisis’ in the case of Europe is often seen as erroneous. From a public administration perspective, however, this period can be characterised as an administrative crisis. The sudden influx of people in need of immediate access to social services (accommodation, legal consultation, health care, education, work, etc.) meant that the relevant social services needed to increase rapidly. In some cases, such as that of the guardianship and care of unaccompanied minors, it also meant that new policies and services had to be created from scratch. Without engaging further in the ongoing political debate, this thesis takes the stance that the mismatch between the increased demand for social services vis-à-vis the services available made this period of inward migration an administrative crisis period. It is in that sense that I shall be using the term ‘Migration Crisis’ henceforth.

As mentioned above, the migration crisis challenged some of the key assumptions of the street-level bureaucracy framework. Most notably, it did so through the administrative gap it created or, to be more precise, through the way in which this gap was filled. The thousands of migrants in need of urgent assistance triggered –among other responses— the so called ‘welcome culture’. Apart from the formal Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that became (even more) active in the area of social service delivery, there were also very many volunteers and political activists who mobilised to help the newcomers, whether in groups or independently. In addition, private organisations and professionals also became involved, for example by running shelters for migrants or by providing legal consultation. In practice, this meant that service delivery swiftly shifted from the hands of the state, spreading across a mosaic of highly diverse front-line actors.

To offer a more accurate representation of migration policy in practice, this thesis accounts for the entirety of this mosaic. It focuses not only on public and private service employees, but also on those who mobilise to offer essential services (e.g. housing or care work) without necessarily having formal organisational affiliations, without necessarily expecting monetary rewards in return and without necessarily seeing themselves as public policy implementers. Therefore, I introduce here the term ‘front-liners’, which I shall be using instead of ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky, 1980) and more recent terms such as ‘street-level workers’ (Brodkin, 2012). In short, the term ‘front-liners’ includes the ‘traditional’ street-level bureaucrats, but also all other non-state actors who are active at

the front lines of social service delivery, whether or not they occupy a formal, paid position. As with the already discussed categories of front-line actors, front-liners effectively implement policy, which makes them today's *de facto* policy implementers (see below).

Along with the accelerated diversification of front-line actors, the migration crisis also multiplied the links between them, leading to the formation of local communities of front-liners (see Chapters 2 and 6). This poses another challenge for the existing literature on street-level bureaucracy, especially with regard to how organisations shape bureaucratic discretion. During this crisis period, the inter-organisational dynamics intensified while the intra-organisational ones diminished in importance. Within organisations, the existing organisational rules and routines became almost obsolete in the face of unprecedented administrative challenges, while the urgency of the situation and the constantly changing conditions meant that new organisational 'cultures' did not have time to form. Simultaneously, the multiple and complex needs of migrants (e.g. accommodation, healthcare, legal support) meant that inter-organisational and inter-group links among front-line actors also had to be built or further strengthened (e.g. among NGO social workers, public doctors and private lawyers). Because of this, vibrant local networks of front-liners arose in each city, forging, what Wenger (1998) called, communities of practice.

Considering the above, Europe's migration crisis represents an extreme case that essentially amplifies the front-line dynamics and processes that have been taking place already. The new regime of mixed social services, for instance, is something scholars have already discussed (Brodkin, 2012, 2013, 2016; Evers, 2005; Lipksy & Smith, 1989-1990; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith & Lipsky, 1993), but the shift towards the 'hyper hybrid' model described above is more rapid and more apparent under conditions of crisis. Accordingly, empirical studies have already examined non-traditional types of street-level bureaucrats, such as private employees (Sager *et al.*, 2014), volunteers (Humphris, 2018) or employees of private-public partnerships (Infantino, 2016; Steijn, Klijn & Edelenbos, 2011), but they have not captured the full range of today's front-line actors at once, or the communities of practice these actors come to form locally. Both of these aspects are becoming more clearly visible through the lens of the Migration Crisis.

Finally, there is one more element that the Migration Crisis has brought to the fore. That is, the need for front-liners to make important decisions, when the conditions around them are ambiguous, uncertain and unpredictable. In today's accelerated pace of social change, both at the front lines and beyond, these kinds of conditions are more likely to represent the norm rather than the exception. Even so, the fluidity of the conditions of the Migration Crisis was unparalleled. Apart from the unpredictable ebbs and flows of migrant populations, the needs of these populations also varied, depending, for example, on the migrants' demographic composition (e.g. need for special shelters and services if unaccompanied minors). Accordingly, the flow of funds to the service providers also changed over time, which means that most front-liners were employed under short-term contracts, often moving from one (type of) organisation to another. These only added further to the uncertainty caused by the diversification of front-liners and the need for collaboration between dissimilar types of actors.

1.1.3 Developing our Knowledge

To tackle the key research question of this thesis, namely how front-liners make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, I offer a theoretical framework that connects individual-level dynamics with the contextual factors that surround them (see Chapter 2). In short, I suggest that the self- of individual front-liners constitute a critical factor that shapes the front-liners' discretionary behaviour, while context also remains relevant. More specifically, drawing from Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009), I argue that the various identities that front-liners hold (person, role, social), as well as the ways in which front-liners construe these identities, play a critical role in guiding their discretionary decisions. I therefore place greater emphasis on the micro-level dynamics at the front lines of service delivery and on the individual decision-making mechanisms of front-liners. At the same time, however, I acknowledge that the individual front-liners are embedded within certain social and structural environments (see also Scharpf, 1997, 2000). As such, their discretionary behaviour is also influenced by external factors, including their fellow front-liners and the structural conditions under which they all operate.

My key proposition here is that, in times of high uncertainty, individual identities constitute an especially critical factor. As already discussed, front-line actors today constitute an increasingly diverse and heterogeneous group, most notably in terms of their

organisational affiliations. With the rise of New Public Management as a governance approach (Hood, 1991), there also came the privatisation of social services, as well as the rise of the role of the civil society (Lipsky & Smith, 1989-1990; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Even outside the field of migration management, thus, various different types of actors came to replace the traditional street-level bureaucrats. Apart from a need to adopt a more inclusive research approach and terminology, this development also calls for greater attention to the identity conflicts these front-liners experience due to the diverse or hybrid character of the organisations for which they work (see Chapter 6).

Moreover, today's front-liners, as well as their clients, are not necessarily local citizens, as the citizen-agent paradigm has it (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), but they often come from abroad. Especially in capital cities, the proportion of international residents is no longer negligible. Whether they have migrated willingly or not, those front-liners who are migrants themselves are likely to encounter additional tensions while implementing policy, which can influence their discretionary behaviour on the ground (see Chapter 4). Even more importantly, perhaps, their clients are also not necessarily locals, but have international backgrounds, too (see also note 2, p. S22, in Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012). Although the focus of this study is on migrant clients most of whom are asylum seekers, there are several other types of migrants who receive social services, from within or outside the EU, low-skilled workers or highly educated professionals. Inevitably, as both front-liners and clients are increasingly international, identity conflicts are more likely to arise when members of the two groups interact (see Chapter 5).

Intensifying these dynamics further, the migration crisis brought the importance of the front-liners' identity conflicts to the forefront. For instance, the fact that migration came to represent such a politically controversial and socially divisive issue meant that front-liners could not help but form a personal view on it. Irrespective of whether this view is informed by their religious beliefs or their political or humanitarian values, it becomes part of their person identity, thereby influencing their discretionary behaviour (see Chapter 3). Similarly, as the collaboration among front-liners from different organisations and groups increased in an effort to respond to the emergency situation, so did the interactions between front-liners and clients from dissimilar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Both of these, in turn, increased the amount and the intensity of identity conflicts that front-liners faced, shaping their discretionary behaviour accordingly.

It is important to note here that most front-liners in this research are likely to be positively predisposed towards migrants, as otherwise they would not choose to work directly with them during such a difficult and demanding period. Even so, these front-liners are still subject to various types of identity conflicts. When it comes to determining the status of asylum applicants, for example, there could be a clash between (lay) judges' *person* identities as individuals who stand for or against migration and their *role* identities as professional judges (Chapter 3). Or, when the front-liners are 'old' migrants themselves, they may develop different strategies in their daily exchanges with migrant clients, depending on how they reconcile their *social* identity as migrants with their *role* identity as professionals (Chapter 4). Similarly, when encountering normative clashes in their interactions with clients, for instance in relation to gender norms, and depending on how they construe the relationship between '*Self*' and '*Other*', front-liners may adopt a more or less 'client-friendly' approach (Chapter 5). These are the themes that I shall explore in the first three empirical chapters of this thesis.

In relation to the secondary part of the proposed argument, the front-liners' discretionary behaviour is influenced by external factors too. At the macro-structural level, there are various factors that may influence the front-liners' use of discretion. In the area of migration management, there are three such factors which play key roles: the economic capacity of a host country, the welfare state and the migration policy framework in place (see also Chapter 2). At the meso-level, then, the communities of professionals (and non-professionals) in which front-liners are active are also likely to play a role in guiding their discretionary behaviour, most notably by shaping shared understandings regarding the use of discretion (Chapter 6). These two levels encompass the contextual elements that surround the front-liners and frame the identity conflicts they encounter, shaping to some degree their behaviour, too. By recognising the particular influences of these contextual elements, I draw a dividing line between the findings of this research that are generalisable beyond the specific contexts (Chapters 3, 4, 5) and the ones that are not (Chapter 6).

To support and demonstrate the above argument, I draw from different disciplinary perspectives and from several literature streams throughout this thesis. While my theoretical starting point is Lipsky's notion of street-level bureaucracy, I borrow from Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) to provide an extension to the existing field of street-level bureaucracy. In doing so, I also utilise more specific literature strands, both from public administration and from social psychology. In Chapter 3, I build on studies

that discuss moral dilemmas at the front lines of service delivery (Tummers *et al.*, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015). In Chapter 4, I combine perspectives from representative bureaucracy (see Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003) with others from racial and ethnic identity development (e.g. Tatum, 1997/2017; Prümm, Sackmann & Schultz, 2003). In Chapter 5, I make use of the Interpersonal Perception Method (Laing, Phillipson & Lee, 1966), together with the citizen-agent paradigm (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2012). And, in Chapter 6, I also bring in the Communities of Practice approach (Wenger, 1998). I shall discuss all these in greater detail in the theoretical chapter that comes next, as well as in the empirical chapters that follow after it.

1.2 Research Methods and Context

Methodologically, this study does not fit neatly within the lines of a single epistemological paradigm. Although I embrace the basic principles of positivism, I do not take an entirely positivist stance. And, although I acknowledge the critical role of unique contextual characteristics, I still aim to identify causal mechanisms that have meaningful implications for a greater set of cases. What guides my approach is the research question itself. With front-line service delivery being such a dynamic process, the discretionary strategies front-liners follow depend on how they make sense of the various steps of this process. And, these sense-making mechanisms, cannot easily be dissected into variables one can control. To still make sense of this 'messy' research topic, I employed a contextualised comparison' (Locke & Thelen, 1995), focusing on the cases of Athens and Berlin (see below). In short, by maintaining an actor-centred approach (Scharpf, 1997, 2000), my goal was to examine how the front-liners in the two cities responded to the same kinds of implementation challenges.

Following this line of inquiry, the data collection and theory development had to take place iteratively. While the general framework of street-level bureaucracy remained relevant throughout, both the initial research question and the data collection strategy had to adjust over time. A qualitative research approach that involved in-depth interviews and direct observations allowed for these kinds of adjustments, while it also worked effectively in examining concepts that cannot be easily quantified, such as 'identity conflicts' and 'discretionary behaviours'. Although not a classic ethnographic study, this thesis treats the cases of Athens and Berlin with an ethnographic sensibility (Simmons &

Smith, 2017). Keeping an 'open mind' with regard to similarities and differences in the two settings, the accounts of the front-liners in the two capitals were analysed in parallel.

1.2.1 Epistemological Approach

If at the one end of the spectrum we have traditional positivism which aims to discover general laws for how the world works, and at the other we have postmodern scepticism which contests any claim of objectivity, this study takes a 'middle-road' approach. It does not look for specific causal links between clearly defined dependent and independent variables in a controlled set of case studies, because the topic of discretionary decisions at the front-lines of service-delivery is not a good fit for this approach. How can one look for similar or dissimilar outcomes in two constantly changing and unpredictable social environments? The *ad hoc* strategies that individuals follow in the face of uncertain and ambiguous conditions is precisely the key point of interest of this research. In Simmons's words (2016), "an interest in dynamic, unfolding processes is ill-suited to the type of variable-oriented analysis" (see also Simmons & Smith, 2017).

At the same time, however, this thesis does not assume that the in-depth analysis of a particular case study yields research findings that are relevant to this case only. It maintains, instead, that the selected case studies are part of a larger set of cases and we can, therefore, draw conclusions with wider implications. In practice, this means acknowledging how the specific contextual characteristics (e.g. state capacity) can inhibit the generalisability of findings and addressing them (see Chapter 6). It also means acknowledging one's own positionality as a researcher in a given setting (e.g. being young, female and White), and the potential biases this may bring to the one's observations (see below). In other words, it means striving for meaningful and generalisable conclusions, while also being aware of, and explicitly articulating, the contextual complexities and the unavoidable practical limitations.

To materialise this 'middle-road' approach, I adopted three specific strategies. First, I employed an *interpretative analysis,* which is based on the premise that the meanings people attach to certain ideas or objects around them play a critical role in guiding their behaviour (Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009). Drawing also from the social psychological tradition of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969; see also Burke & Stets, 2009), as well as from ethnographic approaches in policy implementation and social service delivery (Brodkin, 2017; DuBois, 2010; Eule, 2014; Infantino, 2016; Zacka,

2017), I aimed to 'decode' the front-liners' behaviour. By employing interpretative analysis, I do not take the words and actions of my participants at face value, but I seek to shed light on the meanings they associate to this behaviour and on the meaning-making steps they follow when making discretionary decisions. In doing so, I consider my participants purposeful actors and active agents, while I also acknowledge the contextual influences to which they are subjected (see also Scharpf, 2000).

Second, I used two case studies as opposed to one, in order to better tackle the research question under examination. Broadly defined, this is still a comparative study of public policy (see Lodge, 2006). However, as the research design resembles neither the 'most similar' nor the 'most different' sets of cases, the two cases are not examined vis-à-vis but *in parallel* to each other. Using a *contextualised* comparison (Locke & Thelen, 1995), I selected the cases on the basis of having similar dynamics at work, but I maintained a flexible stance while observing these dynamics unfolding. Athens and Berlin are thus taken as cases of EU capitals with an influx of migrants that is disproportionate to their administrative capacities. Albeit acknowledging that there are important differences across the two sites (see Chapter 2), I had no specific expectations with regard to commonalities or differences in the front-liners' discretionary practices. Therefore, I analysed the accounts of the participants in the two capitals conjointly, without having a pre-determined idea on if and how they would be similar or different.

The aim of this strategy is twofold. On the one hand, it is to identify the commonalities between the tensions experienced and the responses adopted across the individual front-liners in the two settings. In a way, by increasing the pool of participants, I can better examine the underexplored link between identity conflicts and decision-making-mechanisms under conditions of high uncertainty. On the other hand, by also paying attention to the objective contextual idiosyncrasies that make the social and structural environments of the two capitals distinct from one another, I can isolate, conceptually, their influence on this link. In that sense, exactly because I can identify the unique set of external conditions that influence individual action, I can make contributions of wider significance (see also Simmons, 2016).

Third, and following on from above, the logic I employed to carry out the chosen methodological approach is neither deductive nor inductive, but it is abductive (see Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Also known as the 'taking the best shot' approach, abductive reasoning is ideally suited for the examination of cases where there is a known

lack of complete information. Similar to a doctor who gives the likeliest diagnosis based on a given set of symptoms, a researcher often has to draw conclusions from the examination of certain cases based on the limited evidence available. This means accepting one's 'bounded rationality' (Simon, 1955, 1979), but it also means maximising one's effort while 'muddling through' this 'messy' comparison.

In the abductive line of reasoning, there is an iterative process between data collection, analysis and theory development. Indeed, as the initial fieldwork stages proved the original question irrelevant, the particular question had to change. Although my starting goal was to observe the differences in discretionary strategies between state and non-state actors, this mission became absurd as soon as I realised how intertwined these service providers actually are, especially in the field of migration management. As described above, the lines between different types of front-line actors are so blurry in practice that only through artificially made categories I could continue pursuing the initial research question. Because of that, the focus of my research slightly shifted. That was also when I coined the term 'front-liners', making a step towards theoretical development. In turn, the next steps of data collection and analysis shifted, too: I decided to interview a wider range of actors from different backgrounds, occupying different roles in the field. After multiple rounds of data collection, analysis and theoretical re-orientation, I eventually reached a point of saturation.

Through the use of the 'middle-road' approach, and through the combination of different disciplinary and epistemological traditions, this thesis aims to offer an account that contributes to the bottom-up view of policy implementation, which Lipsky, among others, introduced. By using two cities as case studies, while also employing qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations, this research blends comparative political science with classic anthropological and social psychological perspectives. And, by focusing on the micro-level interactions between individual actors at the front lines, it allows for making inferences for the wider field of front-line service delivery, not only during this crisis period, but beyond it, too. In that regard, this approach treats microprocesses as an expression of macrostructures (Burawoy, 2009). Deepening our understanding of the discretionary behaviour of front-liners during Europe's migration crisis can, therefore, offer portable insights for a wide array of cases involving decision-making under uncertainty.

1.2.2 The Setting

To reiterate, Athens and Berlin were selected as cases of EU capitals that underwent an administrative 'crisis', resulting from the sudden and steep influx of migrants in the 2015-2017 period. Despite the differences in raw numbers of arrivals, the administrative burdens were analogous across the two cities, considering also their different sizes and state capacities. Moreover, as the local state mechanisms stretched to their limits, their respective civil societies responded similarly across the two settings, too[3]. To fill the gaps left by the state, non-state actors stepped in and assumed a significant part of the responsibility. The Greek 'philoxenia' paralleled the German 'Wilkommens-kultur', both of which manifested into substantial acts of support for the newcomers (Bock & McDonald, 2019; Kalogeraki, 2019).

Although certain tasks remained solely under the control of the state, such as the process of deciding the outcome of asylum applications, most other tasks were executed either solely by civil society actors, or in collaboration with civil society actors. Most commonly, such tasks included assisting migrants in their interactions with state-offices, providing language courses, connecting migrants to employers, and even providing housing and healthcare to those who had fallen through the cracks of the (public) system. The role of the civil society in responding to the crisis was, therefore, vital. As the front-liners who carried out these tasks essentially played the role of the state, they became *de facto* policy implementers. Put differently, these front-liners became the 'new' street-level bureaucrats.

Among the diverse body of non-state actors that emerged, there were primarily NGOs of various sizes and levels of experience in the field of migration. But, there were also less formal arrangements of support and care, such as newly formed grassroots groups of activists, or volunteers who worked independently or alongside the existing organisations and groups. Against this background, and given the increasing privatisation[4] of social services (particularly in Berlin), an amalgam of diverse front-line actors developed. Public servants, international organisation employees, NGO employees, volunteers and activists, all worked side-by-side, forming local communities of front-liners (see also Graphs 1 and 2 below).

[3] A more comprehensive list of civil society actors per country can be found here: http://simonbjohnson.github.io/europe-refugees-16-3w/.

[4] During the 'migration crisis', privatisation was not mainly characterised by market principles (Thomann, Hupe & Sager, 2016), but it was a response to a new 'gap' in the demand vs. supply of state-services.

Nonetheless, although this 'hybrid' character of front-line communities was shared across Athens and Berlin, there were also some important differences between the two. In Berlin, largely because of the subsidiarity principle[5], the delivery of social services had long been decentralised, with non-governmental welfare organisations representing an institutional pillar of the German welfare system (Wegrich & Hammerschmid, 2018; see also Table 1.1). Six of these organisations constitute more than half of the organisations delivering public services, with two of them, Deutscher Caritasverband (DCV) and Diakonisches Werk (DW), having more than 1.5 million employees (Ibid.) Although Germany ranks among the lowest of the OECD EU countries when it comes to public sector employment as a percentage of the labour force, these welfare organisations rely strongly on public funding, an annual funding of more than 50 billion euros. Alongside these, there are also several smaller, local NGOs, working independently or in cooperation with the larger organisations.

Table 1.1 The Federal Association of Non-Statutory Welfare (BAGFW)

Name	**Denomination/Affiliation**
Workers' Welfare Association/Arbeiterwohlfarht (AWO)	Social Democrats
German Caritas Association/ Deutscher Caritasverband (DCV)	Roman Catholic
The Parity/ Paritätische Gesamtverband (The Parity)	None
German Red Cross/ Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK)	None
Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany/ Diakonisches Werk (DW)	Protestant
Central Welfare Office of the Jews in Germany/ Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland (ZWST)	Jewish

Summary table created by author

With the advent of the migration crisis, many Berliners joined the 'Wilkommenskultur'. The number of smaller NGOs in the field of migration management increased drastically in an effort to meet the needs of the arriving migrants and, simultaneously, a considerable number of independent volunteers, activists and

[5]The principle of subsidiarity in the German welfare system suggests that small units must have priority over larger units, especially over the state, whenever appropriate (e.g. family over bureaucratic organisations, or welfare association over the state). This idea is laid down in the Social Assistance Act and in the Children and Youth Welfare Act.

grassroots groups without institutional affiliations became active in the field for the first time (Bock, 2018; Bock & McDonald, 2019). In addition to these, the government began contracting private companies that worked for-profit, especially when it came to running shelters for migrants (Chazan, 2016). As for funding, the greatest proportion of material resources these organisations and groups used came from the federal state, a lesser amount from the state (länder) of Berlin, and some from private donors. Accordingly, as Figure 1.1 below shows, these activities were either publicly-funded, or privately-funded, or both.

Figure1.1 Flow of funds for the purposes of the ma management of migration in Berlin

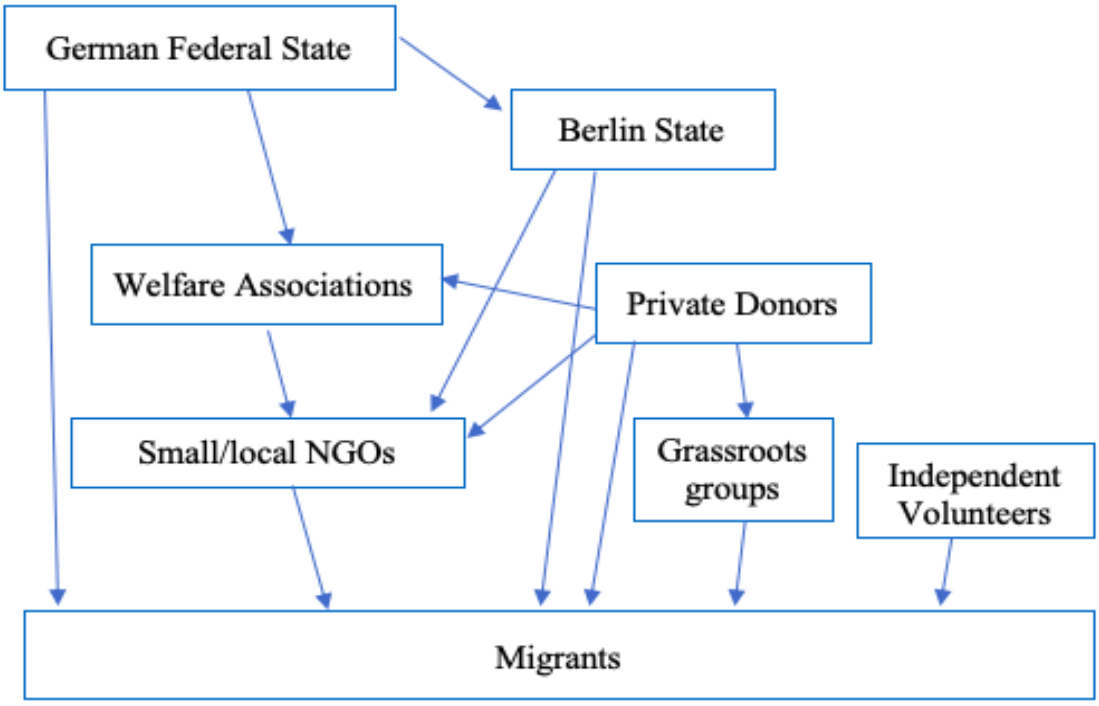


Figure created by author

In Athens, by contrast, the community of front-liners consisted of more, and more diverse, actors (Kalogeraki, 2019). Although the role of the civil society had been relatively weak in Greece prior to 2010 (Simiti 2017), the Greek economic crisis functioned as a catalyst for change. As the already fragile welfare state further deteriorated due to the failing economy and the growing demand for services (Matsaganis, 2011), many citizens organised themselves in a spirit of solidarity. The amount of 'social' grocery stores, soup kitchens, health clinics and time banks rose considerably during this period (Rakopoulos, 2013). In turn, when the migration crisis came about, these arrangements proved very helpful in meeting the migrants' needs (Cabot, 2016). In the face of two co-occurring crises, however, the economic and the one

of migration, the largest proportion of financial support came from abroad. The EU became the primary sponsor of the local NGOs, of the municipality of Athens and of Greek state (European Commission, 2019b), while international NGOs played a significant role, as well.

Beyond the growth of formal civil society, the informal sector appeared especially active, as well. Athenian groups of leftists and anarchists who held strong anti-state ideologies paradoxically found themselves effectively carrying out the work of the state. Since the summer of 2015, members of these groups occupied several empty buildings in central Athens and turned them into housing squats for over 2,500 refugees and immigrants (Georgiopoulou, 2015). One of them, in particular, attracted worldwide support, both material and symbolic, for setting a successful example of both self-organisation and solidarity towards migrants. Despite the illegal status of these squats, the Syriza government did not make a sincere effort to crack down on this effort, possibly because it alleviated the pressure of responsibility resting on the shoulders of the –left-wing— government (see also Chapter 6).

Figure 1.2 Flow of funds for the purposes of the management of migration in Athens

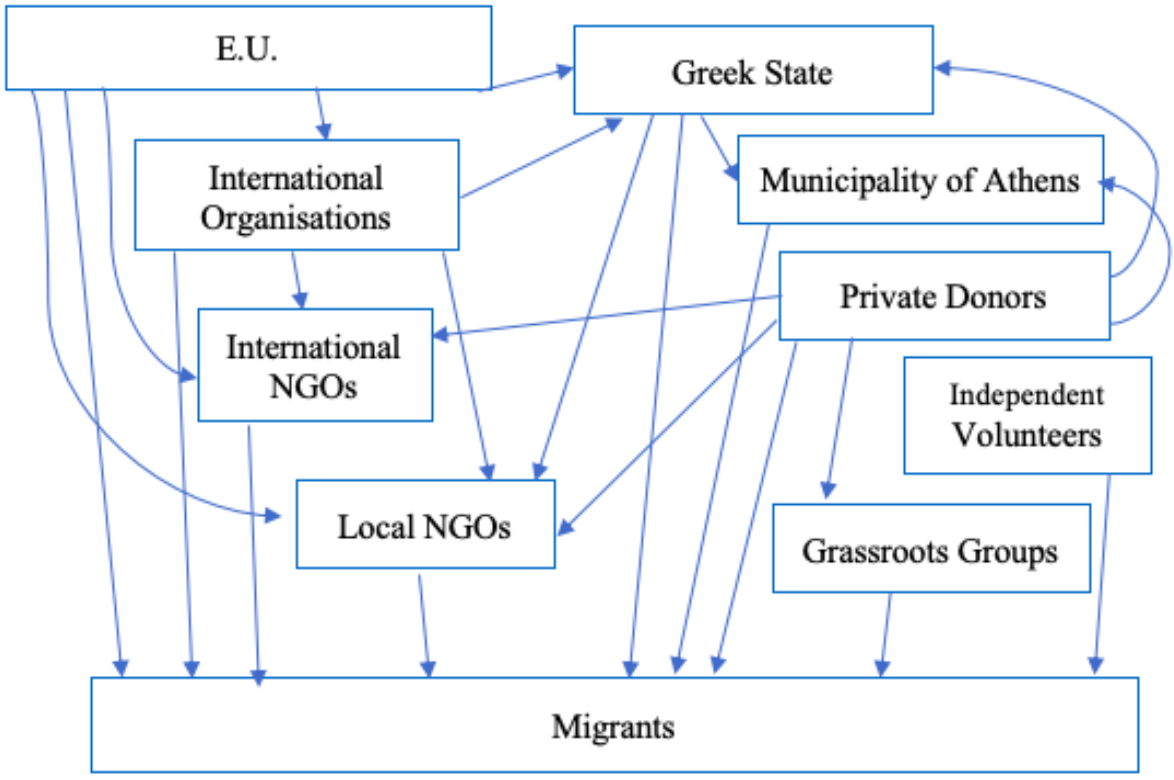


Figure created by author

As we see here, although in both cases the civil society stepped in to support the state efforts in meeting the growing demand for social services, there was a larger proportion of informal and of international assistance in Athens, compared to Berlin. In a few words, the relatively low economic capacity of the Greek state, which was further diminished by the Greek economic crisis, led to greater gaps for non-state actors to fill.

As Figure 1.2 above illustrates, the multiplicity of local and international front-line actors translated into a complex flow of funds and, consequently, to a complex nexus of diverse front-line actors (see also Kalogeraki, 2019; Kortendiek, 2018; Rozakou, 2017). Unlike Athens, Berlin had stronger state capacity, to a large extent because it could rely on federal funds, especially in a case of emergency such as that of the migration crisis. As the German federal government and the state government of Berlin were the ones that mainly funded the social services for migrants, they were also the ones who controlled the allocation of these funds and had the general oversight of service delivery (see also Chapters 2 and 6).

1.3 Data Collection and Analysis

1.3.1 The Participants

As mentioned above, this study is based on an extensive set of in-depth interviews with front-liners from various backgrounds, as well as on some direct observations. The total number of interviews was 149, 79 in Athens and 70 at Berlin. The vast majority of these interviews (141) were with actors at the front lines of policy implementation, while a small number (8) were elite interviews with top-level bureaucrats of the local or national governments (Table 1.2 below). Of those employed in the public sector, most worked for central government agencies (state/federal), but some also worked for local government offices at city level. In the case of Athens, there were also several front-liners employed by international organisations, such as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The participants engaged in the civil society sector (50 for Athens and 43 for Berlin) were nearly twice as many as those in the public sector (27 and 22 respectively). In terms of the composition of civil society participants, there were three important differences between the two cities. First, there was a considerable proportion of front-

liners engaged on a voluntary basis in Athens, especially in housing squats, which was not so much the case in Berlin. Additionally, there was a considerable presence of international NGOs in Athens, and therefore of International NGO participants, which was also not the case in Berlin. By contrast, since the vast amount of social services is delivered through Germany's welfare associations in Berlin, most participants worked for local NGOs, larger or smaller. Finally, there was a small number of private employees, as well, mainly lawyers (3 in Athens, 5 in Berlin).

As for their professional roles (Table 1.3), a large proportion of front-liners had administrative positions, regardless of their sector of employment (25 in Athens and 21 in Berlin). Their tasks usually included processing of paperwork, organising social or educational programmers for refugees etc. This group of participants included mainly social workers and psychologists, but also front-liners who had related qualifications or who had no qualifications but who performed related tasks (9 in Athens and 16 in Berlin). In the latter subgroup there were also many volunteers and activists, especially in Athens (24 in Athens and 3 in Berlin). So, even though officially they did not have specific tasks to carry out, in essence their daily engagement had strong elements of care work. One more important professional group was that of lawyers and judges (12 in Athens and 10 in Berlin), the former also included people who did not have a law degree, but their primary role was to provide legal support to migrants.

It is important to note here that the lines are not always clear, neither between employment sectors nor between professional roles. As for the latter, the urgency of the situation meant that many were employed on short term contracts, which meant a lot of movement from one (type of) organisation to another. Moreover, there were some who could fill two boxes at once, such as private lawyers who also provide pro bono legal advice at an NGO or at an international organisation. The same is also true for some 'professional' roles. For instance, there were front-liners who worked as teachers or private business owners in the mornings but who also offered general voluntary assistance at migrant shelters or housing squats in the afternoon; or, who worked officially as social workers at migrant shelters for a period of time, but then decided to assume an administrative role instead. Having acknowledged these dynamic processes, I use Tables 1.2 and 1.3 to provide the best possible illustration, based on the participants' status at the time when they were interviewed.

Table 1.2 Participant Demographics and Employment Sector

City	Total	Gender		Nationality				Public Sector			Civil Society Sector			Private Employees
		M	F	Country Nationals	Nationals /Migr. Backgr.	EU Nationals	Non-EU Nationals	Int/nal Orgs	State/ Federal	City/ Länder	NGOs/Welfare Orgs		Volunteers and Activists	
											Intr/nal NGOs	Local NGOs		
Athens	79	33	46	68	2	3	5	6	18	3	10	14	26	3
Berlin	70	31	39	46	7	10	7	1	14	8	0	34	8	5

Table 1.3 Participants by Profession and Role

City	Street-Level					Top-Level
	Administration	Psychosocial Support	Legal Support/ Justice System	Education	Non-specific Duties	Administration
Athens	25	9	12	2	24	5
Berlin	21	16	10	2	3	3

1.3.2 The Analysis

I conducted the interviews with the participants during multiple visits, in which I stayed for several weeks in Athens and Berlin, between December 2015 and January 2019. I located the participants in one of two ways. One was by finding their online professional profiles and contact information after an online search or after personal recommendations of contacts we had in common. I reached these participants via email, explaining my research topic and purpose in detail. I then arranged to meet all those who had agreed to participate in person. The second way was by meeting people in person at their place of work and asking them whether they would like to take part in my research project. This was the main strategy with those who worked informally as independent volunteers or activists in self-orgasnised housing squats for migrants. After establishing the first contacts in each city, I also used the snowball technique, utilising the social networks of the participants themselves. With regard to ethical concerns, I obtained an ethnical approval from LSE and I made sure to inform all participants about my research before receiving their consent to participate[7].

The interviews took place either in Greek or English, using the help of a translator on only three occasions while in Berlin, when the participants did not speak fluent English. Using semi-structured interviews, I employed an interview guide with a set of open-ended questions, such as, “Are there any specific challenges that you face while doing your job?”, “Can you provide an example of a particular incident?”, or “What helps you overcome such challenges?” (see Appendix I). The aim of this format was to avoid any leading questions, allowing the participants to describe their experiences and their reflections with as little intervention as possible. I conducted almost all interviews in person, in the working environment of each participant. In exceptional cases, the interview took place via Skype, when the time of my presence in the city did not coincide with the availability of participants. In terms of duration, the interviews ranged from half an hour to over three hours, but the vast majority of them lasted for approximately one hour.

Apart from a couple of exceptions when participants declined, I recorded the interviews with an audio recorder. I, then, transcribed them verbatim, through the help of

[7] The informant consent (Appendix I) was obtained in written form from those approached on-line, but there were also times when it had to be obtained verbally, for example from those active in housing squats. Given the illegal nature of this arrangement, the potential participants would be suspicious of having to sign a document and, for that, they would have refused to participate.

an assistant and I analysed the text thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2019) through the use of the qualitative research analysis software Nvivo 11. As mentioned earlier, the data collection and data analysis occurred iteratively (see also Tummers & Karsten, 2012). This means that after each fieldwork trip followed a stage of data analysis, while a more extensive data analysis period also occurred at the end of all fieldwork trips, with the accumulation of the total number of transcribed interviews.

As the analysis was thematic, it followed the six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2019). The first step involved multiple readings of the transcripts so as to maximise my 'familiarsation' with the data. Based on the reviewed literature, I then generated a set of initial codes. *'Implementation Challenges*' and '*Responses to Challenges'* were two key such codes. After that, a 'searching for themes' followed, when I identified a series of general themes, most notably '*identity types'*, *'identity conflicts'*, *'conflict types'*, and *'uses of discretion'*. Next, the fourth phase consisted of reviewing the entire dataset again so as to locate more instances of the generated themes, as well as to reconsider the theme's boundaries. The latter included collapsing larger themes or splitting them into smaller ones when deemed necessary. The fifth phase was essentially an analysis of the existing themes and sub-themes, and their re-organisation in ways that brought out conceptually meaningful associations. The sixth and final phase consisted of writing up the findings, which naturally involved an additional element of analysis, as well.

1.3.3 Gaining Access

It is worth noting here that gaining access was quite challenging at times. First, the crisis conditions made it difficult to find certain professionals, or rather it made it difficult for them to find time to give interviews. This was, for example, the case for lawyers, caseworkers and judges, from both cities. The amount of workload they encountered on a daily basis, coupled with the shortage of professionals of their kind, for me meant a lot of rejected requests for interviews. At the same time, the fact that the local authorities received a lot of criticism for the way they handled the crisis meant that I, as a researcher, was sometimes greeted with suspicion, especially when there was not a clear understanding of academic research and its difference from journalism. When this was the case, having an insider who could vouch for my innocuous intentions and integrity proved extremely helpful.

Some level of suspicion was also evident when I approached the leftists and anarchists who run the housing squats in central Athens. There, the possibility of leaking confidential information to the press would not only present a risk to their reputation, but it could also lead to their persecution by the police. After all, the very act of squatting abandoned buildings is illegal. Although the government generally seemed to turn a blind eye (see also Chapter 6), there was always a degree of uneasiness among those involved with the squats, who were on tenterhooks in case the police attempted to close the squats down. Once again, specific individuals from the squatters' in-group came to the rescue. Personal links from the past proved helpful, and so did the relationships I built while in the field. The key word here is the word 'trust'. Gaining the trust of some members of the Solidarity Movement allowed me to be trusted by other members, as well.

To a lesser degree, building trust also involved a conscious effort on my part to manage others' perceptions of myself. In Goffman's terms, I had to carefully orchestrate my 'presentation of self', especially with regard to clothing and speaking. While I had to look and behave professionally when interacting with lawyers, judges and government employees, my style had to be a lot more relaxed and informal while spending time in the activist scene in the two cities. Particularly in Athens, having been a resident of the neighbourhood that hosts most of these squats in the recent past, I had a good understanding of what one should or should not wear so as not to stand out. Plain, dark clothes and a slightly bohemian fashion was what predominated. An old pair of jeans and a black cotton t-shirt was a safe option most of the time. Smoking cigarettes would have also helped, as it is a habit around which locals gather and chat until late at night. The alternative to that was to stay brave as a passive smoker.

1.3.4 Positionality

Nonetheless, despite having an awareness of what to do –and not to do– in order to blend in, there were certain points during the fieldwork when I had to reconsider. One day, after entering a squat on a hot August afternoon in shorts, and after encountering the intense stares of several recently-arrived male asylum seekers, I left and decided on a different outfit. This was a key moment when I became aware of my gender as a critical characteristic of my *positionality* as a researcher. There were also several other moments when my gender, along with my age, became relevant, especially in the male-dominated activist scene. Despite the rhetoric of equality, I soon realised that in practice this is not

always the case. For instance, women were too often interrupted during the open assembly meetings, and foreign women even more so. On the other hand, the fact that I was seen as a young woman also worked to my advantage: I did not appear threatening, I did not seem to know enough, and so I could just 'sit there and listen'.

There were also two more aspects of my positionality that were important. The one had to do my education and institutional affiliation. Being a PhD candidate at LSE did help open some doors that were otherwise difficult to open, especially among busy professionals and among top-level bureaucrats. However, although I was generally well-received as an educated cosmopolitan, this status also helped elucidate the existing hierarchies between front-liners and migrants. For instance, during an interview with an administrative employee of a religious NGO in Athens, the participant locked the door of his office and ostentatiously ignored the migrants who knocked every so often, "because otherwise they just don't leave you alone". Similarly, when during my visit at migrant shelters in Berlin I asked to use a toilet, the employees would immediately hand me their keys to the staff toilets, so I would not have to go to the 'other' ones. Being seen as a (White) European researcher and not as (yet another) migrant did mean preferential treatment at times.

The other important aspect, of course, was my nationality. Being somewhat of an insider and speaking the language was obviously a great advantage while in Athens, especially given the general reliance on informal networks as gateways to 'trust'. Although this was then a relative disadvantage while in Berlin, it actually did not pose any substantial obstacles, as most young Berliners are, more or less, fluent in English. Moreover, I was a bit surprised to see that the participants in Berlin appeared quite comfortable discussing the shortcomings of their public agencies and local administration with me. Perhaps, knowing that I have at least 'equally bad' examples in mind from my home country helped. Most likely, this would not be the case had I been a German researcher in Athens.

1.3.5 The Limitations

A final point worth addressing with regard to data collection and analysis was the challenge of conducting research during a time of crisis. Apart from the difficulty of persuading busy professionals to dedicate some of their valuable time for my project, there were other difficulties of even greater significance. The constantly changing social

and organisational conditions, the moving participants, and the 'heavy' atmosphere around migration were perhaps the most obvious such obstacles, with implications both for the data collection process and for its analysis.

Coupled with the flow of migrants, the structural conditions around migration were changing very fast during the time of fieldwork, and my research approach had to adjust accordingly. The most prominent example of this was the shift resulting from the closing of the borders and the signing of the EU-Turkey agreement in March 2016. That was a critical point especially for Athens, as thousands of migrants effectively became 'stuck' in Greece, and Greece turned from a transit country to a destination country. As a result, the front-line support for migrants had to change focus. Instead of merely providing emergency relief, it would have to consider integration programmes on a larger scare, for the first time. As a ripple effect of that, NGOs shifted their orientation, hiring more skilled professionals who could offer psychosocial support, as well as language courses, education, job training, etc. In essence, the composition of front-liners changed, starting to resemble more that of Berlin, where integration services were already on the agenda.

With the rapid changes also came research limitations. Most notably, the turnaround of front-liners at certain positions was so quick that, in several cases, I would book an appointment with someone a few weeks in advance, and by the time we would actually meet in person they had found another job in the field already. Moreover, I often became aware of organisational changes that were meaningful, but whose effects I could not capture by conducting interviews at one single point in time. This was the case, for example, both in the case of the Asylum Service in Athens and in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Berlin. Interviewees from both organisations underlined that "things were just different before", referring to times under a different organisational administration. This time dimension is simply not something that qualitative interviews can capture comprehensively, even though it might have had important implications for the research topic at stake.

Lastly, I cannot omit the challenge of conducting research in a field that involves extensive human pain. Among the root causes behind the 2015 and 2016 unprecedented migration influx were the wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Yemen and elsewhere. The majority of those who survived such brutal conflicts and who also survived a very unsafe journey to Europe were deeply traumatised, and naturally so. The detrimental

after-effect of such traumatic experiences was often compounded by increasingly restrictive policies, a prime example of this being the change in 2016 that stopped allowing Syrian migrants in Berlin to bring their families over[8]. Mental health issues were a common concern among migrants, and consequently among front-liners, too. There was always a 'heavy' atmosphere at the shelters I visited and several times my participants seemed to be in immediate need of mental health support themselves, profoundly affected by their clients' stories and daily battles. This 'transfer of trauma' then became something from which I had to also shield myself.

1.4 Broader Relevance

From a theoretical point of view, this thesis offers new insights in the academic field of front-line service delivery, by employing an interdisciplinary approach. As I shall also discuss in the upcoming chapter, psychological theorising is being increasingly used in the study of public administration, in an effort to parse out the motives, decisions and behaviours of policy practitioners and of policy implementers. Especially at the street level of policy implementation, individual-level dynamics and interpersonal interactions do matter. Despite the renewed attention to psychosocial processes, however, the importance of the identities of policy implementers has not been highlighted enough by researchers hitherto. Through the angle of Identity Theory, this research further fertilises the framework of street-level bureaucracy and sheds light on the decision-making mechanisms of today's front-line actors. By focusing on three specific types of identity conflicts these actors experience ('personal–role', 'social–role' and 'Self–Other'), it demonstrates how identities influence their discretionary behaviour at the front lines.

Through the use of a social psychological angle, this thesis also offers a multi-level view of the phenomenon of front-line decision-making under conditions of high uncertainty. Although the need for such an approach has been previously highlighted (e.g. Gofen et. al. 2019), there has been a persisting lack of empirical studies in this direction. By acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of the social and structural environments in which front-line actors are embedded, this thesis shows, we can develop a deeper understanding of these actors' individual use of discretion. Furthermore, by acknowledging the

[8] According to the interviews with experts in the field, in March 2016, after a political decision, Syrian asylum applicants stopped directly receiving full refugee protection and the vast instead majority received subsidiary protection. Although with the former family reunification follows automatically, the latter means extremely long waits and uncertain outcomes.

interaction between micro and macro level dynamics, we can draw conclusions that inform the timeless debate of 'agency versus structure' (see Chapters 6 and 7).

With regard to empirical contributions, this research offers a contextualised comparison, a methodological approach especially conducive when studying a social phenomenon in flux and a set of processes as they are unfolding. With this approach, this research adds to the limited number of cross-country comparative empirical studies in the field of street-level bureaucracy (e.g. Jordan *et al.*, 2003; Rutz *et al.*, 2017; Andersen & Jaboksen, 2017). And, by doing so, it produces findings that are more likely to be relevant beyond the specific cities (and countries) under examination, as well. Moreover, given the multi-level analytical perspective noted above, this comparison allows for the isolation of the observations that are ascribed to unique contextual factors, from the ones that are shared across contexts and, therefore, applicable to a larger set of cases.

Adding to the above, the fact that the data collected for this research project took place during a period of crisis, is as rare as it is important. Exactly because of the challenges that this data collection process entails, there is a shortage of studies that delve into the nuanced details of critical juncture moments such as the 2015-2017 Migration Crisis in Europe. Without a doubt, the in-depth analysis of the accounts of nearly 150 front-line actors offer an unparalleled opportunity to 'decode' the discretionary behaviour of actors in similarly uncertain conditions. Because, by understanding the de-facto discretion of such actors, we can also understand how policy is carried out in practice and, consequently, we can make better policy next time around. In a way, this is perhaps the true meaning of evidence-based policy-making.

Last but not least, international migration constitutes one of the most controversial and divisive topics in the Western word today. Among academics both in Europe and elsewhere, migration is very often blamed as the main cause of the rise of the far-right, and it is directly connected with the rise of populist governments, as well. Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, there have also been considerable waves of people, mostly lay people, who have defied the negative climate and have fought to embrace the migrants and to facilitate their integration into their new societies. By volunteering independently, self-organising, joining NGOs or siding with state agencies, they have stood in solidarity with migrants, a stance that is too often overlooked by the media and ignored by governments. By observing their decision-making processes closely, complex and

conflictual as they are, one learns that it might not be easy but, in Angela Merkel's words, "it can be done".

1.5 Structure of Thesis

In the remaining chapters, I present and discuss in greater detail the theoretical background of this thesis and, more importantly, its theoretical and empirical contributions. The chapter that follows immediately after this one (Chapter 2) is the theoretical chapter. This is where I provide a more comprehensive literature review, situating this research within the existing literature(s), and explicating the theoretical argument discussed above. After that, four empirical chapters follow. Each of them builds a narrower theoretical point under the broader argument, drawing heavily from the analysis of the participants' interview transcripts. The first three discuss different types of identity conflicts at the front lines, while the fourth one focuses on the external conditions that also play a role in shaping the front-liners' discretionary behaviour. In the paragraphs below I offer a brief overview of what comes next.

In *Chapter 2*, which is the theoretical chapter, I situate the present research into the relevant literature, and I elaborate on the thesis' theoretical argument. Beginning with the theory of street-level bureaucracy, I go over the basic principles suggested by Lipsky (1980), I provide an overview of its main assertions and I discuss how these have been challenged over the years. In doing so, I also position this thesis in relation to the existing studies, both in terms of specific strands of literature and in terms of research methods. As this research is at the intersection of public administration and social psychology, I also discuss the previous efforts to combine the two perspectives, outlining the more focused theoretical contributions of the empirical chapters to come. More importantly, I describe and discuss the broader theoretical framework this thesis brings forward, a framework which underscores the significance of individual identity dilemmas, but which also acknowledges that front-liners are parts of a greater whole.

In *Chapter 3*, the first empirical chapter, I introduce the '*role – person'* identity conflict, building on the literature on moral conflicts at the front lines (Tummers et. al., 2012; Vink et. al., 2015). To do so, I examine the decision-making mechanisms of asylum judges, the front-liners who determine the outcome of refugee asylum applications in Athens and Berlin. On the one hand, I suggest, it is their professional *role* identity as asylum judges and, on the other, it is their *person* identity as individuals who are more or

less compassionate towards migrants. I show here that, when examining an asylum case that belongs to the 'grey area' category of cases, the asylum judges are essentially called to prioritise between their professional role identity and their person identity. Depending on which identity dominates over the other, the decision will be more 'evidence'-based or more preference-based. Although neither path leads to a specific decision outcome, these outcomes have life-altering consequences for the migrant clients.

In *Chapter 4*, I introduce the *'role – social'* identity conflict, by focusing on those migrants who, over time, have become front-liners themselves. This conflict describes the tension they experience between their 'front-liner' identity and their 'migrant' identity. Although one would expect migrant front-liners to be more likely to represent the needs and interests of their migrant clients, this research points to a more complex set of dynamics, suggesting that there are various factors that mediate this relationship. Their social status in the local society, the perceptions others have of them and a previous experience of discrimination represent few such examples. As the combination of these factors is different across different individuals, one cannot pinpoint the specific conditions under which passive representation translates into active representation. But, there is an important shared characteristic among those who make it happen: they embrace the 'migrant representative role', meaning they prioritise their migrant identity over their front-liner identity.

In *Chapter 5* I broaden the scope, both of the front-liners under examination and of the internal conflict they experience. I focus on front-liners who carry out care-work-related tasks, having continuous interaction with the same clients for an extended period of time, and I discuss the conflict between 'Self' and 'Other'. Acknowledging that front-liners and migrants, on average, are likely to hold dissimilar gender identities and gender beliefs, I look at how the front-liners tackle this perceived difference, both cognitively and in practice. In a few words, I suggest that the front-liners' discretionary behaviour depends on their stance on two critical dimensions: whether they see the migrants' views as inferior or simply different and whether they see these views as fixed or changeable. Depending on where they position themselves on these two axes, they follow one of four discretionary strategies: judge, soft nudge, hard nudge or engage. 'Judge' indicates a strict and distant approach to migrant clients, 'engage' indicates a closer level of involvement and the other two lie in between.

In *Chapter 6*, the last empirical chapter, I broaden the scope even more. Returning to the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 2, I discuss in greater detail the formation of front-line communities of practice in the two cities, and I elaborate on the structure-agency interactions. These communities often present new kinds of internal conflicts for front-liners, but they also function as a filter between the structural conditions and the individual self-understandings of front-liners. As the structural conditions shape the community norms (e.g. with regard to the notion of discretion,) they also shape the front-liners' sense of self as members of these communities and, consequently, their use of discretion in practice. However, although the contextual characteristics of Athens and Berlin are considerably different from each other, the actual discretionary behaviours of Athenian and Berliner front-liners are not so different. This, I suggest, is largely due to the 'norm infusion' and to the 'transboundary learning' that occurs when members of the two communities work together.

Finally, *Chapter 7* is the concluding chapter that reviews the most important points presented in the previous chapters and discusses this research's theoretical contributions and broader implications. It addresses how this study adds to the research field of street-level bureaucracy by accounting for a wide and diverse range of front-line actors, and by shedding light on the various identity conflicts these actors encounter at the front lines of service delivery. More generally, through the examination of the cases of Athens and Berlin, during the 2015-2017 European Migration Crisis, this study offers important and portable insights on how discretionary decisions are made under highly uncertain conditions. Assuming a bottom-up view of policy implementation, it draws further attention to the human factor and its critical role when policy is put into practice. The chapter closes with a brief discussion on potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Front-Line Dilemmas and *De Facto* Discretion: Adding to Street-Level Bureaucracy

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the key research question of this thesis, namely how those at the front lines of social service delivery make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty. I mentioned the theoretical approach I used to tackle this question and I discussed in detail the research methods employed to undertake this endeavour. In addition to situating my research theoretically and empirically, I offered a brief discussion of its broader relevance and described the overall structure of the thesis.

In this chapter, I delve deeper into the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis and I present and discuss the theoretical framework I developed to explain the research question under examination. This framework places the identities of front-line actors at its core, emphasising the individual-level processes that take place when front-liners carry out their work tasks. At the same time, it accounts for the external influences at the meso and macro levels, namely the front-line communities of practice and the structural conditions of the local state. Through this multi-level analytical approach, I further infuse the field of street-level bureaucracy with social psychology, thereby offering a theoretical extension which accounts for the increased complexities of today's era of front-line service delivery.

As contemporary scholars of street-level bureaucracy have already noted (Brodkin, 2012, 2013, 2016; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith & Lipsky, 1993), public bureaucracies have ceased to represent the sole units that make up the interface between the state and its citizens. With the rise of mixed social services, public servants have now been joined by private sector employees as well as by civil society members. Accordingly, this thesis suggests that the socialisation of today's front-liners takes place not only within public bureaucracies, but across a wide range of street-level organisations and groups, altogether forming shared communities of practice. And, although the structural conditions circumscribing these communities are likely to differ from one setting to another, the diversification of front-line actors is an increasingly common development.

Against this backdrop, the key argument I make here is that the front-liners' discretionary decisions are, to a large part, self-informed. In the absence of a single dominant organisational culture among the various actors at the front lines, their organisational affiliation is no longer their most important point of reference. What matters more under these circumstances, I suggest, is who the individual front-liners are or, to be more accurate, who they think they are. In other words, the ways in which individual actors view themselves, not only as front-liners but also as persons and as members of specific social groups, function as guides that shape their decisions and, consequently, their discretionary behaviour when carrying out their work tasks. How front-liners construe their multiple identities therefore matters for policy implementation as well.

It is important to note here that, although this theoretical chapter precedes the empirical chapters of this thesis, this order does not reflect a deductive research methodology. As already mentioned, this thesis is based on an iterative research approach, which means that the theoretical framework proposed here has largely emerged from the analysis of the data collected.

I begin this chapter by providing the general background to Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, reviewing its fundamental assumptions and principal assertions. I then discuss some important theoretical developments in the field, focusing on three key points: the factors that determine bureaucratic discretion, the manifestations of discretion in practice and the consequences of discretionary behaviour. In doing so, I position this thesis' theoretical contributions within the relevant literature. As this research is at the intersection of public administration and social psychology, I also discuss the previous efforts to combine the two perspectives and outline the more focused theoretical insights I shall offer in the empirical chapters that follow. More importantly, I present and explain the theoretical framework this thesis proposes, describing each of its parts in greater detail. The chapter concludes with a short summary.

2.2 Street-Level Bureaucracy

2.2.1 The Fundamentals

The theoretical point of entry of this thesis is Lipsky's (1969, 1980) concept of 'street-level bureaucrats', which he defined as "public service workers who interact directly with citizens and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work"

(1980, p. 3). Classic examples of street-level bureaucrats, he noted, are social workers, police officers and public school teachers. A social worker may exercise discretion by deciding whether to provide social assistance to an unemployed citizen, a police officer may have to decide whether to fine a speeding driver and a teacher may have to decide whether to suspend a misbehaving student. As these three examples indicate, street-level bureaucrats may largely determine the extent to which a specific policy will be put into practice, on the basis of the discretion they exercise.

Through his seminal 1980 book 'Street-Level Bureaucracy', Lipsky essentially proposed a new theoretical framework to account for the important role of those at the front lines of policy implementation. In his words, "the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out" (Lipsky, 1980, xii). By portraying street-level bureaucrats as the "ultimate policymakers", Lipsky was among those who advocated a bottom-up view of the study of policy implementation, coming in opposition to the top-down model that was predominant at the time (Wildavsky, 1973, see also deLeon & deLeon, 2002). He also took a step away from Weber's rational–legal perspective of public administration as he placed more emphasis on the individual agency and less on the structure.

Lipsky's work emerged during an era of significant expansion of public services, 25 years after the Second World War, and in the context of the American urban politics of the 1960s and 1970s[9]. With the expanded public sector, professionals involved in health, welfare and education became powerful groups that managed to achieve greater levels of discretion in their work (Lipsky, 1980, see also Evans, 2010). From the early 1960s, scholars began addressing the critical role of lower-level employees in complex organisations too (Crozier, 1964; Kaufman, 1960; Mechanic, 1962; Wilson, 1967). As noted by David Mechanic at an early stage, it is not unusual for them to "assume and wield considerable power and influence not associated with their formally defined positions" (1962, pp. 349–351). Drawing on Weber's concept of bureaucracy, Mechanic emphasised the informal power bureaucrats hold by having increased access to information (knowledge about norms, procedures, etc.), persons (people inside or outside the organisation) and instrumentalities (i.e., equipment, machines, money, etc.).

[9] This period saw one of the vibrant social movements that pushed for a shift in public consciousness in relation to social and identity rights.

It was in this context that Lipsky (2010) came to challenge the then commonly accepted meanings of public bureaucracies, which he argued had a) failed to take account of the daily struggles of public service workers in their effort to serve their communities, and b) employed an anti-government narrative which threatened to undo the social policy achievements of the New Deal, the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty. As Brodkin (2012) noted some 30 years later, not only did Lipsky offer a more human portrayal of bureaucrats, but he also addressed the day-to-day dilemmas of individual policy practitioners, providing a fundamental template for both analytical and practical investigation.

More than four decades after its initial conception, the theory of street-level bureaucracy remains a useful tool for understanding and explaining policy in practice, even though some developments in the *de facto* delivery of human services have challenged a number of its basic premises. An obvious such development concerns the technological advancements over time, which have partly changed citizen–state interactions. Indeed, citizens today are increasingly relying on the use of electronic modes of communication to access social services, as opposed to having face-to-face exchanges with public servants (Cote-Boucher, 2016; Jilke, Dooren, & Rys, 2018; Keiser, 2010; Schuppan, 2016).

More generally, and more importantly, the administrative reforms that accompanied the rise of New Public Management in the 1980s have altered both the composition of the actors who deliver services today and the value system in which they operate. In this 'businesslike' approach to governance (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994), many front-line public agencies have been replaced by profit-seeking contractors, others by non-profit organisations and yet others by 'hybrid' organisations (Brodkin, 2012, 2013, 2016; Evers, 2005; Lipksy & Smith, 1989-1990; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Inevitably, these diverse street-level organisations operate under diverse organisational norms and values and have different types of expectations from their employees compared to 'traditional' street-level bureaucracies.

Adding to the above, today's clients are no longer only local citizens, but, very often, they come from elsewhere. Especially in large European metropolitan cities, the proportion of foreign-born residents has been increasing over the years, a trend that spiked during the recent migration crisis era. Indicatively, 80% of the EU's population growth between 2012 and 2016 was due to migration, and only 20% due to new births (Eurostat, 2017). Whether expat professionals, economic immigrants or refugees, the fact that there

is a significant number of social service recipients who are not citizens but instead migrants poses yet another challenge to Lipsky's account, which has not yet been explicitly addressed by subsequent scholars in the field.

Taken together, the diversification of front-line actors and the social heterogenisation of clients call for a re-examination of the theory of street-level bureaucracy. Undoubtedly, as both the street-level bureaucrats and their clients change, the process of putting policy into practice also changes. My contention is that the new status quo influences the front-line actors' normative of human service delivery, forms their Self-view as front-line actors and consequently shapes their discretionary behaviour. Building further on this observation, and drawing from the analysis of the interview data collected, I shall propose an extension to Lipsky's account in the sections that follow. But, before doing so, I shall first lay out the theoretical groundwork, reviewing some key developments in what came to constitute the 'field' of street-level bureaucracy.

2.2.2 The Use of Discretion

Perhaps the most central notion in the theory of street-level bureaucracy is that of discretion. As mentioned above, the use of discretion by street-level bureaucrats is what ultimately shapes policy outcomes. For that, it has attracted a great deal of from researchers of social service delivery and policy implementation (e.g., Brehm & Gates, 1999; Evans, 2010; Evans & Hupe, 2019; Hupe, 2013; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Among the scholarly accounts following Lipsky's, I distinguish three general foci, each of them speaking to a different aspect of discretionary decisions: the 'before', the 'during' and the 'after'. For the purposes of this discussion, I refer to them here as the *factors* that shape bureaucratic discretion, the *manifestations* of discretion in practice and the *consequences* of discretion use for policy and for clients (Table 2.1 below). Although many of these studies emphasise the latter more, my own research will focus instead on the factors and manifestations of discretion.

a. Factors

Researchers following Lipsky's framework have identified a number of potential factors that may influence the discretionary behaviour of front-line actors. I divide these factors into two categories: those referring to structural weaknesses or gaps and those concerning individual preferences or interpersonal influences. Beginning with the former, a problem which is almost always present, as Lipsky noted, is the lack of resources. When

the material resources available are too few to meet the demands of the clients, front-line workers have to come up with ways to best allocate these resources themselves. And, along with managing this mismatch, they may also be confronted by a very high workload in just a finite amount of time (Riccucci, 2005). In both cases, the pressure to distribute a limited amount of resources across a growing number of clients leads, inevitably, to discretionary decisions.

Table 2.1 Brief Overview of Factors, Manifestations and Consequences of Discretion

Factors	**Manifestations**	**Consequences**
Resources -material -time vs. workload Policy Gaps/Grey Areas Organisational Culture: -shared norms/values -principal-agent dynamics -groupthink Individual Preferences: -on policy, clients, role, etc.	Key Distinctions: -as granted vs. as used -*de jure* or *de facto* -formal vs. informal -authorised vs. unauthorised Discretionary Logics: -state-agent vs. citizen-agent model - indifference vs. caregiving vs. enforcement Discretionary Behaviours: -work, shirk, sabotage -apply, bend, ignore the rules -rationing, controlling clients, etc	Impact on Clients: -positive vs. negative Impact on Policy Outcomes: -intended outcomes vs. unintended consequences Impact on Public's Trust of Public Agencies: -perceived as fair and democratic (or less so)

Source: Table constructed by the author, based on the literature reviewed in this section

Two more objective obstacles for policy implementers are the ambiguity of certain policy prescriptions and the lack of clarity in the organisational rules and regulations. Policymakers may have not calculated with great accuracy the conditions at the implementation stage, or they may have purposely avoided specifying points that would be controversial in the eyes of the public (e.g., regarding migrant deportations). In any case, policy frameworks are often complex and multilayered, having 'gaps' or 'grey areas' that give policy implementers room to exercise their own discretionary judgement (Brodkin, 2013; Martinsen *et al.*, 2019; Schultz, 2020; Thomann & Sager, 2017). Such grey areas may also be present within an organisation's rules, which may not be necessarily placed with a certain policy framework in mind, but which effectively do

facilitate its implementation, as they are at an intermediate stage between making policy and executing policy.

Along with these material and structural pressures, researchers have also identified normative factors that allow for or influence the street-level bureaucrats' use of discretion. The most common of these concerns the so called 'the organisational culture', indicating a shared set of norms and values among colleagues of the same organisation. It could be a product of the organisational rules and regulations (Oberfield, 2014), it may involve a top-down transfer of preferences (Khademian, 2002) within the organisational hierarchy, or it might even result from some degree of peer pressure or 'groupthink' among colleagues at the street level (Alpes & Spire, 2015; Zilber, 2002). Regardless of the reasons for its formation, the organisational culture could play a pivotal role in driving bureaucratic discretion by swaying the bureaucrats' preferences or even shaping their behaviour.

The street-level bureaucrats' individual preferences matter, of course, irrespective of whether or not they are filtered through organisational norms. One way this becomes obvious is by examining the bureaucrats' perceptions of their target populations (Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Jilke & Tummers, 2018; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), which I shall discuss in further detail in Chapter 5. In short, if they have a favourable opinion of the clients they serve and think of them as 'deserving', street-level bureaucrats are more likely to help them, and even go the 'extra mile' to do so (e.g., Belabas & Gerrits, 2017; James & Julian, 2020). By contrast, if, in the bureaucrats' view, the clients have low levels of 'deservingness', then the bureaucrats are more likely to use their discretion in ways that do not advance, or even contradict, the clients' interests (e.g., Epp, Maynard-Moody, & Haider-Markel, 2014).

Apart from the bureaucrat–client interactions, individual normative preferences are also important when it comes to bureaucrats' perceptions of external factors, such as the job task (Buffat, 2016; Jensen, 2018), the institutional capacity (Baviskar & Winter, 2017) or the policy goals (May & Winter, 2009). Depending on their understandings and their opinions of these considerations, street-level bureaucrats may use their discretion to closely implement, (partly) ignore or even sabotage the policies they are meant to put into practice (see also Brehm & Gates, 1999). Even if these preferences are individually held, and not shared among the majority of colleagues within the same organisation, they may still be influenced by the preferences of others. The preferences of managers (Riccucci, 2005), local politicians (May & Winter, 2009) or the public (Ellermann, 2006; Howe,

1991) all play a role in shaping bureaucrats' individual preferences, thereby influencing their use of discretion.

It is also worth noting here that, although bureaucratic discretion is often portrayed as an effort to avoid, cope with or push back external pressures that contradict personal preferences, bureaucratic behaviour is not necessarily reactive. That is, street-level bureaucrats aim not only to avoid frustration by overcoming adversities, but also to gain satisfaction by meeting their personal goals and interests (Nielsen, 2006). This could mean achieving a promotion within their organisation, serving a target population they are strongly in favour of or implementing a policy that is in accordance with their political views. In that sense, their motivation is not merely negative, but also positive. As Nielsen (2006, p. 869) puts it, street-level bureaucrats are "both compelled and enticed to act".

The latter observation is particularly relevant in the field of migration management and during the migration crisis era. As migration constitutes a highly contested issue, both politically and socially, there is likely to be a considerable proportion of front-liners who have self-selected into their roles, particularly among those who represent the civil society. Put simply, if one did not like migrants, one would not take on a role to provide services to them during such a difficult and demanding period. It would not be surprising, then, if these front-liners were more inclined to bend or sabotage the rules in order to help their migrant clients, as this means acting in accordance with their own –political, humanitarian or religious – identities and beliefs.

This brings us to the final and perhaps the most important factor shaping discretion in the given context: the identities of front-line actors. Who they think they are shapes not only their understanding of their role as front-liners (Chapters 3 and 4), but it also shapes how they see their clients (Chapter 5). It can therefore be a major driver of their daily discretionary decisions as they carry out their work tasks and implement policy. Nonetheless, although the identities of bureaucrats have been found to affect their decision-making (Dubois, 2010; Eule, 2014; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Zacka, 2017), this is an area that can be extended substantially, as I shall discuss in further detail in the sections that follow.

b. Manifestations

Bureaucratic discretion has various manifestations in practice. To discuss these, however, one has to first establish what discretion is. Given the multidisciplinary interest in the subject – most notably from the fields of law, economics, sociology and political

science – different disciplinary perspectives would yield different definitions, according to their general principles and objects of interest (Hupe, 2013). From the viewpoint of street-level bureaucracy research, which is considered to be a subfield of political science and public administration, the focus is on policy implementation and, more specifically, on policy as it is practised. This implies that there is an important distinction between discretion *as granted* and discretion *as used*, which Lipsky (1980) sought to emphasise. It is the power bureaucrats have to act within the policy framework, the organisational rules and their role prescriptions on the one hand, and the power to act that they actually exercise on the other.

Over the years, scholars have used other similar terms to describe these two sides of the same coin. Some refer to it as *de jure* vs. *de facto* discretion, differentiating between the legally prescribed discretionary expectations and the discretionary strategies used in practice (Evans, 2010). Others distinguish between *formal* and *informal* discretion (Blackmore, 2001; Brodkin, 2016), or *authorised* and *unauthorised* (Brodkin, 2010), in order to underline the use of discretionary practices that fall both within and outside one's official role prescriptions. As the focus of this thesis is on policy as practised, it is also on discretion as used, or *de facto*, irrespective of whether or not it is also *de jure*/official/authorised.

Alongside the difficulties in pinning down the specific definition and boundaries of what constitutes discretion, there are also difficulties in its empirical observation. The existing studies have used a variety of methodological approaches, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Ethnographic approaches offer a more accurate depiction of what actually happens on the ground, but cannot include the bureaucratic decisions made behind closed doors. Qualitative interviews allow for a deeper insight into the bureaucrats' decision-making mechanisms, but the interviewees' accounts are subject to biases, either due to false memories or due to an effort to present oneself in a positive light. And, large N studies have the advantage of high generalisability, but they do not always capture the intended phenomenon precisely. Depending on its chosen approach, therefore, a study may shed light on a particular aspect of discretion but overlook another.

Despite the challenges in defining and recording discretion, several scholars have proposed different typologies of bureaucratic discretion, both in terms of decision-making logics and in terms of behaviour. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), for instance, argue that those street-level bureaucrats who view themselves as representatives of their clients, the 'citizen-agents', are more likely to serve their clients' interests, while those

who view themselves are representatives of the state, the 'state-agents', are more likely to prioritise rule enforcement. In a somewhat similar vein, Zacka (2017) suggests that there are three (pathological) types of moral predispositions and implementation styles among individual street-level bureaucrats: *indifference, caregiving* and *enforcement.* The first adopts an emotional distance from the act of serving clients, the second assumes a caregiving role that prioritises the clients' needs and the third emphasises rule-following. In both of these typologies, distinct individual identities and characteristics lead to distinct discretionary practices.

Adding to these, there are also other typologies proposed that focus solely on the bureaucrats' discretionary behaviour itself. Brehm and Gates (1997), for example, coming from a slightly different theoretical starting point, discuss a repertoire of different discretionary strategies or enforcement styles. They define *work* as performing policy tasks and producing a "positive output"; *sabotage* as the production of a "negative output" that undermines the policy goals; and *shirk* as not working, either because one does not feel like doing so (leisure-shirking), or because one is opposed to a particular policy output (dissent-shirking) (Ibid., p. 30). Similarly, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003, p. 150) suggest that street-level bureaucrats may *apply*, *bend* or *ignore* the rules, depending on the individual judgements they make about their clients. These proposed strategies come to complement Lipsky's list of "routines and simplifications", which includes rationing services, controlling clients' access to them, husbanding resources and managing expectations (1980, p. 86).

The list of typologies discussed here is by no means exhaustive, but it offers valuable insights with regard to the various ways in which discretion manifests in practice. A persisting problem, nonetheless, is that they are not easily generalisable across different bureaucratic contexts. Indeed, significant differences in the use of bureaucratic discretion have been observed across professional sectors (e.g., Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), across countries for the same sector (e.g., Jordan, Strath, & Triandafyllidou, 2003), as well as across organisations from the same sector within the same country (e.g., Riccucci, 2005). Therefore, to better understand how policy is implemented on the ground, we should not look at the individual-level decision-making and discretionary behaviour alone, but we should also account for the particular contextual characteristics around them (see below).

c. Consequences

Finally, another line of research has focused on the consequences of discretion, not only for the clients, but also for the implementation agencies themselves. When it comes to delivering social services, the people affected the most are, of course, the clients. The effects on clients may be positive and helpful (e.g., boosting minority students' school performance – Marvel & Resh, 2015), or they may be negative and discriminatory (e.g., fining black drivers at a higher rate – Epp *et al*., 2014). In certain cases, they may even be life-saving (e.g., medical doctors deciding on a patient's treatment – see Tummers *et al*., 2012; Vink *et al*., 2015). More broadly, bureaucratic discretion can also influence whether a public agency is fair and efficient (Theobald & Haider-Merkel, 2008), as well as whether it is perceived as such by the public (Keiser, 2010; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, & Lavena, 2014). It goes without saying, then, that the consequences of discretion do matter.

However, much like observing discretion, studying its consequences can be a challenging task for researchers. Although in some cases the effects of discretion can be measured with relative ease (e.g., school exam results or number of speeding tickets), in others they cannot be quantified or otherwise observed. The policies concerning the integration of migrants represent an obvious such example. Given how abstract and multidimensional the notion of integration is, it would be rather meaningless to try to link specific discretionary practices with specific levels of migrant integration. Having this significant obstacle in mind, this thesis will not address the consequences of the front-liners' use of discretion but will remain focused on the 'factors' aspect.

To summarise this section, in the decades following the introduction of street-level bureaucracy theory, scholarly attention has centred around the use of bureaucratic discretion: the drivers behind its usage, the discretionary logics and repertoires, and the consequences. The changing reality of social service delivery, however, presents a critical challenge to the original theory of street-level bureaucracy. With the rise of privatisation and contracting, the responsibility for delivering services has now been divided across a wide range of diverse organisations and civil society groups. At the same time, the clients' demographics have also changed, with an increasing proportion of them being foreign-born residents and non-citizens.

It is my contention that these developments point towards the need to re-examine today's discretionary practices, asking how front-liners view themselves, as well as how they view their clients. In other words, these developments call for further research into

the role of individual identities in front-line decision-making. This suggests, then, a need to adopt a social and/or psychological angle in the study of front-line service delivery.

2.3 Street-Level Bureaucracy from a Psychosocial Angle

As mentioned earlier, Lipsky underscored the importance of the human factor in policy implementation. He asserted that street-level bureaucrats are policymakers in their own right, and he portrayed them as purposeful decision-makers who have their own perspectives, preferences and power to act. In this way, he shifted the focus away from the laws, regulations and procedures that circumscribe policymaking and instead placed it on those at the bottom of the bureaucratic hierarchical ladder, and on their daily thoughts and actions. Although Lipsky acknowledged that external factors may constrain or influence individual action, he placed greater emphasis on the individual agency of street-level bureaucrats.

While shifting the focus away from the structure and onto the individual agent, Lipsky also opened the door for more micro-level approaches to the policy implementation research. As I shall discuss next, since the genesis of Lipsky's framework, there have been various efforts to infuse psychological and sociological perspectives into public administration, and into street-level bureaucracy in particular. Some scholars have made explicit efforts to orchestrate marriages between the two fields (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.*, 2017; Zacka, 2017), while others have made similar contributions but in a more subtle manner (e.g., Dubois, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). These studies have offered valuable insights, but this thesis has also identified fruitful avenues for further fertilisation. In the paragraphs that follow, I review some relevant theoretical developments, and I present some of the focused theoretical contributions that this thesis makes.

2.3.1 Psychosocial Perspectives in Street-Level Bureaucracy

The idea of incorporating social psychology into public administration is not, of course, new. Public administration scholars such as Herbert Simon (1947) and Dwight Waldo (1965) have long argued for recognition of the significance of psychological research within the study of public administration. More recently, this view has been gaining momentum, especially in relation to street-level bureaucracy. Questions concerning the psychological dilemmas, the decision-making mechanisms and the

idiosyncratic characteristics of street-level bureaucrats have dominated this research stream.

From a political theory point of view, Bernardo Zacka (2017) has made an effort to pollinate the study of street-level bureaucracy with psychological theorising. Borrowing from classic psychological theories, such as that of 'cognitive dissonance'[10], he analyses the cognitive processes that street-level bureaucrats follow in their effort to tackle and overcome the multiple and conflicting expectations they encounter at work. Bureaucrats, he suggests, start from a specific "moral disposition" (the indifferent, the enforcer or the caregiver), constantly "calibrating" and "modulating" what they do (p. 111). Put differently, they monitor their behaviour and adopt their self-view in an effort to achieve an inner peace between what they have to do on a daily basis as bureaucrats and how they feel about it as people.

During the last decade, we have also witnessed the birth of 'behavioural public administration', which has also been applied to the study of street-level bureaucracy (Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.,* 2017; Tummers *et al.,* 2016). Following the emerging field of behavioural economics, these scholars have sought to introduce a new angle in public administration, involving psychological insights. In Kasdan's (2018) words, they have attempted a marriage between 'bounded rationality' (Simon, 1955) and 'predictable irrationality' (Ariely, 2008). Their goal here has been to advance conceptual and empirical models that would predict human behaviour, while bearing in mind that this behaviour is often not rational or aiming to maximise self-interest.

Although intriguing in principle, there is a chance that behavioural public administration might be promising more than it can deliver. The increased popularity of big data, experiments and psychometrics is an ongoing trend within psychology too, but it is a trend suitable for answering quantifiable, individual-oriented questions only. There are also other traditions within psychology that view the link between an individual and their community as essential, and ask questions that require more nuanced, in-depth analyses (e.g., Social Representations Theory, Moscovici, 1961/1984). For questions of 'how' (e.g., how do front-line actors make decisions under conditions of uncertainty?), behavioural public administration is not directly suitable, especially when it involves social processes as they are unfolding (e.g., the migration crisis). Although this thesis draws from studies that belong to the behavioural public administration research stream

[10] Cognitive dissonance refers to the mental discomfort individuals feel when they have to confront two of more contradicting beliefs, ideas or values, which upsets their psychological consistency (Festinger, 1957).

too (e.g. Tummers *et al*., 2012; Vink *et al*., 2015), the overall angle it takes is closer to social psychology than to behavioural psychology.

Apart from those who have openly set the goal to examine street-level bureaucracy from a psychological perspective, there are also those who borrow from social and psychological traditions, but in a more discrete fashion. For instance, Dubois (2010) draws from Erving Goffman and Pierre Bourdieu to analyse identity construction in the bureaucrat–client interactions inside two French welfare offices. He speaks, for example, of street-level bureaucrats as having "two bodies" (p. 117), the person and the bureaucrat. By alternating between the mobilisation of the one and the other identity, depending on the needs of the particular interaction, the bureaucrats manage their "presentation of self" (Goffman, 1956), thereby managing their workload too.

In a similar manner, Eule (2014, 2017) also approaches street-level bureaucracy from an ethnographic and interdisciplinary perspective. Although he does not explicitly state his aim to bring in perspectives from psychology or sociology, he does so by providing a detailed description of the micro-level interactions between bureaucrats and clients inside three German migration offices. He discusses how "distancing" is a coping mechanism bureaucrats adopt to face the challenging and conflicting demands of their job (Eule, 2014), while he also addresses the "asymmetrical negotiations" and the unequal power dynamics in the exchanges between bureaucrats and clients (Eule, 2017). Like Dubois, Eule also draws on Goffman and underlines the importance of the socialisation bureaucrats undergo within organisations.

Although this thesis does not represent a pure ethnography in the traditional sense, it does have ethnographic elements (Simmons & Smith, 2017) as it is based on in-depth qualitative interviews and direct observations. As such, it is generally closer to approaches such as those adopted by Dubois and Eule, rather than to those subscribing to the behavioural public administration paradigm. Even so, as I shall show next, there are some focused theoretical arguments that this thesis advances which draw from the combination of the diverse literature streams discussed above, as well as on the incorporation of previously unutilised social psychological insights, most notably Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009).

2.3.2 Key Insights and Focused Contributions

In an effort to examine how front-line actors make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, I borrow from, and contribute to, three particular research areas. These concern 1) the moral dilemmas facing front-liners, 2) the field of 'representative bureaucracy', and 3) the bureaucrat–client interactions. Not only are these areas conducive to the study of individual identities at the front lines, but they are also applicable to the study of different migration policies, whether concerning asylum determination or migrant integration. As I shall discuss next, the re-examination of each of these three research areas through the lens of the migration crisis allows for the advancement of three focused theoretical points that contribute to the extension of the respective research fields.

First, studies have shown that certain categories of professionals who interact directly with clients face a series of moral dilemmas (Tummers *et al*., 2012; Vink *et al*., 2015). Such examples may include a teacher deciding how harshly to punish a misbehaving student from a disadvantaged background or a medical doctor deciding when to discontinue an experimental treatment for an unresponsive patient. Different aspects of these dilemmas speak to different expectations that their role encompasses. Following closely the *policy* at stake, staying loyal to one's *professional* values, meeting the needs of the *clients* and keeping in line with the *organisational rules and norms* constitute co-existing requirements that are not always compatible with each other (Ibid.). Due to these conflicting role requirements, the moral dilemmas these professionals face take the shape of role conflicts for them.

Apart from conflicts stemming from role requirements, however, moral dilemmas may also lead to conflicts between different individual identities. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 3, highly politicised and controversial issues, such as that of migration, in a way 'force' front-liners to take a personal stance. As a result, one's 'person' identity cannot be easily divorced from one's professional decisions which are already morally loaded, as they are in refugee asylum determination. By looking at the decision-making mechanisms of (lay) judges who decide on 'grey area' asylum claims, I introduce an additional conflict that adds to the existing list, the 'person' versus the professional 'role' identity conflict. The literature on asylum decision-making already shows that there are considerable discrepancies between different asylum judges and decision-making bodies (Dahlvik, 2017; Keith, Holmes & Miller, 2013; Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017). Besides shedding light on a largely overlooked category of street-level bureaucrats, this

theoretical point contributes to the literature on moral dilemmas at the front lines, while also informing the asylum decisions discrepancy problem.

Second, as the literature on representative bureaucracy has long shown, when the demographic characteristics of bureaucrats mirror those of the general population, the needs and interests of this population's members are more likely to be well-represented (see Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003; Krislov, 1974; Meier, 1993; Riccucci & Meyer, 2004; Selden, 1997). This appears to be true not only for top-level bureaucrats, but also for those at the street level, including teachers (Keiser *et al*., 2002) and police officers (Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2008). Nonetheless, the link between passive and active representations is not direct, meaning not all minority bureaucrats serve minority clients better, and not all female bureaucrats serve female clients better. A key underlying factor that helps explain this link concerns whether the bureaucrats view themselves as representatives of minorities and/or of women (Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998). If they do, then the passive representation is more likely to become active.

As with the above, the migration crisis offers an opportunity to extend this literature by addressing an element that has so far been overlooked, particularly in the European context. As I shall elaborate in Chapter 4, a significant proportion of those at the front lines of migration management have some type of migration background themselves: they might be first- or second-generation migrants, from within or outside the EU. This makes them, then, a 'special' category of front-liners. By virtue of their migrant identity, they experience an additional layer of pressures compared to their local colleagues, due to the additional expectations clients and colleagues place on them. Although, for some, this is an opportunity to advance their clients' interests, for others it is an opportunity to prove their loyalty to the local state and society. Depending on whether they view themselves as representatives of the migrants or as representatives of the 'system', their use of discretion will form accordingly. This identity conflict is specific to migrant front-liners in this study, but it also informs the literature on representative bureaucracy more generally.

Third, one of the commonly accepted notions among street-level bureaucracy scholars is that bureaucrats' service delivery will depend on how they judge individual clients (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). If they see a client as deserving of their help, they are more likely to help the client, sometimes going out of their way to achieve so (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017; James & Julian, 2020). But, if a client is not seen as deserving, either due to stereotyping (Raaphorst & Groeneveld, 2018) or because of the

behaviour the client displays (Jilke & Tummers, 2018), then the bureaucrats are less likely to help and more likely to 'punish' this client. The existing studies discuss basic demographic differences between bureaucrats and clients, or they focus on the behavioural characteristics of clients. But, there is an aspect that they overlook, too.

As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 5, there are times when front-liners face significant normative clashes in their interactions with clients, for example, when having different gender identities and beliefs from them. In such cases, I argue, the front-liners' use of discretion is filtered through the lens of perceived 'Self-Other' differences. If the front-liners see the gender identities and beliefs of their clients as fixed and as hierarchically inferior to their own, they are more likely to 'judge' their clients and maintain a distance from them. But, if they see these characteristics as socially constructed and as simply different, they are more likely to engage closely with their clients in an effort to bridge the perceived gap. Therefore, in instances when the target population represents a socially marginalised group, client deservingness is determined by the front-liners' perceived distance from their clients.

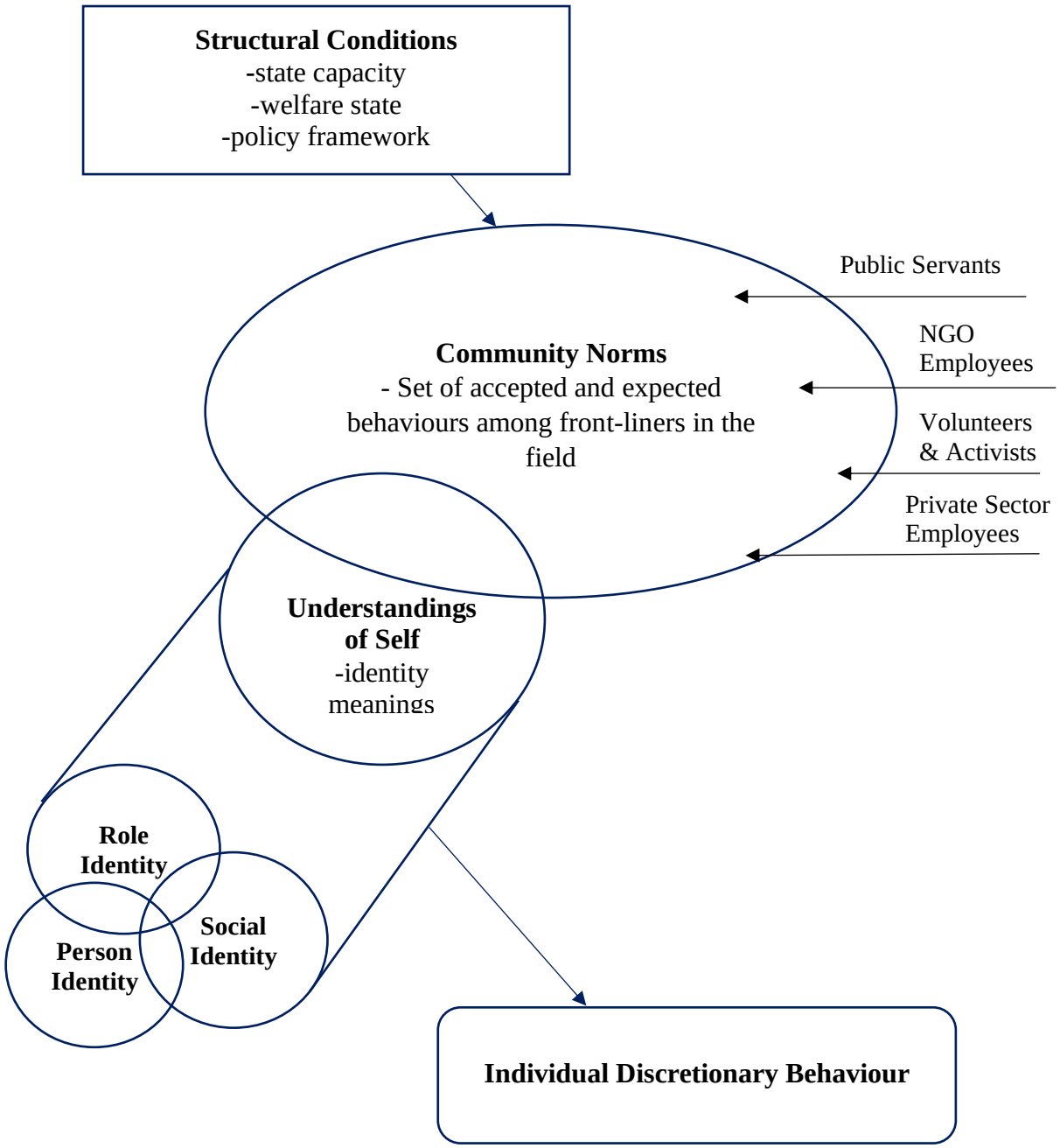
To summarise this subsection, contemporary policy implementation scholars agree that focusing on micro-level dynamics is important for understanding policy in practice. Some have explicitly attempted to build a bridge between street-level bureaucracy and psychology, while others have made subtler attempts to infuse the former with the latter. In this study, I make relevant theoretical contributions on three specific literature streams of street-level bureaucracy, namely the ones relating to moral dilemmas, representative bureaucracy and bureaucrat–client interactions.

2.4 Broader Theoretical Framework

Along with the more specific theoretical points discussed above, this thesis aims to answer a broader question, and, for that, it offers a broader theoretical framework (Figure 2.1). Following Lipsky's general direction, it maintains an actor-oriented approach (see also Scharpf, 1997, 2000), emphasising individual agency, while also acknowledging that individuals are embedded within particular social and structural environments. In short, this framework suggests that, when making decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, the identities of the front-liners play a crucial role in shaping their discretionary behaviour. At the same time, the wider community of front-

liners to which they belong and the structural conditions of their local city also frame their course of action, sometimes enabling it and at other times constraining it.

Figure 2.1 Macro to Micro Determinants of Discretionary Behaviour



Although this framework is developed with those at the front lines of Europe's migration crisis in mind, it is not meant to be specific to the field of migration management, or to times of crises, or even to Europe. Rather, the aim is to map and to explain the interactions between macro-, meso- and micro-level dynamics that shape the discretionary decision-making of front-line actors who face uncertain and ambiguous

situations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the migration crisis serves as a lens through which these dynamics appear more obvious and, thus, more easily observable. Therefore, the general principles of this framework are meant to be transferable across different contexts.

Nonetheless, to better illustrate how this framework and its particular parts apply in practice, I shall keep the focus of the discussion here on the migration crisis context in Athens and Berlin. In the paragraphs that follow, I describe the different elements of this theoretical framework one by one. I begin by describing the *structural conditions* in each city, so as to provide some context for what follows. Next, I introduce the *communities of practice* framework (Wenger, 1998) and I explain how its incorporation is useful for studying the behaviour of today's *de facto* policy implementers. I then further elaborate on the core theoretical point of this thesis, namely the ways in which the front-liners' *identities* shape their discretionary behaviour. The links between these three levels will not be discussed in detail in this chapter, but rather in Chapter 6.

2.4.1 The Structural Conditions

As mentioned above, the front-liners' use of discretion is influenced, in part, by structural factors. Structural factors correspond to institutional arrangements and procedures and, more generally, to the legal, economic and social elements that are rather stable over time. When it comes to social service delivery, a country's economic and administrative capacity is extremely important, and so is the strength of its welfare state or the policy frameworks in place. These types of structural factors essentially frame individual action, as Lipsky also implied, by posing certain implementation challenges and by defining the room for manoeuvre that the front-liners have when executing their daily tasks. Although the aim of the theory of street-level bureaucracy is to highlight the role of the individual policy implementers, my view is that we can better examine individual behaviour by acknowledging the contextual peculiarities within which individual front-liners operate.

As I noted already, and shall further elaborate below, the availability of resources and the grey areas in rules and regulations represent two major factors that give rise to discretionary decisions on the ground. To some extent, these are also related to the size and strength of a country's welfare state. The latter determines the range of social services provided (e.g., free access to education and healthcare or not), the quality of these services

(e.g., higher quality services where economic capacity is higher), as well as the composition of the actors involved (e.g., public agencies, contractors or both). Altogether, these structural factors make up a series of external conditions that play a role in shaping the discretionary behaviour of individual front-liners.

Since these structural conditions are usually different across different contexts, I shall discuss here the structural conditions that are specific to the question of this thesis and to the settings of Athens and Berlin. My goal in this section is therefore not so much to demonstrate what the notion of 'structural conditions' means in general, but to provide a contextual background for the discussion that follows. Of the potentially endless list of structural factors that may influence the discretionary behaviour of front-liners, I focus on the three that I consider most important for the implementation of migration policies: the state's *economic capacity* to respond to crises of this magnitude, the available *welfare* services that can be mobilised for the new 'clients' in need and the existing *policies* for migration and integration, which are usually tightly connected to the country's *migration history*.

a. Economic Capacity

To better understand state capacity, it is helpful to consider the recent economic histories of the two cities and their respective experiences of austerity. In the case of Berlin, it is important to note that its capital status is more for historical and symbolic reasons than it is for economic ones. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of the two sides, the local economy has struggled to keep pace with the rest of the country, for a number of reasons. To a large extent, low GDP translated into low tax collection and increased social spending, which meant persistent budget imbalances and over time dependency on federal funds. At the edge of bankruptcy, the public institutions underwent a heavy dose of austerity in the early 2000s. In 2015, with the sudden great wave of newcomers, the government of Berlin reached a public administration crisis point (Bock, 2018) as the local administrative response – or lack thereof – did not seem to match Germany's reputation for high competence and efficiency, and the expectations that come with it.

In contrast to Berlin, Athens is a European capital where most of the country's economic production is concentrated (Sotiropoulos, 2019). Acknowledging, of course, that the economies of Greece and Germany are vastly different, this comparison primarily serves to highlight that Berlin can rely on federal funds to respond to crises, whereas for

Athens this is not an option. What is more, the migration crisis came in the midst of the 'Greek economic crisis', the most severe economic downturn in the country's post-war era. The peak of the migration crisis in 2015 found Greece facing a 25% drop in GDP since the beginning of the recession, a 25% unemployment rate, and one third of its population living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Besides the limited funds and the infrastructure (see also Picture 2 in Appendix II), the government was also precluded from hiring new public servants, as part of the austerity measures required by the memoranda of understanding Greece signed with its EU partners in the previous years. Although the raw numbers of asylum seekers were much lower in Athens than in Berlin, the administrative pressure was analogous in the two capitals.

b. Welfare State

Largely a function of economic capacity, the welfare state of the two cities was also quite different. Compared with Greece, Germany's social benefits for asylum seekers and refugees can be seen as generous. In 2017, the single adult asylum seekers who lived in refugee shelters received €135 per month, married couples received €129 per month each and children received between €76 and €83 per month, depending on their age. For those living in private accommodation, a single adult received €216 per month and married couples received €122 each (Staudenmaier, 2017). And, apart from pocket money, the local government of Berlin also assumed the costs for their accommodation and food, medical care, education and local transportation (Berlin.de, n.d). With regard to employment, although some thorny issues remain, such as the recognition of the migrants' educational qualifications, overall the labour market in Germany can absorb migrant workers relatively easily.

In Greece by contrast, the already malfunctioning welfare state was nearly dismantled by the economic crisis (Matsaganis, 2011). Not only did the available public funds decline, but also the need for social spending increased dramatically. Without the EU's bail-out agreements, bankruptcy of the country's economy as a whole would have been unavoidable, and so would the complete collapse of its welfare state. Even so, the austerity measures that came with the memoranda barely guaranteed the welfare system's survival, let alone the support and protection of thousands of asylum seekers. Against this background, the EU and the UNHCR stepped in to fill the gap and meet the basic needs of asylum seekers (European Commission, 2019b). For asylum applicants living in state sites inside and around Athens, the monthly allowance was €90 per person in 2017, at times provided in the form of vouchers. For a family of seven living in private

accommodation, the aggregate monthly allowance would be €550 (Hodali & Prange, 2018).

However, as previously mentioned, the civil society played an important role in both capitals. For Berlin, some NGOs and grassroots groups filled the gaps of the state, providing social, legal and even medical support to those migrants who fell through the cracks in the system (Bock, 2018). For Athens, the overall deterioration of the country's welfare state led to the formation of various solidarity initiatives at the grassroots level in the city (Cabot, 2016; Rakopoulos, 2013), which also proved beneficial to asylum seekers. 'Social' grocery stores, soup kitchens and health clinics are just a few such examples, to be complemented later by housing squats for refugees, run by self-organised groups of leftists and anarchists, or 'solidarians'.

c. Migration History and Policy

Germany has historically been an emigration country[11], but today it is known as a country of immigration. Initially, with the 'guest workers' of the 1960s, and latterly with the Eastern Europeans of the 1990s, the country has experienced waves of newcomers, but has not properly considered the implications until recently. In 2005, Germany officially declared itself a country of immigration, and the integration of migrants became its legal duty (Laubenthal, 2019). The new migration law that came into effect helped simplify the bureaucratic steps relating to residence permits and made language courses a legal requirement for the new migrants. The road then opened for the newcomers that followed. In the early 2010s, there was an influx of migrants from recession-stricken countries of the European South, followed by the 2015 'European Migration Crisis'.

More so than Germany, Greece has been known for its emigration history, especially in the decades prior to the re-establishment of peace and democracy in 1974. After this point, and particularly after it joined the EU in 1981, Greece became a destination for immigrants too, especially from Albania (Kasimis & Kassimi, 2004). Despite their significant contributions to the local economy, migrants were not legally protected, not only in terms of employment, but also in terms of residency. The government eventually responded with two waves of mass regularisation, in 1997 and in 2001, and many of the migrants registered for the first time after several years of irregular

[11] Six million Germans emigrated between 1820 and 1920, mainly to the United States (European Reading Room, n.d.)

work and residence. Despite the active, albeit unofficial, labour force participation of migrants, the bureaucratic steps required for legalisation remained highly complex in the years to come, while public policies and programmes for migrant integration are yet to be implemented.

As we observed in the brief comparison above, there are considerable structural differences between the two countries when it comes to the issue of migration (see also Pictures 1 and 2 in Appendix II). Germany's solid institutions can respond more effectively in times of crisis, even when its capital's local government does not meet the country's high expectations. And, its history as an 'old' host migration country offers the additional advantage of experience, both in terms of the legal framework and in terms of social services. Greece, on the other hand, lacks both of the above, while its poor economic state further inhibits its ability to manage a migration crisis. The two capitals' distinct economic capacity levels, welfare states and migration policy histories thus create two quite different working worlds for front-liners on the ground. As these macro-level conditions indirectly influence the front-liners' discretionary behaviour, the effect will vary in the different cities, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 6.

2.4.2 The Community Norms

At the meso-analytical level, there are also external factors that influence the individual front-liners' action, although this time the front-liners can influence these factors too. The majority of the existing street-level bureaucracy studies that take on a meso-level approach focus on the intra-organisational dynamics, looking at principal-agent relationships (e.g., Riccucci, 2005), organisational cultures (e.g., Alpes & Spire, 2015), or both (e.g., Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2013). However, as previously noted, the cooperation across different types of organisations has increased over time, largely due to the increased privatisation of services. These kinds of inter-organisational links have intensified even more in light of the migration crisis, as the sudden spike in demand for services gave rise to many new – and new kinds of — street-level organisations and groups (Bock, 2018; Bock & McDonald, 2019; Kalogeraki, 2019; Kortendiek, 2018; Rozakou, 2017; Sichling, 2020). This development calls for a widening of the scope, I argue, and for examining the wider network of individual front-line actors who work side-by-side in the same city, giving shape to front-line *communities of practice*.

By definition, *communities of practice* are composed of people who are active in the same domain and are mutually engaged around a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). These communities may consist of a wide variety of professionals and/or novices who share a common interest and are active in the same field. Examples include a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in a school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques and an assembly of first-time managers helping each other cope (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These hazy boundaries of what defines a community of practice make the approach applicable to the study of front-line actors in the field of migration management too.

There are three key reasons why this approach is suitable. First, it allows for the examination of diverse groups of front-line actors, state or non-state, paid or unpaid. As discussed in Chapter 1, the lines between public service agencies, private service organisations and the civil society became even more blurry during the migration crisis era. Given also the close cooperation across organisations and across individuals in the field, we observe the genesis of a community of migration management practitioners in each city (see also Chapter 6). Therefore, the ensemble of all those different actors – public servants, NGO employees, volunteers, activists, private sector employees – who work alongside each other to help migrants, and who operate in the same city, can be also be examined through the *communities of practice* approach.

Second, with 'learning' being a core and defining element of communities of practice, this framework allows for the examination of phenomena that are in flux, such as that of the migration crisis. Given that the number of asylum seekers who arrived in European capitals was unprecedented, most front-liners became active in the management of migration for the first time, whether from a professional position or otherwise. Accordingly, the daily practical challenges at the front lines were new and unfamiliar to them. Inevitably, then, learning was a vital part of their daily work. To overcome these new challenges, they had to invent new response mechanisms and coping strategies. And, because of the multiple and complex needs of migrants (asylum applications, accommodation, education, medical attention, etc.), service provision almost always required collaboration between different types of actors (e.g., NGO social workers, private lawyers and public service bureaucrats). Therefore, the front-liners' response strategies developed through learning, and learning developed through interpersonal interactions and the exchange of professional or experiential knowledge.

Third, in communities of practice, the identities of community members matter. By interacting, learning and practising, community members also shape their self-view, while they influence the community itself too. In Wenger's words:

> On the one hand, a community of practice is a living context that can give newcomers access to competence and also can invite a personal experience of engagement by which to incorporate that competence into an identity of participation. On the other hand, a well-functioning community of practice is a good context to explore radically new insights without becoming fools or stuck in some dead end. A history of mutual engagement around a joint enterprise is an ideal context for this kind of leading-edge learning, which requires a strong bond of communal competence along with a deep respect for the particularity of experience. When these conditions are in place, communities of practice are a privileged locus for the *creation* of knowledge. (Wenger, 1998, p. 214)

Arguably, this iterative process between knowledge-building and identity-building also takes place among front-liners who are members of the same local community, such as those in Athens and those in Berlin.

Learning, of course, is not only about practical knowledge; it also encompasses the learning of an appropriate set of norms and values within a community. Apart from the physical space that brings community members together, there is also a normative space of informal and unwritten rules that determines the expected and accepted behaviours of its members, henceforth referred to as 'community norms'. Among other things, community norms may convey specific notions about whether or not a front-liner should use individual discretion and, if yes, what kinds of discretionary practices are regarded as appropriate[12] (see Chapter 6). For example, front-liners from the same community may consider it acceptable if a care worker uses his/her own personal networks in order to assist migrants to meet their medical needs, but not acceptable if he/she receives commission for doing so. As this example illustrates, community norms are informally agreed-upon normative understandings that front-liners from the same community share and go by.

The relationship between community norms and front-line decisions is also an iterative one. On the one hand, community norms represent a specific type of shared knowledge. As such, they are largely products of the daily exchanges and social interactions between individual community members. On the other hand, these norms

[12] Affolter, Miaz and Poertner (2019), for example, suggest that asylum judges use discretion (at least partly) in accordance with what their "communities of interpretation" consider appropriate, referring to their superiors, colleagues and others with whom they are affiliated and consider important.

take the form of unwritten ‘rules’ that orient future individual action as they set the behavioural expectations within the community. That is, when front-liners encounter a new, unfamiliar problem in their work, they proceed to solve it in accordance with these ‘rules’. In this sense, these shared normative understandings also shape the discretionary behaviour of individual front-liners, as they define their normative room for manoeuvre.

Of course, these norms do not directly govern the front-liners’ discretionary behaviour. Even in organisations where there is a predominant organisational culture and a uniformity of views and values, there is still individual variation, as some employees may place greater emphasis on closely following the official rules and regulations than others. Naturally, this variation is bound to be more pronounced within communities of practice, where the number of actors is higher and there is a much greater diversity among them. Between these community norms and the front-liners’ discretionary behaviour, therefore, there is also an intermediate step: the individual.

2.4.3 Understandings of Self

The ‘Self’ and the various identities an individual front-liner encompasses are at the heart of the theoretical framework this thesis proposes. Although the structural conditions and the front-line communities of practice frame and influence the front-liners’ course of action, their discretionary behaviour is ultimately an individual decision. While it is important to acknowledge the social and structural environments in which front-liners are embedded, it is even more helpful, I suggest, to examine how individuals respond to the internal tensions they experience while carrying out their work tasks. Not only is this approach consistent with the bottom-up view of policy implementation, it is also a better fit with the research question at stake.

For social psychologists, to be an individual is to have a sense of ‘Self’. And, to have a ‘Self’ is to have an awareness of being, a selfhood. This sense of selfhood is common across individuals, but the particular meanings associated with one’s Self differ for each person. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, the set of meanings that constitute one’s self-view are created and recreated over time, through one’s interpersonal interactions with others (Blumer, 1969). Social interactions are therefore especially important. On the one hand, this is where social learning occurs and, on the other, this is where individuals have a chance to re-affirm their self-view (Ibid; Burke & Stets, 2009). One’s self-view, however, is never monolithic. In different situations, people enact

different identities. For instance, a person may be a teacher at work, a Green Party supporter when it comes to politics and a kind person when a stranger asks for directions. These are three examples of three different identities, each having a different base.

Burke and Stets (2009) distinguish three bases of identities: *role, social* and *person*. First, a *role identity* refers to the social position an individual holds within a social structure. Examples may include one's position within a family (father, spouse, sister, etc.) or within an organisation (teacher, student, staff member, etc.). With each of these positions, there is a set of associated expectations that guide a person's attitudes and behaviour. For instance, a spouse is expected to be 'loving' and 'supporting', and a teacher is expected to be 'knowledgeable' and 'instructive'. A *role identity* thus consists of a set of meanings that individuals have internalised in relation to a role they hold. These meanings are partly derived from culture and partly from one's distinctive interpretation of the role. As such, some of these identity meanings are shared across individuals while others are not.

Second, a *social identity* refers to a person's identification with a social group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). To have a *social identity* is to be part of a set of individuals who share the view that they are members of the same social category (Burke & Stets, 2009). It could be an ascribed category, such as race (e.g., Black) or gender (e.g., man), or it could be avowed, such as political affiliation (e.g., liberal) or a sports team's fan club (e.g., Manchester United fan). Although members of the same social group often interact with other another, this is not a necessity. What matters most is that individuals identify with the group and see things from the group's perspective. There is, therefore, some level of uniformity of perceptions among group members, as well as a sense of 'us' versus 'them' that distinguishes the in-group from the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Having a sense of belonging within an in-group is something people seek out and it is generally associated with a positive sense of self (Hogg, 2006).

Third, there is the *person identity* (Burke & Stets, 2009), also known as *personal identity* (Hogg, 2006). This refers to an individual as a person with a unique set of idiosyncratic characteristics not shared with others. The meanings attached to one's distinct *person identity* may describe the 'core self' of an individual, which transfers across situations, roles and group memberships (Burke & Stets, 2009). Being 'moral' or 'compassionate' would be examples of such meanings. These characteristics accompany the individual in all facets of their life. They are not like 'hats' that one can put on and take off, as is often the case with *role* and *social identities*. More broadly, a *person identity*

describes what sets an individual apart from others, according to the individual's own view.

Of course, every individual has multiple identities of each of the three kinds, which co-exist and influence one another. Given that *person* identities (e.g., compassionate) transfer across situations, they are very likely to determine one's self-selection into certain group identities, whether they relate to role (e.g., care worker) or social group (e.g., left-wing voter). This relationship, however, can also work the other way around, especially in less open societies where people have little choice over the roles and social groups they join. In these cases, having a particular role (e.g., mother) or belonging to a particular social group (e.g., 'the poor') also shapes one's self-view as a person. Either way, there is an overlap between identities of the three bases (role, social or person identities – see also Figure 2.1), as well as between identities of the same base (e.g., role identities of father and teacher).

Table 2.2 Defining Features of Person, Role and Social Identities

Features	**Person Identity**	**Role Identity**	**Social Identity**
Bases	Individual Self-Concept	Expectations Tied to Social Positions	Social Group
Definitions	Meanings that Define a Person as a Unique Individual	Meanings Tied to a Role	Meanings Tied to a Social Group
Behaviour	Independent of Others	Complementary to Others	Similar to Others
Self-Reference	Me	Me as Role	We

Source: Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 129, shortened by author

The multiple identities of an individual, however, are not always compatible. In today's complex societies, people often hold positions with contradictory expectations and identities with contradictory meanings. A common example of this would be a person who identifies both as a caring parent and as a competitive employee. Having these two role identities may be a cause of stress for that person. Not only do they have to enact two identities with conflicting behavioural expectations, but they also need to find ways to divide their time between the task of parenting and that of working. If we consider the

full range of role, social and person identities that co-exist within a 'Self', the likelihood of such conflicts escalates.

Inevitably, identity conflicts are also highly prevalent among individuals at the front lines of migration management. Think of an asylum judge who is also a compassionate person and who must reject the applications of claimants whose life circumstances are extremely harsh (Chapter 3). Or, think of a local NGO employee who is an 'old' migrant in the local society and who is now expected to enforce restrictive policies concerning new migrants (Chapter 4). Or, think of a liberal, feminist activist whose role is to help migrants, even though they have conservative, patriarchal beliefs and practices (Chapter 5). How do these front-liners make decisions about their daily tasks when they experience such identity conflicts? And, how do these identity conflicts shape their discretionary behaviour? I shall tackle these questions in the empirical chapters that follow.

For now, it is important to highlight that the different identities a person holds are inextricably linked. A personhood is an amalgam of a multiplicity of intersecting identities (e.g., German, White, woman, lawyer, mother, nondisabled, etc. – see also Crenshaw, 1989), and these are not always separable. Examining the exact conditions under which a particular identity is activated over another would be interesting, but it is beyond the scope of this research. The focus, instead, remains solely on the link between identity conflicts and discretionary behaviour. This link is discussed in greater detail in the first three of the four empirical chapters that follow (Chapters 3, 4, 5). The final empirical chapter (Chapter 6) examines the other stages of the proposed mechanism above, namely the effect of structural conditions on community norms, the interplay between community norms and identities, and the effect of that interplay on the individual front-liners' discretionary behaviour.

Overall, the theoretical mechanism proposed here offers an extension to the theory of street-level bureaucracy by addressing three critical aspects. First, it accounts for a wider range of *de facto* policy implementers, including categories not previously examined through this theoretical viewpoint, such as political activists. Second, it places great emphasis on the identities of individual front-line actors and on the impact of identity conflicts on the actors' discretionary practices. Third, it suggests that individual discretionary behaviour can be better understood within the broader social, normative and structural environment within which front-line actors are embedded.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I laid out the theoretical basis of this thesis and presented the theoretical framework I am proposing. Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy was the starting point for this discussion and it is also the primary literature stream to which I aim to contribute. After reviewing the key points of Lipsky's work, I highlighted the aspects that have become less relevant in recent years. As a large proportion of these services have now moved out of the hands of the state and into those of multiple and diverse front-line actors, we need new theoretical tools to account for the entire range of these new actors, I suggested. By replacing the term 'street-level bureaucrats' with that of 'front-liners', I sought to offer a concept which is more inclusive and encompassing, and which corresponds to the contemporary front-line reality.

With regard to the central question of this thesis, namely how front-line actors make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, the main claim I have made in this chapter is that the front-liners' individual identities represent a crucial factor in shaping their discretionary decisions. A number of scholars who followed Lipsky's paradigm have already underlined the significance of micro-interactions at the street level, often borrowing from sociology and psychology. My theoretical angle also incorporates social psychology into the field of street-level bureaucracy, by drawing attention to the question of who today's front-liners are, not only as policy implementers but also as persons and as group members. Acknowledging the various identities front-liners hold and shedding light on the potential conflicts between these identities, I argued, is helpful in understanding and explaining the front-liners' discretionary behaviour.

Besides highlighting the significance of the front-liners' identities, this chapter has also addressed the vital role of their social and structural environments. At the meso-analytical level, front-liners who are active in the same city and the same domain (e.g., migration management) are embedded within a community of actors who share some common norms and values. These norms and values are shaped partly by the community members themselves and partly by the general structural conditions of a city, such as the economic capacity, the welfare state or the policy framework in place. In turn, the use of individual discretion is indirectly shaped by these community norms as well as by these structural conditions. All in all, when making decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, front-liners are mainly guided by their identities, but they are also influenced by the social and structural environment in which they operate.

Having discussed the key theoretical tenets of this thesis, I shall now turn to the chapters that demonstrate these tenets empirically. The first empirical chapter that follows focuses on the conflict between personal and professional identities among asylum judges, and on the way in which this conflict shapes their discretionary judgements. These professionals meet Lipsky's original definition of street-level bureaucrats, in that they are public servants. As I shall illustrate next, their daily dilemmas are highly morally loaded, and an identity-based analysis brings to light their decision-making mechanisms.

CHAPTER 3

Deciding on Asylum Dilemmas: A Conflict between Role and Person Identities

3.1. Introduction

In the first two chapters of this thesis, I laid the groundwork and discussed the theoretical framework of this research. I showed that critical moments, such as the European migration crisis, challenge our assumptions about front-line service delivery, and raise the question of how front-line actors make decisions in conditions of high uncertainty. To address this question, I drew from social psychological theorising, and I argued that the identities of these front-line actors, or front-liners, play a critical role in determining their discretionary behaviour on the ground. As the face of street-level bureaucracy changes, and as the relative role of intra-organisational dynamics diminishes, how front-liners view themselves increases in significance, I suggested. This calls for greater emphasis on micro- and individual-level dynamics, but without ignoring the idiosyncratic particularities of the contexts in which front-liners are embedded. This chapter, and the three empirical chapters that follow, demonstrate this argument, with the support of rich empirical evidence.

In this chapter, I focus on those front-liners who make decisions on refugee asylum applications, and I discuss how the conflict among the different identities they have influences their decision-making processes and their decision outcomes. I address one type of identity conflict in particular, namely the conflict between their *role identity* as asylum judges and their *person identity* as someone who is more or less compassionate towards migrants. By the term 'asylum judges' I mean both the administrative employees making first instance asylum decisions and the legally trained judges making second instance decisions. And, by 'compassionate' I am referring to their individual convictions on the issue of migration, regardless of whether these are framed in humanitarian, political or religious terms. As I show in the pages that follow, this 'role–person' identity conflict plays a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the asylum judges' decisions, especially for 'grey area' cases where the status of asylum applicants cannot be easily determined through the legal tools available.

The use of discretion by asylum judges has direct and considerable consequences for the implementation of asylum policies. Yet, although implementation dilemmas with moral dimensions have been at the centre of street-level bureaucracy research (see below), the moral dilemmas facing asylum judges have so far been overlooked. This chapter comes to show that the morally loaded decisions of asylum judges require more of our attention. Much like a doctor having to discontinue an expensive experimental treatment for an unresponsive patient, or a community police officer having to arrest an underprivileged delinquent juvenile, an asylum judge has to decide whether returning home incubates a life-threatening danger for an applicant. Not only do these professionals make daily decisions that require the use of individual discretion, but the outcomes of these decisions have life-altering, or even life-saving consequences for the lives of their clients. Automatically, this adds a moral dimension to their discretionary decisions.

Adding further to this moral dimension, there is also the uncertainty associated with the process of asylum determination itself. Making asylum decisions might seem like a simple process of labelling and categorisation, but it is often a rather challenging task to carry out in practice. According to law, asylum judges in signatory countries are called to implement the Geneva Convention and, by that, help protect the lives of those who are "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear…". Yet, as related research has increasingly shown (Dahlvik, 2017; Gibb & Good, 2013; Keith, Holmes, & Miller, 2013; Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017), there is a considerable proportion of asylum claims that cannot be easily decided by objective measures, either because of legal grey zones or due to the lack of available evidence. What is more, during the 2015-2017 European migration crisis, the workload rapidly multiplied for these professionals, while the political pressures, from different directions, increased.

It seems fitting to ask, then, how asylum judges make decisions in such pressing conditions. Scholars of street-level bureaucracy have previously discussed similar types of moral dilemmas at the front lines (Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015; Zacka, 2017), but they have not included asylum judges as a category of street-level bureaucrats (but see Miaz, 2017). At the same time, related studies from various disciplinary fields have examined the process of asylum decision-making (Dahlvik, 2017; Hedlund, 2017; Johannesson, 2018; Jubany, 2017; Magalhães, 2016, 2018), and its moral dimensions (e.g., Affolter *et al.*, 2019; Fassin & Kobelinsky, 2012; Kobelinsky, 2019), but they have not sufficiently emphasised the

individual moral dilemmas these professionals face. In this chapter, I combine these two streams of literature to examine how asylum judges in Berlin and Athens make asylum decisions in the face of moral dilemmas. In particular, I explore how they determine the status of applicants whose claims cannot be easily accepted or rejected as per the Geneva Convention definition, but represent, what I call here, 'grey area' cases.

To conduct this analysis, I focused on a specific subset of interviews with this study's participants (see Table 3.1 below). The total number of relevant participants was 35, 15 from Berlin and 20 from Athens. There were 8 caseworkers, 2 administrative judges and 5 lawyers from Berlin, and 8 caseworkers, 5 lay judges, 1 administrative judge and 6 asylum lawyers from Athens. It is worth noting here that, during the fieldwork period (2015–2018), the Greek asylum system was undergoing transition. At first, the second instance asylum decisions were taken by a committee of 3 lay judges, 2 of them public servants and the other a lawyer appointed by the UNHCR. In practical terms, this meant that many of the lay judges in Athens had previously worked as asylum lawyers, and some of the lawyers as lay judges. By 2018, these decisions were made by single administrative judges, harmonising the procedure with that of Berlin.

Table 3.1 Participants by Role and City

	Caseworkers (1st instance)	Lay Judges (2nd instance)	Administrative Judges (2nd instance)	Asylum Lawyers	Total
Berlin	8	N/A	2	5	15
Athens	8	5 (old system)	1 (new system)	6	20

Table constructed by author

Drawing from these interview data and the two literature streams noted above, I make the point in this chapter that moral dilemmas in asylum determination ultimately present identity conflicts for asylum judges. More specifically, when asylum judges cannot easily decide on a specific claim, they experience a conflict between their professional and person identities. When wearing their professional role identity hat, they make decisions that are more 'evidence'-based and that can be well-argued on paper. Alternatively, when wearing their person identity hat, they make decisions that correspond with their own individual preferences and sense of fairness. Depending on which hat 'wins' this internal conflict, the decision will be more 'evidence'-based or more personal-preference-based. And, depending on how supportive the limited evidence is, or

how compassionate towards refugees their person identity is, the final asylum decision will be either positive or negative.

I shall demonstrate the proposed mechanism in the sections that follow, and I shall present and discuss the empirical data that illustrate it. Accordingly, the remainder of the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section provides a short overview of the existing literature on asylum determination and on identity conflicts at the street level, while also elaborating on the decision-making mechanism suggested above. The second section then discusses the empirical findings in support of the suggested mechanism, providing examples of first-hand accounts from asylum judges in Berlin and Athens. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of these findings and their broader implications.

3.2 Asylum Determination Dilemmas

The aim of this section is to show how asylum determination presents an identity conflict for asylum judges between their person and role identities. This helps to support the core argument of this thesis, namely that, in times of high uncertainty, identities play a critical role in shaping the front-liners' decisions. The discussion that follows begins by examining asylum judges as one type of front-liner. It continues with a review of the relevant literature on asylum determination, focusing on the issue of moral dilemmas. It then describes how these dilemmas manifest as identity conflicts for front-liners, taking the form of a 'person–role' identity conflict.

3.2.1 Why Asylum Judges?

In many respects, asylum judges are very close to the archetype of the street-level bureaucrats Lipsky (1980) introduced nearly 40 years ago; they are public servants, they have direct interactions with clients and they have a fair amount of discretion when making their daily decisions (see also Lens, 2012, 2013). Yet, as already noted, this category of professional has been largely overlooked by the scholars of street-level bureaucracy (see also Biland & Steinmetz, 2017; but see Miaz, 2017). Although these bureaucrats' use of discretion has been problematised by studies of various disciplines, including law (e.g., Herlihy *et al.*, 2010; Keith *et al.*, 2013; Rehaag, 2012) sociology (e.g., Magalhães, 2016; Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017) and even economics (e.g., Chen, Moskowitz & Shue, 2016), the angle of public administration remains relatively underexplored.

From a public administration and policy implementation viewpoint, asylum determination presents a fascinating case. While asylum judges have to apply the law with consistency for all claimants, at the same time they have to examine each individual application on a case-by-case basis. Perhaps not surprisingly, this inherent contradiction often leads to some variation in asylum outcomes across decision-makers. Several studies have indeed suggested that asylum applicants are often subjected to 'lottery-like' conditions (e.g., Griffiths, 2012; Ramji-Nogales, Schoenholtz, & Schrag, 2007; Rehaag, 2012). That is to say, their applications are not always judged on the basis of clearly defined and consistent criteria, but instead are often decided in accordance with individual or organisational biases. Even if this may occasionally work in favour of some clients, it generally implies a system that is unreliable or unfair, which also reflects negatively on the host states that wish to be considered fair and democratic societies.

Although the variation in asylum outcomes may pose a cause for concern, it is important to clarify that not all such variation is necessarily problematic. In fact, some of it is to be expected. This is because, in any given year, asylum seekers from particular countries are far more likely to experience some form of persecution compared with asylum seekers from other countries. For instance, in 2016, Syrians were far more likely to fit the legal refugee definition than, let us say, Serbians. Therefore, it would be no surprise if Greece or Germany, as host countries, recognised almost all Syrian applicants but very few Serbian applicants in that year.

Table 3.2 1st Instance Recognition Rates Applicants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq

	Syria			*Afghanistan*			*Iraq*		
	2015	*2016*	*2017*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Germany	97.7%	99.3%	95.2%	72.8%	60.1%	46.6%	98.3%	76.7%	63%
Greece	99.6%	55.3%	83.5%	55.2%	46.6%	75.6%	64.7%	63.9%	63%

Source: Eurostat

Where the problem lies instead is when applicants from the same country of origin seem to have much higher recognition rates in one host country (or region) compared with another in the same year; namely, in 2016, Syrians were recognised almost all of the time in Germany but only about half of the time in Greece. Strange as this may sound, it was indeed the case, as Table 3.2 above highlights. Similar discrepancies are also

observable in the cases of applicants from Afghanistan and Iraq, which, together with Syria, represent the top three nations to send asylum seekers to the EU in recent years. One can imagine how this discrepancy extends, as the number of host countries on accounts for increases, as well as the number of applicants' nationalities and the number of years (see also Hamlin, 2014; Parusel, 2015; Tosh & de Haan, 2013).

While clearly representing a source of problematisation, what these numbers cannot show is the level of complexity that lies in the determination process itself. Relevant studies that address this issue (Ali, Querton, & Soulard, 2012; Bögner, Brewin, & Herlihy, 2010; Gill & Good, 2019; Miaz, 2017; Sweeney, 2009; Tomkinson, 2014, 2018) have pointed towards a number of factors that inhibit the consistent application of the law, some of them objective and others subjective (see also Table 1 in Appendix II). Starting from the asylum interview stage, asylum judges face some common difficulties, most notably relating to their communication with their clients. Cultural and linguistic barriers, poor-quality interpretation or clients' difficulty in expressing themselves due to gender, age, trauma or illiteracy constitute just a few examples. Adding also the pressures of the crisis period, meaning increased workload and increased time pressure to meet quota targets, these difficulties already make asylum determination a challenging task.

Perhaps the greatest proportion of uncertainty facing asylum judges, however, stems from the grey zones of the policy framework itself (see also Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017; Sweeney, 2009). These are the 'blind spots' of the legal definition of a refugee which allow room for differing interpretations by the policy practitioners. A notable example of this, historically, has been the question of what constitutes 'a particular social group', as per the Geneva Convention definition. Since the 1980s, feminist critics have argued that gender should be included in this definition (see Arbel *et al.*, 2015), as women in certain areas, especially in conflict zones, are systematically subjected to persecution on the basis of their gender. Although in subsequent years the UNHCR did issue specific guidelines[13] to address this issue, for a long time this has been a source of the inconsistencies in asylum outcomes (Crawley, 2001; Foster, 2015; Freedman, 2015).

[13] In 1991, the UNHCR issued the 'Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women', followed by the 1995 guidelines, specifically to address cases of sexual violence. These guidelines were updated in 2002 to recognise trafficking as a 'gender-related persecution'. In 2008, the Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls was also issued.

Adding further to the list of challenges above, there are also some asylum cases for which it is almost impossible to provide tangible supporting evidence. Good examples of such cases are those pertaining to persecution due to one's religious or political beliefs, or sexual orientation. This means that applicants who have suffered from this type of persecution cannot always prove it, or that the evidence they provide is not necessarily regarded as persuasive (Giametta, 2018; Jansen & Spijkerboer, 2011; see also Diop, 2014). On the flipside, and as there is almost no other legalisation route for economic immigrants, there are also some applicants who use such stories to 'cheat' the system, precisely because they are difficult to prove. These applicants know they do not fit the legal definition of a refugee – or they think they do not – but they want to increase their chances of obtaining refugee status (see Giametta, 2018; see also Cabot, 2014). This strategy can, of course, backfire, making asylum judges (even more) suspicious of applicants in this category.

For all these types of 'hard' cases, it very often comes down to deciding on the claimant's 'credibility', which naturally involves an individual moral judgement on the part of the asylum judge. The issue of credibility has been at the heart of many studies discussing the process of asylum determination and the inconsistency of asylum outcomes (see Dahlvik, 2017; Hedlund, 2017; Magalhães, 2016; Miaz, 2017; Singer, 2015; Sorgoni, 2019; Tomkinson, 2018; Wikström & Johansson, 2013). At the same time, this issue has direct parallels with the notion of 'deservingness' (see also Giannopoulou & Gill, 2019), which is central to street-level bureaucracy research and theory (e.g., Baviskar & Winter, 2017; Jilke & Tummers, 2018; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2012; Raaphorst & Groeneveld, 2018). In both lines of research, the focal point is that the bureaucrats' perceptions of their clients shape their use of bureaucratic discretion (see also Chapter 5).

Against this backdrop, this chapter examines how asylum judges in Athens and Berlin make such morally loaded decisions under highly pressing conditions, particularly in the face of ambiguous legal provisions and limited evidence. By examining this professional group of front-liners across the two cities, it demonstrates a particular part of the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2, namely the conflict between different identity types. In addition to that, it contributes to our understanding of the existing discrepancy in asylum decision outcomes across different countries and regions.

With regard to the latter, although some relevant studies analyse the demographic characteristics of asylum judges to explain this discrepancy (e.g., gender, political affiliation, etc. – see Jensen & Pedersen, 2017; Johannesson, 2018; Rehaag, 2012), this

research instead focuses on the construction of knowledge during the asylum determination process (see also Affolter *et al.*, 2019; Dahlvik, 2017; Magalhães, 2018; Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017). The basic premise of this approach is that asylum judges make decisions based on the information available to them and, more specifically, on how they make sense of this information, or the lack thereof.

3.2.2 Deciding on Moral Dilemmas

Without discounting the long list of external factors that play a part in this decision-making process (as discussed above, see also Table 1 in Appendix II), I draw attention here to the identity conflicts facing asylum judges, which result from the moral dilemmas discussed above. These identity conflicts, I argue, often represent the most critical factor in asylum determination, ultimately shaping asylum outcomes.

There is indeed evidence to suggest that the moral conflicts facing those professionals who deliver public services at the front lines manifest as some type of identity conflict (see Cooper, 2012; Tummers *et al.*, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015). As noted above, existing studies have discussed such conflicts extensively when it comes to police officers (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2012) or medical professionals (Tummers *et al.*, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015), but they have not addressed the moral conflicts of asylum judges. Yet, for all three professions, there is a common thread. Each aspect of the given moral conflict corresponds to a different role expectation, thereby tapping into a different role identity aspect. Police officers act as agents of the state *and* of citizens, doctors have to help their patients *and* be economical with the resources they use, and asylum judges need to be fair *and* time-efficient. Making professional decisions therefore encompasses sorting through these contradicting expectations and conflicting aspects of their role identity.

Tummers and colleagues (2012) have identified three main types of, what they call, role conflicts (see Table 3.3 below). First, the 'policy–professional' conflict describes a dilemma between what the policy requires versus what their role prescribes (e.g., a medical doctor having to perform an abortion to save a mother's life, but abortion being illegal). Second, the 'policy–client' conflict is about what a policy prescribes versus what a client needs (e.g., police officers having to implement 'zero tolerance' policies without being able to account for each client's circumstances). And third, the 'organisational–professional' conflict refers to the role behaviour demanded by an

organisation regarding policy implementation versus one's professional attitudes, values and behaviour (e.g., doctors prioritising quality of service but managers telling them they have to meet a fixed number of examinations per week). These antithetical role requirements, the authors argue, diminish the professionals' willingness to implement policy.

Adding to the list above, a recent study by Vink and colleagues (2015) also introduced the 'professional–client' conflict to account for cases where one's professional values are not compatible with the demands of one's clients. A notable example they provide is that of a patient requesting euthanasia, which may contradict with the professional values of a doctor who is meant to save lives. Here, too, there is a conflict between two contrasting role identity aspects: the professional-value-oriented and the client-oriented. With regard to discretionary behaviour, instead of a reference to 'willingness to implement', these authors make an effort to link these role conflicts with various identified ways of 'coping' (e.g., rule bending, creaming, etc.).

Table 3.3 List of Role Conflicts among Professionals at the Street Level

List of Conflicts	**Examples**
The 'policy–professional' conflict	Medical doctor having to perform an abortion to save a mother's life, but abortion being illegal
The 'policy–client' conflict	Police officers having to implement 'zero tolerance' policies without accounting for the clients' circumstances
The 'organisational–professional' conflict	Doctors prioritising quality of service but managers insisting they have to meet a fixed number of examinations per week
The 'professional–client' conflict	Doctor looking after a patient who requests euthanasia.

Table compiled by the author, based on Tummers *et al.* (2012) and Vink *et al.* (2015)

This mapping of role conflicts is a useful conceptualisation of the various ways moral conflicts manifest in practice, but it overlooks one very important and rather common condition. That is, when a moral conflict facing professionals does not only tap into their role identity, but into their person identity as well (for identity types see Burke & Stets, 2009; see also Chapter 2). In other words, a moral dilemma a professional faces might not have to do with the policy, the organisation, their professional values or the

clients, but with their personal stance on the issue at stake. Especially when it comes to contested issues such as that of migration, an individual's role identity, including any or all of the aspects noted above, could also be in conflict with their person identity, meaning their individual convictions in relation to migrants and migration.

Hence, I argue here that moral conflicts also lead to another type of identity conflict for front-line actors, namely the 'role–person' identity conflict. Although individual personal preferences are often treated as divorced from one's professional role, several studies show that the two are inextricably linked, both for asylum judges (Affolter *et al.*, 2019; Kobelinsky, 2019; Miaz, 2017) and for other professionals (Brehm & Gates, 1997; May & Winter, 2009; Stensöta, 2012). Arguably, this is even more likely to be the case when it comes to issues of high salience, as migration is during a migration crisis era. Not only is there a greater likelihood that front-liners will have developed a specific personal conviction and stance on the issue, whether positive or negative, but they are also more likely to resort to it under conditions of high uncertainty. Therefore, instead of trying to isolate the judge's professional practices from their inner personal convictions on person identities, I examine the two in conjunction.

As we also find in the literature on representative bureaucracy (see Chapter 4), the multiple identities of bureaucrats could be extremely important in shaping their professional discretion, but only as long as the bureaucrats themselves see them as important. Following on from this, and as I shall elaborate below, the extent to which asylum judges prioritise their role or their person identity while handling 'grey area' asylum cases is going to influence their use of professional discretion. Drawing from interview data, I suggest here that making decisions based on one's role identity is likely to involve more 'evidence'-based decision-making strategies, whereas making decisions based on one's person identity would involve a more personal 'filter' in this process. Although a role-based discretionary strategy may effectively have the same decision outcome as a person-based strategy, the decision-making steps would be different in the two scenarios, as I shall show in greater detail in the next section.

Although I introduce here the 'role–person' conflict in the specific context of refugee asylum determination, it is also relevant in a variety of other contexts too. With relative ease, one can imagine an asylum judge who is pro-refugees and pro-migration having a difficult time saying 'no' to applicants whose cases come close to, but do not neatly fit, the official criteria. Or, conversely, one can imagine an asylum judge who believes that migration should be curbed would find it difficult to give positive decisions

to applicants who do fit the criteria, but barely so. Accordingly, one may envisage a doctor at a public hospital having to perform an abortion while also having strong personal convictions against the idea of abortion. Or, a police officer having to arrest someone for illegal possession of marijuana while being ideologically pro-marijuana-use. These moral conflicts could have significant effects in these professionals' use of discretion, especially at times when the given issues constitute heated political and public debates.

3.2.3 The Decision-Making Mechanism

To elaborate further on this 'role–person' identity conflict, I present here a map, depicting the decision-making mechanism of asylum judges who operate during a migration crisis era. As Figure 3.1 below illustrates, there are various potential routes in the proposed mechanism. In chronological order, the first step is the 'case assessment'. This is where asylum judges examine the information available to them (interview transcript, supportive documents, etc.) and decide whether or not the asylum claim in front of them clearly fits the legal definition of a 'refugee'. If yes, then they proceed directly to a positive asylum decision. If no, then their decision will be a rejection.

However, as already explained, there is also a third category, namely the 'grey area' cases. This is where the claims cannot be easily accepted or rejected, for a number of reasons. It could be because the claimant was distressed or traumatised (e.g., as a victim of sexual violence) and cannot provide a consistent and coherent story (Freedman, 2015). Or, it could be because the evidence in support of the persecution claim (e.g., being chased by the Taliban) is not easy to corroborate according to available international sources (Gibb & Good, 2013). Alternatively, it could even be that, due to the nature of the claim (e.g., homosexuality-based persecution), it is not easy for the applicant to offer tangible 'proof' (Jansen & Spijkerboer, 2011). In any case, this is when asylum judges temporarily stall, as they come across, what Zacka (2017) calls, an 'impossible situation'.

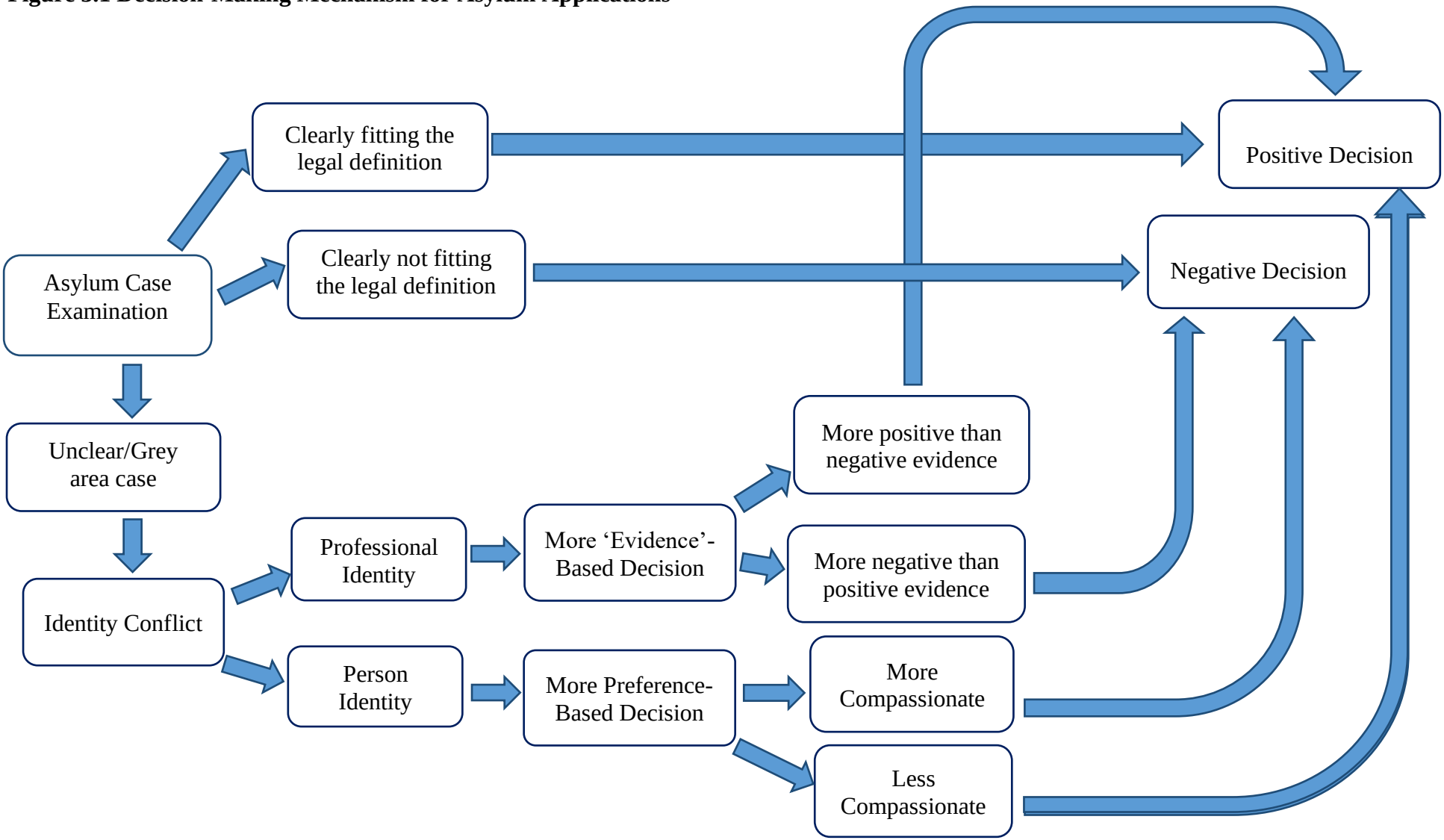
Faced with such ambiguous conditions, the dilemma that follows is a moral one. On the one hand, asylum judges must allow a fair chance to those whose claims are under examination. As such, they should not be quick to reject these challenging claims. On the other hand, giving false positives can also be very problematic, not least because of the chance of potentially dangerous infiltrators. To make matters worse, the crisis situation incubates an extensive list of macro-, meso- and micro-level pressures that further complicates this already challenging process (Table 1 in Appendix II). The contemporary

political rhetoric, the public discourse, the intra-organisational dynamics and the communication difficulties with clients are just a few such examples. In such morally loaded 'grey area' cases, the yes-or-no type of automated response falls short.

Amid the lack of protocol-based solutions, I argue, this moral dilemma turns into an identity conflict for asylum judges, between their role and person identities. Therefore, the next step in the asylum decision-making process is to resolve this conflict, allowing one of these two identities to take the lead. If the professional *role* identity is the one that ends up guiding the judges' discretionary behaviour, I suggest here, then the asylum decision will be based on the direction of the information at hand, even if this information is too limited. Accordingly, if the 'evidence' that supports the applicant's claim appears stronger compared with that which does not, then the asylum decision will be positive, regardless of one's personal stance on it. And, when the 'evidence' that contradicts the claim seems stronger than that which supports it, then the decision will be negative.

By contrast, if the asylum judges' discretionary behaviour is guided primarily by their *person* identity, then the decision will be in accordance with the values, beliefs and preferences this identity encompasses. As already noted, the specific motivations behind one's person identity (religious, political, humanitarian, etc.) are not so important here. What does matter is whether or not this identity is, for the most part, compassionate towards migrants. If it is, then the limited evidence will be examined under a positive light, giving rise to a positive asylum decision. Alternatively, if the judge's person identity is one which is a better fit as a 'non-compassionate' person towards migrants, then the evidence will be interpreted through a negative filter, resulting in a negative decision outcome too (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Decision-Making Mechanism for Asylum Applications



It is important to highlight here that the outcome of the 'role – person' identity conflict cannot be easily predicted. As the factors that may come into play are countless and their combination random, they do not constitute part of the asylum judges' shared decision-making mechanism. Given also the multiplicity of pressures at any point in time (see Table 1 in Appendix II), one can never guess the specific combination of factors that will be relevant to a particular case under examination. For instance, an applicant might be a good story narrator, but the interpreter might be doing a poor job of translating. Or, an applicant might manage to provide credible medical evidence of a specific condition from which they suffer, but the head of the organisation at that period of time might voice strong concerns about the protection of applicants with similar conditions. Such arbitrary syntheses of external factors may 'push' towards the activation of one type of identity much more so than another.

To summarise, this section has argued that, by combining theoretical insights from the literature on refugee asylum determination and on the moral conflicts at the street level, we can enhance our understanding of asylum judges' decision-making. One of the common themes in asylum determination studies is the issue of 'grey area' cases, many of which are ultimately judged on the basis of the claimant's credibility. This presents a source of moral conflicts for asylum judges, resembling similar moral conflicts other street-level bureaucrats face (e.g., police officers or medical professionals). Building on recent studies that link such moral conflicts with role conflicts (Tummers *et al.*, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015), I have proposed here the addition of the 'role–person' identity conflict, explaining how this may influence the decision-making mechanism of asylum judges.

3.3 Asylum Determination in Practice

I turn now to the empirical section of this chapter. Here, I use data from the interviews conducted with asylum judges in Berlin and Athens to illustrate the different stages of the decision-making mechanism introduced above. These stages involve: a) the recognition of 'grey area' cases by the asylum judges, b) the moral conflicts that manifest as identity conflicts, c) the 'role'-based resolution, and d) the 'person'-based resolution. For each of these parts, I provide examples from the participants' accounts, discussing those from Athens and Berlin in parallel.

3.3.1 The Grey Areas

As mentioned earlier, the category of asylum cases that calls for greater discretionary behaviour by asylum judges is that of 'grey area' cases. There is a wide variety of cases that may fall into this category, some of them more specific than others. According to the accounts of this study's participants, some asylum cases present themselves frequently in this grouping, and are more or less expected. As the segments below illustrate, examples of such cases are those which have particularly limited available evidence, making it nearly impossible for judges to establish 'the facts' (see also Gibb & Good, 2013; Tomkinson, 2018).

> Those are the hardest cases, I'd say, [when] you don't get much information... If it's a medical issue, let's say, psychological issue… [Or,] sometimes you have adults but very young, children, like 18: *"My father was threatened, I don't know".* And, you have the daughter, 18 years old, never left the house, let's say. Yeah, what should she tell? So, I'm trying to get as much information as possible, but most probably she will say, *"I don't know, I help my Mum cooking and my Dad came home, he was troubled, he was injured",* whatever, like this. So, in those cases, it's very hard. (Caseworker, Berlin)

> Essentially, you don't have evidence for anything. Because maybe they don't have documents. What they tell you there and then is all it is […] Even when they say, *"I was tortured, imprisoned"*, etc., this is their personal story. Maybe it happened. [And] sometimes you do read corresponding examples from those countries. But, that doesn't have to mean it has happened to this applicant. (Caseworker, Athens)

> It's not so much the law, but the facts. This is very very difficult because as you know the asylum seekers normally don't have any documentation with them, or they don't show it to the authorities […] You never know whether what they state is true, because they have an interest to tell a story which will get them asylum. […] On the one hand, you are not supposed to set unattainable evidence standards, on the other hand you are constantly lied to, and it is very difficult to say, *"Yes, I believe this person. I am sure, I have no doubt that this person is telling the truth"*. (Judge, Berlin)

In all three quotes, the participants highlight the difficultly of deciding whether or not an applicant's claim is true, given the apparent lack of evidence. A point also raised in the relevant literature reviewed earlier, this was perhaps the most insurmountable obstacle for asylum judges, whether their decisions concerned the first or the second instance, and whether they were professional or lay judges. The fact that it is also mentioned by a legally trained administrative judge who makes decisions in the second instance signifies the weight and frequency of this challenge. Needless to say, making an asylum decision largely on the basis of whether or not one's words appear truthful enough presupposes a moral individual judgement or, what Miaz (2017) calls, "moral subjectivity".

Adding to the above, even when the credibility of an applicant's claims is not in question, interpreting these claims in accordance with the law may still call for morally loaded discretionary decisions.

> Well, there are a lot of dilemmas, because all people are humans, so you cannot just put them into little boxes. Generally, we do things based on the law, which says x, y, z, but many times the person … [the case] doesn't fit neatly into the law, let's say. There, you have to have some discretion, a bit of it anyway, to judge, to make decisions. (Caseworker, Belin)

> The law is the law on the one hand, but the interpretation of the facts is subjective. I mean, for someone it is maybe enough [to know] there were 5 security incidents in that specific region. They will say, *"Pfff, the other area had 100".* But someone else might say, *"Yes, 5, but out of these 5 [people who died] the 4 concerned",* let us say, *"are persons with military profiles. And my guy here has a military profile, too. Therefore, I judge that this guy will be in danger"*. [The law] does not tell you not to do this. It cannot tell you what decision to make. It is up to the caseworker. In the end, it has to do with how much you are willing to filter it. How individualised you want to make the decision. (Caseworker, Athens)

These two quotes speak to the different possible interpretations of specific asylum claims, given that not all individual cases fit directly and neatly into existing legal "boxes". As the second quote articulately describes, there are several layers of analysis in which an asylum judge may engage. Depending on the time and effort they dedicate, they can make the assessment more or less individualised to each applicant's case, using one legal interpretation or another. This means that, according to the law, both a 'yes' and a 'no' asylum decision would be equally right, or equally wrong.

A detail worth underlining here is that the asylum judges' in-depth knowledge of the related legal provisions can mean that any decision can be a lawful decision, as long as it is well-supported on paper. By extension, this also means that there is a greater chance of potentially 'manipulating' the available evidence according to one's individual preferences, without having to break the law (see below). In that sense, the asylum judges' *de facto* discretion is always *de jure* or 'authorised' discretion (Brodkin, 2010).

Besides these broader categories of cases, there are also more specific cases that can be challenging for asylum judges. Below are two such examples, the first referring to mentally ill claimants and the second to traumatised minors. Both of these represent situations that the judges feel they are not adequately equipped to handle.

> In 4 out of the 5 days, I encounter problems where there is no protocol to solve that problem, you know? ... So, for example, […] I get the electronic file and I see the picture and where the person is from, yada yada ... But then I go downstairs and I meet that person and she was ... to say it in a politically correct way ... she was mentally unfit to perform an interview […] I was talking to her, you know,

> but it was impossible to find a connection. What do you do with that type of person? She couldn't even answer *"What's your name?"* or *"How are you feeling? Are you ready for the interview?"* She was like ... *"Out of the window. There. They're coming for me".* Like, OK, wow … So, what do you do? There's no protocol! (Caseworker, Berlin)

> It is difficult to handle cases of unaccompanied minors who often come from North African countries, live in hostels for minors, and state they are victims of rape. There, you have to deal with a 16–17-year-old kid who is all closed up. […] During the interview, the applicant offers too little information for their case, while we have their background from the NGO responsible for them and we try to figure out an objective decision for the person. And that's while I have not had training for unaccompanied minors, or expertise, as well as for victims of torture. But, I have all this weight on me, to make an objective decision. (Caseworker, Athens)

Ideally, handling cases of this nature would entail some degree of expert training or a set of detailed guidelines that would assist asylum judges' decision-making. But often this is not the case, as these quotes suggest. The first caseworker appears overwhelmed and underprepared for situations involving mentally ill claimants, while the fact that "there's no protocol" constitutes both a major source of stress for him and a call for discretionary decisions. Similarly, the second caseworker explicitly states that the weight of the responsibility involved in making an objective decision under these circumstances feels disproportionate. Having had no training for interviewing minors or tortured claimants, she perceives an objective asylum decision under these circumstances to be an elusive goal.

Overall, this modest view regarding the attainment of objectivity was largely shared among the participants of this research, albeit this observation contradicts the findings of other relevant studies (e.g. Magalhães, 2016). As the discussion here has demonstrated, asylum judges often face cases, or categories of cases, that they find overly complex or 'impossible' (Zacka, 2017). Whether it is about dealing with the lack of evidence, establishing the facts, interpreting the law or handling cases they do not feel prepared for, making fair and objective asylum decisions is particularly challenging under these conditions. And, the moral implications of these decisions certainly do not make them any easier.

3.3.2 The Identity Conflicts

As explained earlier, internal conflicts that encompass moral dilemmas quickly manifest as identity conflicts for these professional front-liners (see also Tummers *et al.*,

2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015). After they establish that an asylum case falls into the 'grey area' category of cases, there follows a conflict between the judges' role and person identities. Put differently, making a decision under such morally loaded circumstances presupposes positioning oneself on a spectrum of potential moral stances. By extension, taking a given moral stance represents a specific identity expression, be it professionally and personally motivated. As the following quotes highlight, the 'person' identity is frequently very closely knitted with the professional 'role' identity. And, for some decision-makers, it is more so than for others. As a result, there is a variation in individual responses to grey area cases, which, in turn, leads to a discrepancy in policy outcomes.

> In general, the issue is very political, and I try to stay very neutral. And because I have learned to do so as a lawyer, it is easier for me. […] There were other colleagues, whom I would meet with during the break, and they would tell me, *"Great, yet another negative decision"*. Or, in contrast, others who were entirely like, *"Okay, whatever the applicants say is true. Poor them"*. So there were people from both sides. (Caseworker, Berlin)

> There are some of my colleagues who are less scientists and more 'humanitarians'. […] Humanitarianism is hypocritical, because you can't say you give someone asylum because you are a humanitarian. No! You give them asylum because your country has signed the Geneva Convention, and you have the obligation, if they fulfil the requirements of the Geneva Convention, to give them asylum. Even if you are not a humanitarian, and even if you dislike them. Since they fulfil the requirements, it is a legal obligation. The 'humanitarians' can only bring negative consequences because they distance the discussion from the real problem. If there is a real problem, it needs to be solved in a scientific way. (Lay Judge, Athens)

In these two segments, the battle between the professional and the personal approaches is apparent across these judges and their colleagues. While a professional approach that is stripped from personal preferences is the consciously preferred route for these two participants, the same does not seem true for their colleagues. By describing how the others' preferred strategy is false or insufficient, these participants position their own identity on the opposite side of this moral conflict (see also Gillespie & Cornish, 2010). For them, the professional 'role' identity is the one that should dominate. This professional, detached approach to decision-making is rather common, as other studies on asylum determination also indicate (Magalhães, 2016, 2018; Schneider, 2019).

Nonetheless, just as some judges view their colleagues as too biased or too 'humanitarian', others view theirs as too cold-hearted or as 'those who waste time trying to reach the impossible'. The first segment below comes from a lay judge at the Board of Appeals in Athens, who was also the president of her committee, making decisions together with two other members. The second segment comes from a caseworker in Berlin

who has also worked in the 'quality check', meaning it was part of her role to review her colleagues' decisions and confirm that they were of a high standard. As both participants here agree, some asylum judges may be too economical in their use of bureaucratic discretion, especially when it concerns the applicants' interests.

> I think the background of each [lay judge] mattered. The ones who had worked for NGOs before becoming judges had a different kind of sensitivity or understanding. The ones who had come from other positions, ministries, administrative positions or academic positions, they would reach decisions that could be considered harsher. They were stricter, more conservative. […] My percentage of the cases was around 33% of recognition, which was very good, very positive. So in 33% of the cases, I got a positive decision, overturning the first-degree one. There was [another committee] president, who had 1 positive case, out of 110! (Lay Judge, Athens)

> I definitely have colleagues who think they are Sherlock Holmes […]. Some people really think like, *"Oh, yeah, my job is to investigate and to find the truth and find out whether the person is saying the truth"*. And then you have the decisions where they come up with these ridiculous… Like, *"Yeah, it's not credible because, first, he said the car came from the right and then he said the car came from the left, so the whole story is not credible".* And you're like, *"What? No!"* (Caseworker, Berlin)

As the first quote shows, different degrees of a 'personal' touch in asylum decisions lead to different recognition rates, partly explaining the issue of inconsistency in the outcomes discussed earlier. Here, the lay judge from Athens vividly describes how the different educational and career background of each decision-maker allowed for different conceptualisations of what their role identity entails and how much of the 'personal' would be incorporated into the decision-making process (see also Kallio & Kouvo, 2015). She also gives a numeric representation of the asylum outcomes across two committees, suggesting a staggering 32% difference in recognition rates between them. As she explains, her approach was a lot more "sensitive" and "understanding" to asylum claimants compared with that of some other judges, whom she describes as "stricter" and "more conservative".

Similarly, the second quote aims to convey the pointlessness of persisting with the investigation of the 'truth' in the face of missing information and lacking evidence. On a humorous note, she suggests that some of her colleagues think they are Sherlock Holmes, while she finds their argumentation behind the dismissal of claimants' credibility "ridiculous". In a way, this view suggests that there is perhaps such a thing as 'being too professional', or rather 'trying too hard to act professionally'. Regardless of how accurate this description is of the particular colleagues, it is indeed questionable how one can pin down 'the truth' with certainty, whilst the process of establishing the 'facts' remains an

area of contestation (Gibb & Good, 2013). Given the absurdity surrounding particular cases such as the ones discussed in the previous subsection, an overly 'professional' stance may indeed be self-defeating.

As the discussion here has demonstrated, the 'role–person' conflict was both prevalent and recurring for asylum judges across the two cities. While some approaches were seen as 'too personal' for the liking of some asylum judges, others were seen as 'too professional' for the liking of other judges. Digging deeper into the specific determinants of each of the two identified approaches would be undoubtedly interesting, but it is beyond the scope of this research. Remaining within our focus, though, are the practical implications of this identity conflict's outcomes.

3.3.3 The Role Resolution

As shown in Figure 3.1, when the professional role identity 'wins' over the person identity, an asylum judge's decisions are based primarily on the (limited) evidence available vis-à-vis the specific policy requirements, and less so on the individual moral convictions of each judge. Where an individual judge positions themselves on this 'role–person' spectrum may differ from one asylum decision to the next, but it is more likely that a certain type of approach is relatively consistent over time. For the asylum judges who adopt this role-informed decision-making logic, their professional sense of duty represents the primary factor influencing their discretionary behaviour in practice. The quotes below illustrate this point.

> Discretionary behaviour can be positive, too, [but] I don't like going either direction. I want to be objective, to have a precise understanding of the law, or guideline, etc., regardless if I might criticise a particular guideline that may come out, and I say, "*what is that?!*" It doesn't matter. It is the law. And, this is my job. Outside of my job, while engaging in discussions, I might have my own opinion. But, here, it is my job. It is the law and it must be implemented. (Caseworker, Athens)

> Sometimes, I'm really sorry for the people, but there is just nothing that we would call 'relevant for asylum law', because their story might be economic, their story might just be very personal, family issues. But, we just can't give them any protection because [their case] doesn't fit into the law. And, then, I really need to distance myself from that… It works, but sometimes it's really hard. (Caseworker, Berlin)

In both of these examples, the asylum judges recognise that they face certain internal pressures whn making some decisions, such as disagreeing with the particular guidelines they are meant to implement or feeling deep empathy for the applicants they

are meant to reject. Being aware of these pressures, however, the judges highlight the significance of not being swayed by them, favouring instead a professional stance, where law-following is of imperative importance.

When it comes to handling particular 'grey area' cases, judges who follow this approach may at times have a strong 'gut' feeling about a decision outcome they deem appropriate, but they still put their personal stance aside in favour of a more professional, 'evidence'-based decision. As the segments below show, there are times when the judges are not persuaded by the available evidence at all, or they regard a specific policy they are implementing as utterly meaningless and nonsensical. Even in the face of these extreme conditions, their dedication to their role identity still prevails over their person identity.

> I am trying to back up my decisions as well as possible, based on international sources, regardless of whether I agree or not with the decision I make. I mean, many times there might be an internal conflict … Because you have to be based a lot on the credibility of the applicant, many times your personal view may be different from what is written on the paper, or what was said [during the interview]. But you cannot exactly justify this discrepancy. It's just that your instinct is telling you, *"What they tell me was well-studied, but it is not their life"*. […] Often times you might be in that grey zone, where they tell a story that you cannot go against. So, there, I try to justify my decision on the basis of the information and not to put my own opinion first. (Caseworker, Athens)

> You have a child that came over and then there is one parent who comes over as well ... And, you can decide, either you give the parent family protection or you give them their own refugee status […] But, the outcome is super different. If you do give them family protection they can't, if they have another child, they can't really ask for this child to come over to Germany because they only got it for their first child […]. So, I always used to give them their own protection […] Now, they said, in our [organisational] policy, we do have to give family protection. So, I still don't agree. I still think it's a stupid rule but in the future I will probably give family protection because they tell me this is how we do it in this house ... Even though I think personally this is super stupid, that's what policies are there for. (Caseworker, Berlin)

The first quote above describes the internal battle this caseworker experiences when encountering 'grey area' cases, and where the professional approach eventually dominates. As this caseworker's individual instinct leads her in a different direction from where the evidence points towards, the resolution to this conflict comes through the path of an 'evidence'-based decision. This is so even as she "disagrees" with the decision she makes. In a similar vein, the second segment refers to a different type of challenging case, namely those guided by organisational policies that seem "super stupid" in the eyes of the participant. In this case too, the 'role' identity seems to win over the 'person' identity,

and the asylum decision is based on what one *must* do, as opposed to what one thinks is fair or appropriate.

Following this outcome of the 'role-person' identity battle, an asylum decision would be positive or negative, depending on the direction in which the 'evidence' points. More broadly, this role-informed decision-making strategy appears to be in line with previously observed implementation approaches where front-line actors distance and detach themselves from their clients and from the discretionary decisions they make about them (e.g. Eule, 2014, 2018; Schneider, 2019). At the same time, however, it comes in opposition to those who suggest that policy implementers tend to prioritise their own policy preferences (e.g. May & Winter, 2009).

3.3.4 The Person Resolution

Contrary to the decision-making approach discussed above, the 'person' resolution to the 'role–person' identity conflict suggests that the asylum judges' individual moral convictions ultimately guide their decisions. Of course, this is not to say that the policies and regulations in place are to be ignored or bypassed. After all, with every asylum decision, the asylum judges have to demonstrate on paper that they do implement policy. Nonetheless, given also their legal expertise, they are in a position to 'play' with the laws, meaning to pick the specific articles or directives that they deem as most fitting. In this regard, the door for them is open should they wish to 'cherry pick' the specific legal provisions they go by, according to what tallies most with their personal preferences. By extension, when their personal moral compass directs their decision-making, what changes is not *if* the law is followed but *how* it is followed.

> Personally, I rarely give refugee status or subsidiary protection, except from the Syrians, to whom we *have to* give refugee status regardless of their region […] and Iraqis, to whom you *have to* give at least subsidiary protection. I personally have very low recognition rates. And, this is because I believe that both the refugee status and the subsidiary protection are truly 'sacred', and the applicant would really have to persuade you through the interview that they deserve it. I obviously do follow the law closely and I try, of course, to check with the available country of origin information. But, as much as I can, in something so subjective, I try to play it safe and I do not give so easily refugee status or subsidiary protection. (Caseworker, Athens)

> So far, I've never been against the guidelines. What I have done is, if the guidelines keep it kind of open, then I try to interpret the guidelines differently. If the guidelines say: "homosexuality in Ghana is not a problem", I 've never written a decision saying homosexuality is a problem in Ghana. That's clear and I can't

> write against it. I know it would never go through, there is no point. But if they are saying *"some situations can be so bad for women that they cannot return by themselves",* then I can make a case for how it is really really bad for that woman. And then my boss sends it back, and says *"look the guideline says sometimes, so that means sometimes it isn't and in this case it isn't".* Then I write against it, then I go to the higher boss… (Caseworker, Berlin)

> In the beginning, when we would write the decisions, and [my team leader] had to give the okay, I wouldn't give them to her to give the okay. I waited for her to go on holiday in order to make a positive decision from, let's say, Nigeria, which is not that much of a 'safe country'. Or, Egypt, Libya, etc. I would have to wait until she goes on holiday. (Caseworker, Berlin)

In these segments, the participants explain how they interpret the guidelines and make decisions in accordance with their own personal perspectives. In the first example, the Athenian caseworker describes asylum protection as 'sacred' and explains that she only gives positive decisions when she "has to", meaning only when there is no other choice. In a similar vein, but from a different personal standpoint, the second quote illustrates how this caseworker actively looks for leeway in the guidelines, which she can use to the advantage of applicants, even if this involves acting against her superiors' wishes. The concern about the preferences of those higher in the organisational hierarchy is also prevalent in the account of the other Berliner caseworker who follows a sophisticated strategy in order to bypass his team leader altogether[14].

Not surprisingly, none of this study's participants explicitly stated that they make decisions according to their personal preferences rather than their professional role prescriptions. Such a wording would obviously suggest a biased and partial judgement. However, as demonstrated also in the preceding subsections, some judges indeed appear more "sensitive" and "understanding" towards refugees than others (p. 90). As other scholars have also noted, some judges' personal "feelings" (Miaz, 2017) or "inner beliefs" (Kobelinsky, 2019) do indeed inform their decisions.

Mirroring the examples above, the following quotes also indicate a person-informed decision-making approach. The two segments immediately below come from an administrative judge in Berlin who makes second instance decisions. The first segment indicates a more positive general predisposition towards asylum applicants and the second describes a particular case that he overturned, criticising the caseworker's lack of empathy.

[14] Organisational differences between Athens and Berlin to be discussed further in Chapter 6.

> In my old chamber I think I was, together with one colleague, the person more inclined to say *"Yeah, I believe what they say"* and *"No, I don't think they can be treated like this"*, or that they should be given some leverage. And, there were others, who had more tendency to say that they don't believe them, and *"No, they are responsible for their own actions"*.
>
> So he was at this market with this cow, and then all this military came, and then it was a mass panic. That was the way he told it […] A woman from the Bundesamt, sitting in her nice warm office […], wrote *"It's totally illogical that there was a mass panic because it's contrary to life experience that there is mass panic if the militia comes"* […] But it's not [Germany], it was in Eritrea in a village! And then the next sentence was, *"It's also contrary to life experience"* – [as in] my personal experience sitting in the office – *"that you would leave the hospital, because the hospital is a place where you should get help and not get arrested"*. Yeah, it should be … But it was obvious you failed to put yourself into the other individual's [position]… (Judge, Berlin)

By sharing that he was among those more inclined to believe the applicants' claims, this judge is signalling that his stance is more sympathetic towards applicants than that of his colleagues. And, by pointing out the lack of cultural sensitivity from the caseworker who made the negative first instance decision, he suggests that a more compassionate stance is more appropriate in his view. In this regard, his decisions are more likely to have a 'personal' undertone. The same holds true for the Athenian caseworker below, as she vividly illustrates in this example.

> I had a family of Kurds from Iraqi Kurdistan, where there is an ambiguity as to whether you should give subsidiary protection or not ... They had a little kid, aged 2 and a half, with leukaemia […] … the kid's hair had fallen out, a very beautiful little child. And these people said it clearly: *"We came here to save our child. We could not find medicine, we could not find hospitals."* This is not a reason for refugee protection. But, on the other hand, we have the bad luck of living in a country that has no [proper] immigration policy […]. There is a weight on us that is unfair, and has nothing to do with our training, either. So, I took this case, I really really 'stretched it, and I gave them subsidiary protection. […] Because [otherwise] the second degree would have to reject them [again] and make a reference for the humanitarian procedure, which means four years of waiting until you get a decision. Who out of those in need of humanitarian protection can wait for four years? Half of them are going to die! So you are forced into a situation that puts you, you know, in an internal … agony. To find a solution. (Caseworker, Athens)

In this 'role–person' identity battle, the latter clearly wins over the former, as the caseworker "stretches" the case legally in order to provide protection to the child in need. Even though she acknowledges that this claim does not legally qualify for refugee protection, she interprets the available evidence in accordance with her own sense of justice and 'labels' the case worthy of subsidiary protection. In other words, she goes the 'extra mile' (Belabas & Gerrits, 2017) and 'bends the rules' (James & Julian, 2020), using

her professional discretion in line with her own understanding of what a fair and just decision entails. In this example, even more obviously than in the one above, we see the 'person' identity guiding the judge's asylum decision, echoing previous studies that have highlighted the crucial role of judges' personal convictions, feelings, ethics and ethos in the asylum determination process (Affolter *et al.*, 2019; Kobelinsky, 2019; Miaz, 2017)

To conclude this empirical section, the evidence presented exemplified the decision-making mechanism proposed earlier. There are indeed a great number of asylum claims categorised as 'grey area' cases by the asylum judges. The internal moral conflict that such cases cause to them is resolved by taking either a more role-based professional stance or one that is more person-based. Prioritising the former leads to more 'evidence'-based decisions, while prioritising the latter leads to more individual preference-based decisions. The distinction between the two, however, is not clear-cut. Although a 'professional' asylum decision may trump one's personal preference, the opposite is almost never the case. A person-based decision is always a lawful decision, taken within one's professional role prescriptions. Put differently, even if the 'professional' overrides the 'personal', the 'personal' must not override the 'professional'.

3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

In line with this thesis' broader objective, this empirical chapter has sought to understand and explain how asylum judges in Athens and Berlin make refugee asylum decisions under conditions of high uncertainty. As several studies have already shown (Dahlvik, 2017; Foster, 2015; Freedman, 2015; Gill & Good, 2019; Hedlund, 2017; Miaz, 2017; Schittenhelm & Schneider, 2017; Singer, 2015), there is a proportion of asylum cases whose outcome cannot be determined, for instance due to the lack of available evidence or the unverifiability of claims. In an already morally loaded procedure, these 'grey area' cases inadvertently pose heightened moral conflicts for asylum judges.

This chapter has built on the literature of street-level bureaucracy concerning moral conflicts, which then translate into role conflicts for front-line actors (Tummers *et al.*, 2012; Vink *et al.*, 2015). Maintaining an emphasis on identities, it has proposed the introduction of the 'role–person' identity conflict, adding to the already identified list of role conflicts. This 'new' type of conflict describes the dilemma that asylum judges face when their professional *role* expectations do not match their *person* view of what constitutes a right and fair decision for a particular claim. The outcome of this identity

conflict, this chapter has argued, is likely to determine the decision outcome for those asylum cases that are particularly complex and challenging.

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, asylum judges take several steps before reaching a final decision. When it comes to 'grey area' cases, the distance between the initial step of 'case assessment' and the final step of 'decision outcome' is greater because there is the additional intermediate step of the 'role–person' identity conflict. Depending on which of the two identities dominates over the other, the rest of the decision-making process will follow accordingly. A role-based decision would be more heavily an evidence-based decision, while a personally motivated decision would be more aligned with a judge's level of compassion towards asylum seekers. For the latter, a more compassionate approach would correspond to a higher likelihood of a positive decision, whereas a less compassionate approach would most likely mean a negative asylum outcome.

At a deeper analytical level, there are two points worth highlighting here. First, the role-based approach and the person-based approach are not distinct and mutually exclusive. As the asylum judges have the means to 'dress up' their decision in arguments that agree with the existing legal framework, their discretion will always be 'authorised' (Brodkin, 2010) and their decision will always be lawful and in accordance with their professional standards. What does vary is whether the decision will be *only* professional role-based or that, *too*. In other words, the degree to which one includes one's personal preferences in the equation, and the content of these preferences, are the key factors that will determine asylum outcomes.

Second, although a more person-based approach does mean a more individually biased decision, it does not necessarily mean one that is more 'unfair' or more 'unfriendly' towards migrants, as some recent studies have suggested (e.g., Johannesson, 2018; Magalhães, 2016, 2018). As the Migration Crisis has led to a sharp increase in newly hired asylum judges, especially in the first instance of asylum determination, there is a chance that, on average, they would be more migrant-friendly. Choosing to take on such a challenging job at such a critical time signals high motivation, which also signals a positive, or at least a neutral predisposition, towards migrants. This element of self-selection could therefore be key in determining their personally motivated decisions (see also Nielsen, 2009), thereby pushing the overall recognition rates slightly upwards.

To conclude, this chapter has identified a decision-making mechanism that is shared across asylum judges in Athens and Berlin. Acknowledging that the external

factors influencing the judges' use of discretion are many and diverse, the primary emphasis here has been on the identity conflicts that emerge as manifestations of moral dilemmas at the front lines. Adding to the relevant literature stream in street-level bureaucracy (Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2012; Tummers *et al*., 2012; Vick *et al*., 2015; Zacka, 2017), this chapter has suggested that the 'role–person' identity conflict is common among asylum judges, arguing that it is the one that most acutely shapes their discretionary behaviour, thereby shaping asylum outcomes.

In the following chapter, which is the second empirical chapter, I shall introduce another type of identity conflict at the front lines, namely the 'role–social' identity conflict. This conflict is particularly prevalent among front-liners who have a migration background themselves, and who face additional pressures because of it. On the one hand, they are meant to represent their clients and their interests, but, on the other, they have the need to belong to the local society and to be seen as locals. Drawing from the literature on representative bureaucracy, I shall discuss the theoretical underpinnings and show the practical manifestations of this conflict.

CHAPTER 4

Migrants Serving Migrants?
A Conflict between Role and Social Identities

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, which was the first of the four empirical chapters in this thesis, I discussed the identity conflict many front-liners experience between their 'role' and 'person' identities. Focusing on asylum judges, a group of front-liners which most closely resembles the 'traditional' street-level bureaucrats, I addressed the conflict they face between their professional role identity as (lay) judges and their person identity as being more or less compassionate towards migrant applicants. Through the support of empirical evidence, I identified a shared decision-making mechanism and I showed how this type of conflict can shape the judges' decision outcomes. This was only one of the three types of front-line identity conflicts this thesis discusses.

In this empirical chapter, I move on to examine a different type of identity conflict facing those at the front lines of migration management, the conflict between their *role* and their *social* identities. To do so, I focus on a broader group of front-liners, namely those who are 'old' migrants themselves, whether from within or outside of Europe, but who do not share a specific professional role (e.g., lawyers, social workers, etc.). For these front-liners, the 'migrant' identity is the *social* identity under examination and the 'front-liner' identity is the *role* identity.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the complexities of serving migrant clients while being a migrant, and to investigate the impact of these complexities on the migrant front-liners' discretionary behaviour. As with the previous chapter, I shall present and discuss the accounts of participants from Athens and Berlin in parallel. Yet, in contrast with the previous chapter, the conditions of uncertainty here are not only the cause but also the product of the identity conflict under examination. Although this chapter is connected both with the previous and the next, in that each covers a different type of identity conflict, this one places a slightly greater emphasis on the theoretical discussion rather than the empirical one, making contributions of corresponding value.

Albeit overlooked, the role of migrant front-liners is of particular significance in the context of migration management in Europe. As the proponents of representative bureaucracy have long advocated, when bureaucrats share the same demographic characteristics as their clients, they are more likely to understand their needs and interests, and are therefore better able to serve them (Kingsley, 1944; Krislov, 1974; Krislov & Rosenbloom, 1981; Meier, 1993). This not only holds true for top-level bureaucrats, but also for those at street level. Since the proportion of European residents who are originally from a different country has increased in recent decades, it is time to acknowledge as well the presence of those migrants who, over time, have become bureaucrats.

Of course, the migrant identity is far from monolithic. The very definition of international migration – moving from one's country of origin and residing in another – is extremely broad, allowing for a multitude of potential ethnic identity combinations. Two migrants in the same host society may come from entirely different parts of the world, and may have had completely different migration journeys. As such, migrant front-liners may or may not share similar ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds with their migrant clients. Nonetheless, sharing the umbrella identity of 'migrant' still assumes some common experiences, and potentially some common interests. For instance, legal rights for migrants in relation to access to education, work and healthcare could be a shared goal among migrants from all backgrounds. Consequently, in a migration management context, the question that arises is whether migrant front-liners are more likely to help migrant clients; or, to put it in representative bureaucracy terms, whether passive representation translates into active representation.

Drawing also from the social psychological literature on identity, race and ethnicity, this chapter addresses this question by framing it as a 'social–role' identity conflict. Building on these different theoretical streams, as well as on empirical evidence, it suggests that migrant front-liners working in the management of migration face an additional layer of pressures while executing their tasks due to their social identity as migrants. On the one hand, as members of local organisations and groups, they are charged with implementing policy and enforcing rules that are often meant to restrict migrants' rights. On the other hand, having once migrated themselves, they also identify to some degree with these newcomers, which often gives them an additional incentive to be helpful to their clients. Moreover, being seen as 'migrants' by their clients and colleagues also places added expectations on them. It follows therefore that the migrant

front-liners' *role* identity as front-liners is likely to be in conflict with their *social* identity as migrants.

To offer further insights into this undertheorised topic, I propose a typology of four migrant front-liner profiles, depending on their level of loyalty to their clients, or to what I call here, the 'system'. At one end, there are migrant front-liners who adopt primarily the 'migrant representative' identity, prioritising their clients' needs. These front-liners fit the profile of what I call 'the spokesperson'. At the other end, there are those who see themselves mainly as representatives of the local 'system', including the state, the local society and their colleagues. These are the 'localised' front-liners. In addition, there are also those who feel equally comfortable with both sides, making up the 'peacemaker' profile, as well as those who feel they do not fit well in either category, constituting the 'ambivalent' profile. In the sections that follow, I shall further elaborate on these four profiles and use empirical data from migrant front-liners in Berlin and Athens to illustrate their real-life manifestations.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides a background discussion on the literature of representative bureaucracy, with an emphasis on the representation of racial and ethnic minorities. It also considers some necessary adjustments before adopting this literature in the European social context. The second section presents the key theoretical propositions of this chapter, namely the typology of the four profiles mentioned above, and reviews some of the drivers behind its formation. This is followed by the empirical section, which describes and analyses four extensive examples of these profiles. The fourth section concludes this chapter, offering a summary and discussion of these contributions.

4.2 Representation at the Front Lines

While the thesis' theme of identity conflicts at the front lines of migration management remains the focal point of this chapter, this section offers an alternative approach to construe this conflict through the lens of representative bureaucracy. As the paragraphs below illustrate, this stream of literature speaks to the question of what makes migrant front-liners identify with their migrant clients and use their professional discretion in ways that promote their clients' rights and interests. As it appears, a front-liner's migrant identity, or, to be more precise, their self-perception of this identity, does matter. Moreover, even though some of the assumptions of this theoretical approach are

based on the specific social context of the United States, when the contextual differences are accounted for, it is applicable in Europe too.

4.2.1 Passive versus Active Representation[15]

A few more critical voices notwithstanding (e.g., Hindera & Young, 1998; Lim, 2006; Pitts, 2007), public administration scholars generally regard representative bureaucracy as a good thing. When the personnel of a public agency reflect the diversity of the general population, the interests of all citizens are thought to be better represented (Saidel & Loscocco, 2005). The assumption is that when public servants share the same key identities with their clients, especially with regard to race, class and gender, they also share common life experiences and values. As a result, public servants are better able to identify the specific needs and interests of their clients, and are therefore better placed to serve them (Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003; Krislov, 1974; Meier, 1993; Riccucci & Meyers, 2004; Selden, 1997). Not only do they make everyday decisions and push for policies that are to the advantage of their target population, but they also help project an image of a public agency that is fair and democratic (Riccucci, Van Ryzin, & Lavena, 2014; Theobald & Haider-Markel, 2008).

Nonetheless, all this comes with a caveat. Having a proportional number of minority, working-class or female bureaucrats does not necessarily guarantee the substantive representation of the respective social groups' needs or interests. As Mosher (1986) puts it, passive representation does not lead automatically to active representation. Various factors may inhibit this connection. For instance, if minority bureaucrats were worried about their own professional standing within the organisation, they would be less inclined to go out of their way to help minority clients (Watkins-Hayes, 2013). Additionally, if they can only advance within the organisation by adopting the existing organisational values, they would be less likely to take action to change the status quo once they rise in a position of power. Alternatively, these minority bureaucrats might want to take such action but cannot, either because they do not have the necessary support from colleagues, or because they lack the appropriate practical means or know-how (Thomson, 2003, 2015).

[15] These are also known as *descriptive* and *substantive* forms of representation. I consider these synonymous, but I chose to use *passive* and *active* because they are more prevalent in the relevant literature.

This linkage between passive and active representation remains largely unclear, but some factors have been found to facilitate this relationship. Starting from the organisational level, when active representation is explicitly stated in an agency's mission, then the agency's bureaucrats are more likely to behave in accordance with that mission and act as active representatives (e.g., Meier, Pennington, & Eller, 2005). In a similar vein, when a policy that is being implemented aims to benefit a certain social group, such as women, then active representation is more likely to occur by female bureaucrats (e.g., Wilkins & Keiser, 2006). Active representation is also observed when there is a threshold level of passive representation in the agency, or what is also known as the 'critical mass' (Kanter, 1977). Moreover, higher levels of active representation are also found when minority or female bureaucrats have more discretion in their hands (Meier & Bohte, 2001), or at least they have the perception that they do (Sowa & Selden, 2003).

Besides these organisational factors, there are also individual-level dynamics that influence this passive–active relationship, and which are more directly relevant to this research (see below). One of the key determinants that shape the individual bureaucrats' behaviour in this regard is the issue of the salience of the identity in question (Keiser *et al*., 2002; Meier, 1993; Thomson, 1976). As each person is simultaneously a member of several social categories – for example, race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc. – the identity that is most salient in a given policy implementation context is the one that is most likely to shape the bureaucrats' behaviour. It has been shown, for example, that African-American administrators are more likely than their White counterparts to behave in ways that serve the interests of the African-American community (Bradbury & Kellough, 2008). Similarly, an increase in the passive representation of female maths teachers has proved to have positive effects on the maths scores of female pupils (Keiser *et al*., 2002).

Yet, and here is a second caveat, passive representation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of active representation. The bureaucrat's group membership is no guarantee of active representation, as we have already witnessed, but active representation may also come from non-group members. The latter is what Slack (2001) calls 'indirect representation'. Either due to their formal education or due to their close contact with the given group, these bureaucrats may develop an enhanced understanding of the group's needs and interests, and thus become more inclined to satisfy them. One study finds, for instance, that White teachers may exhibit positive bias towards their Black

and Latino students when they are aware of their disadvantaged social circumstances (Harber *et al.*, 2012). Another study shows evidence of highly engaged advocacy for gay persons living with HIV/AIDS by community members who are heterosexual and uninfected (Slack, 2001).

In the midst of inconclusive evidence of the linkage between passive and active representation, a concept that seems to capture both the direct and indirect forms of active representation is that of the 'minority representative role' (Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998). In this view, whether and to what extent a bureaucrat sees themselves as representative of the specific social group(s) they serve is ultimately what determines if and how much they will push for the rights and interests of that group's members. As a result, when it comes to racial or ethnic minority groups, if a bureaucrat strongly identifies with the role of the 'minority representative', they are more likely to use their professional discretion in ways that represent the interests of their minority clients. If they do not, then active representation is less likely to occur.

Based on the literature discussed here, there is a series of lessons we can draw for the migration management context in Athens and Berlin. First, the social identity 'migrant' is likely to be highly salient for migrant front-liners, especially given the urgency of the situation and the divisiveness of the issue. Yet, not all migrant front-liners are likely to actively represent their clients, either because they do not have the means or for other reasons. At the same time, we would expect some front-liners who are not migrants themselves to prioritise the needs of their migrant clients, becoming their 'indirect' representatives[16]. Finally, and more importantly, we would expect migrant front-liners who adopt the 'migrant representative' role to be more likely to actively represent the rights and interests of their clients. I shall examine the latter point in further detail in the next section.

4.2.2 Migrant Front-Liners in Europe

Before delving deeper into the concept of the 'migrant representative', let us take a look at what makes the cases of Athens and Berlin unique, since, in the effort to transfer an existing theoretical framework into a new analytical context, it is important to recognise the new contextual particularities. There are four such particularities I wish to

[16] Perhaps a sign of this is the 'welcome culture' that was formed by locals in light of the migration crisis, as discussed in Chapter 1.

highlight here: a) the importance of micro-level dynamics in light of the migration crisis, b) the social stratification on the basis of race and ethnicity, c) the different migrant statuses that are prevalent, and d) the current trend of falling 'in-between' identity categories.

First, although there are both individual- and organisational-level factors that determine the extent to which individuals identify with the role of the representative (Selden *et al*., 1998), in the context of Europe's migration crisis, the former is more relevant than the latter. As already discussed (Chapters 1 and 2), most migrant front-liners do not work for large public agencies but for smaller organisations and/or grassroots groups. Given also that there is no constant funding for these organisations and groups, front-liners tend not to maintain the same role for long periods. Moreover, and regardless of the working environment, the constantly changing migration flows and migration policies inhibit the formation of a stable organisational culture with specific norms and expectations. Against this backdrop, individual-level dynamics, such as the management of conflicting identities, will be of higher importance in determining the front-liners' discretionary behaviour. Moreover, although one's social identity as a 'migrant' is likely to be more salient in this context, one's level of identification with the role identity 'front-liner' remains uncertain.

Second, albeit 'race' is a primary component of social stratification in the United States – and consequently in the US literature – the same does not hold true in Europe. Instead, ethnic identity seems to matter more (Delanty, Jones, & Wodak, 2008), as the ethno-nationalist rhetoric of far-right parties also signifies. In practice, of course, racial and ethnic identities are intertwined and inseparable, as is the discrimination based on the two. Everyday acts of race and ethnicity-based exclusion (e.g. staring or verbal rejection) are observed not only in the daily interactions of migrants with locals (see Di Masso, Castrechini, & Valera, 2014) but also in their interactions with the employees of the state (see Flam & Beauzamy, 2008). This mix of xenophobia and racism has been described by some European scholars as 'xeno-racism' (Delanty *et al*., 2008; Fekete, 2001; Sivanandan, 2001). To capture this nuanced difference, I shall replace the term 'minority representative' with 'migrant representative', which is more fitting in the European social context.

Third, given there is free movement within the EU, it is important to acknowledge the existing diversity among migrants of different ethnic groups within the same host country, as well as the existing social hierarchies across these different migrant groups.

For example, Germany is a host country for various migrant groups, some from Middle Eastern countries and others from Southern European countries. However, let us say, Greeks and Italians in Germany enjoy more legal rights (e.g., no visa requirement and automatic access to work) than Iranians and Iraqis. At the same time, as Europeans, they may also be seen as being more 'compatible' with the German culture. In this sense, it can be argued that migrants from Southern Europe may enjoy a higher status in Germany than migrants from the Middle East. Given that in the migration crisis most newcomers come from the MENA region (OECD, 2018a), this stratification among different migrant identities could influence if and to what extent front-liners adopt the migrant representative role, depending on their own migrant status within this social hierarchy.

Finally, there is one more aspect that has been overlooked by the existing literature, US-based and otherwise, which is nevertheless rather important. It concerns the fact that people increasingly refuse to put themselves into single identity categories. Instead, they may identify with more than one category, or they may refuse to position themselves within the existing identification system altogether. This is more commonly the case in relation to ethnicity within Europe (e.g., Prümm, Sackmann, & Schultz, 2003), but it is also true for race in the US (Tatum, 1997/2017), and increasingly with regard to gender as well (Brubaker, 2015). As these multi-ethnic, biracial, non-binary and generally non-standard identities increase in frequency, they also become more relevant to scholarly research, and the need to account for them in the field of representative bureaucracy as well becomes more evident. Undoubtedly, the way migrant front-liners place themselves across or between ethnic categories is also bound to have implications for their discretionary behaviour.

As I have shown in this section, front-liners who share the same key identities as their clients are more likely to be helpful to them. Although the conditions under which passive representation translates into active representation are not entirely clear, what seems to matter the most is whether front-liners see themselves as the representatives of their clients. If they do, then they are more likely to meet their clients' needs but, if they do not, there is less likelihood of this happening. Although this theoretical stream comes from the United States, where scholars conceptualise race and ethnicity differently from their European colleagues, this concept of the client 'representative' remains highly relevant across the two social contexts. In the next section, I turn to those migrants at the front lines of migration management in Athens and Berlin, and further elaborate on this concept.

4.3 Migrant Representatives or System Representatives?

In continuation of the theoretical discussion above, this section examines the term 'migrant representative' and discusses the patterns of identification that are likely to form after the 'role-social', or 'front-liner–migrant', identity conflict. Drawing also from the analysis of interview data, here I propose four different stances, or profiles, that migrant-front-liners may adopt to tackle this conflict: the 'spokesperson', the 'localised', the 'peacemaker' and the 'ambivalent'. As I demonstrate below, these profiles correspond to different levels of loyalty to the migrant clients (social identity) and to different levels of loyalty to the migration rules and regulations they are meant to implement, or 'the system' (role identity). In the subsequent paragraphs, I provide a more detailed explanation, and I review some of the individual-level factors that may determine these patterns of identification.

4.3.1 Patterns of Identification

To reach a better understanding as to whether and to what extent migrant front-liners identify with the role of the 'migrant representative', one should also consider what their alternative options are. If not their clients, whom are they inclined to represent? The short answer here, I suggest, is 'the system'. This is the word my participants often used to describe the broader migration management mechanism in their city, referring mostly to the policies and bureaucratic procedures, but often also including the local front-line actors. Given that, in light of the migration crisis, the migration policies became increasingly restrictive in respect of migrants' rights (Scipioni & Urso, 2018), the migration 'system' was also influenced accordingly.

As a result, the front-liners in Athens and Berlin encountered an inevitable conflict between meeting their clients' needs and acting in accordance with the system's demands. Of course, this contradiction constitutes a known and inherent element of street-level bureaucracy, as the debate on the state–agent paradigm versus the citizen–agent paradigm also indicates (see Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). However, the presence of this dilemma is even more conspicuous here. Not only are the policies and bureaucratic processes by design unfriendly towards the migrant clients, but also the migrant clients are likely to place higher demands on front-liners who are also migrants.

On the one hand, migrant front-liners must enact the relevant rules and regulations, as the prescription of their role dictates. Even those front-liners who do not hold a professional and official position and who are not paid for their involvement with migrants still have to operate within the existing legal and bureaucratic frameworks. Consider, for instance, a volunteer who is assisting asylum seekers with the required paperwork for their asylum application. Naturally, the volunteer's job is to advise the applicants on how best to comply with the asylum procedures and with the legal provisions in place. Similarly, an activist who wants to assist a migrant in becoming financially independent will have to help them in meeting the necessary bureaucratic requirements (e.g., work permit or language certificate) that would allow them access to work. Thus, as they assist their 'clients', these front-liners simultaneously enact policy. As they do so, they also automatically express some level of loyalty to the system, becoming in this way representatives of that system.

On the other hand, the front-liners' other obvious goal is to satisfy their clients. In particular, for front-liners with a migration background, helping migrants may not merely constitute the goal that their role requires them to aim for, but their very motivation for undertaking this role. Since most migrant front-liners are either on low wages or unpaid, it is highly likely that they are internally motivated – possibly driven by a sense of duty to help those who are in the same position as they themselves once were. Regardless of whether the front-liners' deeper personal motives may also have ethnic, political, humanitarian or religious roots, meeting the needs of the migrants could still be their ultimate underlying goal. From this point of view, migrant front-liners are expected to possess at least a minimal level of identification with the 'migrant representative' identity.

An obvious question that emerges at this point concerns how migrant front-liners manage these seemingly incompatible identities of the 'system representative' and of the 'migrant representative'. To connect this dilemma to this thesis' broader theoretical framework, let me briefly return to the idea that individuals have three identity bases: *role*, *social* and *person* (Burke & Stats, 2009, see also Chapter 2). Considering this idea in conjunction with the literature on representative bureaucracy, one could argue that, for migrant front-liners, adopting the 'migrant representative' role is close to being synonymous with embracing the social identity of a 'migrant'. If the identity of a migrant is a central and salient identity for a migrant front-liner, then they are more likely to see themselves as 'migrant representatives', too. Accordingly, if the role identity of a 'front-

liner' is more central and salient to a front-liner's sense of self, then they are more likely to see themselves as 'system representatives'.

Consequently, it is my contention that the degree to which migrant front-liners adopt the 'migrant representative' identity is contingent upon the extent to which they prioritise their *social* identity of a migrant over their professional *role* identity of a front-liner. In this sense, the linkage between passive and active representation can be framed as the outcome of one's internal battle between these two identities. If the social identity of the migrant dominates the role identity of a front-liner, then the migrant front-liner will be more likely to use their discretion in ways that match the migrant clients' rights and interests. Furthermore, if the role identity of a migrant dominates the social identity of a migrant, then the discretion would have fewer positive effects for the migrant clients.

Returning to the more practical dilemma between the migrant clients and the system, which is both a cause and a manifestation of this 'role–social' identity conflict, migrant front-liners may adopt different responses. To deal with the tension between these two opposing points of pressure, I argue here that they embody one of four different profiles, indicating different levels of loyalty to the system and to the clients. These profiles are the 'spokesperson', the 'localised', the 'peacemaker' and the 'ambivalent', for which I provide an explanation below. Table 4.1 illustrates how these four profiles correspond to the varying degrees of loyalty to the two sides.

Table 4.1 Profiles of Migrant Front-Liners, by Loyalty to the System and to Clients

	Low System Loyalty	**High System Loyalty**
Low Client Loyalty	The Ambivalent	The Localised
High Client Loyalty	The Spokesperson	The Peacemaker

Table constructed by author

First, there is the profile of the 'spokesperson', or the migrant front-liner who prioritises their loyalty to the clients over their loyalty to the system. In practice, this means bending the rules or even 'sabotaging' (Brehm & Gates, 1997) them in order to meet the needs and interests of their clients (see also Belabas & Gerrits, 2017; James & Julian, 2020). Second, there is the profile of the 'localised' migrant front-liner, meaning the one who sides with the system rather than with the clients, and who sees themselves as being responsible for steering migrants to adjust to the existing system, without doubting the system itself. Third, there is the 'peacemaker', or the migrant front-liner who

feels equally loyal to the system and to the clients. Their understanding of their role is that of someone whose goal is to ease the interaction between these two opposing sides and generally to bring harmony. Finally, there is the 'ambivalent' migrant front-liner profile. This describes the front-liner who struggles the most to manage the demands of their role with the expectations of their clients, finding themselves 'stuck' in the middle and unable to 'pick' sides.

As I shall further show in the empirical section below, these profiles correspond to different degrees of identification with the 'migrant representative' and the 'system representative' identities. As the term indicates, those with a 'spokesperson' profile will be more likely to identify as 'migrant representatives' and consider this social identity to be their most salient identity in this context. By contrast, those with a 'localised' profile will have the weakest identification with the migrant representative identity, as their loyalty to the system predominates. Next, the 'peacemakers' would identify with the migrant representative identity as much as they would identify with that of the system representative, allowing both identities equal amounts of salience in the situation. Finally, the front-liners with the 'ambivalent' profile do not really identify with the migrant representative identity, but they do not identify with the system representative role either, finding themselves 'in-between'.

4.3.2 Determinants of Pattern Formation

Having discussed the different patterns of identification with the 'system' and the 'migrant representative', or with the role and social identities, I now turn to the factors that may determine this pattern formation. Put simply, why do some migrant front-liners identify more with the system and others more with the migrants? Moreover, why do some struggle between these two roles while others seem equally comfortable with both? Since there is always going to be variation across individual front-liners, it would be futile to claim definitive answers to these questions. However, it would be both feasible and useful to offer a general discussion and identify some potential factors that play into this. I do so in the paragraphs that follow, drawing from the social psychological literature on identity, race and ethnicity.

To begin, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between the different types of migrant front-liners. As previously noted, EU migrants tend to enjoy higher social status than that of non-EU migrants. For the latter group, a sense of belonging to

the local society is especially challenging. One of the additional hurdles these migrant front-liners face, therefore, is the potential discrepancy between their preferred identity and that ascribed by others. That is to say, although migrant front-liners may prefer to be perceived as locals by those around them, they are more likely to be seen as migrants, both by the locals and by the new migrants. As a result, those migrant front-liners who have not yet managed to gain acceptance as locals may simultaneously have to make a place for themselves in the host society and help their clients do the same.

Under these circumstances, implicit in the 'migrant representative' versus 'system representative' conflict is also a conflict between the individual identity of a *local* and that of a *migrant*. When it comes to 'old' migrants in the European context, be they settled migrants or their offspring, their identification with the migrant identity is, indeed, neither direct nor obvious. Although the 'migration background', as the Germans like to call it, is often a characteristic that constitutes an undeniable fact, the migrant identity is almost always a stigmatised identity, and consequently an undesirable one. Especially at times when xenophobia and racism are rife, as has been the case at different points during the migration crisis era, it would not be surprising if migrants tried to hide or downplay their migrant identity. Adopting this strategy could therefore potentially serve to increase their chances of acceptance by, and belonging to, mainstream society.

On a similar note, if 'old' migrants had experienced xenophobia and racism as newcomers, their behaviour towards the most recent newcomers will not be necessarily welcoming. Although some may want to protect the new migrant members from similar negative experiences, others may consider it unfair if the new migrants get to 'have it easy'. Despite the generally accepted notion of in-group preference (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it is also not unusual for members of a subordinate social group to defend and justify the status quo, even when the system is disadvantageous to those in their own group (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Albeit somewhat counterintuitive, instances of prejudice, discrimination and racism across, as well as within, subordinate social groups are, indeed, relatively common. The US literature on race describes a variety of 'Othering' mechanisms, even within the same minority groups. For instance, Blacks who come from a mixed-race background are often seen as 'not Black enough' by their Black peers (Tatum, 1997, 2007). Having their 'Blackness' denied, their racial identity is also disputed and their belonging to the minority group questioned. At the same time, however, Blacks whose skin is seen as 'too dark' may also face discrimination, or what is known as 'colourism'

(Banks, 2000). Although the former signifies a tendency to safeguard the group's symbolic borders, the latter reveals some level of internalised 'Otherness' associated with the Black identity. Moreover, there is also 'Othering' on the basis of class. As several studies show (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Townsend *et al.*, 2012), biracial Black/White individuals who are of higher social class are more likely to identify as White. This self-positioning associates individuals with a higher-status identity and maintains a distance from the subordinate 'Other'.

Not surprisingly, discrimination and racism are also observed among members of a larger social category, such as that of migrants within the same European country. As Fox (2013) finds, for example, Hungarian and Romanian migrants in the UK play into Britain's racialised hierarchies to gain an advantageous position over other migrants. Albeit a target of xenophobia themselves, they use racism to distance themselves from Black and Roma migrants, and they emphasise their 'Whiteness' to prove their deserving to belong to the local society. To explain this stance, some scholars point to the anti-migrant sentiment and the racialisation of migration conveyed both by policies and the media (Fox, Moroşanu, & Szilassy, 2012), while others highlight the institutionalised racism against certain groups of migrants embedded in the local labour market (Erel, Murji, & Nahaboo, 2016).

In any case, it becomes evident here that these institutionalised social hierarchies are often transmitted as normalised world understandings and accepted as matter-of-fact realities, even by those most negatively affected by them. In turn, we observe the phenomena of oppressed people who accept a subordinate position and an unfair status quo, at times even becoming themselves the oppressors of their peers (see Freire, 1970/ 2000). Of course, this is not to say that social inequalities are simply and always internalised while individual agency plays no role, but it is to say that one's social and structural environment both constrains and enables one's individual agency (see also Chapter 6).

A migrant identity, therefore, much like racial identity, is a lasting process that continues well into adulthood (Tatum, 2007, 2017). Since it is influenced by a variety of, often unpredictable, factors, one cannot pinpoint the exact drivers that lead to the formation of each of these four profiles discussed above. Nonetheless, as I discussed in this subsection, and shall further demonstrate below, there are some individual-level factors that are likely to steer migrant front-liners in certain directions, depending on the individual's circumstances. Table 4.2 summarises these factors.

Table 4.2 Individual-Level Factors Influencing a Migrant Front-Liner's Profile

- EU/Non-EU Migrant Status
- Forced Migration/Migration By Choice
- High/Low Social Status (gender, race, ethnicity, class, education, etc.)
- Previous Experience of Discrimination
- Internalisation/Rejection of Existing Social Hierarchies
- Match/Mismatch between Ascribed and Preferred Identities
- High/Low Sense of Agency

Table constructed by author based on interview data

In this section, I discussed the migrant front-liners' dilemma between the demands of the local migration management 'system' in which they operate and the expectations of their clients. This dilemma, I noted, is essentially an identity conflict between one's *role* identity as a front-liner and one's *social* identity as a migrant. While acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of the individual front-liners who encounter this conflict, I suggested there are four different profiles of migrant front-liners: the 'spokesperson', the 'localised', the 'peacemaker' and the 'ambivalent'. Each of these profiles, I argued, corresponds to a different stance on the 'role–social' identity conflict and, consequently, to different levels of loyalty to the system and to the clients. To shed some light on this pattern formation, I offered a short discussion on the individual-level factors that may play a role. As I shall discuss in the empirical section below, these four profiles also correspond to different discretionary behaviours at the front lines.

4.4 Empirical Evidence: Identity Construction at the Front Lines

Turning now to the empirical section of this chapter, I shall further elaborate on the four identified profiles of migrant front-liners, using interview data from the migrant front-liners in Athens and Berlin. In the paragraphs that follow, I shall describe each of these profiles in greater depth, through the individual stories of Zena, Genti, Joan and Leila. Although these are not their real names, their individual stories are real and belong to selected participants from the two capitals. Although each participant's story is unique, it is simultaneously representative of the migrant front-liners who fall in the same profile

category; they display similar discretionary behaviours and adopt a similar stance in their effort to resolve their own version of the 'role–social' conflict discussed above.

4.4.1 Profile A: Zena, the 'Spokesperson'

Zena was once a refugee child. In the early 1990s, her Russian mother and Iranian father fled with her to Sweden, where she then grew up and lived most of her life. In 2013, when Zena was in her mid-30s, she moved to Berlin because she was attracted by the city's vibe. She was able to learn German quickly, as she was already fluent in Russian, Farsi, Swedish and English. As she was looking for a way to pay the bills, she decided to become a social worker at a shelter for migrants. Not only could she make use of her social work degree and experience from Sweden, but she could also work towards a cause she really cared about: helping refugees.

While on the job, however, she was surprised to discover that, unlike in Sweden, the social services in Germany are largely privatised, especially when it comes to running shelters for migrants. This is something Zena found especially problematic, and which made her question her role as a social worker in Berlin.

> In order to be able to expand your profit-driven company, you need to be on good terms with the people who give you the contracts. This is the [local government] authority that my clients are pretty much in conflict with. And, I am employed by the company that is dependent on it. So, from my boss's point of view, we are contract partners with this authority and need to execute their will. From my professional point of view, I am the social worker of the people who are quite often in conflict with this authority. Of course, this is a completely unrealistic situation; either you stay focused on your clients, which will, at some point, mean that you will be uncomfortable towards your profit-driven bosses, or you stay in line with the policy of the company, but then you are actually not producing good social work.

Here, Zena is illustrating the contradiction between the expectations of her boss versus those of her clients, leading to a conflict between the 'system representative' role and that of the 'migrant representative', as discussed above. Although these contradictory expectations are not unusual in the field of social service delivery, especially in today's context of mixed social services (see also Chapter 6), the fact that Zena shares the same background as her clients poses an additional layer of pressure on her. Among other things, for her this is also a conflict between her 'role' identity as a social worker and her 'social' identity as a migrant.

In this internal conflict, Zena has taken a clear stance: she is with her clients. On the broader issue of migration, she states that "a human has a right to move inside [Europe] or wherever they want". When referring to the Geneva Convention, she notes that "if we just follow the law that we actually signed under, we would have to take a lot more refugees". Additionally, she makes sure to dispute the term 'crisis': "I don't want to call it a crisis. I mean it is humans we are taking about. They are not 'crisis', you know?" As her words suggest, Zena identifies with the migrants' perspective and is critical of the European response to incoming waves of asylum seekers.

In more practical terms, she is especially critical of the local Berlin authorities, describing their lack of responsiveness as appalling, while she simultaneously explains and defends the stance of migrants. Although in principle social workers should be able to contact a certain governmental office with inquiries about their clients' needs, rarely does anyone pick up the phone or respond to the emails she and her colleagues send, she says. She calls this the "void" or the "black hole that never responds". She further explains that most asylum applicants have not found themselves in Berlin by choice, but have been uprooted and feel homesick. She talks about the exhausting process of asylum determination, the poor food quality at the shelters and the hostility from locals, suggesting that they neither contribute to a positive experience, nor do they inspire a thirst for language acquisition and integration. Without a doubt, she sides with the migrants and not with the 'system'.

As her feelings translate into actions, Zena becomes the 'spokesperson' for migrants. Dissatisfied with the local government response – or lack thereof – she takes matters into her own hands and uses her professional discretion to defend the migrants' rights. Together with the colleagues she is close to, they bend or even disregard the rules whenever they find them unfair towards migrants.

> We don't do room controls which we are supposed to do … which means going into people's homes and looking to see if it's clean or not. This is something that we don't do. We say we do, we have to, but we don't… We don't always count [the number] of [nappies] we give out. We trust people when they ask for a couple more, there is a reason for it. Things like this. [And], as much as we can, we try to stop deportations by warning our clients… When we get phone calls and we understand – which you do when you have worked for a long time in this area – we understand that these calls are to control people who are here to ease their deportation. We warn our clients.

As this quote demonstrates, Zena and her likeminded colleagues use positive discretion towards their migrant clients, at times going as far as to "warn" them, so as to

prevent their deportations. Here, too, her social identity as a migrant dominates for Zena, who acts as a 'migrant-representative' and as a 'spokesperson' for her clients.

This dynamic becomes even more obvious when she describes specific incidents that occurred while on the job. For example, although the shelter where she worked already had built-in kitchens, a new government order at one point said that only those who are recognised refugees or have high prospects of being recognised (e.g. Syrians) would be allowed to cook their own meals. For the rest, there would be catering. After organised complaints by social workers from many such shelters across the city, this regulation was withdrawn. Yet, Zena's boss still did not allow the migrant residents to use the existing kitchens and the residents complained. For Zena and her colleagues, there was no question about whose side to take.

> It became a pretty open conflict where we had to take a side, and we decided to take our clients' side. Because not only are they our clients, they are also totally right. And this is totally insane and it's also actually against any form of law there is about this. And makes no sense, whatsoever. And this whole thing culminated with the fact that our clients had a demonstration exercising their right to express their opinion on the street. Like every other German person in this world. And instead of seeing that this was maybe a very good note for the integration work that we have been doing, it was looked upon as something very bad from my bosses who came together with [the local government agency] and tried to stop this, and tried to force us to make our clients shut up, which we refused.

This incident also illustrates Zena's loyalty to her migrant clients as opposed to her loyalty towards her boss or indeed the entire migration management 'system' in Berlin. Soon after this incident, Zena was reprimanded for organising a protest among her migrant clients. After this latest dispute with her boss, she decided to quit her job.

As Zena's profile illustrates, the 'spokesperson' is a migrant front-liner of higher social status who identifies with the 'migrant' representative role, and that role alone. What points to her higher status is primarily that she is a migrant by choice, while as an EU citizen she is in a clearly advantageous position compared with that of the migrant clients she serves. Moreover, Zena very much recognises the conflicting demands of working to serve migrant clients, while simultaneously getting paid by a state that aims to restrict migration. In this conflict, she not only stands by the migrants, but she becomes their representative and their spokesperson. Taking advantage of her higher migrant status, she bends, ignores or sabotages the rules, stretching her authorised discretion and testing the discretionary limits of her unauthorised discretion. After all, risking losing her job is something she can afford.

4.4.2 Profile B: Genti, the 'Localised'

Genti moved to Greece from Albania in 1991, as a young adult. Albeit relieved to escape a country in chaos, the situation he encountered in the receiving society was not exactly welcoming. Having only been an emigration country until that point, Greece had no official support to offer to the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and immigrants who entered in the 1990s. Although the developing state of the economy was able to absorb their cheap labour, it was definitely not an easy time to be an Albanian in Greece.

Genti had already spent five years struggling with economic hardships and overt discrimination when he came across the Network for the Support of Immigrants and Refugees in central Athens. He describes this as an eye-opening and heart-warming experience: "Until that point, I did not believe that there could be even one Greek who may see you as a human being. I had just been through so, so much racism", he says. Since then, Genti has maintained some level of involvement with the Network, which allows him both a sense of belonging and the opportunity to help others.

In the summer of 2015, when migrant inflows to Greece had reached a record point, members of the Network initiated the Solidarity Movement for Refugees and Immigrants, an effort joined by the mobilisation of large parts of mainstream society, at least for a certain period of time. For some a political act, for others a humanitarian response, this was in any case a manifestation of the broader 'welcome culture' that was on the rise across several European countries, as already discussed in Chapter 1. Genti was quick to jump on this bandwagon, finding himself at the front lines of service provision for migrants. Inevitably, there was a level of identification with the newcomers.

> Although I was not forced out due to war, I was forced out due to deprivation. It was hope that 'pushed me' towards a better life. A better life of all kinds, not just financially. So, because I have already lived this, being in a foreign country without anything and without having any support – maybe because we were the first bunch to migrants in Greece back then in 91 – so, ok, we got some experience from hardships etc., so we can maybe make it a little easier for them...

As these remarks denote, Genti's migration experience was quite similar to that of the current migrants. He, too, migrated because of need and not by choice. Driven by these similarities, he was motivated to ease the newcomers' hardships.

Nonetheless, by taking an active part in the Solidarity Movement, Genti gradually came to see himself as a 'solidarian', too. Along with a group of local solidarians, he became closely involved in one of the housing squats for refugees and immigrants in central Athens. Once an abandoned hotel, the building now hosted approximately 400

migrants from various countries, one third of whom were children. Genti has been present there on a nearly daily basis, performing a variety of supporting tasks. These include maintenance work, which is also his regular job, security shifts at the gate, service work in the reception area and attendance at assembly meetings.

Two years into this physically demanding routine, Genti describes his involvement with a great deal of enthusiasm and pride. He speaks about the positive attention this initiative has attracted from media outlets Europe-wide and the frequent encounters with various high-profile international visitors, including academics such as Judith Butler and musicians such as Manu Chao. Ironically, albeit the aspect of squatting buildings is illegal, the work of solidarians was even praised by the Greek migration minister himself (Giannarou, 2016). Overall, Genti appears to enjoy being a 'solidarian' and part of something bigger. Over time, as the initiative has gained momentum and international exposure, Genti's picture has appeared in magazines and online videos across different countries. He views how things have turned out almost with an air of disbelief. "I felt like George Clooney", he says in a humorous tone and an expression of self-satisfaction.

Nonetheless, when Genti talks about his interactions with migrants, he does not seem equally pleased. "They have some things that, for *us,* are not understandable", he starts by saying, pointing his index finger at me and then back to him, in repetition. His account continues with a long list of issues that he finds problematic about migrants: racism among different ethnic groups, lack of education, excessive levels of religiosity, overt sexist behaviours, gender-based violence, irresponsible parenting, lack of appreciation for what is given to them by the solidarians and a curious sense of entitlement. The quote below encapsulates the latter.

> One thing they do, which is quite annoying – other solidarians have also told me this — is that they keep saying: *"You know what we've been through..?"* Okay, yes, but you see this coloured, like in a film. Through a shiny filter, etc. Okay, you've been through a lot. But sitting there being miserable about it and making it like *now you have to treat me well, because of what I've been through,* doesn't work. It is just annoying.

Despite being a migrant himself, and despite assisting migrants voluntarily, Genti sides with the solidarians and does not hesitate to offer a rather negative depiction of his migrant 'clients'. Perhaps it is because he is a migrant himself that he feels he can be a harsher critic of other migrants, or perhaps the egalitarian arrangement of the housing

squats leads to higher expectations from migrants, too. In any case, Genti does not seem to side with the migrants as much as he does with his fellow solidarians.

Further into our discussion, he also describes how he uses his position to steer the migrants to 'correct' their behaviour and align it to the requirements of the European value system, as he understands it.

> I have told them. Their mentality due to religion, etc., is in a very different direction from that of the locals. They came to Europe. Europe is not going to change for you. Don't insist. You are the one that has to change. I am not saying to get rid of your culture, but some things that are not compatible, some stupid stuff that the Quran is saying or whatever … you have to change them! Otherwise, you are automatically getting yourself excluded. You will be standing out and … it can't be otherwise. You have to adjust!

In this segment, Genti underlines the urgent need he sees for migrants to "change" their mentality and to "adjust" their behaviour to fit into the local society. He frames this process as a one-way street, almost mandatory, if not as inevitable. In this instance, too, he conveys a self-view that is closer to that of a representative of the 'system' than to a representative of the migrants.

Looking at both segments, one thing we can infer from Genti's story is that his involvement with the migrants helps him to get closer to his preferred identity of a local, and further away from his ascribed identity as a migrant. Being an Albanian, and a handyman, Genti has always carried a lower-status migrant identity, and has always been excluded by the local Greek 'system'. Through participating actively in the Solidarity Movement for Refugees and Immigrants, he is claiming a place together with the locals or, to put it differently, he is 'doing belonging'. As the last segment above suggests, in Genti's view, migrants also need to make their own effort to belong.

In his well-known book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', Paulo Freire (1970/2000) notes: "The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom" (p. 47). Although the migration crisis is not quite the same as Freire's post-slavery era, the power difference between local authorities and migrants is rather comparable. Despite being an 'old' migrant and having endured decades of discrimination and hardship, or perhaps because of this, Genti's belonging to the local society is an unfinished, ongoing process. One way to make sure he is seen as a local in this context is to stand with the locals and to operate as an enforcer of the local norms, values and practices during his interactions with the new migrants.

Therefore, albeit identifying closely with the migrants' hardships due to his first-hand experiences, he does not identify with the migrants themselves. In other words, he identifies *as* a migrant but not *with* the migrants. By suggesting that the migrants should change and become more "like us", he positions himself as a representative of the system rather than as a representative of the migrants. By extension, he casts himself as a 'localised' migrant front-liner.

4.4.3 Profile C: Joan, the 'Peacemaker'

Joan, 23, was born in the UK to Greek–Cypriot parents, and raised in a relatively privileged social environment in North London. Her mother, however, was once a refugee, having fled Cyprus when the Turkish forces invaded the island in 1974. Growing up, Joan often had the chance to visit Greece and Cyprus for holidays and family visits. This also helped her to become fluent in Greek. She recently completed her studies in the UK, and she now has both a bachelor's and a master's degree, both relating to human rights. Currently, she works for a small NGO in central Athens, a youth centre dedicated to helping unaccompanied migrant minors. Prior to this, she had been volunteering for months at a time at refugee camps in Lesvos and at housing squats in Athens.

Her involvement with the migrants began in the summer of 2015, when the flows of asylum seekers coming across the sea had reached record levels, leading to –among other things— a humanitarian crisis. Holidaying on a different Greek island, Joan could not look the other way. She changed her travel plans and went to Lesvos, where she ended up spending the rest of the summer, volunteering on a daily basis in the most chaotic and violent-prone conditions. Joan remembers the stress she experienced during that period: "Having to pull children who have come to Greece as refugees out of tear gas on a day-to-day basis … It just takes a toll on you", she says.

Joan prioritised the rights of migrants and, in doing so, she did not hesitate to intervene when the management of migration became conspicuously problematic. She recalls how she often became the intermediary between the UNHCR field administrator and the police:

> … Say she has an opinion opposite to the police, she would send me to go to speak to the police because her job disallowed her from going to talk to them. She wasn't allowed to tell them to stop the riots. She just had to stand there and watch the riots. While we [the independent volunteers] were allowed to go in there and argue with the police.

As the two quotes here indicate, Joan was both ready to provide humanitarian assistance to refugee children in need, and able to –informally– facilitate the communication between international humanitarian organisations and the state police.

At the end of that summer, Joan moved to Athens. There, for the years to come, she spent much of her time assisting migrant families, most of them from Syria. An abandoned school building near her family house had just been occupied and turned into a housing squat for close to 300 migrants. In Joan's eyes, this was both a convenient location and an excellent opportunity to "make a difference" by "offering myself to these people". Her daily tasks included registering the children at school, counselling the teenagers, assisting with the building's restoration needs, doing security shifts at night to help keep the fascists and the police away, and accompanying the squat residents to their governmental and medical appointments.

> …I was also very involved in the hospitals. [For] emergency cases [that] had to go to the hospitals, we needed someone who was Greek. Because we would not abandon these people in terrible Greek hospitals as they could be there for hours because they didn't have someone that spoke Greek. We noticed that things got done a lot quicker when someone Greek was with them. So, my friend [Maria] and I were always at the hospital for appointments with people.

In this segment, Joan speaks of herself as a local Greek who is using her language expertise to ease the migrants' encounters in "terrible Greek hospitals". Here, she can be seen as a migrant front-liner who has adopted the 'migrant representative' role, prioritising her clients' needs and interests. She came to develop such a close bond with the migrants that she often refers to some of the residents of that squat as "my family".

Nonetheless, there are also several instances when Joan describes her role as complementary to that of the governmental and intergovernmental organisations. In that regard, she sees herself as also being 'system representative'. In the following segment, she suggests that the housing squats for migrants are essentially helping fill the gaps left by the state. As soon as extra spots at a state camp open up, the residents will happily register with the UNHCR and empty the squat.

> The reason the squats have been opened until now is because the government needs us to be open, because they don't have a place to put all these people. As soon as they have a place, it will not even be the police. It will be UNHCR turning up, like "come to this camp, we will give you money". And, they *will* do that […]. They *will* leave. These people are broke.

On the one hand, this sentiment repeats the theme of the dysfunctional Greek state. Not only are the hospitals "terrible", but also the state camps are not good enough to host

all the asylum seekers in need of housing. On the other hand, by asserting that the squats are only open "because the government needs us", she suggests that front-liners like herself are essentially assisting the Greek government to meet its legal obligations to asylum seekers, something the state apparently cannot achieve on its own. She therefore depicts the squats as a 'necessary evil' to temporarily fill the gap caused by governmental inadequacies, and as something that is ultimately happening precisely because the state has turned a blind eye to it. In that sense, there is an informal but very substantial cooperation between the Greek state and front-liners such as Joan who are running the squats, and who *de facto* function as an extension of the state (see also Chapter 6).

Overall, Joan's family history and education have sensitised her to the migrant experience. At the same time, her multi-ethnic identity, her familiarity with the Greek language and culture, and perhaps also her looks, allow her to pass as a local while in Greece. Joan's profile represents that of the 'peacemaker' front-liner. She is a high-status migrant who identifies strongly both with the migrants and with the host country, and who sees her role both as a representative of the system and as a representative of the migrants. In several instances, she also plays the role of an intermediary between the two. Thus, she feels equally comfortable with the 'system representative' and the 'migrant representative' identities, managing to either combine the two or switch with ease from one to the other.

4.4.4 Profile D: Leila, the 'Ambivalent'

Leila, 24, is Syrian, and she is a Sozialbetreuer, or a 'social carer' for migrants, employed by one of the six main German welfare organisations. The migrant shelter where she works is located in Eastern Berlin, an area with relatively few migrants and high levels of xenophobia. In parallel, Leila is also studying for her master's degree in English Literature. She generally comes across as very polite and well-spoken. Leila moved from Syria to Germany together with her family in 2013, before most of her co-nationals. "I came here legally," she pointedly informs me, even though this was not something I was planning to ask. Leila had already had German lessons at home for two years prior to her journey, so language was not a barrier to her transition. In fact, she began teaching German to Arab migrants on a voluntary basis soon after she arrived in Berlin. Her education, clothing and general remarks point to a person from a higher socio-economic background.

Along with assisting the shelter's residents with their everyday needs, especially with regard to their bureaucratic, medical and educational appointments, and paperwork, Leila also translates for them. While combining these duties, she often finds it difficult to assert her role as a front-line worker in the eyes of her migrant clients.

> Sometimes, because I [also] translate for them, they don't take me seriously as a decision-maker, or a person who knows information … So, when I tell them that this doesn't work like this, like seriously this is not allowed or something … they ask to talk to my boss, for example, instead. They find out that it is the same result, my boss says the same thing, but they think because I am just a … They assume I am just translating here. That I don't really know much about whatever they are asking about.

Here, Leila describes her effort to play the role of the 'system representative'. Phrases like "this doesn't work like this" and "this is not allowed" are meant to convey the existing rules to the migrant clients, be they organisational regulations or state law. Her effort to fulfil the requirements of this role, however, is met with resistance from her clients, who seem not to "take her seriously". Through her interactions with clients, therefore, Leila is unable to verify the 'system representative' identity and experiences a discrepancy between her preferred and ascribed identities.

Leila often finds it difficult to connect with her clients in general, an issue that inhibits her from seeing herself as a 'migrant representative'.

> I come from the same culture, but they come from different environments, within the same country, that I haven't necessarily had contact with, even when I was there myself. And, the language they use when they ask questions, or when they want something, is not necessarily always nice. I am the only one that suffers with this because I am the only one who understands it. […] Some of them expect that we have to do everything for them, for example, or expect that we are here as servants or something. The language implies this. And I always excuse them because I know that not everyone has had the same educational chances, for example, or like they were not all raised the same way...

As we see here, Leila does not identify very strongly with many of her migrant clients. Partly because they come from "different environments" and partly because she disapproves of their manners, their relationship is not always easy.

Moreover, incumbent in this 'system representative' versus 'migrant representative' identity tension is a tension of ethnic identities. While Leila tries to increase her 'Germanness' as part of her own journey to belong to the local society, her clients expect her to follow the stereotypical behaviours of an Arab woman. Inevitably, this constitutes an additional obstacle in their daily work.

> I have also been Germanised, in a way, because I learnt a lot about Germany. That you have to be direct but also very polite. You can never say "Do this" or "Do that". In Syria, it is different […]. The problem is always because Syrians are indirect when they have to complain about something, I cannot directly say, "This is not like this, you have to respect me", because I am an Arab, they are Arab. They will understand it differently, because in an Arab country, you don't criticise directly. In Germany, you criticise directly. I am in Germany but I am not a German… [laughs]

As this segment suggests, Leila's 'Germanisation' process seems to be hijacked by the primary image her clients have of her, that of a fellow-Arab woman, as well as the behavioural expectations that come with it.

Finally, in her effort to establish her Germanness and her role as a 'system-representative', Leila encounters an additional struggle. On top of feeling conflicted about acting as a German or as an Arab towards her clients, Leila also has a difficult time communicating her unique experience to her German colleagues:

> We always have a conflict because of this… The German colleagues don't get my point on why I can't be direct. They don't get it. […]. This is one big issue for me.

Although, when discussing her interactions with her clients, she referred to herself as "Germanised", the difficulties in her interactions with her colleagues indicate that she is perhaps not yet *fully* "Germanised".

As Leila's story shows, there are migrant front-liners who, in their struggle to belong to the host society and to help newcomers do the same, face continuous difficulties on both fronts. Albeit sharing the same ethnic and cultural background as her clients, Leila does not really identify with them, and does not see herself as, or want to be considered, their representative. At the same time, the fact that they treat her as 'one of their own' compromises her role as a 'system representative', while it also poses a hurdle to her 'Germanisation' journey. Furthermore, her interactions with her German colleagues are also somewhat problematic, as they fail to acknowledge the added pressure she encounters in this context. Overall, Leila does not take a clear stance with her clients or with her German colleagues. Instead, in her role as an intermediary, she often feels 'stuck' in the middle, functioning, as she puts it, "as a buffer between the two". As the identity conflict between the 'system representative' and that of the 'migrant representative' is very much an unresolved one for Leila, her profile represents that of the 'ambivalent' migrant front-liner.

4.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined a newly identified identity conflict, namely the 'social–role' conflict, among a newly identified type of front-liner, namely the migrant front-liner. Given this is an understudied topic within the European literature on street-level bureaucracy, I have put greater weight on the theoretical discussion of this chapter compared with the empirical one. In short, I have argued that we ought to pay greater attention to the unique position of front-line actors who deliver social services to migrants while being migrants themselves, because the identity conflict they encounter between their social identity as migrants and their role identity as front-liners is likely to have implications for their use of (professional) discretion and, consequently, for the services the migrant clients ultimately receive.

To develop and illustrate this argument, I combined two different streams of literature, while I also used empirical data from the interviews with migrant front-liners in Athens and Berlin. Borrowing initially from the field of representative bureaucracy (Dolan and Rosenbloom, 2003), I drew attention to the distinction between passive and active representation, highlighting the concept of the 'minority representative'. The key idea here is that those bureaucrats who view themselves as representatives of their clients are more likely to meet their clients' needs and interests (Kennedy, 2014; Selden, 1997; Selden *et al*., 1998; Sowa & Selden, 2003). To adjust this idea to the European context of migration management, I introduced the alternative term 'migrant representative', and I examined whether and when migrant front-liners adhere to it.

To investigate further the 'social–role' identity conflict, and to account for the complexities that the 'migrant' identity incubates, I also borrowed from the social psychological literature on identity, race and ethnicity. As relevant scholars have long pointed out (e.g. Fekete, 2001; Tatum, 1997, 2017), the lines around ethnic and racial groups are not clearly defined, and the ways in which individual members position themselves within these lines can take various different forms. Especially for groups that are socially stigmatised and targets of discrimination, in-group dynamics can vary from being very supportive to being very oppressive (see Freire, 1970/2000). As this variation also transfers to broader social group categories, such as that of 'migrants', migrant front-liners may exhibit a wide range of behaviours towards their migrant clients, from highly positive to highly negative.

With this in mind, and drawing also from the interview data of this research, I identified four different profiles of front-liners, depending on their endorsement of the 'migrant representative' identity versus that of the 'system representative'. These are: a) the 'spokesperson' who sides with the migrants, b) the 'localised' who sides with the system, c) the 'peacemaker' who is equally comfortable with both and d) the 'ambivalent' who feels stuck in the middle. These profiles represent different combinations of loyalty to the system and/or to the migrant clients, a dilemma most front-liners face, but which is even more prevalent among migrant front-liners. The implication here is that the more front-liners see themselves as 'migrant representatives', the more likely they will be to use their discretionary behaviour in a way that benefits the migrants and advances their interests. In other words, this is when passive representation is more likely to turn into active representation.

This theoretical claim was conveyed more vividly through the specific stories of four individual migrant front-liners who operate in Athens and Berlin. Although one cannot outline with accuracy the specific drivers behind each migrant front-liner's stance, a closer examination of their individual trajectories does illuminate the distinct patterns that form. As we saw from the profiles of Zena (the 'spokesperson') and Genti (the 'localised'), for instance, their two migration journeys were extremely different: whereas Zena migrated by choice, Genti's story was one of forced migration. Moreover, while Zena was an EU national, Genti was a so-called third-country national.

This meant their legal rights of movement and access to work were also dissimilar, and so were their transition periods. As a result, the way in which they identified with the system and with their clients was also dissimilar. Whereas Zena was able to side entirely with her clients and embody the role of the representative, Genti followed the route of advising his clients how best to change and adjust to the local system. Given that Zena had less to lose by bending and 'sabotaging' (see Brehm & Gates, 1997) the rules of the 'system', she was more inclined to do so. And, given that Genti had struggled hard before achieving a sense of belonging to the local society, he was neither willing to sacrifice this achievement nor able to identify an alternative avenue for the migrants' integration rather than their own change and adjustment, as the system justification theory would predict (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Yet, although the migration trajectory of Joan (the 'peacemaker') was closer to that of Zena, their stances on the 'social–role' identity conflict were still dissimilar. On the one hand, they were both children of refugee parents and both nationals of

economically strong EU countries, where they grew up and received higher education. However, although Zena came to act as a representative of migrants, Joan was more of an intermediary between the migrants and the system. This comes to show that there is always an intersection of various identities and factors that play a role (see also Watkins-Hayes, 2013) and that individual variation is ultimately inevitable.

As we saw in Leila's (the 'ambivalent') story as well, there are multiple unpredictable factors that may shape one's specific stance. For her, the fact that she came from a more affluent family and had better educational opportunities than most of her co-nationals contributed to her having a higher social status than her clients. In turn, it also deterred her from identifying with them and from seeing herself as their representative.

To conclude, this chapter has contributed to this thesis' theme of 'identity conflicts at the front lines of migration policy implementation' by shedding light on the tension between the social identity of a migrant and the role identity of a front-liner. By focusing on a category of front-line actors that has thus far been overlooked by the European literature on street-level bureaucracy, it has illustrated some of the added tensions these front-liners experience due to their migrant backgrounds. By drawing from the sociological literature on racial and ethnic identities, it has also extended the theoretical notion of the 'minority representative' to include the 'migrant representative'. By doing so, it has contributed both to the discussion on front-line decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and to the literature on representative bureaucracy.

In the next chapter, which will be the third empirical chapter in this thesis, I address another 'new' type of identity conflict at the front lines of migration management. This conflict will not be between the different types of identities that an individual front-liner possesses, but rather between the front-liner 'Self' and the migrant client 'Other'. By focusing on the contested issue of gender, I shall investigate how front-liners address what they perceive as different gender identities and beliefs between themselves and the migrant clients they work to serve.

CHAPTER 5

Front-liner-Migrant Interactions and Gender: Dealing with Divergent Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

In the quest to shed light on what shapes front-liners' discretionary behaviour, the last two chapters discussed two different types of identity conflicts facing those at the front-lines of migration management in Athens and Berlin. Chapter 3 focused on the conflict between person and role identities of asylum (lay) judges, while Chapter 4 focused on the conflict between the social and role identities of front-liners who were once migrants themselves. These chapters highlighted the fact that front-liners have various different identities that are not always in harmony with one another. Especially under conditions of high uncertainty, these identity conflicts influence front-liners' discretionary behaviour.

In this chapter, I turn to the interactions between front-liners and their migrant clients and I discuss a different type of conflict, the conflict between the front-liner 'Self' and the migrant 'Other'. Focusing on a specific aspect of the 'Self', namely that which concerns gender identities and beliefs, or gender perspectives, I examine how front-liners' understandings of their migrant clients inform their discretionary practices. Building on the idea that the street-level bureaucrats' construction of their target population shapes their discretionary behaviour (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003), I argue that front-liners' discretionary behaviour is contingent upon their perceived differences from their clients. That is to say, front-liners create an understanding of their clients, depending on how differently they see these clients from themselves, and how malleable they perceive this difference to be over time. This understanding, I suggest, shapes front-liners' discretionary behaviour.

Bureaucrat-client interactions have always been at the focus of street-level bureaucracy research (e.g. Bartels, 2013; DuBois 2010; Eule, 2014), and what motivates the decision-making of street-level bureaucrats has been at the centre of this discussion (e.g. Brehm & Gates, 1997; May & Winter, 2009; Tummers, Steijn & Bekkers, 2012; Brockmann, 2017). One prominent view in this stream of literature is the idea that

bureaucrats' behaviour is largely shaped by normative choices, namely bureaucrats' judgement of their clients' deservingness (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000, 2003, 2012; see also Baviskar and Winter, 2017; Raaphorst and Groeneveld, 2018; Jilke and Tummers, 2018). In short, the more 'worthy' the clients seem in the eyes of the bureaucrats, the more likely it is that the bureaucrats will make decisions that favour the clients.

Needless to say, a person's understanding of another person's worth and deservingness is subject to individual biases. Empirical studies have indeed shown how the negative stereotypes bureaucrats hold in relation to major identity categories, such as race, class, or gender, may have negative consequences for their clients. For instance, Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Haider-Markel (2014) address how 'racial profiling' leads to unfair treatment of Black drivers, while DuBois (2010) demonstrates how conceptualisations of 'the poor' as 'less deserving' results in unfair treatment of some clients. In a similar vein, Alpes and Spire (2015) show how gender stereotyping may lead to discriminatory decisions for either male or female visa applicants. In these studies, the views bureaucrats hold of their clients shape their discretionary behaviour towards said clients.

It is worth noting here that bureaucrats' understandings of their clients may also lead to positive use of professional discretion, with positive effects for the clients in question (see also Brockman, 2017). For example, in the school setting, positive discretion has been observed by teachers both toward minority students (Marvel and Resh, 2015) and toward girls (Keiser, et. al. 2002), ultimately improving the pupils' performance. In general, when bureaucrats empathise with their clients, either because they belong to the same social group, or for other reasons (e.g. Slack, 2001; Harber et. al. 2012), they are more likely to go out of their way to help them. This kind of positive discretionary behaviour has also been observed in the field of migration, where at times bureaucrats "go the extra mile" in order to assist the migrant clients most in need (Belabas and Gerrits, 2017; see also James & Julian, 2020).

There are several explanations as to why bureaucrats use positive or negative discretion. Of the scholars focusing on individual-level dynamics, some emphasise the bureaucrats' unique characteristics, such as their personal preferences (Brehm and Gates, 1997), their self-interest (Cohen and Gershgoren, 2016), or their moral dispositions (Zacka, 2017). According to the citizen-agent paradigm, however, bureaucrats' decisions are directly related to their interactions with, and the perceptions of, their clients

(Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000, 2003). In this view, bureaucrats feel a sense of accountability towards their fellow citizen-clients, especially when they have repeated contact with them. It is this line of theorising that I shall mainly draw from and contribute towards in this chapter.

More specifically, focusing on the Migration Crisis context in Athens and Berlin, this chapter looks at how front-liners' social construction of their migrant clients shapes their discretionary behaviour. In doing so, it infuses the literature of street-level bureaucracy with perspectives from Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009) and the Interpersonal Perception Method (Laing, Phillipson and Lee, 1966). It also accounts for an element that has so far been neglected, namely the cases when the clients are not fellow-citizens but migrants, meaning they are members of a social group that is widely seen as 'Other' (see also note 2, p. S22, in Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2012). Accordingly, the examination of the front-liner-migrant interactions enhances our understanding of front-liners' decision-making mechanisms under conditions of high uncertainty, while it also informs the literature of the citizen-agent paradigm.

For the purposes of this chapter, I analysed the accounts of front-liners whose (professional) position revolved around care work, regardless of their organisational affiliation (Table 5.1). Although their official title varied from one setting to another (e.g. social worker, social carer, care worker, etc.), these front-liners engaged in largely similar tasks (e.g. providing general assistance at migrant shelters, helping migrants to access health care services or take the steps needed for obtaining asylum). More importantly, they had daily and repeated interactions with the same migrant clients, which means they had to confront whatever differences or difficulties in communication they encountered. For the participants of this study, the dissimilar perspectives on gender identities and beliefs they held between themselves and the migrants constituted a prominent such tension, one which influenced the front-liners' use of discretion, as I shall explain in further detail below.

Table 5.1 Demographics of Care Workers

	Paid		Unpaid		Gender	
	Work for Public Org.	Work for Private Org.	Volunteers	Activists	M	F
Athens	1	10	6	12	14	16
Berlin	3	18	6	3	11	19

Table constructed by author

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows. In the first section below, I discuss how the incorporation of a social psychological angle can help shed light on bureaucrat-client, or front-liner-migrant, interactions. Next, I elaborate on the sense-making mechanisms front-liners follow to understand their migrant clients or, rather, to understand what seems to separate the latter from the former. Subsequently, and following from the previous section, I focus on the discretionary strategies front-liners follow in practice. The chapter closes with a short concluding discussion.

5.2 Dealing with Difference: Incorporating Psychological Perspectives

To re-state one of the citizen-agent paradigm's key assertions, the ways in which front-liners judge their migrant clients shape their use of discretion. Therefore, to better understand front-liners' discretionary behaviour towards their migrant clients, one must first understand front-liners' social construction of their clients. This can be better achieved, I argue here, by looking in greater depth at what seems to separate the two groups or, to be more accurate, by looking at how front-liners make sense of what seems to separate the two groups.

In the context of the European Migration Crisis, those working directly with migrants are likely to encounter considerable barriers in their daily interactions with them. Whether cultural, religious, or linguistic, these barriers may inhibit the communication between the two groups and, consequently, compromise front-liners' effectiveness in meeting their clients' needs. At the same time, however, repeated and prolonged contact between the two groups would necessitate overcoming these barriers. Under these circumstances, the psychological processes behind front-liners' understandings of their clients are going to play a key role in shaping their discretionary behaviour.

Until now, most studies that address the implementation of migration policies at street level do not analyse these psychological processes in great depth. Instead, they focus primarily on the practical strategies bureaucrats adopt in the face of implementation dilemmas or the link between discretionary strategies and policy outcomes (e.g. Eule 2014; Belabas & Gerrits, 2017; Hagelund, 2009). What is missing, therefore, is a closer look at how front-liners' sense-making mechanisms shape their discretionary behaviour. Given also the barriers noted above, I suggest that it is worth examining how front-liners tackle the tensions that emerge from the perceived differences between themselves and the migrant clients they serve.

According to Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009), through interacting with others, individuals seek to verify their various identities, be they person-, role-, or group-related,. More specifically, when entering a new social interaction, individuals hold a particular ideal (identity standard) about how they ought to behave in a given situation, and behave accordingly. Depending on the feedback they receive from others, or rather their perceived understanding of this feedback, they assess whether identity verification is achieved. If their identity at stake is verified, they feel good about themselves and continue behaving as before. If not, they experience negative emotions and seek ways to correct this discrepancy at the next possible exchange.

With regard to interactions between front-liners and migrants, identity verification is likely to be more challenging than usual. As the two groups come from two different societies with distinct social norms, the members of each group are likely to hold considerably different identity standards for the same identities (e.g. role identities like woman/man, wife/husband, or mother/father). As such, a member of one group is less likely to receive the expected feedback that would verify their self-view when interacting with a member of the other group. In turn, as a response to an uncomfortable exchange, front-liners may adjust their behaviour in their future interactions with migrants, becoming more or less friendly and helpful towards them. Therefore, the extent to which front-liners use positive or negative discretion towards their migrant clients is, at least to some degree, contingent upon their success in verifying their identities while interacting with these clients.

Among the identities that seem to matter the most in interpersonal interactions are those pertaining to gender. As Cecilia Ridgeway (2009) argues, gender is a primary frame for organising social relationships. That is to say, when we first meet someone, gender is one of the main conceptual categories we use to make sense of who this person is. Following from this, the beliefs we hold in relation to gender are also very important. Gender beliefs correspond to the "widely held cultural beliefs that define the distinguishing characteristics of men and women and how they are expected to behave" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 511). Put differently, what we consider to be appropriate roles of men and women in a society are likely to shape our behavioural expectations from those with whom we interact.

When it comes to front-liner-migrant interactions, there is evidence to suggest there is a significant difference in gender norms and practices between members of the two groups and, thus, a high likelihood of unmet expectations. As Table 5.2 below shows,

gender inequalities in the primary sending countries of asylum seekers (Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq) are generally considerably more severe than those in most European countries. Based on this, we would expect front-liners to view their clients' gender identities and beliefs as overly traditional, conservative and gender-unequal. A question that consequently follows is how these different perspectives inform the interactions between front-liners and migrants.

Table 5.2 Gender Development Index, 2017, Selected Countries

Country	Value	Group
Norway	0.991	1
Germany	0.967	2
Greece	0.964	2
Iraq	0.823	5
Syria	0.788	5
Afghanistan	0.625	5

Source: United Nations Development Program (UNDP, n.d.)

To shed light on the link between divergent gender perspectives and interpersonal interactions, there is one more conceptual tool which I shall borrow from psychology: the Interpersonal Perception Method (IPM). According to the IPM, there are three levels of perspectives in a dyadic relationship (Table 5.3). First, the direct perspective refers to what each party thinks about something (e.g. the front-liners' view of gender identities and beliefs). Second, the meta-perspective is about what each party thinks the other party thinks about the same thing (e.g. the front-liners' view of migrants' gender identities and beliefs). And third, the meta-meta-perspective describes what each party thinks the other party thinks about their own view of this thing (e.g. the front-liners' view of migrants' view of front-liners' gender identities and beliefs) (see also Moore *et al.*, 2011; Gillespie and Cornish, 2010; Gillespie, 2008).

In this line of theorising, when two direct perspectives are similar, there is an agreement, and when they are different, and if both parties know this, there is a disagreement. For example, if a social worker and a migrant father both think it is okay for girls to play together with boys, there is an agreement between the two direct perspectives, whereas if one thinks it is okay but the other does not, and there is an

awareness of this difference, there is a disagreement. By contrast, if this difference exists but there is no awareness of this difference, there is a misunderstanding.

Table 5.3 Three Levels of Perspectives

Direct Perspective	
Meta-Perspective	
Meta-meta-perspective	

Table constructed by author, drawing based on IPM (see also Gillespie, 2008)

Combining Identity Theory and IPM, we would expect the following: During their daily exchanges with their migrant clients, front-liners in Athens and Berlin would be driven to confirm their gender identities, as they themselves understand them. However, this identity verification process is likely to be challenging due to the differing gender identity standards and gender beliefs between themselves and the migrants. As this divergence in gender perspectives constitutes a barrier in the communication between members of the two groups, it may 'push' front-liners to find ways to overcome it. In turn, it would be through these —potentially unsuccessful— identity verification attempts and perspective-bridging efforts that front-liners construct their understandings of their migrant clients and determine their clients' deservingness.

5.3 From Social Construction to Action: Tackling Difference in Practice

Having established there is likely to be a gap in perspectives with regard to gender identities and beliefs between front-liners and migrants, I now turn to how front-liners address this gap, both in terms of sense-making mechanisms and in terms of practical discretionary strategies. Drawing from the analysis of this study's interview data, I suggest here that, when it comes to gender perspectives, front-liners make sense of these differences in terms of two intersecting axes. As shown in Figure 5.1 below, there is, on the one hand, the spectrum of essentialism versus social constructionism and on the other hand, that of low versus high hierarchy.

Figure 5.1 Conceptual Understandings and Discretionary Behaviour

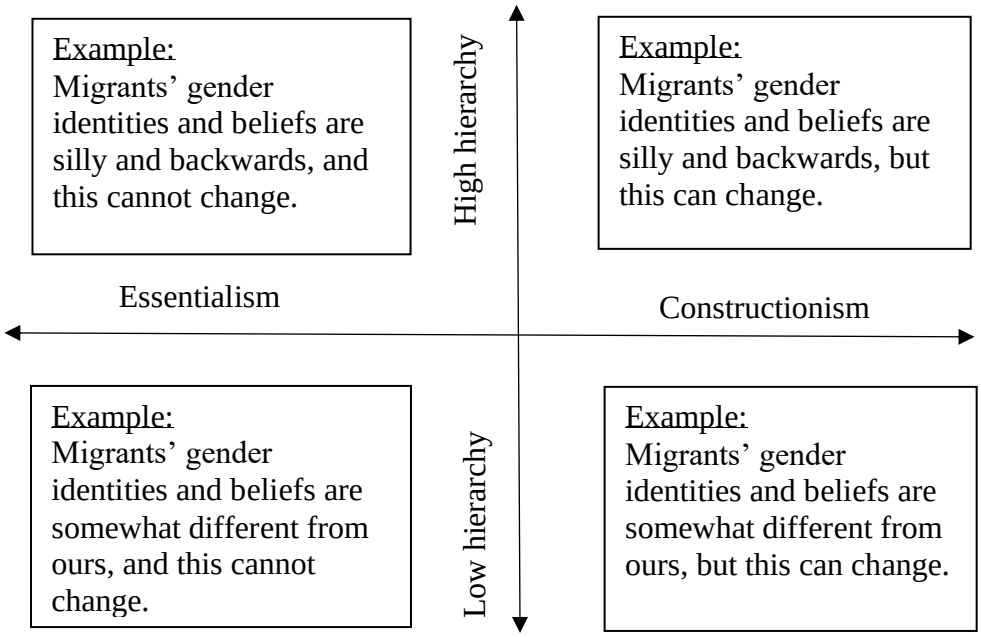


Figure constructed by author

With regard to the horizontal line of the above figure, there are, at the essentialist end of the spectrum, those who view all characteristics of another group, including their gender identities and beliefs, as inherent, natural, and unchangeable. For essentialists, identity categories such as race, class and gender constitute real and verifiable differences among people, independent of social processes (see Rosenblum and Travis 2012)[17]. As such, when front-liners assume that the gender identities and beliefs of migrants are innate and fixed, they also assume a gap between 'Self' and 'Other' that cannot be easily bridged. Therefore, those front-liners who have adopted this way of thinking would be less likely to make an effort to minimise the distance between the two differing perspectives. In the absence of such an effort, the (perceived) distance between 'Self' and 'Other' is likely to remain intact.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who explain the perceived differences between two social groups by attributing them to the different social processes (e.g. political, religious or economic) as opposed to individual idiosyncrasies. This view reflects a social constructionist approach (see Burger and Luckmann, 1966). Here, individual gender identities and beliefs are subject to change, depending on the given

[17] As Rosenblum and Travis (2012, p.3) put it, "For essentialists, *race*, *sex*, *sexual orientation*, *disability*, and *social class* identify significant, empirically verifiable differences among people. From the essentialist perspective, each of these exist apart from any social processes; they are objective categories of real differences among people".

context and circumstances. Accordingly, the differences between 'Self' and 'Other' are seen as malleable, and the gap in perspectives as bridgeable. For front-liners who align with social constructionism, there is a variety of different potential explanations they may use to make sense of migrants' deferring gender identities and beliefs. Three examples are: (a) the migrants come from a more closed and conservative society and so they need time to adjust; (b) there were very similar practices in the local society not too long ago; (c) the local society currently has equally conservative segments, too.

It is important to note here that, although essentialism and social constructionism stand in opposition to each other, the two are not entirely mutually exclusive in people's minds. That is, most people do not take a single-sided stance on the long-held debate of nature versus nurture, but believe that humans are products of both. In most cases, then, the disagreement between essentialism and social constructivism lies in the degree to which one factor is prevalent in relation to the other. Therefore, I frame here these two paradigms as two ends of a single spectrum, as opposed to two opposing sides that have no connection point between them.

To continue with the description of Figure 5.1 above, the vertical axis represents the notion of hierarchy, which broadly speaks to the way in which people tend to organise social relationships when interacting with members of another group. In the migration management context, there will be some front-liners who view their relationship with migrant populations in more hierarchical terms than others. At one end of this spectrum, there are those who position themselves as 'experts' on most issues, including that of gender identities and beliefs. Adopting this stance reflects a perceived position of superiority and a perceived top-down hierarchical view of one's own perspective compared to that of the migrants.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who do recognise a difference in perspectives, but do not associate any hierarchy to this difference. In other words, they view the 'Other' as different, but not as worse. In terms of how these two views translate into discretionary behaviour, it is only logical to assume that the positioning of front-liners on this spectrum is bound to influence their general stance towards their migrant clients. Those front-liners who view migrants as hierarchically inferior would be more likely to develop a critical or negative stance towards them, whereas those who view migrants through more egalitarian lenses are likely to adopt a friendlier, more positive stance.

As these two spectrums, or axes, intersect, the different mental positionings of front-liners would correspond to different discretionary behaviours. In simple terms, and as the examples in Figure 5.1 illustrate, front-liners may see migrants as 1) unchangeable and inferior, 2) changeable and inferior, 3) unchangeable and equal, or 4) changeable and equal. In accordance with these, and based on empirical evidence (see below), I identify four different discretionary strategies that front-liners may employ while interacting with migrants (Table 4). I name them 'judge', 'soft nudge', 'hard nudge' and 'engage.' As the terms indicate, and as I shall further show in the following sections, the 'judge' approach embodies a critical stance towards migrants, the 'engage' approach represents a rather friendly stance, while the 'soft nudge' and 'hard nudge' strategies are 'middle-ground' approaches.

Table 5.4 Conceptual Understandings and Discretionary Behaviour

	Essentialism	**Social Constructionism**
High Hierarchy	Judge	Hard Nudge
Low Hierarchy	Soft Nudge	Engage

Table constructed by author

To elaborate further, those front-liners who adopt an essentialist understanding of migrants and who also view their relationship with them as hierarchical, are likely to 'judge' and keep a metaphorical and/or physical distance from their migrant clients. In this way, they both establish and reinforce this perceived distance between 'Self' and 'Other'. On the other hand, those who hold an essentialist approach but who also view their relationship with migrants as egalitarian are likely to follow a 'soft nudge' strategy, making a low-level effort to bridge the gap between themselves and the migrants. Although they do not see the migrants' views as inferior to their own, their level of engagement with their target population is minimal because the expectations for long-term change are very low.

By contrast, those ascribing to the social constructionist paradigm and who also perceive their relationship with migrants as hierarchical are likely to follow the 'hard nudge' strategy. This course of action indicates a perceived position of power as well as an active effort to change the migrants' views so as to align them with one's own standards. Finally, those who follow a social constructionist approach and who view their relationship with migrants as egalitarian are likely to follow the 'engage' strategy. This

stance shows an effort to bridge the perceived gap between themselves and the migrants, but in a non-hierarchical fashion.

To recapitulate, the theoretical proposition of this chapter is the following. In order to make sense of a gap in perspectives and, through that, to make sense of their clients, front-liners draw from a range of conceptual tools. Some adopt an essentialist approach, assuming their clients' characteristics are innate, while others employ a social constructivist stance, viewing these characteristics as malleable. Simultaneously, some attach a hierarchical connotation to the perceived difference in gender identities and beliefs, while others do not. Through the use of interview data, the empirical sections that follow demonstrate how the different combinations of these tools lead to different discretionary behaviours in practice.

5.4 Empirical Evidence

5.4.1 Divergent Perspectives and Identity Conflicts

As expected, participants from both Athens and Berlin perceived migrants' social conventions pertaining to gender as overly traditional and conservative, compared to their own. Although they generally showed heightened awareness of the relevant public debate and aimed to avoid further stigmatisation of migrants when expressing their views, they were often unable to hide their frustration when it came to migrants' gender identities and beliefs, or gender perspectives.

The quote that follows comes from a local Athenian activist who has had a long-term engagement with assisting migrant families. Despite her consistent dedication toward helping these migrants over time, she continues to find it very problematic every time she observes young girls being treated differently from young boys:

> I am a feminist, and I see the women in scarves and I go a bit crazy. […] Yesterday we took a young girl to the doctor. We had an appointment at 3 o'clock at [the square]. It was hot as hell, and she was wearing a scarf and long sleeves […]. And the mom bought crisps and a water bottle to the two little ones but said *"[my daughter] is doing Ramadan".* To the younger siblings, they don't do it yet. But because she had her period, she had to wear the scarf and do the Ramadan. And, she will probably have 8 children in the next two years... She may not even go to school. While if she was a 15-year-old boy, she would. (Activist, Athens)

In this segment, the participant's frustration is apparent and her feminist identity is being challenged. The fact that she juxtaposes the sight of 'women in scarves' with being 'a feminist' indicates that the symbolic meanings she attaches to the two are in opposition

to each other. If, in this front-liner's mind, feminism is about the protection and promotion of women's rights while the scarf is a symbol of women's oppression, then interacting with migrant clients means encountering what she aims to fight against. Inevitably, these encounters are likely to be uncomfortable, potentially eliciting strong feelings.

With regard to gender perspectives, we observe a disagreement here between the participant's direct perspective, meaning her view on how boys and girls ought to be treated in a family, and the meta-perspective, meaning what the participant thinks the migrant families think about it. Although the participant seems to believe that young girls should not be treated any differently from boys when it comes to covering their body, attending school, or starting a family, what she sees happening among migrant families is contrary to that perspective. In her view, migrant families hold double standards for boys and girls, and girls are generally subjected to additional restrictions.

Table 5.5 Examples of Front-liners' Gender Perspectives

Direct Perspective	'Women do not need to wear headscarves in public'
	'Women and men should be allowed to shake hands'
	'Couples should have few children'
Meta-Perspective	'Migrants think women need to wear headscarves in public'
	'Migrants think men and women should not be allowed to shake hands'
	'Migrant couples think having many children is good'
Meta-Meta Perspective	'Migrants think local women are immoral because they do not wear headscarves in public'
	'Migrants think local men and women act inappropriately because they shake hands'
	'Migrants think local families are no good because they have few children'

Table constructed by the author by paraphrasing extracts of the interview data

Such differences in perspectives represented a common theme across the participants' accounts. The front-liners views on gender norms and dynamics very often contradicted the migrants' views or, more precisely, they contradicted the front-liners' understandings of the migrants' views. Moreover, as I shall discuss in further detail below, the migrants' views of the front-liners' views, as these were perceived by front-liners, were also unsettling for front-liners. A more simplified version of the differences between these three perspectives is illustrated in Table 5.5 above.

Although a divergence in gender perspectives between front-liners and migrants was not surprising considering the data from the Gender Development Index (Table 5.2), the effect of this divergence on front-liners was. Indeed, given the front-liners' relative position of power in comparison to their migrant clients, one would not expect the front-liners' own identities to be contested or even re-considered through their interactions with migrants. However, as the quotes below show, the participants often described events where a certain behaviour on their part was met with the migrants' disapproval, leaving them with a sense of unease.

> We were at a meeting with the community, where there were mostly men… It was an open space and I was allowed to smoke, but I was feeling a bit uncomfortable. I had my hand under the table, hiding, as if I was in my teenage years, when I first started smoking and my father was around. I then thought, "You came here now, to tell me, with your eyes, that [I] can't smoke'"?! (Care Worker, Athens)

> Often, I tell them I am an unmarried mother, because they ask me, "where is your husband? Has he died?" "No", I say, "I don't have a husband. I just was just pregnant and decided, even though the relationship was problematic, I was 35, […] so I said, I will either be alone from the beginning, or I will be alone at some point. Because no relationship is forever". But, often when they start telling me things, some who are very religious, I turn around and tell them "we are humans, and only God can judge people". (Care Worker, Berlin)

In the first example, a care worker in Athens encounters migrant men who, through non-verbal cues, express their disapproval of the fact that she is smoking. In turn, she becomes frustrated as she catches herself adjusting her behaviour in response to their gender norms and expectations. Similarly, in the second example, a social worker in Berlin describes how some of her clients look down on her lifestyle as a single mother, putting her in the uncomfortable position of having to explain and defend herself. The implicit message front-liners received from migrants on both occasions was that they fail to 'do gender' appropriately (West and Zimmerman, 1987), which was not well-received.

Such challenging interactions were more common among female front-liners than male front-liners, partly explained by the higher proportion of women among front-liners and the higher proportion of men among migrants. Yet, male front-liners also faced similar tensions. A social worker in Berlin, for instance, felt that he failed to meet the expectations of his migrant clients when he did not participate in what he perceived as sexist jokes. Another example is that of the volunteer in Athens who became disappointed when the group of female migrants he was there to assist refused to shake his hand and avoided being in his company. Both examples illustrate the perceived discrepancy between front-liners' own gender identity standards and those of the migrants, or what

the front-liners consider gender-appropriate behaviour (their direct perspective) and what they think their clients consider appropriate (meta-perspective).

Adding to the above, the next quote comes from a male volunteer who, together with his wife, had spent a considerable amount of time and money helping a migrant family with their paperwork and their various integration steps in Germany (housing, asylum paperwork, medical access, job access, etc.). Despite having built a strong bond with the migrant family's members, the behaviour he expected was not always the behaviour he received, largely due to the existing divergence in gender perspectives.

> …for two years the girls and the wife from that family never ever shook my hand. […] I tried to explain to them it's a very important thing in our country and in our culture. That it's considered very impolite, very offensive when you don't shake hands. But, I could not change their minds. Even though we were so close. Even when their child was born here in January this year, we drove the mother to the hospital, we drove the family to the hospital. We had never been so close to a new-born as this one. So, when he was born and we were all very happy I tried to express my happiness by hugging the mother. But—you know, this felt like a body-check in ice hockey—for her this was so [inappropriate]. […] So, they hug and kiss [my wife]… And, when there is a birthday party, traditionally, only women and children are invited. (Volunteer, Berlin)

In this segment, there are two underlined levels of disagreement in perspectives. First, there is a divergence between the participant's direct perspective on how close men and women can be, and the meta-perspective, which is what he thinks the migrant family thinks about it. More specifically, he thinks that men and women can and should shake hands and be in each other's company, but he finds that the members of the migrant family do not think so. Second, there is also a divergence between the direct and the meta-meta perspective; that is, his gender beliefs on the issue of closeness among men and women, and his view of the migrant family's view of his beliefs on the issue.

Apart from facing this disagreement in perspectives, the last participant also failed to verify his own gender identity. Unlike his wife, he was kept at a distance from all the female members of the migrant family, both physically and metaphorically, despite his efforts to develop a close relationship with them. This means he did not receive the warmth and friendliness he expected back from them. In a way, not being treated by these migrant women as the amicable and unthreatening man he believed he was, felt like a rejection, not only of his gender beliefs, but also of his gendered sense of self. As there was a discrepancy between his gender identity standards and the (perceived) feedback from others in this interaction, he did not manage to achieve identity verification.

To reiterate, in their interactions with migrant clients, front-liners encountered a 'clash' in gender identities and beliefs, or gender perspectives, which translated into a perceived distance between 'Self' and 'Other.' Albeit largely unsurprising, these challenging interactions shook the front-liners' own identities and sense of self, too, which was not necessarily expected. Given that locals generally have higher social status than migrants, one would think that front-liners in this context would be more likely to 'set the tone' when it comes to gender-appropriate interactions and confirm their self-view (see also Stets and Harrod, 2004). Yet, the findings here show that the relationship between members of the two groups is rather reciprocal and their common practices are largely 'co-produced' during their daily interactions (see Verschuere, Brandsen, and Pestoff, 2012; Hand, 2018).

This observation partly confirms the street-level bureaucracy literature on bureaucrat-client interactions, but it also adds a new element to it. Although we already know that bureaucrats' construction of their target population shapes the bureaucrats' discretionary behaviour, here we see that the clients' construction of the bureaucrats also influences the bureaucrat-client interaction. More specifically, the ways in which clients perceive bureaucrats (and their views) affects the clients' behaviour towards bureaucrats in a given situation. And, as the exchanges between bureaucrats and clients are reciprocal, it can be argued that the bureaucrats' use of discretion is, at least to some degree, also shaped by the clients' construction of the bureaucrats.

5.4.2 Discretionary Strategies

After the initial 'shock' of encountering gender perspectives that are considerably different from one's own, front-liners had to develop strategies to deal with this 'Self'-'Other' difference, especially since their role prescription assumes repeated interactions with the same migrant clients over time. This divergence in perspectives pushed front-liners to shape their discretionary strategies in certain ways, as I noted earlier, depending on their specific conceptualisations of the 'Other.' As I shall demonstrate in this section, to deal with divergent perspectives and with identity non-verification, the participants adopted one of four discretionary strategies: the 'judge' approach, the 'soft nudge' approach, the 'hard nudge' approach and the 'engage' approach. Each of these approaches assumes different degrees of perceived distance between the front-liners and the migrants' views on gender, as well as different levels of effort to minimise this distance.

Moreover, each strategy represents different positionings at the intersection between the two conceptual axes discussed above: that of essentialism versus social constructionism and that of low-versus-high hierarchy.

a. The 'Judge' Approach

The 'judge' approach was the one most commonly adopted by those participants who ascribed to the essentialist paradigm and who viewed their relationship with migrants as highly hierarchical. In other words, they viewed migrants' gender identities and beliefs as innate and fixed, as well as of lower value compared to their own. This view represented the front-liners' meta-perspective, meaning their view on migrants' gender identities and beliefs. As the examples below indicate, judging and distancing oneself from the 'Other' may take various forms in practice.

> One day a [migrant] man came and told *me "I don't want to talk to women, I only accept men."* I told him: "*You are in the wrong country. Bye bye. You should go to another country. This is Germany. If you want something, you have to talk to women. And, if you don't want to talk to them, go back. Or, to another country. This is Germany!"* They come here and they have to accept our rules. (Social worker, Berlin)

> We won't go to speak to a man, to tell him *"why are you doing these things?"* Or, to correct him. The everyday reality at the camp is that as I am walking through the camp's streets, I will say hi to a woman I don't know a lot more easily than to a man. And, there is especially this thing when we look at each other and then we turn our gaze away from each other. (Social worker, Athens)

Both of these quotes describe responses of female social workers to what they see as misogynistic behaviour by migrant men. The first refers to migrant men who ask to be served by male employees only, while the second comes alongside a discussion on the topic of gender-based violence that occurs inside the camps for migrants. In the former quote, the participant openly disapproves and confronts the migrant's stance, while in the latter the participant avoids the interaction with migrant men altogether. In effect, both reactions reflect the same discretionary strategy and they bring the same result. The migrant 'Other' is cast as 'undeserving' of the front-liners' attention and is kept at a distance. Moreover, as there is no meaningful attempt to 'bridge' the perceived gap in the two perspectives, the direct and the meta-perspective, the divergence in perspectives remains.

Judging and maintaining a distance from migrants with whom a front-liner disagrees reinforces the migrants' 'Otherness', while also helping front-liners maintain a positive sense of self. By not treating migrants as equal interlocutors, front-liners avoid

situations that may result in receiving feedback that could challenge their views or lead to identity non-verification (see also Kadianaki, 2014). It follows that this discretionary strategy is neither likely to have a positive impact on migrant clients, nor is it likely to contribute towards the broader policy goal of migrant integration.

b. The 'Soft Nudge'[18] Approach

The 'soft nudge' approach refers here to subtle efforts of front-liners to change migrants' behaviour. This approach is associated with a low perceived hierarchy between the 'Self' and the 'Other', as well as the underlined expectation that migrants cannot change much. In practice, it may take the form of suggestions for solving a problem (see also Hand, 2017) or friendly advice about how things are done in the host society. Specific instances discussed by participants included a local volunteer offering unsolicited advice and material support for contraception to migrant women who had already had several children or a local activist advising young migrant men on how flirting is properly done in the local society.

As the examples below also illustrate, such discrete interventions have the clear goal of 'nudging' migrants towards –what front-liners see as– the 'right' gender norms and practices. The first quote comes from a social worker in Berlin who uses her discretion to make sure women migrants have access to the family's income, while the second describes a polite confrontation between a migrant man and an Athenian social worker, though the use of humour.

> The man is [usually] the one who goes to all governmental offices and [the one who] comes to us. I personally always try and, right from the start, I always say: "*Your wife has to sign all the forms. When you apply for child benefit in Germany that goes to the woman. And, you know, if you have a bank account...",* --because, you know, they always have to write down their bank details for all the governmental benefits to go in— I always say: *"She has to join the account"*" […]. So, it's very important for me always to say: *"This is her money and she should have access to that money!"* (Social worker, Berlin)

> I had a case where the man was sarcastic to the woman, the woman got sad, and I took her side, and said to him "Look, here we're in Greece, here the boss is the woman", joking with him. You treat it with a bit of humour. But, I see that slowly they become familiar with the fact that we respect women more here. [Women] can be independent and work. Not that you can change the software inside his head, all of a sudden, but I think they are slowly becoming familiar. […] In the end, they understand that gender roles are a bit different here and they partially adjust to this (Social Worker, Athens)

[18] Despite the obvious commonalities in meaning, the 'nudge' approach here does not derive from and is not to be confused with the famous 'Nudge Theory'.

In both of these interactions, there is an underlined effort to bridge the perceived gap between 'Self' and 'Other'. In the first segment, this participant steps out of her official role requirements and uses her informal professional discretion to transfer her direct perspective to her clients, namely her belief that there should be gender parity in the access to family finances. In doing so, she does not ask her clients to make a larger change but, through a specific step, she tries to reduce the divergence between the direct perspective (gender parity in family finances) and the meta-perspective (men should control the family's finances).

In a similar manner, the participant in the second exchange jokingly conveys to the migrant man the idea that treating women as inferior is considered inappropriate in the local society. She therefore makes an effort to address the perceived gap in gender perspectives, meaning the direct perspective (men should treat wives as equals) and the meta-perspective (it is okay to talk down to one's wife). Although she does not think it is possible to "change the software inside his head", she does hope for minor adjustments.

c. The 'Hard Nudge' Approach[19]

'Hard nudging' is a less discrete version of nudging, which aims to 'correct' the migrants' behaviour through more direct and explicit interventions. This approach assumes that migrants' views are inferior to those of locals and they can and should change. As the examples below show, the participants may follow different strategies to 'train' their migrant clients so as to achieve gender perspective-bridging. The first segment comes from a volunteer guardian of an unaccompanied minor boy who sought to "show him" how interactions between men and women should be, and the second from a local activists who, together with their comrades, came up with internal "house rules" at a squat to ensure equality of gender roles.

> Before going [to meet the boy] I thought, what would I do if he refused to shake my hand? […] In every other context I would leave [if] somebody is not gonna give me their hand. There is too much feminism inside me. If you want something from me, give me your hand. I am not accepting this. […] It's a constant conflict to be honest. The only way out for me is to have a lot of contact with him. To have some positive impact on him, to show him "Look! It can be different". (Volunteer, Berlin)

> What happens at the group level in [this squat], is that during the cleaning shifts, the ones who are cleaning the stairs [and] the common spaces, are men. In order for this thing to be more balanced. Because, if we were to leave this thing for them

[19] Despite the obvious commonalities, the 'nudge' term here does not derive from and is not to be confused with Cass Sunstein's (in)famous 'Nudge Theory'.

> to arrange, they would definitely make the women do this. Since the first day we opened […] we noticed that men would wander around doing their own things, while the women were doing all the work. And, we said: *"Wait a minute"…* From the first moment, this was obvious. So, we had to do something about it, because it shouldn't be happening like this. (Activist, Athens)

Both of these examples indicate a perceived distance in gender perspectives, as well as an active effort to minimise this distance. In the first case, the front-liner expresses her lack of appreciation and tolerance regarding the way migrant men often behave towards women, for instance by refusing to shake their hands. Frustrated as she is, she focuses her efforts on counseling the minor boy under her care in order to "show him" how "it can be different". She therefore attempts to close the perceived gap by reinforcing her direct perspective in order to 'correct' the meta-perspective. On a similar note, the second participant, along with her fellow activists, goes as far as to 'set the rules' in the housing squat in order to ensure the equal participation in housework by migrant men and women. Paradoxically, local anarchists make up and enforce rules in order to 'make' the migrant residents of the squat behave in a gender-egalitarian way.

In both of these asymmetrical spaces of negotiation (Eule, Loher and Wyss, 2018), changing the migrant 'Other' becomes the preferred route for minimising the 'Self'-'Other' discrepancy in gender perspectives. Compared to the 'soft nudge' approach, here we observe a more 'hands-on' effort from front-liners to redirect the migrants' behaviour by using their position, which is one of relative power, to change the rules of the game according to their own views and values. This intensive effort to 'fix' the migrants' behaviour reflects a top-down hierarchical view of the migrants' gender identities and beliefs, as well as an assumption that these identities and beliefs are changeable. Nonetheless, this behaviour also serves to maintain this hierarchy. Ironically, in their effort to create and promote gender equality among migrants, the front-liners reinforce the existing hierarchical relationship between migrants and themselves. In that sense, the front-liners' discretionary behaviour is both helpful and harmful for migrants and their integration process.

d. The 'Engage' Approach

Compared to the two previous discretionary strategies, the 'engage' approach suggests a greater effort on the part of front-liners to listen to and understand the migrants' gender identities and beliefs, or the gender meta-perspective, before proceeding to offer advice or attempting to change their behaviour. This approach is linked to the social constructionist paradigm only, and it shows low perceived hierarchy. It also reveals the

implicit attitude that the divergence in perspectives will be better bridged through mutual effort by members of both groups or, what is also known as, co-production (Verschuere et. al, 2012). The segment below conveys this stance well.

> I also have to understand some stuff. […] [To] a Muslim woman without a hijab, they say "hi" usually, and touch, at least give a hand. [To] a woman with a hijab, not. And, I don't change my way of behaving. And if a man doesn't want to give me his hand, I respect it as much as I would respect it with a German man. […] It could be that he is saying 'hi' to me in a much more respectful way than somebody shaking hands with a 'rubber hand'. And, because usually when a man is doing this they put the hand on the heart and they do it like this [places hand on her heart] and they say hello to me, this is a very respectful gesture. And I must say I never had so much respect from other people as in the last two years! I also had to learn a lot... (Activist, Berlin)

In this extract, the male migrants' avoidance of shake hands with women does not seem to challenge this front-liner's own gender beliefs or sense of self. Her view of the migrants' gender perspective, or the meta-perspective, also does not seem to challenge her own gender identities and beliefs, or the direct-perspective, even though they do differ from each other. As such, identity-verification is not a problem in this interaction.

Moreover, unlike the front-liners who adopt the previous three discretionary strategies, this participant does not make an effort to 'correct' the migrants' behaviour. By asserting that she also has to "understand some stuff" and that she has to "also learn also a lot," she indicates that she sees her relationship with migrant men as egalitarian and the gap-bridging as a two-way process. In this view, there is no need for migrants fundamentally to change their gender norms and practices, because front-liners could simply adjust to alternative ways of interacting with them. By accepting this greeting custom as she understands it to be defined by the migrants, this participant accepts the meta-perspective, thereby taking an significant step towards bridging the perceived gap between 'Self' and 'Other'.

Similarly, in the final quote below, a young Athenian front-liner also 'engages' with the 'Other', as he approaches a middle-aged migrant man who just had an angry outburst towards his wife when another man accidentally touched her hand:

> First of all, [I] try to understand why the person did it. For me that's the first question. Like, "Okay, you were angry. Why were you angry? What actually happened? […] Why was it wrong? Okay, I get it. Respect. No problem. Continue. What would make you feel better? Okay, good. What does she say about that?" First of all, by talking to the man, you understand, and you respect a certain part of his power. Not the power that you think he has, but the power he thinks he has. (Activist, Athens)

Once again, there is a divergence between the direct perspective and the meta-perspective. The former is that it does not matter if men's and women's hands touch, whereas the latter is that they are not supposed to. Although the reason the migrant man became angry in the first place is not easily explainable by this participant according to his local society's gender norms, he tries to put himself in the migrant's shoes. By acknowledging "the power he thinks he has," this front-liner also takes on the meta-perspective and verifies this migrant's gender identity. Therefore, operating on the assumption that the migrants' gender perspective is different but equal, this participant makes an effort to bridge the perceived gap in the two perspectives. In that sense, he takes the role of a neutral 'mediator' between the local and migrant views, as opposed to that of the 'ambassador' from the former to the latter.

Table 5.6 Judge, Soft Nudge, Hard Nudge and Engage approaches: Indicative Quotes

'Judge' Approach	"Bye bye. You should go to another country. This is Germany"
	"We look at each other and then we turn our gaze away from each other"
Soft Nudge Approach	"…It's very important for me always to say: *'This is her money and she should have access to that money'"*
	"Not that you can change the software inside his head, all of a sudden, but I think they are slowly becoming familiar."
Hard Nudge Approach	"[I want] to have some positive impact on him, to show him "Look! It can be different"
	"…If we were to leave [cleaning] for them to arrange, they would definitely make the women do this."
'Engage' Approach	"I also have to understand some stuff. […] If a man doesn't want to give me the hand, I respect it as much as I would respect it with a German man"
	"By talking to the man, you understand, and you respect a certain part of his power. Not the power that you think he has, but the power he thinks he has"

Table constructed by author, based on direct quotes from participants

Based on the discussion above, it follows that the 'engage' approach is potentially the most 'positive' discretionary strategy in terms of meeting the clients' needs and in terms of achieving the broader policy goal of migrant integration. This stance indicates that front-liners see their migrant clients as 'deserving' of their time and effort, despite the perceived divergence in gender perspectives. What also becomes obvious here is that the front-liners who choose to employ this approach are the ones who are least likely to

perceive migrants' gender identities and beliefs as threatening to their own. Instead of framing the difference in perspectives as an unsurmountable, unnegotiable barrier, they see it as a 'call' to make a step closer to the 'Other'. In this view, the 'Self'-'Other' distance is a mutual responsibility and does not fall on the shoulders of the migrants alone.

All in all, the four discretionary strategies discussed here echo the idea that the street-level bureaucrats' construction of their target population shapes their discretionary behaviour (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003), leading to a positive or negative use of discretion, as noted above. However, as the target population here consists of migrants and not of citizens, each discretionary approach assumes a different degree of 'Otherness' attached to the front-liners' constructions of their clients, as well as a different level of willingness to bridge the perceived distance between 'Self' and 'Other'. Depending on the sense-making mechanism each front-liner employs — seeing migrants as changeable or not and as equal or not — they follow a corresponding discretionary strategy. Table 5.6 above summarises a few indicative examples that illustrate how these four strategies manifest in practice.

In light of the empirical evidence presented here, let us briefly return to the main argument of this thesis; namely, that identities play a critical role in shaping front-liners' discretionary behaviour. By shedding light on the 'Self'-'Other' conflict front-liners experience in their interactions with migrants, this chapter shows a 'new' way in which identities matter. That is, front-liners' construction of their clients is largely dependent upon the perceived distance of the 'Other' from the 'Self'. Therefore, although the citizen-agent paradigm remains relevant overall, when the clients are migrants, and especially during a period of crisis, front-liners are less inclined to act as citizen-agents and to represent their clients' interests. In any case, their particular stance is subject to change over time, as the construction of the 'Other' is constantly revisited and re-negotiated through the daily interactions with clients, as is the construction of the 'Self' (see also Chapter 6).

5.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced and discussed yet another type of identity conflict at the front lines of migration management, that of the front-liner 'Self' versus the migrant 'Other'. In contrast to the previous two empirical chapters which looked at conflicts between the different types of identities that front-liners simultaneously hold (person-role

and social-role), this one focused on the interactions between front-liners and their clients. Building on the citizen-agent paradigm and the notion that bureaucrats' construction of their target population shapes bureaucratic discretion (Maynard-Moody and Portillo, 2010; Baviskar and Winter, 2017; Jilke and Tummers, 2018), this chapter identified an additional dimension to this link. It argued that it is not merely about how bureaucrats, or front-liners, view their clients, but also about how they view these clients in relation to themselves. This is more broadly relevant in cases when the clients belong to a marginalised group that is seen as the 'Other' (e.g. the poor, the Black community, etc.).

Focusing on the concepts of gender identities and beliefs, or gender perspectives, this chapter has delved into a topic of major concern among front-liners who have daily and direct contact with migrants. As expected, the gender perspectives of members of the two groups are largely divergent. In short, front-liners view migrants' gender identities and beliefs as highly traditional and conservative, if not 'wrong'. However, despite the asymmetrical power relationships between front-liners and migrants (see also Eule *et al.* 2018), this difference in gender perspectives is often frustrating for front-liners too, because it is often experienced as a failure to verify one's own self-view (see Burke & Stets, 2009). As this chapter has demonstrated, this 'shock' appears more strongly felt by some front-liners than by others, depending on the perceived distance between themselves and the clients they serve, or between 'Self' and 'Other'.

More specifically, at the cognitive level, different front-liners may follow different pathways in constructing their view of their migrant clients. In simple terms, this research showed that front-liners' views of migrants' gender identities and beliefs take one of the following variations: a) inferior and unchangeable, b) inferior and changeable, c) equal and unchangeable, and d) equal and changeable. As these four combinations indicate, the front-liners' perceptions of their clients are dependent upon where the front-liners position themselves on the spectrum of essentialism versus social constructionism and on that of high-versus-low hierarchy.

Inevitably, these unique cognitive pathways shape front-liners' discretionary strategies in practice. If front-liners see the 'Self'-'Other' difference as bridgeable and the relationship between the two groups as egalitarian, they are more likely to 'engage' closely with their clients, using their discretionary power to the advantage of their clients. By contrast, if they see this difference as both unchangeable and hierarchically organised, they are more likely to 'judge' their clients and use their discretionary power in a way that is likely to have negative consequences for the clients. In between these two ends,

there are the ‘soft nudge’ and ‘hard nudge’ strategies: if front-liners view the perceived difference as egalitarian and unchangeable, they may try to ‘correct’ their clients, by adopting a ‘soft nudge’ approach, whereas if they view it as hierarchical and changeable they may try to ‘fix’ their clients by adopting the ‘hard nudge’ approach.

Using the social psychological tools of Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009) and of the Interpersonal Perception Method (Laing, Phillipson and Lee, 1966), this chapter has argued that the perceived distance between the bureaucrat ‘Self’ and the client ‘Other’ is key in determining bureaucratic discretion. While existing studies that focus on bureaucrat-client interactions tend to focus either on the characteristics of bureaucrats (e.g. Tummers, Steijn & Bekkers, 2012; Zacka, 2017), or those of clients (e.g. Jilke & Tummers, 2018), this chapter has shown that the way bureaucrats relate with clients, or rather the way they distinguish themselves from clients, is worthy of further attention from researchers.

Going back to the key question under examination in this thesis, namely how front-liners make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, this chapter has reinforced the broader claim that identities play a critical role in shaping front-liners’ use of discretion. As a continuation of the two previous empirical chapters, this one has provided further evidence that the identity conflicts front-liners experience when carrying out their work tasks are bound to shape their discretionary behaviour. Nonetheless, although front-liners’ course of action is primarily shaped by the internal processes within the individual front-liners, the front-liners’ social environment would seem to play a vital role as well, as the following chapter will further demonstrate.

In this next and final empirical chapter, I shall show how those individuals at the front-lines of migration management are part of a larger community of professionals and operate within particular structural conditions. As such, the identity conflicts they experience often occur within the context of this community, and in relation to the structural factors that determine the community’s norms. This view accounts for the simultaneous interplay of dynamics occurring at several different levels of analysis: the institutional structure, the community and the individual. Although the main focus of this thesis remains at the micro-level, it also maintains that internal tensions and interpersonal interactions can be understood even better when considered within their broader social and structural context.

CHAPTER 6

Athens and Berlin: Communities of Practice and the Structural Construction of Discretion

6.1 Introduction

In the previous three empirical chapters, I discussed the various identity conflicts front-liners experience while completing their work tasks, either between different types of identities (role, social, person) or between 'Self' and 'Other'. These chapters focused on the psychological processes taking place within the individual front-liners, independent from or as a consequence of their interpersonal interactions with clients. This micro-level focus is in line with the majority of the existing studies on street-level bureaucracy, where the unit of analysis is either the individual bureaucrat or the bureaucrat–client interactions (see Gofen, Sella, & Gassner, 2019). It is also consistent with Lipsky's effort to underscore the human factor in policy implementation.

In this chapter, I shift the attention away from the decision-making mechanisms of individual front-liners and direct it towards the external factors that influence their behaviour: in this case, the broader context of migration management in the cities of Athens and Berlin. Returning to the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 2, I present and discuss empirical evidence in support of the parts of the mechanism not analysed up to this point, namely the *communities of practice* and the interplay between *structural conditions* and *individual discretionary behaviour*. By offering a multi-level analysis of what shapes front-liners' discretionary behaviour, this chapter further enhances our existing understandings of how policy is put into practice. Indeed, by comparing the contextual idiosyncrasies across the two settings, it allows for differentiating the individual discretionary behaviours that are likely to be observed beyond a single setting (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) from the ones that are more context-dependent (Chapter 6).

As discussed in Chapter 2, although the identities of front-line actors represent a crucial factor that shapes the actors' discretionary behaviour in times of uncertainty, the social and structural context in which front-liners are embedded matters, too. During the migration crisis era, the unprecedented administrative challenges led to the involvement of more, and more types of, front-line actors, who interacted closely, giving rise to local

'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998, 2002). Yet, the macro-structural conditions that framed these communities did not exhibit an equally drastic change. Even if the front-liners across the two capitals faced similar identity conflicts, they would still be likely to employ different discretionary practices, as they operate in distinct social and structural environments.

Nonetheless, as this chapter will show, despite the considerably different structural conditions across Athens and Berlin, the front-liners in the two capitals displayed rather similar discretionary behaviours while serving migrant clients. More specifically, in order to meet their clients' needs, the front-liners in both cities employed discretionary practices which often crossed the limits of formal or authorised discretion, falling into the category of informal or unauthorised. This is so, even though the respective of the notion of discretion differed across the two communities of front-liners.

In the case of Athens, where there is lack of resources and persistently poor coordination in the management of migration, the use of discretion is often described as an assumptive reality. As the participants' accounts show, these conditions lead to shared understandings of discretion among Athenian front-liners as a 'necessary evil', which cannot be avoided in practice. In the case of Berlin, however, where the material resources are relatively generous and government oversight tight, front-liners associate negative connotations with the use of discretion. Even so, they still use *de facto* discretion behind the scenes, at times in an unauthorised manner, a tendency I describe as 'disguised discretion'. As it appears, both in the lack of strictly enforced rules and regulations and in the presence of their abundance, front-liners find ways to 'do' discretion. To some degree, the interaction among members of the two front-line communities of practice also contributed to the development of shared practices.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section revisits the theoretical framework proposed at the beginning of this thesis, providing a brief overview and emphasising the 'communities of practice' part, as well as the structure–agency interactions. The second section uses empirical evidence from the interview data to illustrate some of the unlikely links and the enduring divides within these communities, as well as the internal conflicts these cause for individual community members. The third section illustrates the interplay between structural conditions and individual discretionary behaviours, as mediated through the front-line communities of practice and the norms shared by their members. This section also sheds light on the

differences and the commonalities between Berlin and Athens. The chapter ends with a short discussion and some concluding remarks.

6.2 A Three-Level Game: Revisiting the Theoretical Framework

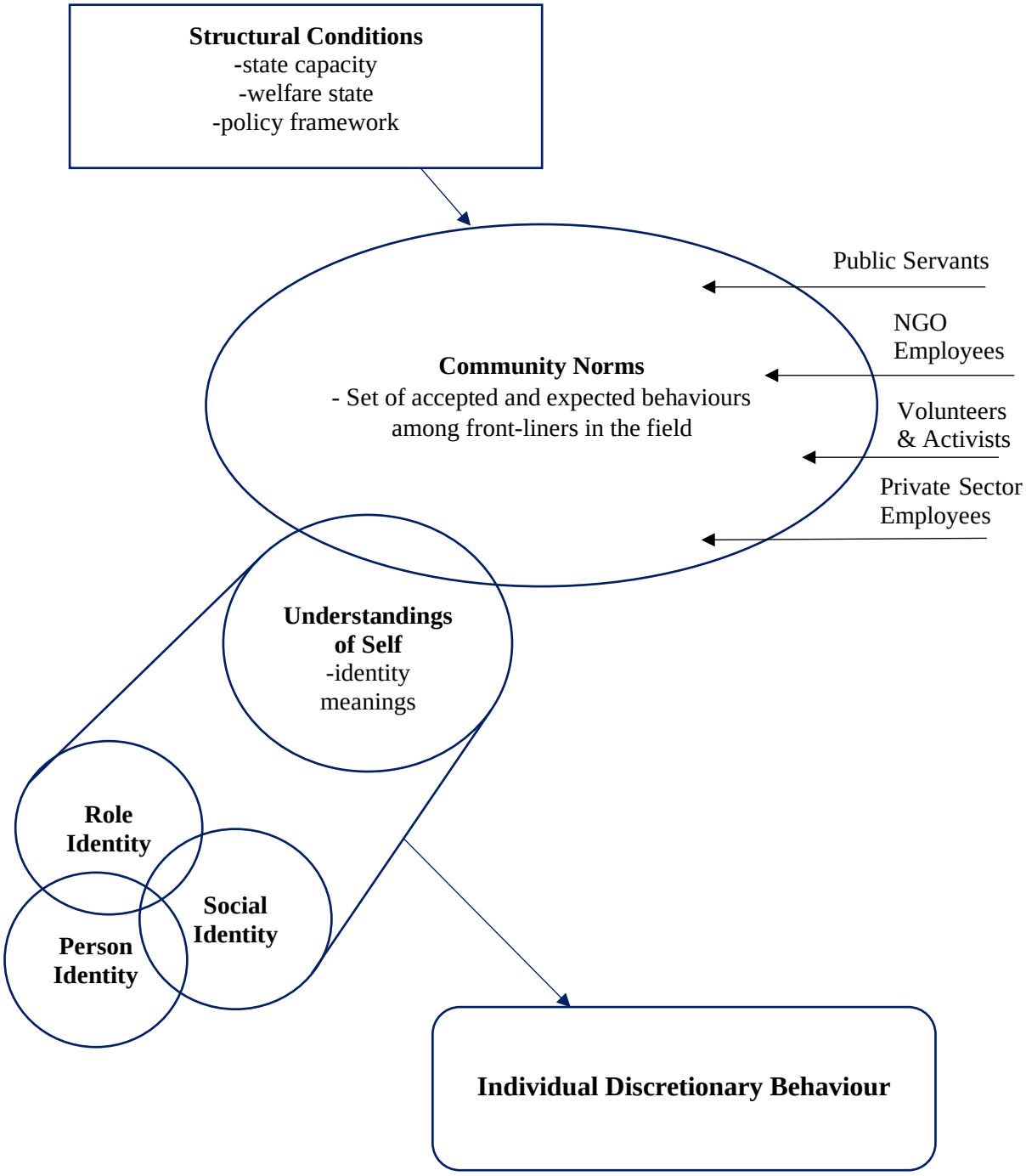
I begin here by returning to the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2, to review the relationship between *structural conditions*, *community norms*, *identities* and *individual discretion*. Since I have already extensively discussed the part of the framework pertaining to identity conflicts between different types of identities (role, social, person) in the previous three empirical chapters, I shall not readdress that here. Moreover, since the structural conditions outlined in Chapter 2 are rather stable over time, I shall not present a detailed description of these conditions now. Instead, my goal in this section is to offer a quick reminder of the overall mechanism itself, before I delve deeper into the parts of the mechanism that still require further empirical analysis. These elements include the 'communities of practice' that emerged in the two cities, and the influence of 'structural conditions' on 'individual discretionary behaviour', as filtered through the shared 'community norms'.

Let us turn to Figure 6.1 below. At the very top, there is a box referring to the 'structural conditions' of a city that hosts a community of practice. Some prominent examples relating to the context of migration management include the state capacity, the welfare state and the policy framework at national level, as discussed in Chapter 2. These structural characteristics 'frame' the communities in which front-liners operate, both materially and normatively. First, by determining the kinds of organisations and groups that are allowed to be active in the field (e.g., NGOs, private companies, volunteers, etc.), these characteristics essentially determine the composition of front-liners. Second, by offering front-liners a specific amount of resources, they effectively determine the front-liners' potential pathways for action. Third, and following from the previous two, they also shape the community's normative space, forming what I call here the 'community norms'.

To reiterate, Berlin's economic and administrative capacity (or 'state capacity' for short) was much higher compared that of Athens, not least because it is the capital of a federal republic which is also the most powerful economy in the entire EU. Although powerful economies do not necessarily translate into pro-migrant (or pro-citizen) policies, they do practically allow for a stronger welfare state, even when the provision of social

services is contracted and privatised. The combination of these two characteristics has long contributed to making Germany a magnet for migrants (Rietig & Müller, 2016)[20], leading eventually to the acknowledgement of its role as a host immigration country in 2005 (Laubenthal, 2019). In effect, this translated into the implementation of a series of integration policies for old and new migrants that, by 2015, were already in place.

Figure 6.1 Macro to Micro Determinants of Discretionary Behaviour



[20] Although recent evidence also suggests that a generous welfare state does not necessarily make a country an attractive destination for migrants, claiming instead that social factors are of higher importance (Ponce, 2018).

Despite the criticism the local government of Berlin received for its administrative response – or lack thereof – to the large wave of newcomers between 2015 and 2017 (Bock, 2018), these structural conditions undoubtedly proved crucial in ameliorating the extent of the 'crisis' over time (see also OECD, 2018b). Of course, this criticism should also be examined through the prism of the high expectations that citizens, as well as outside spectators, are likely to have of the government of a country such as Germany.

Athens, on the other hand, is the capital of a highly centralised country (Sotiropoulos, 2019) which has fared quite poorly economically, especially during the last decade. Without the support of a federal government mechanism, with an already weak welfare state (Matsaganis, 2011) and with no integration policies in place, the working environment of Athenian front-liners was undoubtedly far more challenging during the 2015–2017 period. Considering also the multiplicity of international actors that suddenly became involved in the funding and management of this emergency situation (European Commission, 2019b, see also Chapter 1), the most significant difficulty for these front-liners was the lack of a single, central coordinating authority (see also below). Even if the raw numbers of asylum seekers that the authorities in Athens had to process and assist were much lower compared to those of Berlin, the enormously problematic structural conditions led to a greater relative gap between the response demanded and the one delivered.

Returning to Figure 6.1, below the 'structural conditions' box there is an oval representing the 'community norms', or the informally agreed-upon behavioural expectations shared by community members. These may refer to the language of communication that is considered appropriate within the community, or they may denote an informal hierarchy among different community members. Most importantly, perhaps, these norms indicate a shared understanding of the idea of using discretion among front-liners, thereby determining the kind and range of discretion considered acceptable. The different shapes used in the Figure signify an important difference: whereas structural conditions predominantly refer here to material conditions, the community norms concern normative aspects only. This is also why the arrow is one-directional: although the material structure shapes people's mentalities, the opposite is not true, at least not during the short time-horizon of the migration crisis.

As I shall discuss in greater detail in the sections that follow, these norms are somewhat different between the cities of Athens and Berlin, largely as a result of the deferring structural conditions surrounding the two communities of practice. In short,

Berliner front-liners, operating in a highly structured and hierarchical bureaucracy, have developed a negative view of the idea of discretion use. Their Athenian counterparts, by contrast, speak of discretion in a matter-of-fact fashion, framing it as an inevitable pragmatic necessity. Notwithstanding this difference, it is noteworthy that the community norms in the two cities are gradually changing over time. As the third section in this chapter will demonstrate, the interactions between the two cities' front-liners lead to social learning (what Wenger calls 'situated learning') and to some degree of normative exchange across the two communities of practice.

Turning now to the interaction between community norms and front-liner identities, Figure 6.1 shows an overlap between the two, as Wenger (2010) also implies. This overlap denotes a two-directional relationship that operates as a feedback loop. On the one hand, the shared norms within a community of practice help shape a front-liner's understandings of the 'Self' within this community, this 'Self' encompassing all three identity bases discussed thus far (social, role and person). On the other hand, the understandings of the 'Self' that front-liners already have when they first join this community also play an important role in shaping this community's norms. In a way, a community comprises a collection of individual front-liner 'Selves'. This iterative relationship may be especially meaningful in times of high uncertainty, when new challenges continuously emerge and the front-liners' work tasks may differ from one day to the next. Under such conditions, this research suggests, it is through social interactions with fellow community members that front-liners (re-)construct their 'Self' as front-line actors, as well as the character of the community.

Given the existing differences in the structural conditions and community norms between Athens and Berlin, it is not surprising that the front-liners' identities are also influenced somewhat differently across the two settings. As I shall demonstrate below, the make-up of the civil society in each city plays an important role in this regard. Whereas in Berlin most front-liners work for NGOs or private, for-profit companies, in Athens a large part of the service delivery is not institutionalised, but instead carried out by grassroots groups of volunteers and activists. Undoubtedly, delivering social services in a business-like environment invokes different practical and ideological dilemmas than doing so in a largely uncoordinated fashion. These conditions also assume distinct levels of structural legitimisation of discretion and, as a consequence, distinct individual understandings of one's role as a front-liner.

The final element in this framework is the 'individual discretionary behaviour' that front-liners exhibit. As Figure 1 shows, this behaviour is directly connected with front-liners' identities. This could mean the identity conflicts they experience, and which I have already covered in the previous empirical chapters, or it could mean their understandings of 'Self' as members of a given community of practice, the next item for discussion here. Since identities function as 'filters' between community norms and discretionary behaviour, the latter two may not necessarily correspond with each other, as seems to be the case in Berlin.

6.3 Communities of Practice at the Front Lines

As the introduction of the term 'front-liners' constitutes an important contribution of this thesis, I shall offer here further empirical evidence to demonstrate how this concept manifests in practice. In this section, I use segments of the participants' accounts to support the claim that, during times of high uncertainty (e.g. the migration crisis), inter-organisational dynamics become more important than intra-organisational ones. Following the unprecedented set of demands in the management of migration, the existing networks of front-liners intensified, while new networks that transcend organisational borders also emerged for the first time. These networks of practitioners soon took the form of 'communities or practice', as I shall show, with unlikely links, enduring divides and identity conflicts for community members.

6.3.1 Unlikely Links

Some level of cooperation among organisations and individual actors in the field is, of course, to be expected, due to the nature of the work itself. A social worker at a shelter for migrants, for example, needs to communicate on almost a daily basis with public servants, mental health professionals and language teachers. These are the types of professionals migrants usually need to interact with, and it is the social worker's job to mediate these exchanges. Similar circles of professionals may also be required by asylum lawyers who, in the effort to collect evidence for their clients' cases, may have to obtain written documentation from doctors, psychologists or private employers. This multidimensional support that migrants need represents one, rather unsurprising, factor contributing to the formation of the front-liners' communities of practice (see also Kortendiek, 2018; Sichling, 2020).

What also happens on the ground, which is a lot more surprising, is the collaboration of individual actors whose organisations' ideological orientations are diametrically opposed, at least in theory. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is the collaboration between two individuals where one works for the state while the other is a member of an activist grassroots group with an open stance against the state and its policies. This is particularly startling in the case of Berlin, where the largely efficient state mechanisms and generous state provisions for migrants leave relatively little room for anti-state action. Yet, as the segment below highlights, such grassroots groups do exist and informal collaboration with state employees does occur. The account presented below is provided by a participant who is a member of such a group, whose aim is to provide medical assistance to those 'without papers'. As he explains, individual public servants do occasionally advise migrants to make use of the group's services.

> There were even [cases] where the [local government office] would explicitly send people to us. For example, pregnant women, because it would take them months to get the birth date that you needed to get put in a hospital … To get that approved it would take them months at [that office], so [that office] was saying, *"Well, if that is too late for you, just go to the [self-organised medical centre]"*. So, we ended up organising birth dates and organising this medical care for women, because we knew if we didn't do it, nobody would do it. (Activist, Berlin)

Despite the local government office and the self-organised medical centre being on 'opposing sides', and although there was a lack of official communication channels between them, collaboration did still occur, informally. Undoubtedly, it seems rather absurd that a local government office would direct migrant clients, at times irregular ones, to a self-organised medical clinic run by activists. On the other hand, it is also not difficult to imagine a social worker at a public agency whose hands are tied by the existing bureaucracy and policy framework seeking a humane solution when confronted by the sight of a pregnant woman in need of assistance (see also Malakasis & Sahraoui, 2020). Thus, although this referral is not officially an appropriate step to take, from the point of view of individual front-liners who operate within the same community and work towards the same greater cause of helping migrants, it is.

Very similar examples of unlikely links are also found in the accounts of Athenian front-liners. Moreover, since the administrative gap left by the Greek state was relatively larger, allowing more space for self-organised civil society actors to operate, the relevant references front-liners made were more and more diverse. The first example that follows echoes the sentiment expressed above. It comes from an anarchist activist who helps run a housing squat for migrants in central Athens. This participant also describes cases where

state employees resort to the assistance of those who, through illegal means, essentially cover the gaps in the services provided by the state and its contractors.

> Often we would get [migrants] from [state] camps in the squats, because the camps sent them to the squats, because [the squats] are safer places, or better places. I, personally, have witnessed many occasions. I can easily recall three. For example, a woman with her two children was a victim of GBV[21], and she came into one of the squats, with an escort from [that camp], to ask for two days of safe space, hospitality. Because her husband was beating her and [at] the camp they didn't know how to deal with it, they put her in a taxi with someone who was working in the camp and they got her to the squat, because they knew this was a safe place. (Activist, Athens)

As with the example from Berlin above, this one also describes an unlikely link between formal and informal service providers. Unlike the previous example, however, the state actor here is not so much constrained by the bureaucratic procedures as by the lack of adequate state infrastructures, security and social services for women. This problem was, in fact, a recurrent theme during my fieldwork in Athens, raised both by women front-liners who worked at state camps and by refugee women who lived in them.

Compared with Berlin, the presence of activist front-liners in Athens was proportionately larger. As such, the informal links between local activists, or 'solidarians'[22] as they self-identify, and state employees were more frequent, while the help went in the opposite direction too, meaning from state employees to solidarians. A prominent example solidarians shared with me involved public servants from the Public Power Corporation (PPC)[23] informally providing solidarians with the practical means and know-how to 'steal' electricity from underground lines to use it for the housing squats for migrants. Another such example involved state-funded lawyers visiting the squats to provide legal assistance to asylum seekers who resided there. As some lawyers explained to me, these consultations took place in the nearest public square or park, so they would be technically within the limits of law, since the migrants would be officially counted as 'homeless asylum seekers'.

In addition to the above, another unlikely link between front-liners in Athens was the one between squatters and NGO employees. In their dedication to help migrants based purely on the spirit of solidarity, the solidarians voiced strong opinions against the work of NGOs in Greece, which they considered to be dishonest, profit-seeking and corrupt, a sentiment shared more widely in Greece (see Huliaras, 2014; Fragonikolopoulos, 2014).

[21] Gender-Based Violence.
[22] In Greek, 'αλληλλεγγυοι'.
[23] In Greek, Δημόσια Επιχείρηση Ηλεκρτρισμού (ΔΕΗ).

However, despite having vowed not to receive any sort of assistance from NGOs, there came times when this became necessary, especially as the resources were running low. Although not many solidarians would openly admit to doing so, the vignette below comes from one who did.

> All squats will tell you that we are not cooperating with NGOs. But we all know that [this state-funded, mental health-related NGO] has taken on numerous cases from the [residents of the] squats. Also [this private-funded medical NGO] is vaccinating the children for the 2nd year now so they can go to school. [One of the squats] has very close contact with [two international NGOs] from Palestine and Spain […]. Or, at [another squat], there were Muslim imams giving out things... (Activist, Athens).

As we see here, there are multiple connecting links between the formal and informal segments of civil society, at times extending to the international level. Although, once again, there is no formal channel of communication between these organisations and groups, the personal connections between some of their individual members allow for various inter-organisational and inter-group collaborations. Moreover, it is worth underlining that these collaborations are of great significance in terms of the assistance the migrants ultimately receive.

All in all, the above examples point towards the following observations. Because of the crisis, some of the existing dividing lines between state and non-state actors, as well as between formal and informal civil society actors, became obsolete. As the number of front-line actors increased, and as there were more and more frequent interactions between them, the collaborations between dissimilar kinds of actors intensified. The front-liners in both Athens and Berlin therefore formed a complex nexus of individuals with various institutional and group affiliations, who effectively worked together to meet the needs of their clients and to respond to the emergency situation of the migration crisis. As such, we see front-liners in the place of traditional street-level bureaucrats, while we also see frontline communities of practice in the place of traditional street-level bureaucracies.

6.3.2 Enduring Divides

Although the intensification of inter-organisational links did occur as a result of the migration crisis, this does not mean that the existing divides between certain groups of front-liners entirely disappeared. After all, conflicts and disagreements are a natural part of communities of practice (Wenger, 2010; Wenger *et al.*, 2002). As different types

of front-line actors were suddenly expected to work closely together, old divides came to the surface, while new divides appeared, too. The difference, compared with the pre-migration-crisis period, lies perhaps in the urgency of the situation that intensified the interactions between diverse actors, 'forcing' them to come face to face with these divides. The following examples illuminate the mosaic of various actors who work together on the ground and spotlight some of the 'barriers' that hinder the communication and collaboration across these actors.

Beginning with Berlin, the segment below comes from a social worker who works for a private company in an emergency shelter for migrants when they first arrive. This private company is contracted by the local government of Berlin to ensure the psychosocial well-being of migrants on the site, but it operates alongside a group of federal employees whose role it is to oversee the administrative aspect of the registration process. Moreover, it is the social workers' responsibility to stay in touch with the local governments' employees and to refer to them certain cases of migrants who need further psychosocial care. This mixture of front-liners from diverse backgrounds does, at times, lead to tensions:

> They complained about us. […] Even [this federal employee] here, he came to me for another case and he said *"Yeah but if you write all these letters, the social workers at the [local government office] will then think they have [too] many things to do".* Yeah okay … that's their job! It's our job to see what people need, to find their needs, and their job is to try to [meet these needs]. You see? We have another opinion on this. We are more for the people and they are more … I don't know [what]. (Social Worker, Private Company, Berlin)

This extract reveals the multiple co-occurring tensions among various front-liners on this site. There is clearly a tension between the private social workers who claim to prioritise the needs of their migrant clients and the federal employees who seem to prioritise administrative efficiency instead. At the same time, however, there is also a tension between these private social workers and those social workers employed by local government. Interestingly, although this social worker is a private company employee, she positions herself closer to the migrants than to her government colleagues – local and federal. By claiming that "we are more for the people", she is also expressing her criticism of her colleagues' stance towards the migrants. Even if the attitudes of these participants may not be representative of the sectors for which they work, the tensions between them are.

In a similar vein, members of the (formal) civil society in Athens also differentiate themselves from the state. Much like the scenario outlined above, the next quote

demonstrates the colourful diversity and the newfound partnerships among front-line actors in the field, while, at the same time, it describes some of the enduring divides between state and non-state actors.

> We have created an unofficial working group, with about another 10–15 [street-level] organisations […]. With the organisations at the group, the cooperation is fantastic. I have been working for [this NGO] for 9 years, same position, and on no other issue [besides migration] have we had so close and had such good cooperation with other teams. I consider these people my colleagues, as I do with the ones of [this NGO]. Very good team. [But], from the Greek government, no, there is no responsiveness at all. From the beginning, I think, there was a polarisation between government and NGOs, both in terms of rhetoric, with the various things the Migration Minister has said at times, and practically. I would say they maintain a distance from us, and they are very suspicious [of us]. (Administrative Employee, International NGO, Athens)

These words partly reinforce the earlier point that the migration crisis functioned as a catalyst for developing inter-organisational links and networks. In this example, an unprecedented level of close collaboration developed among NGOs in the field, as a direct result of the crisis. Simultaneously, however, this quote also reinforces the notion that some divides at the front lines persisted over time, such as the divide between NGOs and the state. The two points are thus not mutually exclusive. Although the migration crisis did make some of the dividing lines between different front-liners more porous, some of the existing divides persisted over time too.

6.3.3. (More) Internal Conflicts

Given the iterative relationship between community norms and front-line understandings of the 'Self', this combination of new partnerships and old divides also had an effect on individual front-liners. Even if they themselves were agents of change, in that they were often the ones who initiated the unlikely links, this change did not come smoothly or effortlessly at the individual level. As already shown, in their effort to tackle the contradicting expectations they encounter at work, front-liners often experienced internal conflicts. Apart from the conflicts among different types of identities (Chapters 3 and 4) or between 'Self' and 'Other' (Chapter 5), they also experienced internal conflicts on the basis of the specific position they occupied – or did not occupy – within their community of practice.

Part of the quote that follows has already been discussed in Chapter 4. It refers to the case of a social worker in Berlin who feels very uneasy about having to work for a

for-profit private company, contracted by the state. This hybrid of private and public service provision, which was prevalent in the field of migration management in Berlin, became a common cause of internal conflicts among Berliner front-liners. Here, I provide an extended version of the same quote in order to highlight the subjective experience of the participant.

> From my boss's point of view, we are contract partners with this [government] authority and need to execute their will. From my professional point of view, I am the social worker for the people who are quite often in conflict with this authority. Of course, this is a completely unrealistic situation; either you stay focused on your clients, which will at some point mean that you will be uncomfortable towards your profit-driven bosses, or you stay in line with the policy of the company, but then you are actually not producing good social work … And I think it's shit. Hopefully, it's an internal conflict for everyone who works in a situation like this. (Social Worker, Private Company, Berlin)

As she vividly describes, a major cause of the internal conflict she experiences stems from the public–private partnerships. If the government policies are becoming increasingly restrictive in terms of migrants' rights, and if the government contracts for-profit companies to deliver services to migrants, then the people executing service delivery are constrained in their effort to serve the interests of their clients. When the dominant norms within their community of practice dictate prioritising the clients' needs, then these front-liners' sense of 'Self' as community members is being challenged. Although the conflict between representing the state and the clients is partly inherent in the delivery of human services (e.g. Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003), it is much more pronounced when profit-seeking contractors also come into the equation.

Moving now to the corresponding internal conflicts among Athenian front-liners, the activist–formal–informal fragmentation of the civil society discussed above is also reflected in the subjective experiences of individuals. A characteristic example of this comes from a front-liner who self-identifies as an anarchist and a solidarian, who has been active in housing squats, and who has eventually decided to work for a state-funded NGO.

> I don't play the anarchist role in [this NGO]. […]… I will cooperate with the state, because I am an employee here. Like every job, it has its limitations. But outside of here, I can be whoever I want to be. I cannot, of course, go out and say *"fuck all NGOs"*, because I work for one of them. I understand the limitations, I recognise the contradictions […]. Making ends meet is hard, and you are forced to do certain things, but I don't think we need to hide it. I admit it. I say, *"I have this [anarchist] identity and, within this work environment, it is being oppressed"*. (Administrative Employee, Local NGO, Athens)

To put this vignette into context, it is worth noting that the unemployment rate in Greece was 25% in 2015, dropping only to 23% by 2017, while for those under 25 it ranged between 45% and 50% (Eurostat, 2019). With this in mind, it is easier to see why a young anarchist with a strong anti-state and anti-NGO orientation found himself working for a state-funded NGO. "Making ends meet" was indeed challenging for most young Greeks at the time. To tackle this internal contradiction, the participant resorted to keeping his anarchist identity hidden from his official working environment, activating it only outside his official working hours. The fragmentations of the civil society therefore manifested in the fragmentation of his sense of 'Self'.

In both of these examples, we observe how the inter-organisational and inter-sector partnerships lead to internal contradictions and conflicts for individual front-liners. There are indeed studies suggesting that the co-existence of different institutional logics[25] causes considerable ambiguity for the individuals involved (e.g. Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012; Zilber, 2016). Nonetheless, there are qualitative differences between the two cities. While in Berlin the public–private hybrid is the one that gives birth to such contradictions, in Athens it is the mixture of formal andinformal civil society. Once again, although the theoretical mechanism linking structural conditions with micro-level dynamics operates much the same in the two cities, there are distinct qualitative characteristics that differentiate the two cases.

To summarise this section, both in Berlin and in Athens the migration crisis changed the face of social service delivery, as it increased the diversity of front-line actors and intensified the interactions between them. This then gave rise to the phenomenon of front-line 'communities of practice'. Despite the distinct structural conditions between the two capitals, and despite the different composition of the front-liners, the two communities of practice shared a series of similar underlying trends: unexpected alliances, persisting dividing lines and internal dilemmas among front-liners.

These observations tally with Wenger's conceptualisation of communities of practice, even if this theoretical framework has not been commonly applied in the study of policy implementation. As these communities are unstructured and their boundaries blurry, the community members, as well as their level of engagement, may change over time. In these self-developing communities, the construction (and re-construction) of individual identities takes place naturally, through interpersonal interactions and a

[25] e.g. banking logic or development logic (see Zilber, 2016)

process of socialisation. Inevitably, conflict is also an integral element, not only across individual community members but also within them (see Handley et al, 2006). Having covered the dynamics at the frontline communities of practice, I shall next discuss the interplay between structural conditions, shared community norms and individual discretionary practices.

6.4 From Community Norms to Discretionary Practices

Taking a multi-level analytical approach, this section focuses on the steps that connect the structural conditions surrounding the two communities of practice with the individual front-liners' ultimate use of discretion. First, I discuss how, based on these conditions, the front-liners in each city create a shared set of understandings around the concept of discretion. Then, I elaborate on how these shared understandings translate into actual discretionary behaviour, by setting the boundaries of accepted and expected individual action. Finally, I highlight the constructed nature of community norms, by bringing to light the 'transboundary learning' that occurs with German front-liners in Athens and with Greek front-liners in Berlin.

6.4.1 The Structural Construction of Discretion

As noted in Chapter 2, the funds that go to migrants in Berlin come primarily from the federal budget. The fact that the German government spends its own money allows it to 'make the rules of the game', while also compelling it to be more attentive to how this money is being spent. This means the government has a) greater say over who receives the funds, and b) tighter control over the organisations – non-profit or for-profit – that handle these funds and deliver services at street level. In practice, this may translate into the government setting very specific standards and requirements about which organisations receive the money, as well as the organisations adjusting to the standards set by the government to even be considered for 'the job'. In turn, once they have undertaken a particular task (e.g., running shelters for asylum seekers), these organisations are greatly confined in their ability to perform their duties, as adhering to the specific government rules and regulations is an obligatory condition, contingent upon their dependency on government funds.

In an environment of abundant rules and regulations, and tight governmental control, individual front-liners appear to have little room for manoeuvre. By definition,

the emphasis on meeting measurable goals and achieving efficacy does not allow for great flexibility or the use of discretion. It thereby contributes to a set of community norms that discourage front-liners from exercising discretionary behaviour. A number of relevant studies that have examined the implementation of migration-related policies in Germany find that street-level bureaucrats indeed refrain from departing from the rules, adopting a rigid and restrictive interpretation of them (e.g., Brussig & Knuth, 2013; Cyrus & Vogel, 2003; Jordan, Strath, & Triandafyllidou, 2003). At times, they even welcome additional rules, regarding them as a much-wanted relief from ambiguity (Jordan *et al*., 2003). These findings are partly corroborated by the present research, as the following segment exemplifies.

> I think [the government officials] should introduce more policies so there would be more consistency […]. There is already so much personal influence and I think this should be minimised to the maximum, basically. So, wherever you can, tell people what to do. (Caseworker, Berlin)

These were the thoughts of a caseworker in Berlin who conducts interviews and makes decisions on asylum applications, and who sees the addition of further rules and regulations as the answer to the inconsistency in asylum decision outcomes.

Nonetheless, the findings of this thesis do not quite support this one-dimensional representation of a German 'culture' of discretion (see Jordan *et al*., 2003), but illustrate a picture that shows a more complex discretionary reality on the ground (also see further below). Specifically, they point towards the negative side of having an extensive focus on professionalism and measured efficiency, meaning the tendency to adjust one's behaviour in order to meet the required quotas, without this stance reflecting a meaningful effort in its entirety.

> [The consulting companies] give ridiculous quotas that are unsustainable, you know? I'm a big fan of, yeah, reach for the stars or reach for the moon and let's see how far we can get … But, if my ass is on the line and there is a [consulting company] guy sitting next to me and writing a protocol and watching me work … of course, I work as hard as I can during this one day, you know? But, that doesn't mean that every single person in this agency can perform like that every single day for a whole year. This is impossible! (Caseworker, Berlin)

This strategy, followed by another caseworker, represents the archetypical example of the Hawthorne effect, whereby productivity increases in the presence of an observer. It also echoes findings of US-based studies where meeting performance targets becomes the primary source of pressure as well as the key guiding principle for street-level workers and their managers (e.g., Soss, *et. al.,* 2013). The question that remains is then whether the lack of an observer induces leisure-shirking, in accordance with the

definition provided by Brehm and Gates (1998), or simply allows for a human reaction from a terribly overworked employee.

In any case, it is worth highlighting that front-liners in Berlin seem to understand their role as small parts of a looming large bureaucratic machinery, which they criticise but do not fundamentally question. Should they occasionally question it, as some grassroots group members do, they are limited in their freedom of action, precisely because their group's financial survival is directly dependent on it. In the end, they also find ways to comply with the government requirements while remaining dedicated to their values and goals.

> We do get funding from different state organisations […]. So, there are some strings attached to the fact, like, we do have to have records and tell them what we are doing. But, it's not like they are here every day looking at, you know, who we are speaking to, or for counselling people without papers… (Grassroots Group Member, Berlin)

In this segment, an activist in Berlin explains how their group essentially uses federal government money to help irregular migrants in their legal fight against the federal government. Similar instances were also described to me by NGO employees. They might have been receiving funding to assist migrants of only certain nationalities, let us say Syrians, but they used this funding to assist clients of other nationalities too, without reporting this fact to the government. This is a type of discretionary behaviour that has clearly important consequences for the clients, albeit not having been addressed by the relevant literature on street-level bureaucracy to date.

Returning to the case of Athens, as already discussed, Greece has never been particularly meticulous in terms of registering new migrants or managing immigration (see Cabot, 2014; Marmani, 2018). The recent co-occurrence of the economic and migration crises, however, has led to another level of disorder. At the initial stage of the migration crisis, the state's reaction was both slow and insufficient. This was when several international organisations and NGOs stepped in, playing a critical role in the provision of emergency relief to asylum seekers at the front lines. They worked alongside local volunteers and activists, both in the Aegean islands and on the mainland, and altogether they created an amalgam of many and diverse street-level actors, operating without a central system of coordination (Kourachanis, 2018).

From August 2015, the EU began to allocate funds to support the Greek state (€613.5m allocated for 2014–2020) through three different avenues (European Commission, 2019b). One was by directly funding some of the state's key services, such

as the Greek Police, the Asylum Service or the Hellenic Coast Guard. Another avenue for support was through securing the presence of international organisations, such as the UNHCR and the IOM, which played a supportive role to the state on various fronts. The third way was by directly funding international NGOs that had the relevant expertise, such as Doctors of the World, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund and others (European Commission, 2019b). In addition to these service providers, there were also other organisations of various sizes present, whose funding either came from different EU and state programmes or from private donors.

With such a multiplicity of actors in the field, along with a lack of a single coordination authority (The Greek Ombudsman, 2017), it will not come as a surprise that the Greek participants in this research observed general disorganisation and the lack of planning as 'the root of most evil'. Despite the handling and distribution of funds slowly being passed into the hands of the Greek state, its ability to organise and coordinate was too often judged by the front-liners as "inadequate", and the poor central management remained a point of concern. In fact, it was a theme shared by both front-line actors and top-level bureaucrats, and a problem that maintained its relevance throughout the time period of this project's fieldwork, namely from the end of 2015 to the beginning of 2019. Of course, this lack of coordination and the general sense of disorder had a direct impact on the daily work of Athenian front-liners.

> Because the funding system is structured this way, meaning a large NGO can be funded directly if they do a job with the central funding of the Commission, there is no obligation to be under the control of someone else right now, and they can simply do the work they have undertaken and are funded for. This sometimes works because an NGO is flexible on field issues, but on the other hand it may create overlapping with other organisations, other services … This is what I mean by coordination issues. There could be better allocation, both in human and material resources, if labour division was better organised on the ground. (High-Level Administrative Employee, Municipality of Athens)

> Many ask me, *"What are your basic priorities?"* and I say, *"For me to have basic priorities, someone above me has to state the general priorities, so I can say what I will do to reach the general priorities".* But there are no general priorities. […].We were working at [a state camp], and [the authorities] decided overnight to close down the camp. And I say, *"Excuse me, I have people there who are under my care. What will happen?".* And now we are trying to find these people, after the fact, after they took them from there. Because [the authorities] would not give us information on what will happen with these people. Maybe even they themselves didn't know... (Psychologist, Local NGO, Athens)

As these segments indicate, the Greek situation leads to a baffling, antithetical reality for front-liners. On the one hand, the lack of a central coordinating authority leads to a great deal of frustration, due to the poor planning and allocation of resources, the unclear goals and the lack of communication channels. On the other hand, the lack of clearly defined rules and regulations also allows for greater freedom and flexibility, especially for non-state actors, who actually constitute the majority in the migration crisis context. Quite strikingly, the latter quote comes from a front-liner whose organisation is, for the most part, state-funded. Yet, as his words illustrate, it is not only that the state does not ably facilitate the work of those operating on the ground, but at times it obstructs it, even if unintentionally. Under these conditions, discretionary behaviour becomes a pragmatic necessity.

The discussion here demonstrates how the community norms around the use of discretion are shaped by external, contextual factors. Although this is true for both cities, there are qualitative differences across the two communities of practice: whereas in Berlin discretionary behaviour is something to be avoided, in Athens it is seen as inevitable. Yet, as the following subsection will show, these differences in community norms do not correspond directly with discretionary behaviours in practice.

6.4.2 Doing Discretion

As expected, individual front-liners' discretionary behaviour is somewhat different in Athens from that in Berlin. Nonetheless, although the Athenian front-liners do seem to apply discretion more generously than their Berliner counterparts, the gap is not as large as the gap in community norms would suggest. More specifically, in Berlin, there is a tendency for discretion to be 'disguised', meaning it is not captured by the official mechanisms that measure performance targets or policy outcomes. In contrast, both formal and informal discretion seem to be in open sight in the case of Athens, where discretion is treated merely as an inherent part of 'business as usual', which is regularly irregular.

Beginning with Berlin, when the rules and regulations are particularly strict, it is easy to assume that bureaucratic discretion is minimal. Nonetheless, it may also mean there is less formal, or *de jure*, discretion, but more informal, or *de facto*, discretion (Evans, 2010). In other words, when front-liners have little leeway in deciding how to best handle certain cases at hand, they would be more likely to find a way outside the

rules, or even against the rules, precisely because they cannot 'bend' them. In this sense, a system that aims to minimise bureaucratic discretion oftentimes merely disguises it.

This seems to be the case with German front-liners in Berlin, who appear very hesitant to discuss using discretionary behaviour, but who simultaneously share instances of considerable *de facto* discretion. In doing so, they both comply with the predominant community norms and act in accordance with their own individual understandings of how they ought to behave in the given context. The following examples illustrate this.

> There are a lot of clients who just ask me *"What should I do with my passport?"* If I tell them – I don't know – *"Throw it away",* that might be criminal. So, I just have to explain, *"If you have your passport, it might be easier to send you back to your country. If you don't have your passport, it might be not so easy..."* So, I just have to explain the rule and they have to do the next step. [Because] we must be careful also. [If] we have to [make up] a story for someone else, this might be a problem. (Lawyer, Berlin)

> One of the big issues [at the shelter] was [migrants] cooking inside their rooms. But they were not allowed… […]. [With] most of my colleagues, we're like, *"Of course we smell that it smells like onions when we go around there".* But we always say, *"If we don't see something, then nothing happened".* It is just when we really see it and then, okay, we can't act as [if] we didn't see it. But, of course, when we knock on the door, they hide it. And then it's okay. (Social Worker, Berlin)

In the first segment, a lawyer describes how she cleverly tells her clients to ignore the law, without directly telling them, "ignore the law". In a similar manner, a social worker at a shelter for migrants in Berlin explains how she and her colleagues turn a blind eye when the residents break a rule that the social workers find unnecessary, even in the face – or smell – of obvious evidence. In both cases, the front-liners prioritise their own judgement of what is fair and appropriate for the situation over what the law or official rule dictates. Moreover, although they both take care not to depart from the formal prescriptions of their roles, in effect they do, using their informal or *de facto* discretion. The discretion Berliner front-liners talk about and allow others to see, therefore, is not necessarily the discretion they 'do'.

Contrary to the front-liners in Berlin, those in Athens seem to speak of discretionary behaviour without a sense of guilt attached to it, but rather in a matter-of-fact fashion. Given the overly complicated and disorderly bureaucratic environment they face every day, they often portray their work as an effort to swim against the tide. In order to complete their tasks, they feel obliged to improvise and to use their "imagination and

creativity", as one social worker put it, paying less attention to whether their solutions would be considered officially legal or not.

To revisit an example discussed in Chapter 3, an Athenian caseworker gives subsidiary protection to a family with an ill child who would otherwise not meet the legal criteria for this type of protection. In her view, although the child would legally be entitled to humanitarian protection, the bureaucratic procedures are so tedious and lengthy that the child's life would be at serious risk. The caseworker therefore feels compelled to 'correct' this malfunction of the system by stretching the limits of her professional discretion.

> Who out of those in need of humanitarian protection can wait for four years? Half of them are going to die. So you are forced into a situation that puts you, you know, in an internal … agony. To find a solution. (Caseworker, Athens)

There are a couple of points worth highlighting here. First, this caseworker feels she has the freedom to make decisions that fall outside the official protocol, which may also signify a lack of close oversight from superiors. Second, this front-liner has very little *trust* in the Greek institutions, a trend observed more widely among the general Greek population (Dianeosis, 2018; Eurofound, 2018). This lack of trust seems to 'force' some front-liners into filling the gaps in the system, or at least trying to, a pressure not shared by their counterparts in Berlin. Under these circumstances, the use of discretion is part of an assumptivereality.

This perception of governmental dysfunction and disorganisation is also vividly illustrated below, in the words of a medical doctor and the head of an international NGO operating in Greece.

> You are maybe in no man's land, and you want to install [portable] toilets, because people are just refugees, and in order to install toilets you have to ask for permission. But, permission from where? So, [the authorities] tell you that you need to ask for permission from EYDAP[26] and the municipality, and this and that and the other, and it is not part of their responsibility. So, in a way, there are [these] things that, you know, do not allow you to [be lawful]. […] If you want to follow the law, there is no way! You just ignore it. (NGO Employee, Athens)

Here, the state dysfunction manifests as poor communication across public authorities and other organisations, unclear allocation of tasks, and responsibility avoidance. Once again, going by the book is portrayed as being the least conducive strategy for completing the task at stake, and applying one's (informal) discretion as the

[26] The Hellenic Water Company.

'necessary evil'. Using a Greek proverb, the same participant added that the daily bureaucratic obstacles are so insurmountable that no matter how hard one tries, it is impossible to remain lawful: "You try to become a saint and they don't let you". In this view, bypassing the law when necessary appears to be the only way to reach the end goal of providing substantial assistance to migrants.

To reiterate, as the community norms regarding the use of discretion differ between front-liners in Berlin and those in Athens, so do their individual discretionary practices. In short, Berliner front-liners appear hesitant to stretch or cross the lines of the rules, or rather they appear hesitant to admit that they do so. This is what I label 'disguised discretion'. Athenian front-liners, on the other hand, seem to understand discretion as a normal and necessary part of their work, to the point that breaking the law is at times framed as an ingenious solution applied by a dutiful employee. Even though they do not accurately mirror them, these different practices actually stem from the front-liners' community norms in each city.

6.4.3 Transboundary Learning

To better illustrate the proposed link between structure, community norms and the front-line use of discretion, this final empirical subsection addresses the Greek front-liners who live and work in Berlin, and the German front-liners who operate in Athens[27]. As shown below, there is a convergence of views when German and Greek front-liners are active in the same communities of practice. From a top-down point of view, the predominant community norms within a community of practice have the direct effect of socialisation for those new to the community, who gradually come to adapt to what is expected of them by their local colleagues. In addition to this, the community norms front-liners have carried with them are also infused into the local community norms, to some degree. In that sense, both individual *learning* and *norm infusion* took place in the two cities.

With regard to *learning*, German and Greek front-liners who engage with each other's communities of practice endeavour to grasp and make sense of what they observe and what is unfamiliar to them. As the following quotes illustrate, these observations

[27] There were several Greek front-liners in Berlin, often with university degrees in psychology or relevant social sciences, who had migrated to Germany in previous years because of the Greek economic crisis. By contrast, the Germans in Athens were mostly there in the capacity of international organisation employees (e.g., EASO) or as activists in solidarity with migrants (and local Greeks).

largely mirror those of the local front-liners mentioned above, but they also come with an element of surprise, as the bureaucratic reality they confront is rather unexpected.

> We have to run together with [this Greek NGO] on [this collective solidarity] project, [and] we had to get registered in Greece. It was a quite horrible process with this Greek bureaucracy … Now, I am a friend of German bureaucracy when I compare… It lasted 8–9 months to get registered there, and [that was] with support from Greek people […]. They were [also] surprised about every new question that came up... (German Activist, Greece)

> The German state wants to see that its money is being spent. If you are a volunteer and you drink a coffee with a refugee and then you come to tell me *"No worries, I will pay for this coffee – I have a job and money, no problem"*, this should cost the programme less. But it must not cost less! Because when the Ministry sees the numbers, it will say, *"In the end, you don't need this money"*, and it will give less money next time, or it will judge the programme as 'not productive' because the money hasn't been spent. So, it forces you to push people to spend money… (Greek NGO Administrative Employee, Germany)

In the former example, a German activist expresses his indignation at the complexity of the Greek bureaucratic system and, along with that, his newfound appreciation for the German one, as he inevitably compares the two. In the latter quote, a Greek administrative employee at a German NGO shares the view that the German state seems to worry more about numbers than about substance, "forcing" NGOs to do the same in order to ensure their financial survival. In both cases, the front-liners echo the views of the local bureaucrats in each country, as discussed in the previous section: the Greek bureaucracy is disorganised and chaotic, while the German bureaucracy prioritises rules and quota targets, often at the expense of quality in service delivery.

Following *learning*, there is a degree of 'assimilation' to the new community of practice, or community norm-'blending'. This is when front-liners' initial observations have been processed over time, and where – consciously or not – their individual understandings of discretion have come to match those of the community in which they are now placed. Below we see an example of an 'Athenianised' Berliner and one of a 'Berlinised' Athenian. The former is a caseworker and an EASO employee with a more 'relaxed' attitude to asylum seekers moving irregularly from Greece to central Europe. The latter is an example of a Greek social worker who has adopted a harder line of discipline towards migrant minors, mimicking the stance of her German colleagues.

> [The Greek caseworkers] have the biggest workload you can have... Since I saw colleagues working [in the Greek islands], I'm very happy for every applicant who disappears to try to go to another country… To take off some pressure from those caseworkers. Because it's not ... possible. You cannot solve this issue like this. And by sending 40 people from Germany to help ... making everyone

> vulnerable, I don't think this is very helpful. And, at the same time, I know that not a lot of people actually get sent back to Turkey, so this also makes me feel better. (German Caseworker with extensive experience in the Greek islands)
>
> As I came to the job, I think I dedicated a lot of time and personal interest to it, which I think affected me … I am not saying this is the right thing to do, but it was my approach … the ideal for me. And I think that was lacking from the rest [of my colleagues], and so I tried to fill the gap. […] At this point, I have changed too. I have lost my personal interest. I have become tougher. Like, *"Okay, let's kick [the troubled kid] out".* (Greek Social Worker, Berlin)

The first segment here addresses the refugee situation in the Greek islands. Given how grim it looks, both in terms of the working conditions for Greek caseworkers and for the fate of asylum seekers, this German caseworker suggests it would be better, for both groups, if the migrants were to break the law and leave their geographically permitted area. Moreover, she asserts that she "feels better" due to the fact that the EU–Turkey deal is largely not fully implemented, as most applicants are sent back to Turkey, a reaction to a moral dilemma also known as 'cognitive restructuring' (Vink *et al.*, 2015). This view contradicts that of her colleagues in Berlin who emphasise abiding by the rules, and mirrors that of the Greek front-liners mentioned earlier. It also demonstrates how the structural conditions at a given context 'push' for certain norms and discretionary logics.

In addition to this, at a later point in our interview, the same participant also expresses this embracement of the 'Athenian perspective' as she defends her colleagues' rights and interests. "I don't approve" of the precarious conditions of their short-term contracts, she notes, and "it's not fair" when EASO experts from Germany get 3–4 times more pay than their Greek colleagues for doing the same job. This field norm 'adjustment' therefore comes together with a spirit of solidarity and a self-identification with the local community of practice.

In a similar vein, the Greek social worker quoted above describes explicitly how she has been influenced by the discretionary approach of her colleagues. Although in the beginning she employed a much more personal approach towards her young clients, she has now also adopted a stricter, more rigid disciplinary stance. Moreover, later in the interview, she also says that she often finds herself defending her German colleagues when the shelter's residents complain about them to her, explaining that the Germans "are not necessarily cold", as the migrant residents claim, making an effort to persuade them that "life is good in Germany". As with the above, the adoption of the local community's community norms co-occurs with a level of self-identification with its members.

In practice, then, this type of *normative exchange* manifests as the use of new discretionary behaviours by international front-liners, often through synergy and in collaboration with their local colleagues. Not surprisingly, after having developed a good understanding of the new bureaucratic ins and outs, and after having endorsed the community norms of their colleagues, international front-liners also adjust their discretionary behaviour accordingly. In practice, this may manifest as German activists finding legal "tricks" to sponsor the illegal Athenian refugee squats, or Greek social workers finding "tricks" to meet the quantitative targets expected of them by the German government.

> From Germany comes money. And, because they can't get the money in due to capital controls, etc., they gather it through various tricks… One [trick] or another, lots of money comes in cash… They organise parties, and other stuff… Lots of cash from Germany! (Greek Activist, Athens)

> You have constantly to be under stress, to make sure [the local volunteers] spend money […]. There are things that one can avoid through certain tricks. For instance, we must not pay for alcohol consumption. To start with, I do agree with this. On the other hand, I see that this is sometimes part of the integration process. Some people say *"Okay, I will drink one beer".* There, we have to say, *"Okay, don't bring us the beer receipt, bring us a supermarket receipt"*. Which is something everyone knows. (Greek NGO Administrative Employee, Berlin)

As these quotes indicate, the specific structural pressures in each environment lead to specific discretionary behaviours by front-liners. In these examples, a German front-liner finds ways to overcome the Greek capital controls, and a Greek front-liner finds ways to comply with the German focus on measurable policy outcomes. The close cooperation between members of the two communities of practice on the ground level thus leads to common strategies on how best to 'play' to the rules. As such, there occurs an exchange of community norms and of field practices, not only within but also across communities. As Figure 6.1 above also highlights, individual understandings of one's self both feed and feed off these community norms, ultimately shaping the front-liners' discretionary behaviour.

Overall, this section has demonstrated how the structural conditions circumscribing the front-liners' communities of practice serve to shape the communities' norms, thereby shaping individual discretion. When it comes to comparing the two cities, it is important to differentiate between discretion as a normative understanding and discretion as practice. Although the gap in shared understandings of discretion use is rather large between Berlin and Athens, the gap in 'doing' discretion is considerably

smaller. What also confirms the contextually 'learned' aspect of discretionary norm practices is that these practices change and adapt as front-liners move across contexts.

6.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter revisited the theoretical mechanism proposed in Chapter 2 (Figure 6.1), focusing on the concept of the *communities of practice*, as well as on the relationship between *structural conditions*, *communities of practice, self-understandings* and *individual discretionary behaviours*. Unlike the previous three empirical chapters, this chapter placed emphasis on the external factors that influence front-liners' discretionary practices. It discussed the social and structural conditions that surround the front-liners in Athens and Berlin, providing a comparative discussion of the two settings. By doing so, it placed the identity conflicts front-liners face within a wider context and it offered a comparative multi-level analysis of the ways in which front-liners put policy into practice.

From a theoretical standpoint, this chapter combined perspectives of the framework of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) with that of street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980). As discussed also in Chapters 1 and 2, in times of high uncertainty, such as those of the European migration crisis, the inter-organisational dynamics rise in importance, since the intra-organisational routines cannot always offer adequate solutions to the unfamiliar administrative challenges front-liners face. As the frequency and intensity of interactions among diverse front-liners increase, there follows the rise of heterogeneous networks of front-liners, or front-line communities of practice. As I have illustrated in this chapter, it is the normative space within these communities that influences the self-view and the discretionary behaviour of front-liners.

In the front-line communities of practice in Athens and Berlin, I observed a series of links between diverse front-liners, some of which were rather unexpected, such as those between public servants and anti-state grassroots group members. This finding shows that some of the existing dividing lines between different categories of front-liners are becoming obsolete, contributing to the idea that front-liners operate more as community members and less as distinct organisational employees. Yet, this does not mean that the interaction among different community members is always smooth and conflict-free. Some of these divisions do persist over time, often causing tensions between front-liners of different sectors (e.g., public vs. private). In turn, the rise in the communities of practice, fragmented and divided as they are, may also translate into

internal tensions for individual community members who strive to make their place within these communities, continuously redefining their sense of self.

In theoretical terms, then, this chapter has made a step towards cross-fertilising the perspectives of Lipsky and Wenger. On the one hand, the literature on street-level bureaucracy could be further enriched by accounting for the inter-organisational networks between actors, especially in today's reality of mixed social service delivery. This is because, as noted above, these networks play a role in shaping the front-liners' self-view and, consequently, their discretionary behaviour as well. At the same time, the communities of practice approach could also benefit from the application of the framework in the field of policy implementation. The 'practice' of the community here is the practice of policy. Therefore, the cultivation of communities of practice, whether through the intervention of managers (Wenger, 2002) or otherwise, may have important implications for governance, an aspect worthy of further exploration by scholars in this research area.

Turning now to the empirical findings, this chapter has demonstrated that the discretionary practices of the front-liners in Athens and of those in Berlin are more similar than expected. By looking at the different structural conditions of the two cities, most notably in relation to economic capacity, the welfare state and integration policies, one would expect to find different types of discretionary behaviours at the front lines. Yet, although these structural differences do translate into different normative understandings of discretion across the two communities of practice, the predominant discretionary practices among front-liners were not so dissimilar.

In short, the availability of resources and integration policies in Berlin, along with the business-line approach to governance, led to front-liners attaching negative meanings to the notion of discretion (see also Brussig & Knuth, 2013; Cyrus & Vogel, 2003). By contrast, the lack of adequate resources in Athens, together with the poor coordination and management of migration, led to front-liners conceptualising the use of discretion in a matter-of-fact fashion. Despite these different conceptualisations of discretion, however, the front-liners in both cities applied discretion in ways that surpass their official room for manoeuvre. This unexpected similarity offers a more complex depiction of discretion use across the two settings than previously noted (Jordan *et al.*, 2003). Paradoxically, it seems that both the tight control and oversight by a central authority, and the obvious absence of it, 'push' front-liners to exercise their informal, unauthorised, or *de facto* discretion.

This unexpected similarity notwithstanding, there were still qualitative differences in the discretionary practices of the front-liners in the two cities, as the unique structural pressures called for unique front-line responses. The learning and infusion of norms that occurs when members of one community join the other is indicative of the learned nature of the discretionary strategies that front-liners follow. Put differently, the fact that front-liners tend to adjust their discretionary practices when entering a new community of practice underscores the notion that individual discretionary behaviour is influenced by structurally constrained social learning. It is through this process, I argue, that front-liners (re-)define their self-view over time and, in Zacka's (2017) terms, 'modulate' their discretionary behaviour.

To conclude, this chapter turned our attention away from the identity conflicts individual front-liners experience and directed it towards the contextual factors that surround these individuals and that influence their discretionary behaviour. By zooming out of the micro-level dynamics, it provided the opportunity to look at the bigger picture of migration management, both in Berlin and in Athens. This approach added the final missing pieces to the puzzle of how front-line actors make decisions in times of high uncertainty. To restate my response to the central question of this thesis, individual identities constitute a critical factor, but individual action is contextually situated and socially learned.

Having now provided a detailed analysis of all the building blocks of this thesis, the next chapter will be the final, closing chapter. It will present a short summary of all the preceding chapters, reviewing how each contributes to answering the main research question under examination. More importantly, it will discuss how this thesis helps move the existing literature forward, both in relation to the field of street-level bureaucracy and beyond. After also discussing the broader implications of this research, it will offer some ideas for future research, by way of a conclusion.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

I have now reached the final station of this intellectual journey. To return to my initial point of departure, this thesis has set out to examine *how those individuals at the front lines of social service delivery make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty*. Complex and challenging as this question is, it is vital for understanding policy in practice. Although the use of discretion by street-level bureaucrats has long represented an object of scrutiny for policy implementation researchers, this thesis has looked more closely at the decision-making mechanisms of those front-line actors who operate under particularly strenuous and ambiguous circumstances.

My central argument in response to this research question has been that the front-line actors' identities play a critical role in shaping their discretionary behaviour, while context matters, too. As I shall discuss in further detail below, I developed a theoretical framework to illustrate this argument, offering an extension to Lipsky's original account. At the heart of this framework lie the 'understandings of 'Self' that front-liners hold, which encompass the intersection of various identities and identity bases (role, social, or person-related – Burke & Stets, 2009). In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I showed how different identity conflicts influence the front-liners' decision-making processes and, subsequently, determine their use of discretion. In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how these identity conflicts are, to some degree, also context-dependent, influenced by the social and structural environment in which front-liners are embedded.

This thesis has primarily contributed to the literature on policy implementation and street-level bureaucracy. By shedding light on the identity conflicts and discretionary decisions of front-line actors, it has offered a significant social psychological insight into the practice of policy. Not only has it underscored the significance of the identities of those carrying out policy matter, but it has also show *how* they matter, using original empirical evidence. In addition, it has made contributions to the (sub)fields of moral dilemmas in asylum determination (Chapter 3), representative bureaucracy and migration (Chapter 4), client deservingness and 'Self-Other' dynamics (Chapter 5), and the social and structural influences of frontline discretion use (Chapter 6). Even though these observations were made in the context of migration management during the so-called

European migration crisis, the implications of this research's findings are of wider importance.

In what follows, I review some of this thesis' key contributions, discuss their connections to the relevant literature, and offer some concluding remarks. I begin with a short overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches used, highlighting the goals these approaches have achieved. I then elaborate on the novel theoretical insights I have offered in this thesis, placing particular emphasis on three aspects: a) the introduction of the term 'front-liners', b) the larger theoretical framework proposed and c) the identity conflicts discussed. After that, I offer a discussion on the broader implications of this thesis' findings, not only on the issue of migration but also beyond, and both in terms of time and in terms of space. I close this final chapter with some ideas for future research.

7.1 Overall Approach

To tackle my key research question, I focused on the so-called 'Migration Crisis' of 2015-2017. During this period, an unprecedented wave of asylum seekers arrived in Europe, finding most European capitals underprepared to respond to the needs of newcomers and to manage the magnitude of the administrative challenges that arose. The mismatch between the new demands for social services and the services available soon led to the rise of an administrative crisis, both in transit countries, such as Greece, and in destination countries, such as Germany. The front-line actors involved in the management of migration increased quickly, not only in number but also in diversity. These actors were called to find solutions to pressing and often unfamiliar problems, at a time when the need for services was changing in accordance with the ebbs and flows of the target population. The Migration Crisis, therefore, functioned as a magnifying lens that intensified the uncertainty that front-line actors regularly face when delivering services, making the ongoing dynamics more easily visible.

Both theoretically and methodologically, my research approach was novel. At a theoretical level, I introduced a new social psychological angle to the literature of front-line service delivery, drawing mainly from Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009) and the different identity bases that constitute one's sense of 'Self' (role, social, person). Assuming a bottom-up view to policy implementation, I investigated various kinds of identity tensions front-liners face when delivering services and I examined how these

tensions influence front-liners' use of discretion. More generally, I highlighted the significance of micro-level dynamics, while also accounting for the context in which these occur. Following previous efforts to fertilise the field of street-level bureaucracy with perspectives from sociology and psychology (e.g. DuBois, 2010; Eule, 2014; Tummers et. al., 2012; Zacka, 2017), I incorporated social psychological theorising and, by doing so, I offered an extension to the literature of street-level bureaucracy, as I shall explain in further detail below.

From a methodological standpoint, I conducted a contextualised comparison (Locke & Thelen, 1995) between the European capital cities of Athens and Berlin. Both of these cities received a disproportionate amount of asylum seekers in relation to their administrative capacity, creating a particularly demanding implementation environment for their respective front-line actors. Although I was aware that there is a similar phenomenon taking place across the two settings, meaning an administrative crisis due to an unprecedented influx of migrant populations, I had no predetermined expectations with regard to particular commonalities or differences in the front-liners' discretionary behaviours. This also means I did not examine the data collected from the two sites against each other, but in parallel. The point of having two case studies as opposed to one, was to increase the generalisability of my findings, as I could distinguish the insights that are portable across contexts from the ones that are context-dependent.

With regard to research methods, my approach was also innovative in that it involved an extensive number of in-depth interviews with participants in corresponding positions across Athens and Berlin. With a total number of nearly 150 qualitative interviews, this research is based on a dataset that is both large and rich in detail, a combination that is not easily obtained, whether from a qualitative or a quantitative perspective. This has added to the generalisability of this study's findings, while also upholding their nuance. It is also worth highlighting here that my participants were from a variety of occupational fields and held diverse organisational affiliations. They ranged from legal professionals to care workers to administrative employees, to others who had non-specific duties. They also worked for all kinds of organisations and groups, public, private or 'hybrid', local, national or international, formal, informal or semi-formal. This level of diversity is not something many studies have so far managed to incorporate, even though it is much more reflective of today's fluid and 'hyper hybrid' environment of social service provision.

7. 2 Theoretical Contributions

Once again, my theoretical point of departure, as well as the literature to which I contributed the most, is that of street-level bureaucracy. As discussed in the theoretical chapter (Chapter 2), Lipsky (1980) highlighted the importance of the human factor in the policy implementation process and advocated for a bottom-up approach to the study of this process. Maintaining these two basic principles, Lipsky's account, I note, remains relevant and useful today, more than four decades after its conception. Nonetheless, I have also argued that the fundamental changes that have occurred in the world of front-line service provision, such as the rise of New Public Management, have called for some adjustments to today's research field of street-level bureaucracy.

Most notably, as noted elsewhere (Brodkin, 2012, 2013, 2016; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith & Lipsky, 1993), today's trend towards the privatisation of human services and the use of contractors means that front-line actors are no longer merely public servants, but may be affiliated with a multiplicity of different organisations and groups. This, I have argued, means that there is no longer a single, unified set of organisational norms to which front-line actors of the same profession may adhere. Moreover, today's clients are not necessarily local citizens, but may come from diverse ethnic and/or racial backgrounds, a reflection of increased levels of migration, within or across national borders. Inevitably, it follows that the increased levels of organisational diversity and population heterogeneity increase both the overall level of uncertainty front-line actors face when delivering social services and the ways in which these actors make sense of their (professional) roles. In turn, these developments are also bound to influence the front-line actors' course of action.

To acknowledge and account for these changes, I proposed a series of theoretical points that aim to offer an extension to the theory of street-level bureaucracy. As I shall elaborate in the subsections below, these include the introduction of the term 'front-liners', as well as the introduction of a theoretical framework that explains what shapes the discretionary behaviour of those front-liners who operate under particularly uncertain conditions. Although Lipsky and the scholars following his steps have been successful in turning our attention to the discretionary behaviour of the individual actors that implement policy on the ground, my contention is that it is worth looking more closely at the multi-faceted individuals behind the 'bureaucrats'. I have argued that, especially in today's world of mixed social services and increasingly heterogeneous populations, just

who the front-line actors *think they* are matters because it guides their practices on the ground.

Before delving deeper into the specifics of my theoretical contributions, it is important to note that these contributions cut across different literature streams. Mainly, of course, they are tied to the central research question of this thesis, namely how those at the front lines of social service delivery make decisions under highly uncertain conditions. Yet, as this thesis synthesises perspectives from different disciplinary fields and subfields, some of the points I have raised also have theoretical implications for other strands of literature. In the paragraphs that follow, I shall review my key theoretical propositions, including the introduction of the term 'front-liners', and the proposed framework that addresses the main research question in hand. In parallel to that, I shall also address the points that have theoretical value for specific theoretical (sub)fields, within or outside that of street-level bureaucracy.

7.2.1 The Front-Liners

As already mentioned, there is currently a need to rethink who today's street-level bureaucrats are. Given the increased fluidity and diversity among front-line service providers, it is obsolete to equate contemporary policy implementers with public servants, as per Lipsky's original definition of street-level bureaucrats. Of course, this has already been acknowledged by scholars in the field (Brodkin, 2012, 2013, 2016; Evers, 2005; Lipksy & Smith, 1989-1990; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Yet, today's level of hybridity and heterogeneity has not been fully captured, neither theoretically, nor with respect to empirical studies.

Although the terms 'street-level workers' and 'street-level organisations' are now increasingly used in order to capture this heightened hybridity (e.g. Brodkin, 2013, 2016) these terms do not include the front-line actors who neither see themselves as 'workers', nor work for official organisations. Instead, as this study has shown they may be members of the informal civil society sector, motivated internally (e.g. by humanitarian values or political beliefs) and operating on an unpaid basis, independently or alongside a broader social movement. The additional presence of such actors may be particularly important for the services clients ultimately receive. This was indeed the case in the response to the migration crisis, as independent volunteers and activists often played a key role in directly providing services to migrants or in facilitating service delivery.

To account for the entire spectrum of today's front-line actors and their various institutional and group affiliations, in this thesis I have introduced the term 'front-liners'. This term, I have argued, could be used instead of the term 'street-level bureaucrats' or even that of 'street-level workers', when the body of front-line actors is highly diverse, including, among others, volunteers and activists. The term 'front-liners' is therefore meant to provide a more encompassing, as well as a more representative view of today's social service delivery.

In a nutshell, front-liners are today's face of human service provision. They, like street-level bureaucrats, operate at the ground level of policy implementation and have direct contact with clients on a daily basis. Nonetheless, their type of organisational affiliation may vary considerably, while they may also not be directly attached to a formal organisation at all. Regardless of their affiliation, and regardless of whether they carry out their daily tasks from a professional position or not, front-liners deliver services at street level, essentially implementing policy. The term 'front-liners' thus represents an umbrella term that is particularly useful for the study of policy in practice, as it encompasses the entire range of *de facto* policy implementers, cutting across their various organisational and group affiliations.

7.2.2 The Framework

In addition to introducing the term 'front-liners', I formulated a theoretical framework in this thesis with the explicit goal of explaining what shapes the front-liners' discretionary behaviour. In this framework, the front-liners' self-understandings lie at the core. Put simply, the ways in which front-liners view themselves, not only as front-line actors but also as persons and as social beings, guide their behaviour at the front-line. I have argued that, especially in the absence of established protocols and pre-packaged solutions, front-liners consult their own sense of self to find solutions to the daily dilemmas they encounter at work,. In this sense, their discretionary behaviour is, to a large extent, self-informed. Although the importance of the street-level bureaucrats' self-view has been previously discussed by other scholars (e.g. Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Selden, Brudney, and Kellough, 1998), this framework delves further, by accounting for the multiple (types of) identities front-liners simultaneously hold.

Drawing primarily on Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009), I have suggested that front-liners' 'understandings of the self' is shaped by the interaction of different, and

of different kinds of, identities. According to Identity Theory, these identities are broadly categorised into three intersecting identity bases: the 'role' identity, the 'social' identity and the 'person' identity. The first refers to one's social position within a social structure (e.g. their professional role), the second to their identification with a particular social group (e.g. the migrants) and the third to the set of unique, idiosyncratic characteristics that describe them as persons (e.g. compassionate). Each of these identity bases includes various co-existing identities (e.g. role identity of legal professional and role identity of father), which is indicative of the depth and complexity of an individual front-liner's self-understandings in its entirety.

As these various identities are often in conflict with one another, I have suggested that this conflict can shape the decision-making mechanisms of front-liners, particularly when the front-liners encounter new and unknown circumstances. To illustrate this argument in the environment of front-line service delivery, I have focused on three kinds of identity conflicts. The first pertains to the conflict between a front-liner's *role* and *person* identities (Chapter 3), the second to the conflict between their *role* and *social* identities (Chapter 4) and, the third, to the conflict between the front-liner 'Self' and the client 'Other' (Chapter 5). I shall further elaborate on these in the next subsection. Overall, although the thesis discusses these conflict examples in the context of the migration management field, my contention is that such identity tensions are rather typical when it comes to facing ambiguous situations at the frontlines of service provision.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework also places the identity conflicts front-liners encounter within a broader social and structural context. At the macro-structural level, there are various factors that frame the front-liners' individual action, both constraining it and enabling it. The economic and administrative capacity of a country, its welfare state and its relevant policy framework represent only a few such examples, which happen to be particularly relevant in the management of migration field and during the Migration Crisis era. As I have shown in Chapter 6, these conditions indirectly influence the front-liners' individual self-views, by determining the composition of front-liners in terms of organisational affiliation and, more importantly, by defining their room for manoeuvre, both normatively and pragmatically.

Nonetheless, this framework suggests that there is also an intermediate step between structural conditions and individual discretionary behaviour. Although organisations tend to constitute the most commonly used unit of analysis when it comes to the meso-analytical level, I have instead argued for the use of the concept of

'community', borrowing from Wenger's (1998) notion of Communities of Practice. In short, I have suggested that, as the inter-organisational interactions and collaborations increase in frequency and intensity, especially during conditions of high uncertainty, there forms a complex nexus of diverse front-liners, resembling that of a community of practitioners. These communities indirectly shape the front-liners' individual discretionary behaviour, too, as they represent a common reference point for them, especially when the intra-organisational rules and protocols fall short of providing adequate solutions to new and unfamiliar administrative problems.

As demonstrated in Chapter 6, when front-liners interact closely in the physical and normative space of a common community of practice, they shape, and are shaped by, a shared set of 'community norms'. On the one hand, the front-liners co-create an informal set of common rules, for instance with regard to which types of discretionary behaviours are deemed acceptable at the front lines and which are not. On the other hand, this community also constitutes the primary platform of socialisation for new front-liners, as these community norms are conveyed in a peer-to-peer fashion and in a form of social learning. In this respect, community norms shape individual discretionary behaviour by shaping the front-liners' normative limits. Of course, it is important to remember that these limits are also dependent upon the structural conditions of a particular country or setting, as previously noted. More generally, therefore, the 'community norms' function as a filter between the external 'structural conditions' and a front-liner's 'understandings of self'.

Although this framework offers a multi-level approach to the research question of this thesis, it places greater emphasis on the micro-level dynamics. The individual front-liner thus remains at the centre of the framework, as was the case with Lipsky's original account of street-level bureaucracy. In fact, the individuality of the actor is emphasised even further here, as the framework accounts for the multiple identities of each individual front-liner, which intersect, interact and co-contribute to a unique sense of self. The combination of various identities is of course unique to each individual, and so is the prioritisation of one identity over another, even under the same conditions. Therefore, although we cannot predict when and which identities will be more salient for each front-liner, we should still keep in mind that, at any given moment, front-liners' multiple identities may lead them to experience internal conflicts, which may then shape their discretionary behaviour.

7.2.3 The Identity Conflicts (and beyond)

To illustrate the critical importance of identities in the shaping of front-liners' discretionary decisions, I discussed a series of different types of identity conflicts, occurring within different kinds of administrative situations. In Chapter 3, I discussed the 'role–person' identity conflict, by looking at the process of asylum determination. Focusing on the front-liners who make asylum decisions in Athens and Berlin, I analysed the identity conflict they experience between their role identity as asylum judges and their person identity as someone who stands pro or against migration. As this chapter demonstrated, when asylum judges encounter 'grey area cases', the 'role—personal' identify conflict becomes part of their decision-making process. Although the outcome of this identity conflict will not ultimately determine the outcome of their asylum decision, it will nonetheless shape the front-liners' use of the evidence available and, by extension, their discretionary decision.

Aside from illustrating a particular aspect of the abovementioned theoretical framework, this chapter also contributed to the literature of moral conflicts at the street level of policy implementation (see Tummers et al, 2012; Vink *et al.* 2015). The existing relevant studies tend to frame moral conflicts in terms of conflicting expectations within one's professional role prescriptions, which means they do not account for the multiple identities front-liners have. By shedding light on the conflict between the asylum judges' role and person identities, I introduced a new approach to understanding how front-liners respond when they encounter moral conflicts. In a few words, I suggested that if one's person identity dominates their professional role identity, then their use of professional discretion would be in accordance with how they see themselves as a person. By contrast, if their role identity 'wins' this moral battle, then their discretion use would be in close agreement with their role prescriptions.

In Chapter 4, I discussed a different type of conflict, the 'role—social' identity conflict, focusing on a previously understudied group of front-liners; namely, those whose clients are migrants, while they themselves are 'old' migrants. In this interesting condition, I have suggested that migrant front-liners face a conflict between their role identity as front-liners and their social identity as migrants. On the one hand, they are meant to represent the groups or organisations they work for while, indirectly, representing the local state and society. On the other hand, they are also expected to represent their fellow migrants and promote their rights and interests. Depending on which of the two conflicting identities the migrant front-liners prioritise over the other, I

noted they would be more likely to act as representatives of the 'migrants' or as representatives of the local front-liners, state and society or, in one word, the 'system'.

As above, this chapter corresponded to a particular aspect of the theoretical framework described earlier, but it also contributed to another stream of literature, namely that of representative bureaucracy (see Dolan and Rosenbloom, 2003 for a review). Although it is widely accepted that bureaucrats who share the same demographic characteristics as their clients are more likely to meet their needs and represent their interests, this notion has not been previously applied in the European context of bureaucracy, street-level or otherwise. In the field of migration management, as most major European capitals are already hosting 'old' waves of migrants, one would assume that migrant front-liners would be better able to serve their migrant clients. Drawing on the notion of the 'minority-representative' (Selden, 1997; Selden, Brudney, & Kellough, 1998), I introduced here the notion of the 'migrant-representative' to elucidate the complexities of this arrangement and to add to the discussion of the linkage between passive and active representation.

Moving beyond the conflicts among identities of different identity bases, in Chapter 5 I discussed the identity conflict front-liners experience when encountering a key identity difference between themselves and their clients. Focusing on the divisive issue of gender identities and beliefs, I examined how the front-liners who have repeated contact with the same migrant clients over time, make sense of and behave towards these clients. In a few words, I argued that the discretionary strategies front-liners use towards their clients ('judge', 'soft nudge', 'hard nudge', 'engage') are dependent upon the front-liners' perceived distance of the client 'Other' from the front-liner 'Self'. Adding further to the theoretical framework above, this chapter reinforced the centrality of the idea that the front-liners' self-view shapes their discretionary behaviour on the ground.

This chapter also made theoretical contributions to a more specific literature strand. It borrowed from the citizen-agent paradigm (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003) and built on the idea that the street-level bureaucrats' constructions of their target populations shape their discretionary behaviour towards this population. Based on this line of research, we already know that when bureaucrats identify with their clients, either because they have a shared identity (e.g. Keiser, et. al. 2002) or because they empathise with them (e.g. Slack, 2001), they are more likely to use positive discretionary behaviour towards them. My addition to this field of knowledge is that, in cases where there is a key identity characteristic that distinguishes clients from front-liners (e.g. gender identities

and beliefs), the front-liners' use of discretion is shaped by the way front-liners make sense of what seems to separate the two groups. Depending on whether they associate hierarchical value to this difference, and on whether they see it as innate or changeable, I have suggested that front-liners will follow distinct discretionary strategies.

Overall, these theoretical propositions are meant to extend and enrich the theory of street-level bureaucracy. They do so by accounting for the great diversity of today's front-line actors, by illuminating the internal tensions they encounter, by acknowledging the —often unlikely— links between them and, at the same time, by contextualising their discretionary behaviour. As this research is based on rich and original empirical evidence, it offers further nuance to our contemporary understanding of today's front-line service provision. Finally, there is unique explanatory value to these propositions, as they offer a 'best shot' account for understanding and explaining individual behaviour in the face of uncertainty (see also Chapter 1). In doing so, they better capture the new status quo of fluid and flexible front-line dynamics.

7. 3 Broader Implications

7.3.1 In Perspective

More generally, this research has approached the issue of migration, which is a broad social phenomenon with wide implications, from a relatively under-researched perspective. As also mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, migration is a socially divisive and politically controversial issue, not only across countries, but also within them. In the plethora of views and voices expressed on the issue, those who oppose migrants and stand against migration seem to be loudest. They usually come from the far-right of the political spectrum and tend to frame incoming international migrants as a form of threat to host societies. Accordingly, in today's era of 'identity politics' (Fukuyama, 2019), there is a growing tide of scholarly research which aims to understand and explain the rise of the far right and the logic of its supporters (e.g. Lazaridis, Campani & Benveniste, 2016).

Nonetheless, as with the participants of this study, who had overwhelmingly self-selected their roles, there is large proportion of locals who welcome and support incoming migrants. Perhaps the number of people who welcome and embrace migrants is in fact greater than that of those who dislike them and react negatively to their arrival. Moreover, perhaps those who — often quietly — take action to facilitate the migrants' integration

and to contribute towards their wellbeing are more effective than those whose goal is to inhibit these processes. In that regard, this thesis has offered a window to the 'other side', meaning the perspective that dominates neither the mainstream media nor the scholarly research, but which may have an even more powerful social impact.

In practical terms, supporting migrants and meeting their needs does not always go smoothly, as this thesis has shown, but it does bring results. As the preceding empirical chapters demonstrated, and Chapter 5 in particular, those at the frontlines who interact directly with migrants do face daily difficulties, but they also find ways to overcome these difficulties. Undoubtedly, there is something to be learnt by paying attention to *how* this actually happens. To paraphrase a famous proverb[28], those who say it cannot be done should perhaps pay more attention to those who are doing it.

7.3.2 In Policy

By examining migration policy in practice, this study has made contributions with potential relevance not only for researchers of policy implementation, but also for policy practitioners. Among the key insights it has offered is that the practice of policy is better understood by examining those individuals at the frontlines, who too often have to make *de facto* decisions that are disproportional to the level and scope of responsibilities their official role subscribes. This means that when difficult decisions are not made by those who design policy, they will inadvertently be made by those who carry out policy on the ground. The question that remains open is whether this is desirable or something to be addressed.

Accordingly, policy makers who wish to draw lessons in order to maximise the effectiveness of policy at the next policy cycle, should not overlook the daily practices of the *de facto* policy implementers. To some degree, this study has corroborated Lipsky's point that front-liners' discretionary behaviour impacts on policy outcomes. As such, in order better to account for the discretionary decisions of front-liners, policy makers should acknowledge these actors as multi-faceted individuals. To mphasise the latter point, this thesis has also demonstrated that front-liners' decisions matter regardless of the organisational background and affiliation of these actors, or the lack thereof.

[28] The original form of this proverb is: 'Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it.' The source of this proverb is not known.

In addition, and following from the above, it is not only the 'human' behind the bureaucrat that requires the policy-makers' attention, but also the broader context in which this human is embedded. With the diversification of street-level organisations (Brodkin, 2013, 2016) and the intensification of inter-organisational collaborations, there also comes a new type of 'workforce'. In this direction, this research has pointed out that today's diverse street-level actors form broader communities with their own norms and practices. These norms and practices are partly human artefacts and partly products of macro-structural conditions, such as economic capacity or national policy frameworks (see Chapter 2, pp. 60-64). For the design of policy, this means taking into consideration the persons and group members behind the 'bureaucrats', and it also means developing a deeper understanding of the social and structural context in which these individual street-level actors operate.

7.3.3 In Time

It is important to remember that the data collection period of this research was, historically, an extraordinary point in time. Whether one sees this period as a real crisis or as a 'crisis', the international migration flux was the highest ever recorded in such a short period of time, primarily in Europe but also globally (OECD, 2018b). As such, it constitutes what some may call a critical juncture, with social, political and humanitarian implications. Against this background, the observations of this research are of high significance and of historical value. Not only do they come from an empirically rare and challenging research undertaking due to the fluidity of the situation, but they also convey a snapshot of a critical issue at a critical time.

Nonetheless, although this research has focused on a time of crisis, many of the processes unfolded and patterns observed were not unique to this time period. As already mentioned, the 2015-2017 European Migration Crisis served as a magnifying lens that made the ongoing dynamics at the front-lines of service provision even more visible. With regard to the composition of front-line actors, for instance, the trend towards privatisation and diversification has already been under way, especially since the 1980's, with the introduction of New Public Management. And, with that, there also came increased collaboration among different kinds of organisations, within or across sectors. These developments have already boosted the levels of ambiguity front-line actors face and called for re-visiting the concept of street-level bureaucracy. As there is currently no sign

of ‘going back’ to service provision by public agencies alone, the introduced concept of ‘front-liners’ is likely to remain relevant for years to come.

In a similar vein, the provision of social services to migrants is likely to continue being an issue of concern in the near future, for policy makers and policy implementers alike. Considering refugee asylum determination, for example, it is a legal process that is time consuming and tends to last for months, if not years, especially in cases where the first instance decision is negative. Even more time consuming and long-lasting is the process of migrant integration, which consists of multiple steps (obtaining legal residence, language learning, job training, etc.) and, for most migrants, takes several years. This means that every migrant who arrived during the 2015-2017 period will continue to need the support of various social services for years to come, be they language, legal-support, education, job-related or other.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, inward migration represents an ongoing trend across the world, especially for large urban centres in more economically developed countries, particularly in recent decades. Whether resulting from natural disasters, bloody wars, a colonial past, or global and local inequalities, migration has always been an inherent element of human history. In that regard, what we call today an ‘unprecedented’ phenomenon, is essentially a timeless phenomenon in accelerated motion. Without doubt, it is also a phenomenon that will continue to take place, even under the most restrictive of migration regimes.

It follows, therefore, that those at the front lines of migration management are likely to continue being ‘busy’ in the future, and they are likely to continue being ‘front-liners’ rather than street-level bureaucrats. Accordingly, they are also likely to continue encountering identity conflicts while carrying out their work tasks, with these identity conflicts shaping their use of (professional) discretion, thereby shaping the outcomes of the policies they are meant to implement.

7.3.4 In ‘Space’

Geographically speaking, the observations of this study are applicable across borders, as the analysis of the cases of Athens and Berlin has already demonstrated. Although the front-liners’ identities were partly influenced by the structural conditions of the local context (e.g. more informal civil society members in Athens than in Berlin—see Chapter 6), the identity conflicts they experienced and the overall decision-making

mechanisms they followed were largely shared across the two settings (Chapters 3, 4, 5). By the same token, the observed patterns in front-line discretionary behaviour which are not context-dependent are likely to be applicable in other cities as well, especially within the European context and its major capital cities.

In addition to geographic space, the insights of this research should also be portable in terms of 'space', meaning in other areas of front-line service delivery, not necessarily related to migration. For instance, access to welfare services also constitutes a contested area, even when the clients are locals. When it comes to, for instance, access to social benefits, the 'Other' is often 'the poor' (DuBois, 2010). Here, too, front-liners' identities are likely to play an important role in shaping the front-liners' discretionary behaviour. This could be so by determining the outcome of one's morally loaded decisions (Chapter 3), by dictating whether one sees oneself as a representative of the 'poor' (Chapter 4), or by situating oneself at a relative distance from 'the poor' (Chapter 5). In any case, how a front-liner sees themselves, independently from or relative to their clients, is likely to shape their discretionary behaviour towards these clients.

In a similar manner, one would expect to make similar observations in other contexts and with clients who belong to other 'Other' groups. Such examples may include the context of law enforcement when citizens under scrutiny are Black, that of health care services when HIV patients are homosexual, or that of education when struggling students have learning difficulties. Regardless of the particular context of service provision or the particular 'Otherness' of the clients, it is who the front-liners think they are that is likely to represent the key driving force that shapes their discretionary behaviour. Acknowledging, of course, the peculiarities of each context, both in terms of space and 'space', the decision-making mechanism and the discretionary strategies identified in this thesis should be observable across settings and across cases.

Finally, the concept of front-line communities of practice should also be transferable across contexts. To some extent, the repeated social interaction and collaborations among local practitioners of some kind, such as doctors, teachers, or police officers, is already assumed in Wenger's original definition. Based on this study's findings, however, one would expect to find front-line communities of practice even among professionals or civil society members who are otherwise not expected to engage closely with one another (Chapter 6). Such examples may include public service bureaucrats and private sector employees from the same type of service provision (e.g. elderly care), or even actors from different professional backgrounds (e.g. doctors and

teachers) who have the same clients (e.g. students). As strong as these claims may sound, they remain to be verified through further research.

7.4 Avenues for Future Research

Following on from the discussion above, there are plenty of fruitful avenues for future research. To begin with, additional studies on the notion of 'front-liners' would be useful in further illuminating the inclusivity of the term and the plurality and diversity of today's *de facto* policy implementers. As this thesis has shown, today's service provision is hybrid, not only in terms of public and private, but also in terms of formally organised and spontaneously mobilised actors. The latter category, in particular, calls for more attention by researchers. Be they anarchist activists, religion-driven volunteers or socially-sensitive professionals, their role is particularly meaningful for the quality and quantity of services that clients ultimately receive. Therefore, better understanding of their role is bound to enhance our broader understanding of how policy is put into practice.

Second, as the aim of this research was to examine how front-liners make decisions under conditions of high uncertainty, its key argument can be tested in other comparable contexts of high uncertainty. The recent migration tide from Latin American countries into the United States, for example, is a comparable context. In what some called "the US migrant crisis" (BBC, 2019), the number of newcomers has also been unprecedentedly large for such a short period of time. There, too, there is a prevalence of contractors as well as civil society members, or 'front-liners'. These front-liners are, therefore, also likely to encounter various identity conflicts, be they due to 'grey areas' of the US migration policy framework, the front-liners' own ethnic/racial background, or the linguistic and cultural differences between themselves and their migrant clients. Consequently, it would be worth examining whether the key theoretical propositions of this thesis hold there, too.

Beyond the scope of 'migration crises', the global pandemic of Covid-19 also presents an analytical opportunity for making relevant observations. Clearly, those at the frontlines of this health crisis are also facing extenuating circumstances and being called upon to make extremely difficult decisions on a daily basis. A shortage of ventilators at public hospitals, for example, presents a highly pressing condition for medical professionals, who are expected to decide which patients to save and which to leave

behind. In such –literally– life-or-death situations, how do front-liners make discretionary decisions? Given how morally-loaded these dilemmas are, what kind of identity conflicts do front-liners face? What kind of discretionary strategies do they develop in response to these conflicts? These kinds of questions are no doubt worthy of further investigation, and the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis may offer a useful analytical tool in this direction.

Third, having argued that the observations of this thesis are relevant beyond periods of crisis, it would be useful to corroborate the findings of this research during less turbulent times as well. Although, as noted above, the European Migration Crisis is far from over, when considering the front-line provision of social services, the intensity of the administrative crisis period has largely subsided. As such, even if the identity conflicts front-liners encounter may be less conspicuous, they are still likely to be prevalent and they are still likely to be guiding front-liners' discretionary behaviour. Therefore, further research could help shed more light on the micro-level dynamics that shape the front-liners' use of discretion, not only in Athens and Berlin but also elsewhere, and not only within the field of migration management but in other areas, too.

As a final point, this thesis has shown that policy research would benefit by dedicating more attention to the discretionary strategies of *de facto* implementers, regardless of the context. By developing a more precise understanding of what actually happens in practice, researchers can therefore also contribute towards making better policy at the next policy cycle. By now, the gap between policy and practice represents a known pathology that is shared across countries and policy types. Yet, despite the recent trend towards evidence-based policy-making, meeting measurable targets does not necessarily correspond to higher quality policy outcomes (see also Brodkin, 2011). With the theory of street-level bureaucracy in mind, and considering the new elements this research has contributed to the field, one could help mitigate this policy-practice gap by examining how front-liners use the discretionary power they have. After all, in Lipsky's words, this is what casts them as the 'ultimate policy-makers'.

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Appendix I

Additional Information Regarding the Interview Process (Chapter 1)

A. Note: The full list of the participants' profiles (position, organisational affiliation, demographic background, date of interview etc.) to be provided separately, via email, through the form of a password-protected excel document.

B. Informant Consent in English

My name is Katerina Glyniadaki, I am a PhD candidate at the European Institute, London School of Economics, UK. My PhD thesis examines the implementation of migration policies (asylum determination procedure and migrant integration) in Athens and Berlin, during the so-called 'European Migration Crisis'. For the purposes of my research, I conduct qualitative interviews with various front-line actors who work directly with migrants, such as lawyers, case workers, social workers, etc. I investigate the daily challenges they face while putting the relevant policies into practice, and I am particularly interested in the individual strategies they use to overcome them.

With each participant who agrees to take part in my study, I conduct an interview in English (or Greek), lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. I shall have prepared a short list of open-ended questions, but this type of interview is meant to be more like an informal discussion. With the consent of the participants, the interviews will be audio recorded. In any case, the answers provided by the participants will remain confidential, meaning the anonymity of the participants will be fully protected. The interview material will be used strictly for the purposes of this research, while it is possible that parts of my thesis will be published in the future in relevant scientific journals.

My research generally follows the ethics code of conduct of the LSE, as the attached letter of my supervisor also confirms. In case any questions arise, my contact information is the following:

Email: aglyniadaki@lse.ac.uk

Phone number: +44 7393224144

Thank you in advance,

Katerina Glyniadaki

C. Informant Consent in Greek

Ονομάζομαι Κατερίνα Γλυνιαδάκη, είμαι υποψήφια διδάκτωρ στο τμήμα Ευρωπαϊκών σπουδών του London School of Economics. Το θέμα της διατριβής μου διαπραγματεύεται την εφαρμογή των μεταναστευτικών πολιτικών (διαδικασία αποφάσεων ασύλου και κοινωνική ενσωμάτωση) σε Αθήνα και Βερολίνο, κατά τη διάρκεια της λεγόμενης 'Ευρωπαϊκής Προσφυγικής Κρίσης'. Στο πλαίσιο της έρευνάς μου πραγματοποιώ ποιοτικές συνεντεύξεις με άτομα που εργάζονται στο πεδίο και έχουν άμεση επαφή με αιτούντες ασύλου, όπως για παράδειγμα δικηγόρους, χειριστές, κοινωνικούς λειτουργούς, κτλ. Μελετώ στις καθημερινές δυσκολίες που συναντούν στην δουλειά τους, θέτοντας τις σχετικές πολιτικές στην πράξη, και εστιάζω τις στρατηγικές που ακολουθούν για να τις αντιμετωπίσουν.

Η συνέντευξη με κάθε συμμετέχοντα/ουσα διαρκεί περίπου μισή με μία ώρα, και περιλαμβάνει μια σειρά ερωτήσεων ανοικτού τύπου, αν και έχει περισσότερο τη μορφή απλής συζήτησης. Με την συγκατάθεση των συμμετεχόντων/ουσών, οι συνεντεύξεις αυτές θα μαγνητοφωνηθούν. Σε κάθε περίπτωση, η ανωνυμία τους θα διατηρηθεί, και τα προσωπικά τους στοιχεία δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν πουθενά. Το υλικό των συνεντεύξεων θα χρησιμοποιηθεί αυστηρά και μόνο για τους σκοπούς της έρευνας αυτής, ενώ είναι πιθανόν στο μέλλον κάποια αποσπάσματα της διατριβής μου να δημοσιευτούν στη μορφή άρθρων σε σχετικά επιστημονικά περιοδικά.

Η έρευνα γενικότερα ακολουθεί τους κανόνες δεοντολογίας της έρευνας του LSE, όπως επιβεβαιώνει και το γράμμα που επισυνάπτω από τον επιβλέποντα καθηγητή μου.

Παραμένω διαθέσιμη σε περίπτωση περαιτέρω ερωτήσεων.

Το τηλέφωνο μου είναι +44 7393224144 και το email μου a.glyniadaki@lse.ac.uk.

Ευχαριστώ εκ των προτέρων,

Κατερίνα Γλυνιαδάκη

D. Interview Guide in English

1. For how long have you been engaged with refugee-related issues? What made you decide to get involved?
2. Can you tell me a few things about your current role, and the specific activities in which you engage?
3. What are some difficulties or challenges that you face in relation to the daily activities you just described? Can you give me 1 or 2 specific examples?
4. When you are facing such types of challenges, what helps you make the difficult decisions that you need to make? Are there certain guidelines or criteria that you have in mind?
5. Can you describe for me a specific example of a case that you found particularly challenging? How did you handle it?
6. Is the way you handle such cases similar to how your colleagues would handle them? In other words, would you say your approach is in accordance with your organisation's values?
7. In your interaction with refugees and migrants, have you come across issues relating to differences in social or cultural values (between Germany/Europe and the home countries of refugees)? Can you think of a particular example?
8. From your perspective and your experience, how have things changed over time in relation to the refugee issue? If yes, in which way?
9. If you were to turn back time, would you handle certain cases differently from how you handled them? If yes, how?
10. Are there any things, that are not dependent on you, but if they were to change, would help make your job easier and more effective? Examples?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

E. Interview Guide in Greek

Οδηγός Ερωτήσεων

1. Πόσο καιρό τώρα ασχολείστε με το προσφυγικό θέμα, και πως πήρατε την απόφαση να ξεκινήσετε;
2. Μπορείτε να μου πείτε λίγα λόγια για την θέση σας, και τις συγκεκριμένες δραστηριότητες με τις οποίες ασχολείστε;
3. Ποιὲς είναι κάποιες συνηθισμένες προκλήσεις ή δυσκολίες που αντιμετωπίζετε καθημερινά κατά τη διάρκεια της εργασίας σας; Μπορείτε να μου δώσετε κάποια παραδείγματα;
4. Πώς τις αντιμετωπίζετε τέτοιου είδους καταστάσεις στην πράξη; Έχετε κάποια συγκεκριμένα κριτήρια ή κανονισμούς υπ' όψιν;
5. Μπορείτε να μου περιγράψετε ἐνα περιστατικό που σας δυσκόλεψε ή σας προβλημάτισε πάρα πολύ; Και πώς το αντιμετωπίσατε;
6. Πως πιστεύετε ότι άλλοι συνάδελφοί σας θα λειτουργούσαν υπό παρόμοιες συνθήκες; Με τον ἰδιο τρόπο με σας ή διαφορετικά; Έχετε, δηλαδή μια κοινή γραμμή στον οργανισμό για τον οποίο δουλεύετε;
7. Στην καθημερινή σας συναναστροφή με πρόσφυγες και μετανάστες, έχετε προσέξει διαφορές που αφορούν στις κοινωνικές ή πολιτιστικές αξίες (μεταξύ Ελλάδας/Ευρώπης και των χωρών από τις οποίες κατάγονται οι πρόσφυγες); Μπορείτε να μου δώσετε ένα συγκεκριμένο παράδειγμα;
8. Απο την δική σας εμπειρία, οι δυσκολίες που αναφέραμε προηγουμένως, έχουν αλλάξει με τον καιρό; Αν ναί, με ποιό τρόπο;
9. Αν μπορούσατε να γυρίσετε το χρόνο πίσω, υπάρχουν καταστάσεις και περιστατικά που θα τα χειριζόσασταν διαφορετικά από ότι τα χειριστήκατε; Παράδειγματα;
10. Υπάρχουν κάποια πράγματα, που δεν εξαρτώνται από εσάς προσωπικά, και που αν άλλαζαν θα σας βοηθούσαν να κάνετε την δουλειά σας πολύ πιο εύκολα και αποτελεσματικά; Παραδείγματα;
11. Υπάρχει κάτι άλλο που θα θέλετε να συμπληρώσετε;

Appendix II

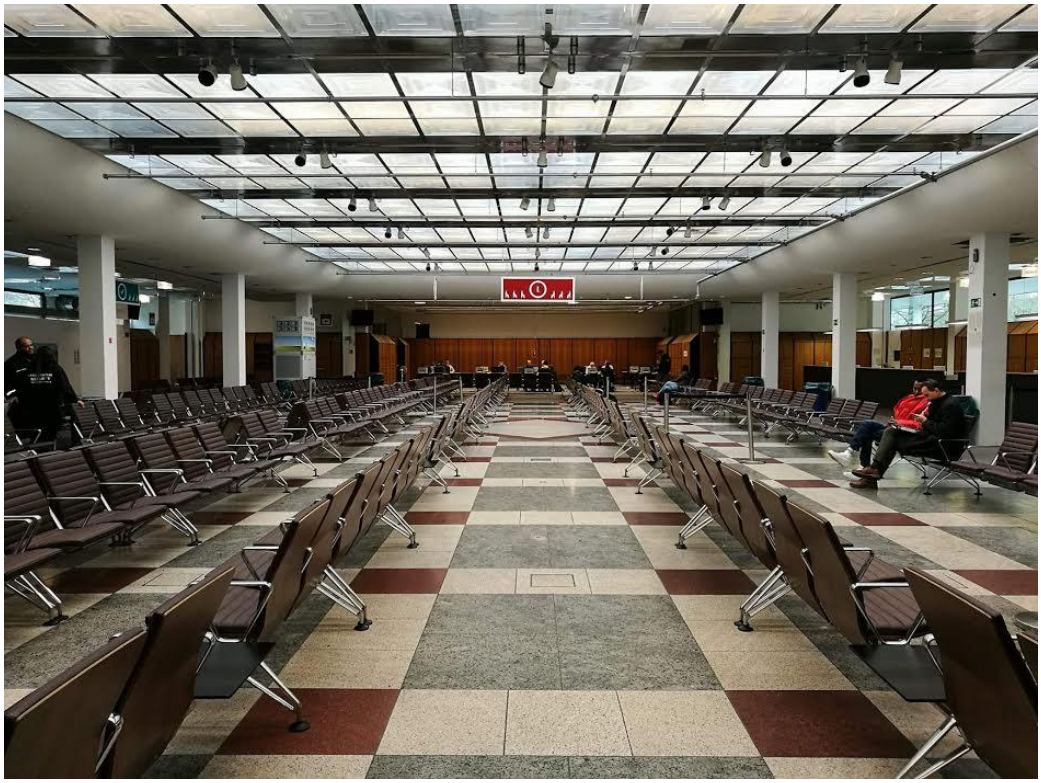
Additional Background Material for Chapters 2, 3 and 6

Table 1. Sources of Pressures as Described by the (Lay) Judges (Chapter 3)

Source /Type of Pressure		(Lay) Judges			
		Germany		Greece	
		1st inst.	2nd inst.	1st inst.	2nd inst.
1	Rapid changes in policy framework	√		√	
2	Unclear direction of overall legal framework	√		√	
3	Low implementability (time frame/availability of relevant professionals etc.)	√		√	
Societal					
4	Media pressure	√		√	√
5	Public/social environment pressure	√		√	√
Organisational					
6	Limited training	√		√	√
7	Heavy workload/time pressure to perform task	√	√	√	√
8	Weak administration/management			√	√
9	Principal–agent pressure	√			√
10	Precarious working conditions			√	√
Role-Related					
11	Conflicting 'hats' (i.e., support for law and humanitarian values)	√	√	√	√
12	Emotionally heavy work	√	√	√	√
13	Lack of evidence to support claim (i.e., age, vulnerability etc.)	√	√	√	√
14	Communication compromised by interpreter	√	√	√	√
Applicant-Related					
15	Cultural/language barriers	√	√	√	√
16	Communication difficulties due to trauma	√	√	√	√
17	Traumatised applicants/not mentally fit	√	√	√	√
18	Illiterate applicants/poor story narrators	√	√	√	√
19	Continuous changes in applicants' country of origin situation	√	√	√	√

Table constructed by the author, based on the interviews with participants

Picture 1. Waiting Area for Asylum Applicants, Berlin, 2017



Picture 2. Waiting Area for Asylum Applicants, Athens, 2017