In the Eye of the Beholder: A Sociology of Knowledge Perspective on Norm Transfer

Antje Wiener Chair of Political Science, especially Global
Governance[a]

[a] Chair of Political Science, especially Global Governance,
University of Hamburg and EURIAS Senior Fellow, Netherlands
Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Wassenaar
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ANTJE WIENER

Chair of Political Science, especially Global Governance, University of Hamburg and EURIAS Senior Fellow, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Wassenaar

ABSTRACT   The article introduces the concept of 'strategic blueprinting' as a distinct practice of norm transfer, thereby turning the 'normative-power approach' on its head. Rather than transferring norms from the inside of liberal communities out, outsiders choose to copy parts of the *acquis communautaire*. European integration is thus perceived through the eye of the beholder. To elaborate on this strategy, the article compares it with other types of norm transfer such as transplantation and diffusion. The intention is to establish parameters for further research on norm transfer along the four principled dimensions of the new sociology of knowledge: (1) identify and define the practice (internal/external division); (2) situate the practice within the broader field of integration theories and the parallel development of integration policy and politics (symmetry principle); (3) reconstruct the practice (situatedness principle); and (4) establish its potential with regard to governance and constitutionalism in the global realm (contextualism).

KEY WORDS: Blueprinting, norm transfer, normative power, diffusion, sociology of knowledge, acquis communautaire, community

Introduction

This article sheds light on Europe as a normative power that is attractive to others. In doing so, it effectively turns the normative power Europe approach, which was originally advanced by Manners (2002, 2006) on its head. Rather than taking a view from the inside out, with the intention to diffuse norms from the centre towards the periphery of liberal communities,

Correspondence Address: Professor Antje Wiener, Chair in Political Science, especially Global Governance, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Hamburg, Allende Pl 1, 20146 Hamburg, Germany, email: antje.wiener@wiso.uni-hamburg.de

it suggests the reverse perspective from the outside into these communities. While the former works according to the logic of appropriateness, the latter is guided by the principle of contestedness. This attraction is indicated by outsiders from other regions who choose to copy 'bits and pieces' (Curtin 1993) of the EU's *acquis communautaire*. The beauty of European integration is thus perceived as lying in the eye of the beholder, so to speak. To my knowledge, this article is the first to take up this particular strategy. It is defined as the practice of *strategic blueprinting*. Drawing on an increasing number of references to the European Union (EU) that take the body of the *acquis communautaire* as a sort of pool containing hard and soft institutions which has been established over time and which bears the socio-cultural imprint of the specific experience of European integration (Michalski and Wallace 1992; Gialdino 1995; Jørgensen 1998; Wiener 1998; Merlingen *et al.* 2000; Vauchez 2015) it is suggested that picking and choosing institutions (norms, principles, rules and routinised procedures) from this pool has consequences. In other words, although it seems promising with a view to advancing integration in their respective regional contexts, norm transfer from the EU context to other areas is expected to generate unexpected outcomes elsewhere.

This article seeks to elaborate on this expectation. To that end, it assesses the potential for socio-cultural detail that is provided by distinct approaches to norm transfer. The discussion is structured by leading insights from the (new) sociology-of-knowledge approach, including the four principles of symmetry, internal/external division, situatedness and contextualism.[1] Given the scope and limited space provided by this special issue, the intention is to establish parameters to organise more specific and detailed empirical research on norm transfer along for the four principled dimensions of the new sociology of knowledge: first, to identify and define the practice (internal/external division); second, to situate the practice within the broader field of integration theories and the parallel development of integration policy and politics (symmetry principle); third, to reconstruct some cases in which the practice is applied (situatedness principle); and fourth, to offer a conclusion about the potential of this practice with regard to future development of global governance and global constitutionalism (contextualism).

While the transfer of norms between established and emerging regional orders or organisations is not new, the proposed concept of strategic blueprinting includes two innovative moves. The first regards the phenomenological dimension, i.e. the decision to engage in blueprinting is taken outside rather than inside the EU context of policy-making and politics. This includes a shift of perspective, which is conceptualised as a distinct new dynamic of engagement with the *acquis communautaire*. Relatedly, the second innovation regards the theoretical dimension, i.e. the reference to the EU's set of formal and informal institutions and the decision to apply a selection (bits and pieces) of this *acquis* in another context, and it brings new — situated — cultural experiences to bear on these very bits and pieces of the *acquis*. It is argued that in order to understand the impact of this process, research needs to be sensitive to the cultural roots of hard and soft institutions, both in the context of the EU, and in the other, regional

context. These cultural roots matter at both ends of the exchange, i.e. the receiving and the providing contexts. A reflexive approach allows for incorporating the interactive practices that contribute to norm generation (or institution building) in each context.

The conceptual challenge lies in bringing the sum of cultural experiences, including interactive norm generation in each context, to bear for the analysis of blueprinting. The stakes of this project are raised by variations of neo-institutionalism that have focused predominantly on formal institutions and their functional logics (Jenson and Merand 2010) and thus effectively contributed to almost editing out the complex interplay between contextualised and therefore regionally and locally distinct normative structures of meaning-in-use as carriers of socio-cultural experiences. To elaborate on this process, the following draws on reflexive approaches advanced by earlier research on European integration which has advanced the concept of the 'embedded *acquis communautaire*' (Wiener 1998; Merlingen *et al.* 2000). This reflexive perspective had been enabled by the constructivist turn in the 1990s. Recent calls for a more consistent focus on the political sociology of integration as opposed to studying 'formal organisations and a social norms' (Jenson and Merand 2010, 74) have picked up on the loose ends of this reflexive approach to European integration. This is in tune with the broader contextual approach that understands (1) norms as embedded in social and cultural contexts (Finnemore and Toope 2001); and (2) social interaction as norm-generative practices. The following understands institutions as bearing culturally distinct meaning. Accordingly, it is argued that in addition to the dimensions of formal validity and social recognition, the inter-national inter-active work of norms requires the additional focus on cultural validation (Wiener 2014). In sum, it is held that norm-diffusion research generally suffers from two central oversights. *First*, social constructivist approaches that consider norms as having a structuring impact on the behaviour of states miss out on the reflexive dimension of norms. This leads to a bracketing of negotiated normativity, and consequently, the normative quality of norms based on distinct degrees of moral reach that is ascribed to different 'types of norms' (Wiener 2008, 66; Bernstein and Coleman 2009; Park and Vetterlein 2010). Accordingly, the norm-generative focus on contestation is neglected. *Second*, work on norm diffusion tends to prioritise the spread of norms from the EU towards other areas over interactive negotiations involving the EU and other regions. In doing so, it is likely to reify the EU's set of values. Scrutinising these shortcomings offers the opportunity to reconstruct the normative change that actually does take place through interaction among a multiplicity of regional actors.

To that end, the following proceeds in three further sections. The *first* section lists a number of regional integration contexts in which norm transfer is observed. It points to selected cases of such norm transfer in order to demonstrate that global processes of regional integration do share references to norms, principles and institutional design. In some cases more than in others, a specific interest in learning from European experience is notable. This article's interest lies in raising a question about whether, and if so how, such learning has taken place at a region's own initiative, or whether

normative adaptation was conducted in compliance with EU demands. While this article does not intend to provide an answer to this query, it takes the invitation to revive integration theories with recourse to the new sociology of knowledge as a starting point to explore two distinct research perspectives with a view to further empirical inquiry on the matter. A caveat applies with regard to the following, for, due to limited space in the context of this special issue, the following is restricted to the decidedly theoretical exploration of how to account for blueprinting. Section *two* then proceeds to critically review the approaches to norm transfer in the wake of the normative power Europe discussion, thereby paying particular notice to the focus of these approaches on processes and effects of inter-contextual reflection and inter-cultural learning. Based on this critical review, section *three* introduces the concept of strategic blueprinting as a reflexive alternative to prevailing approaches of norm diffusion. In the con-cluding section, the concept of blueprinting is recalled as a practice-based alternative to political and legal norm-diffusion of global governance theo-ries on the one hand, and the normative-power approach, on the other.

Norm Transfer and Regional Integration

The two conceptually quite distinct perspectives on norm transfer which will be introduced in the following two sections (i.e. norm diffusion and strategic blueprinting) share an interest in developing a concise understand-ing of norm transfer from one polity to another. Thus, the literature on norm diffusion defines this process as *transplanting* norms by diffusion from the European inside towards other regions (i.e. following an EU-based strategy). In turn, the proposed alternative defines strategic *blueprinting* as fetching bits and pieces of the *acquis communautaire* in order to establish them within the constitutional or proto-constitutional framework of one's home region (i.e. following the strategic interests of regional politicians and policy-makers outside the EU). According to the new sociology-of-knowledge approach and its four leading principles, the distinct norma-tive purpose and expectation, which need to be reconstructed in order to assess the potential impact of the respective norm transfer, stand to be identified by the following research questions that are to guide empirical research: Where is the norm transfer initiated (symmetry; inside/outside)? Who triggers the process (situatedness)? How is the transfer perceived within the receiving context — including both the immediate situation for example a specific organisational committee, and the wider societal context for example the national or regional context (contextualism; inside)?

Like transplanting, blueprinting begins by observing that reference to the EU's institutional and/or constitutional settings is made in contexts outside Europe. However, in contrast to the functional or utilitarian approaches of transplanting or diffusing norms, blueprinting involves a multiplicity of dif-ferent actor constellations and therefore equally multi-directional power vectors. Rather than diffusing ideas — however useful they may seem to the receiver — blueprinting is conceptualised as an interactive practice. This implies that the normative meaning generated by the practice depends on the context in which the meaning-in-use is enacted. The result is to be

'read-off' at the receiving end. By reversing the direction, i.e. rather than assuming an EU interest in diffusing their legal order to others, it focuses on the interest in turning towards the EU for inspiration in the utterances of others. Research on blueprinting is distinct as it is interested in first, identifying the motivation of others to turn to Europe, and second, understanding how social practices that re-enact normative structures of meaning-in-use change the latter through adaptation. For, in the process, normative structures of meaning are both used (i.e. applied, copied, implemented or transferred) and changed (i.e. bestowed with meaning derived from experience and expectation).

The resulting structures of the respective normative orders elsewhere therefore reflect the interaction between the diverse repertoire of cultural experiences in the root contexts in which the EU's norms are embedded and the cultural experiences of the external context to which they have been incorporated. Both consist of complex normative structures of meaning-in-use that derive their meanings through a web of binary oppositions that are brought to bear through the practice of enacting *within* their respective contexts and *across* these contexts. This transfer of normative quality reflects the normative power potential of the EU in a way that remains undiscovered by both the normative-power approach and the norm-diffusion approach, respectively, as these approaches understand norm transfer as something which operates according to a centrifugal logic. Reflexive approaches to global constitutionalism turn this logic on its head by attributing an active part of the interaction to those looking 'in' on the EU's normative order from the outside. Accordingly, the outcome is to be *read off* the practice at the other end, outside the EU. It follows that while the interest in imitating aspects of the European normative order does confirm the appeal of that order to others, the practice of blueprinting reveals its — empowering — effect. To assess the latter, more detailed empirical research is required. It cannot be predicted by normative theory, but should rely on both, normative and empirical research, i.e. applying a *bifocal* approach.

To do this, it is helpful to distinguish two types of interaction as part of the practice of blueprinting. The *first type* includes other regional organisations such as Mercosur, the African Union (AU), the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), ASEAN or NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Area) that seek to establish organisational settings which are similar to the EU. These actors compare their *institutional settings* to the EU's institutions and then decide to copy the EU's formal institutions, such as the political organs i.e. the Parliament, the Council, the Commission or the courts. The *second type* refers to international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations (UN) or NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) that have adopted core constitutional principles and norms which are central to the EU's *constitutional setting* or vice versa. This perspective has generated research by scholars, who compared the role *courts* play in the EU with their role in other regional bodies (De Búrca and Weiler 2012) or how the neo-Kantian *regulatory ideal* could be made to work in other organisational contexts (Fossum and Menéndez 2011).

The following illustrates how blueprinting strategies may differ according to either the purpose of adding organisational details to an existing regional organisation, or incorporating constitutional norms in a constitutional context.[2] To that end, the following presents a selection of potential empirical studies of regional organisations to address the research objective of blueprinting and the two questions of *first*, what was the motivation to turn to the EU's normative order?, and *second*, how did the transfer of parts of that order play out with regard to the situated structures of normative meaning-in-use? Given the interest in blueprinting normative order from the perspective of contexts outside of the EU, the following stresses the relevance of processes of constitution building in post-revolutionary settings. In these settings, the main focus is set on fundamental constitutional norms (type 1) such as democracy, the rule of law, human rights and citizenship. The assumption is that the attraction of the EU's constitutional setting stems from its experience with unbound constitutionalism, i.e. the development of constitutional quality that is not state-bound. To indicate the terrain for follow-up research, the selected examples of regional organisations are intended to illustrate the range of different locations from which an interest in the EU's *acquis* has been expressed.

The *first* turns to a range of non-European regional organisations. While there are plenty other regional organisations, the following turns to recent examples where regional actors made explicit reference to bits and pieces of the EU normative order. In all selected cases, a move towards creating a *community* rather than a mere treaty organisation or conference is notable. Among them is the 'Mercado Comun del Sur', the South American union of states which is commonly known as 'Mercosur', and which was founded in 1994 in the city of Asuncion by four countries (Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) by the Treaty of Asuncion. The main goal of this union was to enhance economic progress and to improve social justice (Tratado, 1994, 1). In 2014, Mercosur established formal political bodies, some of which follow the EU's model, for example, the Parliament, which was inaugurated in 2006. However, in contrast to the EU, in the Mercosur context, the Parliament remained without political power. While the underlying principle does focus on promoting democracy, in the absence of the principle of voting rights for Mercosur citizens (as a community of citizens), rather than for citizens of each member state, the Parliament remains more of an advisory body.[3] Another South American organisation, the Court of Justice of the Andean Community (original Spanish name of the organisation: Tribunal de Justicia de la Comunidad Andina, TJCA) was founded as the 'Court of Justice of the Cartagena Agreement and was then renamed and modified in 1996 by the Protocol of Trujillo to interpret, enforce, and settle disputes arising from Community law.'[4] It has been analysed as being 'explicitly' modelled 'on the ECJ (i.e. the European Court of Justice, AW)' (Alter *et al.* 2012, 631). To assess the underlying strategy from a sociology of knowledge perspective, empirical research would want to reconstruct the Court's set-up on the basis of document research, expert interviews and expressive interviews in order to reconstruct the strategies underlying the founding decisions as well as the long-term effects of the

transfer of bits and pieces of the *acquis communautaire* from the EU into the Andean region.

In Asia, in turn, the 'ASEAN Economic Community' (AEC) still stands to be established in 2015. It builds on the ten former ASEAN member states in order to develop an economic community based on the principle of free movement, which represents the founding principle of the European Economic Communities (EEC) as the precursor of the EU. Yet, while the prospect of a common market based on the principle of free movement of labour, goods and capital is the principal first step, in 2012 Najib Razak, the Malaysian Prime Minister, envisions democracy and peace to follow. As he notes,

> (C)ommon markets require common rules and independent decision-making bodies, which contribute to the improvement of governance. Similar to the European project's support for smaller member states' development towards mature democracies, the AEC will be able to strengthen institutions and support good governance in our region.[5]

While referring to the EU's successful common market-building principles, Razak cautions: 'Of course, Asia is not Europe. Our implementation of a single market will necessarily differ. But the fundamental principles behind free trade are the same wherever you are in the world.'[6] At the time of the EU's struggle with countering the financial crisis, the envisioned progressive integration from economic to political union, and the promise of democracy and peace comes with a grain of salt: for while the perception of the sequence of integrative steps persists, the threat of the problems currently experienced in the EU invites to careful re-assessment. In this sense, the prospective AEC will be able to benefit from the EU's experience by making careful choices of which integrative steps to copy and how. It is here that the concept of blueprinting allows for a reflexive approach to norm transfer. The new Asian organisation builds on its forerunner, ASEAN, and 'blueprints' from them to begin with. As the AEC website states:

> The ASEAN leaders adopted the ASEAN Economic Blueprint at the 13th ASEAN Summit on 20 November 2007 in Singapore to serve as a coherent master plan guiding the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015.[7]

However, the decision in favour of further integration, which led to the founding of the AEC, does build on the European experience and the promise of growth, wealth and democracy that it entails. As Razak notes,

> these may be well-known waters, but ASEAN's members will choose their own course. Based on the right approach, the AEC can build on the successes of the European project and learn from its experiences. My hope is that in the coming decades the people of South Asia be able to enjoy that wealth and peace which comes with closer economic cooperation. (Alter et al. 2012)

To turn to the third geopolitically important process of regional integration, in 1992 the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was founded through the transformation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) as its forerunner. The SADCC was established in April 1980 by Governments of the nine Southern African countries of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.[8] According to Schöman, regional organisation in South Africa was politically motivated (Schöman, 2001).[9]

> The SADCC or the conference was formed with four principal objectives, namely: (1) to reduce Member States' dependence, particularly, but not only, on apartheid South Africa; (2) to implement programmes and projects with national and regional impact; (3) to mobilise Member States' resources, in the quest for collective self-reliance; and (4) to secure international understanding and support. (Schöman 2001)

SADC and its Member States are expected to act according to the following principles:

- sovereign equality of all Member States;
- solidarity, peace and security;
- human rights, democracy, and the rule of law;
- equity, balance and mutual benefit; and
- peaceful settlement of disputes (Schöman 2001).

Notably, a number of unbound constitutional practices of the EU, such as the practice of regular 'summit' meetings as well as the introduction of the practice of sharing governance responsibility based on a 'troika' (i.e. applying a model that builds on collective experience), reveal a notable similarity with the EU's way of organising policy and politics of regional integration. Thus, the 'principal institutions of SADC' include a 'summit — made up of Heads of State and/or Government; the Summit is the ultimate policy-making institution of SADC'. The Summit is responsible for the overall policy direction and control of functions of the Community. It usually meets once a year around August/September in a Member State at which a new Chairperson and Deputy are elected. Under the new structure, it is recommended that the Summit meet twice a year. The current Chairperson of SADC is President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, and the Deputy Chairperson is President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi. More functions of the Summit are enumerated under Article 10 of the SADC Treaty (Schöman 2001). The 'troika — the extraordinary Summit decided to formalise the practice of a troika system consisting of the chair, incoming chair and the outgoing chair of SADC'. This system was established in August 1999. It includes that

> other Member States may be co-opted into the troika as and when necessary. This system has enabled the organisation to execute tasks and implement decisions expeditiously as well as provide policy direction to SADC institutions in the period between regular SADC

meetings. The troika system will operate at the level of the Summit, the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, Council and Standing Committee of Senior Officials. (Schöman 2001)

In turn, the BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which have become known as new 'emerging powers' (Nabers 2010; Nolte 2010), created an alternative institution to the UN's World Bank in order to rebalance the representation of states and support the creation of global justice. According to South Africa's finance minister, Pravin Gordhan,

> (T)he roots of the World Bank and IMF still lie in the post-World-War-Two environment. The reforms that have taken place are still inadequate in terms of addressing the current environment. We still have a situation where certain parts of the world are over-represented.[10]

The World Bank and IMF continue to be dominated by America and Europe. And as Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said, the main point of the meeting was to show that 'the BRICS countries should create conditions for a more just world order'.[11]

Finally, another regional organisation, the African Union (AU), was founded by the *Constitutive Act (CA)* in 2001.[12] It is the follow-up organisation, which replaces the former Union of African States (UAS) and has currently 53 Member States. While European perspectives note that the AU has been conceived with an institutional setting and refers to a 'similar' set of values to the EU (Schmidt 2008, 1), a closer look at the distinctive embeddedness of these values reveals that the AU's normative order leads beyond 'copying' the institutional setting. This is particularly noticeable with regard to the active role that is bestowed on the 'people' as an actor in addition to 'states'. For example, it notes the 'participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union' as a lead 'principle' (CA Article 4 (c)), and it details fundamental norms of legitimate intervention in its Member States when these are in breach with the African Charter of Human Rights and Peoples' Rights (see CA, Article 3 (h)); as well as the right of the 'Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity' (CA, Article 4 (h)).

The Normative Turn in European Integration and Its Practice *Lacuna*

Current European integration theories include three theoretical approaches that address normative change. They include, first, the *normative-power approach* that was kicked off by Manners a decade ago and has been thriving since as an alternative soft-power perspective to international relations theories' neo-realist perspectives; and second, the *norm-diffusion approach* that was developed in conjunction with the prospect of massive enlargement to the East. The third is *critical norms research* that was developed with reference to the constitutional debates in the EU and beyond, as one of several precursors — next to democratic theory and international law — to the new interdisciplinary theory of global constitutionalism. To scrutinise

these with regard to the observed *lacuna* of 'practice', the following discusses the distinct ways in which these three approaches address normative change according to their respective tools. Given its focus on unbound constitutionalisation, the latter in particular is important for research that seeks to shed light on the choice and process of blueprinting bits and pieces of the EU's normative order. The following recalls reflexive roots that pre-empt the new sociology-of-knowledge approach as the core theoretical framework of the range of constructivist theories of European integration.

Constructivist research on *norms* facilitated a thriving norm-diffusion research culture, interested in compliance with the 1993 Copenhagen criteria that set the standards (i.e. type 3 norms) for massive eastern enlargement in 2004 (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005), as well as the critical and/or consistent constructivist norm research agenda, which focused mainly on fundamental norms (i.e. type 1 norms) that were discussed in interdisciplinary research in the fields of international relations theories and international law. This section demonstrates how, despite constructivists' 'seizing the middle-ground' between positivist rational choice approaches and reflexive sociology-of-knowledge approaches (Adler 1997), 'limits of bridging the gap' prevailed (Wiener 2003). In sum, the 1990s' constructivist theories of European integration brought the ontological stress on ideas, identities, norms and language to the, by then, rather stale theoretical repertoire of grand theories to the table. This move followed the key argument of Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge; that all knowledge is socially constructed, and that therefore interactive practices in context mattered for our understanding of European integration (Berger and Luckmann 1967). In the beginning, the key role of constructivist thought lay in providing a meta-theoretical move away from a baseline between realist and poststructuralist perception of the EU who had remained largely incommunicado. Constructivists then had an enabling function with regard to academic exchange about the leading questions, main concepts and methodological approaches that mattered for European integration theories. This communicative turn had a hugely informative impact on the entire discipline of European integration, for it made the discipline attractive to students and serious academic debate. Based on the tool-kit of the middle-ground, focused constructivists soon generated an impressive number of case studies.

Kratochwil's query about the way norms 'work' (Kratochwil 1984) was approached from increasingly different perspectives that resulted in three distinct constructivist strands: conventional constructivists were interested in pursuing the question of how norms influenced state behaviour; consistent constructivists studied the way new rules were set through speech acts, thus concentrating not so much on social practices as on discursive and strategic interventions to change the rules of the — political — game; and critical constructivists questioned the shared meaning of norms that remained invisible to behavioural and strategic studies, and therefore suggested making invisible meanings of norms accountable with reference to enacting normative structures of meaning-in-use and cultural repertoires.

Instead of engaging with the development of these three constructivist strands — that ultimately mattered more for the development of international relations theories than European integration studies — the remainder of this section points to the widening gap between positivist and normative approaches. This is because this quite noticeable gap in the literature matters most for understanding the EU's impact on the global normative order, and hence, the allocation of the practice *lacuna*.

On the one hand, the EU is portrayed as a norm-entrepreneur with long-term experience in diffusing norms to candidate countries, and subsequently, the power to facilitate norm diffusion to post-conflict areas so as to improve 'governance in areas of limited statehood' (Risse and Lehmkuhl 2007). This approach builds on the compliance, cooperation and governance literatures. On the other hand, the EU has been conceptualised as a 'normative power'; a rather more elusive civilisational force of sorts in the global realm (Manners 2002, 2013; Whitman 2013). At first sight, both approaches do have their merits, especially for European foreign offices that demand manuals for operations in post-conflict areas. Thus, the former diffusion approach offers relatively straight-forward fixes that take their central persuasive force from the compliance literature, while the latter normative-power approach paints a picture of the EU's soft-power as a civilised counterpart to the US and other hard powers. In particular, the latter approach has taken pains to develop a more sophisticated critical view of the transfer of norms, ideas and values from the EU to the global realm. Thus, Whitman notes that

> (B)y distinguishing the concept of normative power from the previous discussions on military power (Bull 1982) and civilian power (Duchêne 1972), Manners placed the identity and nature of the Union into a different framework in which he aimed at replacing 'the state as the centre of concern' (Manners 2002, 236) and refocusing on the ideations and power of norms as the substantive basics of the EU studies. (Whitman 2013, 172)

While Whitman is right in stressing the importance of the shift of focus, this article contends that the potential of this normative perspective remains unexplored. This is largely due to leaving to one side the sociology-of-knowledge approach that lay at the centre of the erstwhile constructivist turn in European integration theories (Christiansen *et al.* 1999). That is, like the norm-diffusion approach, the normative-power approach ultimately operates according to the neo-Kantian regulative ideal of political organisation that is common to Western European nation-states and which rests on the underlying belief in the universality of Western European norms, ideas and values and their presumptive value-added elsewhere (Habermas 2011). By contrast, this article's shift towards the eyes of the beholder elaborates on the potential of norm-generative interaction as a key empirical indicator for studying the way norms work. For example, Manners describes the normative-power approach thus:

> (T)he *contagion diffusion* of norms takes place through the diffusion
> of ideas between the EU and other global actors. An example of
> *pouvoir normatif* in action through contagion can be found in the
> ways in which ideas and means of regional integration have diffused
> between continents. Hence ideas such as the creation of a "common
> high authority", "four freedoms" and even "single currency" are seen
> in other regions of the world as being *worthy of imitation*. (Manners
> 2013, 315, emphasis added AW)

Just how precisely the process of 'imitation' works remains bracketed,
and accordingly it is hard to see how empirical research would proceed in
order to establish whether or not, and if so to what effect, 'contagion diffu-
sion' unfolds. It appears that when authors refer — often critically — to
Manners' 'normative power' concept, two perceptions dominate the litera-
ture. The first refers to 'Normative Power Europe (NPE)' as a concept that
conceives the EU as appreciatively referred to from abroad, upon which
ground it is considered as constitutive for a perception of the EU as a
civilian as opposed to a military power (Manners 2002; Nicolaides and
Whitman 2013). The second is Manners' own further development of the
concept towards the 'normative-power approach' (NPA), which, in his
more recent work, stresses the active role of the EU in the process of
spreading European normative values and ideas (Sjursen 2006). The
strategic normative-power approach is summarised by an understanding of
'others', such as ASEAN, the AU and MERCOSUR, as behaving like copy-
cats. As Manners writes, '(C)ontagion diffusion relies on a number of
mechanisms of imitation, emulation and mimicry/*mimétisme* including the
persuasive attraction of ideas, as well as the prestige and status associated
with regional integration organisations' (Sjursen 2006). While the NPA
therefore does rely on a range of 'mechanisms' facilitating the actual incor-
poration of normative ideas elsewhere, its power results from a vector that
is directed *away* from Europe. Its value added is thus mainly defined as a
means towards the end of strategic power, in keeping with E. H. Carr's
concept of power over opinion as hence 'power-over' others (Mearsheimer
2005, 139). In turn, the concept of blueprinting sheds light on the EU's
normative order as having empowering potential.
      Similar to the strategic normative-power approach, Alter holds that
European institutions are 'emulated' or 'transplanted' from the EU to other
non-European social contexts, which is demonstrated by accounting for
'copies' of the ECJ around the globe (Alter 2012; Alter *et al.* 2012). The
rationale underlying this kind of copying is the attraction of the possibility
of co-existing supranational institutions and domestic institutions that is
demonstrated by the EU's example. As research about 'the consequences of
copying a European supranational judicial institution' (Alter *et al.* 2012,
632) reveals, the notion of co-existing institutions — rather than the mean-
ings attached to them — does not reveal the related change of normative
meanings attached to these institutions when transferred to a different social
environment. This is because this meaning is expected to be enmeshed with
situated cultural repertoires, and therefore, it is expected to change as

institutions become established and used by other actors elsewhere. This is confirmed by the findings, 'that copying the ECJ is selective rather than wholesale, which suggests that adapting a court to local legal and political contexts may be necessary for successful transplantation', and 'that importing a supranational judicial institution does not necessarily copy the institution's politics' (Alter *et al*. 2012, 633). The normative change of meaning-in-use that is triggered by copying institutions remains to be examined as 'the success of a transplant will depend on its ability to graft onto existing legal norms and practices' (Alter *et al*. 2012, 634, citing Watson 1976). Even though the approach is conscious of and careful with distinguishing the process from colonialist strategies, the approach ultimately advances an interest in transplanting judicial institutions. Its focus on the 'effectiveness of the imported legal order' (Alter et al. 2012, 635) puts its utilitarian motive on a par with Manners' normative-power approach.

To summarise, normative order has predominantly been studied with a focus on changing institutional and/or constitutional settings *inside* the EU or alternatively, change initiated *by* the EU vis-à-vis others so as to make others comply with the EU's normative settings. The latter is well demonstrated by the enlargement literature's focus on accession candidates and the normative foreign-policy literature. Both have laid the grounds for the norm-diffusion approach and the normative-order approach, respectively. In turn, this article's reflexive perspective on interactive contestations about norms and their impact on the global normative order views norm transfer from a different perspective. Following the assumption that norms are socially constructed and the normative theoretical claim that, in principle, norms must always be contestable by their addressees, critical constructivists have raised critical questions about the sustainable effects of norm diffusion. Studies have noted that compliance with norms detailed in the Copenhagen Agreement was not the standard behaviour, instead 'contested compliance' was observed (Wiener 2004; Lerch and Schwellnus 2006; Brosig 2012). And a new range of critical constructivist research, which benefitted from interdisciplinary exchanges with IR theories and international law, linked the way normative meaning-in-use was re-enacted in this process with changes of the global normative order.

Blueprinting Bits and Pieces of the *Acquis Communautaire*

Drawing on the reflexive approaches that benefit from the four principles advanced by the new sociology of knowledge, this final section suggests developing an interactive alternative to norm-diffusion approaches. It points out that, central to understanding its impact is that the practice of blueprinting is an ongoing (i.e. unfinished and ever-changing reference). That is, a norm that has been blueprinted will therefore never be fully adopted elsewhere. As it travels across cultural borders, it remains subject to 'translation' (Walker 2003). Importantly, a number of non-European actors have been engaged in copying some of the EU's political and legal structures. By doing so, they have contributed to bestowing the function of a 'blueprint' to the EU's normative order. As a political practice, blueprinting involves the

conscious choice to copy an institutional and/or constitutional detail. As a social interaction, it extends beyond that decision and includes the process of approaching that detail in the European context of origin from the outside, transferring it to another outside destination, and enacting it according to the normative structure of meaning-in-use of that other context. This complex interactive process is analytically distinct from diffusing norms in various ways, for example through contagion by compliance mechanisms or by transplanting the norms. This is therefore advanced as an alternative conceptual approach to the concept of Europe as a 'normative power' that was triggered by Manners' erstwhile argument (Manners 2002, 2006, 2013; Sjursen 2006, 2007; Whitman 2013).

It is argued that the way in which norms, ideas and principles are incorporated from one context (e.g. the *acquis communautaire*) into another (e.g. the African Union's Constitutive Act) matters for the ultimate meaning that is attached to — and can therefore empirically be read off from — the respective norms. As critical norms research indicates, norm interpretation depends critically on the cultural background experience of those who enact a norm. As binary opposition analysis has shown, for example, even long-term EU Member States such as the United Kingdom and Germany reveal different interpretations of fundamental constitutional norms such as democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. Given these distinctly different interpretations among EU Member States with shared normative roots, it is expected that norm transfer between contexts in which cultural repertoires differ considerably more, the likelihood is much higher of conflictive norm implementation following the expectation of compliance with norms that are diffused from the EU centre to the periphery.

The concept of strategic blueprinting suggests that the EU's global political attraction stems from its unparalleled experience with building a quasi-constitutional framework of non-state polity. In the process, the EU established an embedded *acquis communautaire* including a considerable wealth of widely accepted constitutional norms, rules and regulations (Weiler 1999; Weiler and Wind 2003; De Búrca and Weiler 2012; compare Figure 1).

These bits and pieces of the *acquis* have proved attractive to others insofar as they carry a promise regarding the construction of their own constitutional blueprint of regional integration. The tool towards this process appears to be the strategic incorporation of bits and pieces of the *acquis* to their own specific contexts. That is, we observe an interactive incorporation of norms from the EU to other regions around the globe. This reference function of the EU's quasi-constitutional order works for two types of actors, including regional actors such as Mercosur, ASEAN, UNASUR or the African Union as well as other international organisations such as the WTO or the UN. Blueprinting comprises the strategic choice of incorporating bits and pieces from institutional and constitutional settings of other normative orders. This is based on the substantial assumption that norms entail a 'dual quality' (Wiener 2007). That is, they are constructed through practice while having a structuring impact on behaviour at the same time (Giddens 1979). Accordingly, no two normative structures are the same (compare the principles of situatedness and contextualism). This
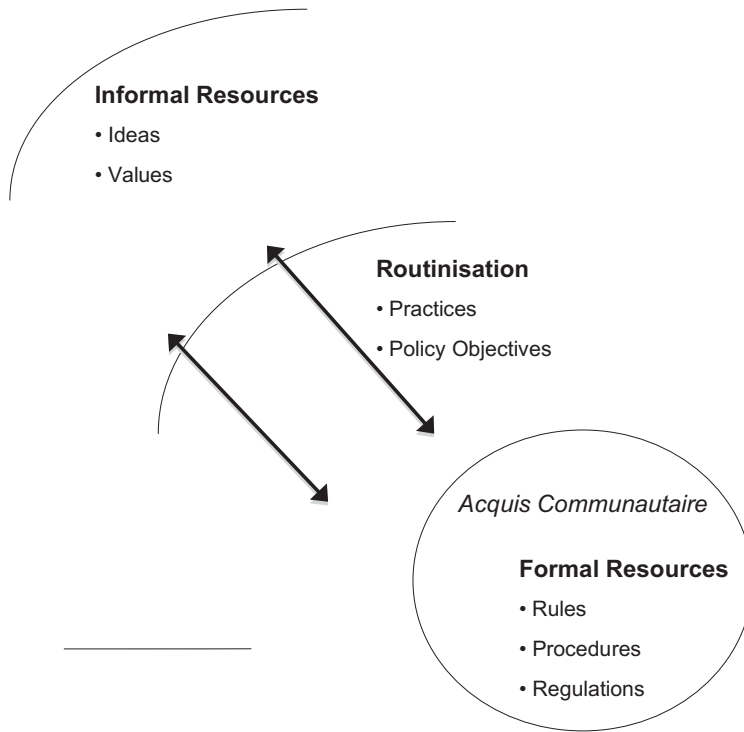
Figure 1. The embedded *acquis communautaire*
Source: Wiener (1998, 302).

insight was most prominently taken forward by Milliken's suggestion to examine inter-national interaction as the practice of re-/enacting 'normative structures of meaning-in-use' (Milliken 1999, 132). With this interactive conceptualisation of normative structures, Milliken recalled Derrida's societal sub-structures, which are used and put to work as inter-national interaction unfolds (Derrida 1976). The concept provides an empirical access point for ethno-methodological research that seeks to account for ways in which normative structures are both used *and* changed at the same time. Blueprinting indicates that by re-enacting normative structure 'A' in a context other than its root context, its substance is brought to interact with existing settings of a normative structure 'B'. It follows that, if others re-enact European normative structures through blueprinting, their own normative substance begins to incorporate a diverse repertoire of cultural experiences. These reflect both the norm-generative practices from the root context (A) and those of the target context (B).

Conclusion

As this article demonstrated, the strategy of blueprinting offers an alternative practice-based perspective on interregional norm transfer. It was argued that first, the socially constructed normative order of the EU entails

a quite robust constitutional quality, and more importantly, second, as a normative order that is unbound from the state, the EU offers a reference frame for political re-orientation in post-conflict and/or post-revolutionary contexts. Accordingly, it was noted that the identification of socially recognised and culturally validated ground rules (type 2 norms) that could work as a common reference for political parties that stand to be integrated in post-revolutionary (or post-crisis) contexts, lies in *agreeing* on basic rules of procedure. It was argued that, while formal settings consisting of standardised norms (type 3) may be exported akin to the EU's enlargement *acquis*, the ways in which norms travel are not predictable, for the *acquis* of all polities is embedded within a larger context of ideas and routinised practices.

In other words, norms are always contingent and therefore contested all the way down. It is therefore key for empirical research to take into account that constitutional quality (expressed by the dominant constitutional narrative) develops through the process of re-/enacting normative meaning-in-use. That is, it depends on precisely what the involved constituent power makes of it. This implies establishing constitutional ground rules through contestatory politics all the way up rather than complying with expectations of the normative orders of others all the way down. For appropriateness develops exclusively through direct interaction with norms, even if these were blueprinted from institutional and/or constitutional settings elsewhere. In turn, this implies that blueprinting involves a change of the respective *local* normative structure of meaning as well as of the larger *global* normative order, as both are interrelated and therefore re-/enacted in the same process. It follows that blueprinting matters beyond the strategic interaction between regions elsewhere and Europe. The more interaction between regions, as well as between multiple constituent powers occurs on a global scale, the more change of normative global order can be expected. The normative global order's social recognition and political legitimacy is likely to rise with interactions between a plurality of constitutional orders worldwide.

Notes

1. For the adaptation of the 'new' sociology of knowledge, compare the argument developed by the introduction to this special issue (Adler-Nissen and Kropp 2015); for earlier notions of the sociology of knowledge compare the seminal work by Berger and Luckmann (1967), which has been the starting point for reflectivist approaches to European integration, and more generally, international relations theories (compare for example, Christiansen *et al*. 1999; Fierke and Jørgensen 2001).

2. Please note that more detailed substantiation of these illustrations remains to be facilitated by further empirical research for which this article is intended to set the framework approach, and which, therefore, leads beyond the purpose of this predominantly conceptual piece.

3. Compare, e.g. the assessment of *International Democracy Watch* (for details: http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/index.php/mercosur-parliament, accessed on 9 September 2014).

4. Compare IJRC at: http://www.ijrcenter.org/regional-communities/court-of-justice-of-the-andean-community/ (accessed on 9 September 2014).

5. See: 'Europe as an Example for Asia' in: *DIE ZEIT*, 5 November 2012, 258 (all translations from German original texts, AW).

6. See: Huffington Post, 6/11/2012 (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/prime-minister-najib-razak/na jib-razak-learning-from-europe_b_2080744.html, accessed on 9 September 2012).
7. For details, see the AEC's website at: http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-commu nity (accessed 26 August 2013).
8. For details, see AU's website: http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/recs/sadc.htm (accessed 27 August 2013).
9. Compare: http://www.alternative-regionalisms.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/schoemar_from sadcctosadc.pdf.
10. *The Guardian*, 28 March 2013.
11. *The Guardian*, 8 May 2013.
12. For details, see the AU's website: http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/aboutau/constitutive_act_en. htm (accessed on 3 July 2013).

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