EUROPEAN UNION COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

DIPLOMACY AND BOUNDARY WORK IN UKRAINE

Maren Hofius

European Union Communities of Practice

This book provides a practice-based analysis of European Union (EU) diplomacy and community-building.

Unlike studies focusing on how EU community-building proceeds centrally in Brussels, this book turns to EU diplomacy in its bordering state of Ukraine. At a time when the EU's internal cohesion is being put to the test, this book provides novel insights into how feelings of belonging are produced amongst its members in the absence of a homogenous 'we'. Transcending the traditional dichotomy between macro-structures and micro-processes of interaction, the book demonstrates that the EU's large-scale community depends for its existence on practical instantiations of community-building in distinct 'communities of practice'. Using the case of an EU diplomatic 'community of practice' in Kyiv, Ukraine takes these questions to the EU's margins, highlighting that the boundaries of community are key sites in which community materialises. The in-depth case study identifies diplomats' 'boundary work' as the constitutive rule that makes the local 'community of practice' cohere and create feelings of belonging to the large-scale polity of the EU.

This book will be of interest to researchers of European studies, as well as to those working on global cooperation and international relations more broadly.

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To Lea and my parents

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Acknowledgements

The journey of a book is a boundary experience. During my PhD, I travelled to the borderland of Ukraine to track down diplomats' boundary work to only experience my own boundaries. However, it was precisely this experience that enabled me to write a doctoral thesis, which I later turned into this book.

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1 Introduction

1 The Book in a Nutshell

What constitutes community beyond the state? What holds a community together and makes it cohere over time? At a time during which cultural diversity and pluralism are all all-pervasive features of global governance, the community question warrants renewed attention. Taking the European Union (EU) as a paradigmatic case of a "community without unity" (Corlett 1989; Nicolini 2012: 94), this book seeks to provide novel insights into how this post-national community succeeds in producing feelings of belonging among its members in the absence of a homogenous 'we'.

Recent advancements in international practice theory have made important inroads into exploring the practical foundations of social phenomena such as order (Adler & Pouliot 2011; Bueger & Gadinger 2014, 2015, 2018; Pouliot & Thérien 2018; Adler 2019). To that end, International Relations (IR) scholars have harnessed the 'communities of practice' approach to analyse their practical instantiations in immediate action settings. In doing so, however, international practice theorists have largely overlooked processes of identity-building as a crucial dimension of the 'communities of practice' approach, and of global order more broadly (for an exception, see Gadinger 2022: 108–109). This book fills this research lacuna by presenting the first monograph-length praxiology of the EU community within the IR discipline, and its 'practice turn' in particular.

To that end, it gives readers an understanding of the advantage of approaching the concept of community from a practice-theoretical angle. It presents the 'communities of practice' approach as one of the dominant approaches in international practice theory and engages in an innovative revision of the concept. As part of a revised 'communities of practice' framework, the book makes three original conceptual moves: in a first move, it suggests transcending the traditional dichotomy between macro-structures and micro-processes of interaction. It follows the ethnomethodological argument that macro-structures such as the state or regional and international organisations always depend on their instantiation in micro-social contexts. In a second move, the book proposes to adopt a thick conception of community to foreground the normative nature of practices that arguably lies in constitutive rules of engagement. In a third move, it capitalises on

the boundaries as well as boundary practices of community to study where and how cultural diversity is negotiated.

The book also provides readers with a hands-on research strategy for practice-based research on community. It develops a thick methodology to reconstruct the normative background of community by advancing a three-fold method of 'zooming in' on practices. *In concreto*, it suggests focusing on (1) 'b/ordering sites', understood as the site where the inside of political entities is reproduced on the outside, (2) the carriers of practices and (3) crisis moments. This practice-based theory-method package is bolstered with an in-depth case study on EU community-building at its borders, zooming in on an EU diplomatic 'community of practice' in the EU's neighbouring state Ukraine. Based on a reconstructive analysis of interviews conducted with field diplomats from the EU member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) posted to Ukraine's capital Kyiv, I come to identify diplomats' 'boundary work' as both the constitutive rule and communal resource that makes the local 'community of practice' cohere and relate to the large-scale polity of the EU. This finding suggests viewing the EU as a 'community of communities of practice' that is layered into multiple and over-lapping 'communities of practice', each reflecting in its unique way the individual members' direct and local experience of belonging to the larger community.

As such, this monograph offers one of the few comprehensive studies of how EU diplomacy and community-building take place abroad. Different from extant studies on how EU diplomacy takes place in its policy-making centre Brussels, a perspective on the EU's margins questions the self-evident nature of community and highlights the practical work that is needed to build and sustain it. At a time during which the EU's cohesion is also put to the test internally – be it through the rise in right-wing populism or 'Brexit', this book also provides important pointers to straddling old and newly emerging fault lines within the EU. Beyond the EU context, the book holds significant value for research on global cooperation. It highlights the growing importance that diplomats play when global governance is characterised by cultural pluralism, fragmentation and complexity (Sending et al. 2015a). Diplomats as boundary workers have developed the practical knowledge and skills to travel in-between and translate between contexts. They are there-fore vital in holding globally differentiated and geographically dispersed political entities together. In a crisis-prone world, field diplomacy, in particular, contributes to providing more ethically oriented global governance solutions. If effectively harnessed, field diplomacy does not only function as an early-warning system to detect emerging crises. Field diplomats' experience gained on the ground also pre-disposes them to develop policy solutions that exhibit greater sensibilities towards affected stakeholders.

2   The Global Governance Paradox

> On the 9 November 1989, we all thought that a new world order was about to start. […] Today, 25 years later, we hardly dare to refer to any form of world order. And rightly so. In the world we see emerging it's hard to define the

centres of power: they are multiple, of different nature, and overlapping in a rather chaotic web. […] Maybe we are living in times of absence of poles, times of an endless transition to something we cannot yet define. Complexity, conflictuality, interdependence seem to be the only elements we can be sure of when we refer to our times. The big question for all of us is: how do we try to make a change? How can we manage complexity, prevent conflict, and take the opportunities that interdependence offers to us? *How do we shape, after 25 years, a new world order?*

(Federica Mogherini 2015: 1–3, emphasis MH).

The above statement by Federica Mogherini, the EU's former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is only one among many made by state leaders who deplore the increasingly perceived gap between the requirement for and de facto absence of order beyond the nation-state. The political settlement of the Westphalian state system that provided us with the certainty of clear demarcation lines between (liberal democratic) order on the 'inside' and anarchy on the 'outside' belongs to the past. Initially triggered by multiple processes of transformation in the political, socio-economic and cultural realms, united under the generic term of globalisation, it seems as though a world order once thought stable is collapsing. The newly emerging rules of the game are yet unknown as they are no longer written within the Westphalian frame of reference. Today, conflicts transcend territorially based or functionally differentiated boundaries and require the shared coordination efforts of both states and non-state entities. In Europe, the Russian aggression against the sovereign state of Ukraine is the most prominent example of where the carefully built European security order, undergirded by the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, no longer seems to hold as it has been unilaterally abrogated by the Russian Federation. Thus, the world is in flux as the "state-sovereigntist 'order of orders', or metaprinciple of authority, has been threatened in its position of preeminence" (Walker 2008: 376).

Underlying this perceived disorder is a more profound paradox of global governance that scholars across the social sciences have identified (e.g. Sassen 2008; Walker 2008; Rawls 2009; Wiener et al. 2012). On the one hand, there is a reportable thickening web of transboundary relations that is progressively regulated by a network of global, regional and transnational institutions that enjoys authority beyond the nation-state (Slaughter 2005; Börzel & Zürn 2021: 283). With the increase in blurring of functional boundaries between the political and economic sphere and the apparent permeability of territorial borders for the sake of the smooth transit of goods and capital transactions, the turn of the twentieth century led proponents of globalisation to believe in a "borderless world" (Ohmae 1990) where the "network society" moves within a constant space of flows (Castells 2000). On the other hand, as Walker (2008: 373) has astutely detected, 'the underlying basic grid" of the Westphalian model that during the twentieth century held together diverse (legal-)normative orders under the inside/outside logic of the modern state system is no longer shared by the plurality of actors participating in global governance.

As a result, the modern international order in its current liberal form stands contested (Börzel & Zürn 2021: 283–284), and with it its fundamental norms and organising principles (Wiener 2014: 10). Not only is there 'less West' in today's international order as newly emerging non-Western powers as well as non-state actors are populating and challenging the principles of the United Nations (UN) system and its Bretton Woods institutions from 'without'; the international order is also becoming "less Western" as its liberal script is increasingly subject to contestation from 'within' (Bunde et al. cited in Flockhart 2022: 176). Be it the surge in autocratic powers such as Russia and China, a new wave of right-wing populism and ethnonationalism in Europe or the global empowerment of anti-colonial movements – all these developments are unsettling the long-held assumption of the universality of the liberal script, including its core norms and principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights (cf. Börzel & Zürn 2020: 14). So with global governance on the rise, and contestation as well as pluralism as the 'normal' global condition (cf. Campbell & Schoolman 2008), a single normative grid is on the decline, if not absent, and a similarly hegemonic metaframe like the Westphalian one is unlikely to replace it. Rather, contending, often diffusing metaprinciples seem to point to a new "disorder of orders" (Walker 2008: 385). These rivalling metaprinciples are, inter alia, based on global, hierarchically structured institutions, a regionally divided world order or the universalisability of norms across orders.

While the reasons for a contested international order are manifold, leading IR scholars see the contemporary global governance architecture as the major crux. Its formal institutions are considered unable to account for the cultural diversity prevailing in today's world politics. Despite its claim to universality, for instance, the UN charter continues to be "hierarchical and exclusionary", and the Bretton Woods institutions and its successors are regularly criticised by "millions of protestors" for "establishing an informal type of post-colonial imperial governance" (Tully 2007: 80). As a response to these undemocratic global governance institutions, Reus-Smit (2017: 878) observes the rise of "new cultural claims, often animated by grievances against past diversity regimes" that were – and continue to be – unable to ensure the equal recognition of subjects, "privileg[ing] some cultural identities, norms and practices, while marginalizing others" (Reus-Smit 2017: 880).

The international order, it follows, currently lacks those socially recognised and culturally validated institutions that are capable of accommodating cultural difference in its various global governance frameworks (Wiener 2014: 40, 2018; Reus-Smit 2017: 879). For governance to work and be legitimate in the eyes of affected stakeholders in culturally heterogeneous contexts, the accommodation of cultural diversity in institutions is therefore key (Wiener & Puetter 2007: 1081–1082; Reus-Smit 2017: 882). Yet, how exactly can global order develop and remain stable in view of this diversity? What institutions, which principles and mechanisms are needed in global governance to meet the challenge of a widening spectrum of non-state and non-Western actors that each enters the global scene with

a distinct set of cultural and ethical background schemes? In short, what could be the normative grid that holds these manifold actors together?

3 Ordering Disorder? The Quest for New Metaprinciples

There is no shortage of blueprints and propositions about which institutions, principles and norms could help (re)establish order in the global realm in light of cultural diversity. Following Reus-Smit's (2017: 859) recent review of influential IR theory works that are dedicated to the future of the modern international order, the debate mostly runs along two axes, that is, culture and institutions. While so-called "culturalists" consider that "a common culture is a necessary prerequisite for the development of an international order", they fear that diversity will precisely threaten this prospect (Reus-Smit 2017: 859–860). "Institutionalists", on the other hand, believe in the "neutralising" effects of international order's institutions (ibid.). In political theory, models for order beyond the nation-state traditionally range from communitarian to cosmopolitan visions, the latter of which vary in the extent to which they assign primacy to either intergovernmental, pluralist, federal or fully supranational institutional solutions that see the contours of a world state emerging (Zürn 2011).

Mirroring political theory debates on models of global order, IR scholars working within the tradition of Habermasian communicative action theory (Habermas & McCarthy 1984), and theories of deliberative democracy more broadly (Habermas 1992; e.g. Elster 1998; Schmalz-Bruns 1999), have specifically focused on the central role of norms for building global order, pondering the possibility to universalise norms as a way to cope with cultural difference in the global realm. They have squarely addressed the question as to whether and under which conditions a common understanding of universal norms is possible, if the validity and shared understanding of fundamental norms can no longer be assumed in the global realm (Deitelhoff 2009a: 190). Shared understanding, so the idea, can be reached by approximating the ideal speech situation: by embedding (quasi-)deliberative procedures of rational, communicative action in international negotiation structures, abstract agreement on norms can be found (Müller 1990, 2004; Risse 2000; Deitelhoff 2006, 2009b).

In an alternative proposal to create fair governance beyond the nation-state, Deitelhoff suggests creating "a reflexive multi-level system" in which intermediary structures such as regional fora mediate and translate between nation-states (Deitelhoff 2009a: 209, translation MH). In contrast to global negotiation settings, these regional "learning fora" are considered close enough to affected stakeholders so as to reflect and account for their everyday lifeworlds (Habermas' *Lebenswelten*), that is, their shared stock of background knowledge that informs their meaningful conduct (ibid.). In similar ways, Acharya sees regional institutions as a major factor in building global order, acting as important sites and conveyor belts for the two-way diffusion of ideas and norms between global and local institutions (Acharya 2014, 2018).

As valuable as these institutional models appear, impediments to realising them can be found in the authors' own works: Deitelhoff (2006, 2009a, 2009b) has demonstrated that the universalisation of norms cannot be accomplished under contemporary conditions of pluralism. Instead, common understanding – *Verständigung* – only succeeds on "islands of persuasion" (Deitelhoff 2006, 2009a: 200–201, 2009b: 58). A model of institutional engineering, therefore, betrays the very fact that understanding is context-bound and locally anchored, and that the validity of order always depends on the meaning that is attributed to it by the members of a given community.

It follows that as soon as the spatial reach of political institutions expands beyond a concrete community for the sake of a universally valid global order, the implicated institutions are no longer able to reflect the complex and diverse cultural background schemes that constitute it. More than this, next to being impossible, striving for universally valid norms is also undesirable as any form of abstraction results in uprooting a norm's meaning from its original reference frame (Wiener 2007: 3–4). This has the likely result of "diverging interpretations of meaning [that] may induce a clash of normative resources and hence potentially present a source of conflict for politics beyond the state" (Wiener 2007: 7). Under conditions of transnationalisation, then, formal abstract rules and institutions necessarily encroach on the maintenance of cultural difference.

4 Accommodating Cultural Diversity in 'Communities of Practice'

So what solution could be the way ahead when pluralism carries the day and the meaning of fundamental norms and values is contested? In this book, I present a two-fold argument of how to accommodate cultural diversity in today's global governance landscape: first, I build on insights garnered from international practice theory to claim that the foundations of global order and global governance are not only social but that they are most often practical and informal (cf. Bueger & Gadinger 2014, 2018: 53; Pouliot & Thérien 2018: 164; Adler 2019: 22). Accordingly, it is practices rather than norms, principles and formal rules that hold together diverse normative orders (Adler & Pouliot 2011: 8; Bueger & Gadinger 2015: 449, 2018: 110–113; Adler 2019: 125). Second, and relatedly, I contend that new practice-near contexts must be conceived where cross-cultural encounters actually take place, where cultural diversity is accommodated and where organising principles are developed in a bottom-up fashion. In other words, we need to 'look down' on practices in sites of action rather than 'look up' to formal institutions to ensure that the principles and norms promoted by global governance institutions spring from and resonate with practitioners' multifarious practices. These immediate action settings, I hold, are "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Conceived as primarily informal and local social structures of meaning, 'communities of practice' are the context within which modes of belonging to larger configurations are negotiated through the enactment and reification of shared practices. They function as an intermediary

space between the macro-social structures of the global governance system and the micro-social processes of interaction among individuals.

The main thrust of my argument is therefore that global order evolves and changes in and through 'communities of practice' because it is in 'communities of practice' that groups of individuals mutually engage with one another, negotiate a joint enterprise, create a repertoire of shared resources and thereby enable the emergence of a 'we'-feeling in the absence of a shared culture (cf. Wenger 1998: 73). At the most basic level, then, I contend that practices make community, and not the other way around[1], and that these experiential communities are the building blocks of global order. They stabilise diverse normative orders through furnishing these with an identity dimension that evolves as members develop shared ways of knowing and acting on a daily basis. Absent this affective and visceral dimension of 'communities of practice', global order will falter.

I am not the first in IR to harness the 'communities of practice' framework for understanding the evolution of order in the global realm. Emanuel Adler, one of the leading IR constructivists of our time and pioneer of the so-called 'practice turn' in IR, has introduced and popularised the 'communities of practice' approach to capture transnational communal arrangements in the global realm. While the concept of 'communities of practice' had originally been coined by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and social learning theorist Etienne Wenger in 1991 to primarily capture the interactions between domestic groups of people, Adler (2005: 14) scaled up the concept to the transnational level. In a visionary move at the time, he conceived of 'communities of practice' as "one of the leading ontological factors in the study of IR" (Adler 2005: 3) and proposed to "take the international system as a collection of communities of practice" that each forms a "*domain of knowledge*, which constitutes like-mindedness" among a group of transnationally operating practitioners (Adler 2005: 14). As the 'practice turn' in IR has gained momentum since the 2010s, the 'communities of practice' approach has equally emerged as one of the "core approaches" in international practice theory (Bueger & Gadinger 2018: 30). By now, numerous IR scholars have explored the dynamics of individual 'communities of practice' operating within or across international and regional organisations as well as international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (Adler 2008; Pouliot 2010; Bicchi 2011, 2016; Gross Stein 2011; Lachmann 2011; Bremberg 2016; Davies 2016; Græger 2016; Hofius 2016; Mérand & Rayroux 2016; Zwolski 2016; Glas 2018; Ekengren & Hollis 2020).

In his recent 2019 monograph *World Ordering*, Adler has expanded his original claim to argue that 'communities of practice' are the "vehicles" through which practices evolve and constitute a multiplicity of "social orders" in the global realm (Adler 2019: 2). I want to transfer this conceptualisation to the global governance system, claiming that 'communities of practice' become the conveyor belts between small interaction orders and institutionalised practices congealed in international and regional organisations, such as the UN, ASEAN, AU, NATO or the EU. While, in principle, 'communities of practice' can be equated with institutionalised, geographically and spatially bounded organisations, it is more plausible that they cut across or straddle different formally institutionalised organisations since

"the boundaries of communities of practice do not necessarily follow institutional boundaries" (Wenger 1998: 119). Rather, their membership is primarily defined by members' mutual engagement in practice (ibid.). Approached from a 'community of practice' perspective, then, the global governance system comes to constitute a "landscape of practices" (Wenger-Trayner et al. 2015), each of which is embedded within and given meaning by multiple and crisscrossing 'communities of practice'. Zooming in on 'communities of practice' therefore promises to reveal the key drivers and mechanisms not only of transnational life as such, but also of the social foundations of the global system and its institutions. In short, their study is vital for understanding what factors contribute to "world ordering" below the surface of formal institutions (Adler 2019).

Sceptics might hasten to conjure the image of a fragmenting world order, with each 'community of practice' pursuing distinct ends and contributing to Walker's (2008) new "disorder of orders". Yet, in doing so, sceptics overlook the value of each community entailing "'fractal' layers of belonging" (Wenger 2000: 242–243) to large-scale structures, such as the abovementioned organisations: each community belongs to a macro-social structure, and yet it reflects a locally negotiated and, thus, distinct meaning of the structure's norms, principles and values. This image of interlinked or nested 'communities of practice' suggests we need to conceive of any macro-social structure as a "community of communities of practice" (Brown & Duguid 2001: 203) that underlies no single overarching meaning but has at its disposal multiple realities in different sites of interaction. Far from leading to a new fragmentation in the global realm, these constellations can meet today's challenge of creating order in view of cultural diversity.

Why and how this challenge can be met will be the task of this book. Let me summarise three key aspects that I tackle in greater detail in the following chapters, and which, taken together, have to date received insufficient attention by international practice theorists. First, cultural diversity can be accommodated in 'communities of communities of practice' because within each 'community of practice', diversity is managed through the very act of participating in practices. Consequently, the diversity of cultural backgrounds of its members is not sought to be overcome. Disagreements, tensions or contestation arising from diverging meanings and viewpoints may exist. But they do not threaten the community as long as members continue to participate in the shared negotiation of meaning and believe that their joint enterprise is still worth pursuing. In short, 'communities of practice' are capable of accommodating a multiplicity of actors, each with different ethical sources and loyalties, by orienting "towards mutually recognizable ends" (Nicolini 2012: 85). No predefined culture is required, only the shared ethos that develops as participants engage with one another in acknowledgement of each other's differences[2]. This is how global governance can account for the evolution of order in the absence of an a priori shared culture.

Second, order constantly evolves and remains relatively stable over longer periods of time because practices are inherently normative (Rouse 2007; Gadinger 2016, 2022; Adler 2019: 4–5). At first glance, this may sound as if I were to introduce constructivist norms research in IR through the backdoor. Far from

it; in practice-theoretical terms, normativity does not solely lie in explicit norms. Instead, it is understood to also encompass practical knowledge "such as rules of thumb, body-based performances, or knowledge inscribed in artifacts" (Bueger 2017: 127). A practice-theoretical understanding of normativity is therefore much broader than a constructivist understanding that limits normativity to concrete norms. Moreover, the standards of excellence bound up in this practical knowledge do not only define how to "go on" (Kratochwil 2011: 53), or how a practice must be performed in order to be in line with the social expectations of a given community (Frost & Lechner 2016: 344–345). These standards also define the identity of community members – "a moral way of being" (Nicolini 2012: 84) – that gives members a "communal sense of how things matter" (Nicolini 2012: 85). As a result, shedding light on the normative dimension of practices also raises questions of identity, which extant constructivist norms research and international practice theory have so far neglected (Gadinger 2022: 109). The 'communities of practice' perspective developed in this book squarely addresses both the normative and identity dimension of practices. Through its conceptual toolkit, the framework demonstrates how members come to develop shared understandings, a 'we-feeling' and a joint purpose, which ensure that members' collective enterprise is viable and worth pursuing in the long run.

Third, the proposition to conceive of macro-structures as layered into multiple 'communities of practice' carries considerable weight because it holds out the prospect of identifying new practice-based organising principles for global governance. As I make plain in this book, normative standards underlying practices are essentially constitutive rules. Rather than mistaking constitutive rules for abstract or formal rules, however, we must regard them as procedures by which participants in a practice make the self-same practice intelligent to each other. In doing so, participants create a normative background, which provides orientation towards shared understandings within a local 'community of practice' and generates a sense of belonging to large-scale political entities.

Constitutive rules can be likened to what Wiener (2018: 42) calls "ground rules (or organising principles) […] [that] reflect a compromise which takes into account constraints and opportunities of sustainable normativity in a given context". Different from metaprinciples, such as sovereignty, that are too abstract to organise different communities according to their contextual affordances, organising principles emanate from the practice of contestation by groups of individuals who regularly cooperate in specific global governance issue areas (Wiener 2014: 5). Accordingly, they differ across issue areas, but in each area they function as sustainable "pathways" of cooperation (Wiener 2018: 5).

Like organising principles, constitutive rules move away from the quest for metaprinciples that are uprooted from the concrete contexts of people's engagement. Yet, they cut deeper than organising principles in two distinct ways: first, they are even more mundane, informal and implicit – "indeed something [community members] might have trouble seeing even if it were made explicit" (Swidler 2001: 91). Second, they "facilitate the sociality that stands under and makes possible human reason, identity and morality", as ethnomethodologist Rawls

(2009: 511–512) has highlighted. This enabling function for sociality has led Ruggie to argue that constitutive rules are "the institutional foundation of all social life" (Ruggie 1998: 873). Unfortunately, almost no IR practice scholar has to date used his insights to further the study of constitutive rules as the normative bedrock of polities[3]. In due acknowledgement of his writings, it is my objective to cast light on the importance of constitutive rules as to account not only for the stability of order in the global realm, but also for its sociality and normative quality that develops in 'communities of practice'.

What implications do the above-described conceptions of normative practices and constitutive rules have for the quest for new metaprinciples to rebuild global order? Once the normativity of practices is recognised and constitutive rules are acknowledged as situated normative standards that participants in a practice shape and reshape as a collective, scholars are tasked to rethink how organising principles emerge and get institutionalised (cf. Rawls 2009: 511). Consequently, if today's sovereigntist metaprinciple of authority no longer corresponds to the lived experiences of the growing plurality of actors, we need to develop alternative principles which stem from and are instituted in the immediate action contexts – 'communities of practice' – of those individuals affected by them. Such alternative principles, I argue, can be developed, if we as scholars reconstruct the constitutive rules that are in use in 'communities of practice'.

5 The EU 'Laboratory'

Having argued for the study of 'communities of practice' to address the global governance paradox, I empirically turn to the EU as a point of departure. As both a "multiperspectival polity" (Ruggie 1993: 172) and post-national community, the EU is the paradigmatic example and result of the decline of the Westphalian state-sovereigntist metaprinciple and the prime attempt of taming anarchy among its constituent member states (see Mitzen 2006: 281). It is considered to have "mov[ed] beyond the hard boundaries and centralised sovereignty characteristic of the Westphalian, or 'modern' state, towards permeable boundaries and layered sovereignty" (Buzan & Diez 1999: 56). To date, as a political community in the making, it has developed the farthest reaching constitutional framework of any non-state polity.

Yet, its social foundations, the social processes beneath the constitutional framework which provide for its affective dimension and enable the development of a sense of belonging among its members, have to date been largely left out of view (for notable exceptions see Wiener 1998; Kuus 2014). In lieu of an enquiry into its social foundations, the EU has been said to rest firmly on its 'founding' norms and values, such as peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights (Schimmelfennig 2001; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Lucarelli & Manners 2006). In his seminal piece on *Normative Power Europe*, Ian Manners (2002: 241) has considered these to be "crucial constitutive factors determining [the EU's] international identity". The underlying problem, however, is that these have been taken as given and fixed. Manners

(2002) remains silent about the processes and means by which these norms have emerged in the first place and continuously help instantiate the EU over time. Consequently, due to his disregard of practices in the constitution of the EU community, he can neither make explicit the normative and affective dimension of practices that makes a community meaningful and a 'project' worth pursuing nor is he able to capture the contingency of the EU's normative grid.

The above outline demonstrates that the EU shares many of the features that are reflected in the broader paradox of global governance, albeit on a smaller, regional scale: while its constitutional structure is at an advanced stage of development and boasts high interdependencies among its constituent units, the Westphalian 'order of orders' no longer applies to the EU. However, it crucially differs from the global governance paradox in that there *is* an alternative normative grid that meaningfully holds the EU together – otherwise the EU would have faltered. The point is that its practice-based substance simply has not been unearthed and made visible yet. A reconstruction of the normative grid underlying the EU, that is, the meaningful background schemes that order its members' practices, could therefore provide tentative answers to how global governance institutions and principles can be furnished with a shared normative background. The EU, then, serves as a "laboratory" (Checkel 2005: 802) in which to enquire about the ways in which other culturally plural large-scale phenomena beyond the state sustain over time.

The overarching question that guides my empirical enquiry in this book is therefore: *what constitutes the EU community? What is the normative grid that makes the EU hang together and cohere over time?*[4] To discover the social constitution of the EU, I assert that the EU community must be viewed as a "structure of meaning-in-use" (Weldes & Saco 1996: 373; Weldes 1998: 218; Milliken 1999: 231; Wiener 2008, 2009) whose very normativity can be reconstructed by examining how the macro-social structure is negotiated and given meaning by its members practising it in smaller scale sites of interaction. This is possible as soon as we conceptualise the large-scale community of the EU as being layered into multiple, often overlapping 'communities of practice' that each reflects in its unique way the individual members' direct and local experience of belonging to the larger community. Consequently, I reconceptualise the EU as a "community of communities of practice" (Brown & Duguid 2001: 203; see also Bicchi 2011: 1119) whose normative background is located in the relationships among those people who mutually engage in a joint set of practices and establish a shared repertoire of communal resources in 'communities of practice'.

Along these lines, a collection of practices becomes the principal source of the EU's coherence. Practices 'house' the social and, as a consequence, the meaningfully shared constitutive rules that order members' actions and senses of belonging to the EU. Thus, the EU is perceived as a meaningful community because its members negotiate its normative makeup by perpetually appropriating it in their everyday life contexts *qua* practice. Hence, the background from which macro-structural entities become meaningful consists less of norms or formal rules and more of the reflexive quality of practice that both create the rules for

members' engagement and constitute the shared resources for the development of shared identification with the community. The EU then becomes a "community without unity" (Corlett 1989; Nicolini 2012: 94) in which order develops and senses of belonging emerge in the absence of a homogeneous 'we'.

To reconstruct the normative background against which the EU is experienced as meaningful, I explore EU diplomacy in Ukraine. Several works have analysed the diplomatic system of the EU as a non-state actor as well as the emergence of the EEAS, its inner workings and challenges in the post-Lisbon period (Carta 2012; Petrov et al. 2012; Kuus 2014; Koops & Macaj 2015; Spence & Bátora 2015; Bicchi & Bremberg 2018; Morgenstern-Pomorski 2018). Seldom have scholars of IR and EU studies looked beyond Brussels and examined how EU diplomacy takes place abroad (for exceptions see Austermann 2014; Bachmann 2016; Bicchi & Maurer 2018). Turning to the EU's neighbouring country Ukraine, therefore, provides novel insights into the EU's emerging diplomacy, for Ukraine is the site where both intra-EU diplomacy and the EU's external diplomacy towards Ukraine overlap. Apart from these empirical insights, analysing EU diplomacy in the borderland Ukraine also holds out the prospect of unearthing the constitutive rules of the EU community. Borders are the site where the inside of political entities is reproduced on the outside and where the members of a community experience their belonging to a community most intensely. More than this, borders are "sites of difference" (Abbott 1995: 862) in which categories of membership are most contested, and thus definitions of the 'inside' and 'outside' of community are most intensely negotiated. Consequently, if we pay attention to Ukraine as a 'site of difference', we can carve out the constitutive rule by which the EU succeeds in managing differences and reproducing its normative order vis-à-vis the bordering collectivity.

Based on a reconstructive analysis of interview data with field diplomats from the EU member states and the EEAS posted to Ukraine, I come to identify 'boundary work' as both the constitutive rule and communal resource that makes the EU cohere over time. It tackles the EU's internal and external challenges not to overcome boundaries, but to manage them without compromising on diversity. It is the generic term for a nexus of practitioners' boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing practices that negotiate the terms and conditions of EU membership and thus the boundaries between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the EU. For one, boundary-spanning practices are inclusive and integrative in that they further interdependencies across boundaries and create shared discourses based on coordination and cooperation. Boundary-drawing practices, in contrast, are exclusive in that a coherent 'inside' is sought to be created based on the differentiation from a constitutive outside. In a dynamic relationship, these two modes of boundary work perpetually instantiate the EU community in practitioners' immediate contexts of action. They come to constitute the normative background from which participants in 'communities of practice' conceive of themselves as members of the EU project. While the pertaining practices vary across time and space, boundary work remains the constant pattern or *leitmotif* that orients members' actions.

As I demonstrate in my case study on EU diplomacy in the neighbouring state Ukraine, key 'boundary workers' prove to be field diplomats from both the EU member states and the EEAS. As official representatives of the EU collective, they carry out the delicate balancing act of linking their diverse and potentially contradictory practices into a coherent assemblage that engenders like-mindedness among their 'community of practice'. This like-mindedness does not develop out of a set of higher order norms or values that are purportedly shared. Rather, it is the shared experience of jointly managing the diverse boundaries they are confronted with on the ground that generates a communal resource which orients the diplomats' actions in the field. Their developed repertoire of skills in, for instance, (in)formal coordination or creative problem-solving during crisis situations brings about regimes of mutual accountability and trust. The lived experience of boundary work hence creates a shared stock of knowing-in-practice that, in turn, constitutes an "act of belonging" (Wenger 2000: 238).

Boundary workers who have developed the practical knowledge and skills to travel in-between and translate between contexts of cultural difference arguably come to be the most critical agents, not only within the EU context. Within the wider context of global governance, I hold boundary workers to be vital in holding globally differentiated and geographically dispersed political entities together. They do more than just engage in the "mediation of estrangement" (Derian 1987), which involves the maintenance of order and peace by balancing diverse interests. Similarly to politicians or bureaucrats from national line ministries, they actively govern and shape political outcomes of global governance (Mitzen 2015; Sending et al. 2015b). Distinct from these actors, however, field diplomats as boundary workers exhibit greater sensibilities towards those individuals subject to a specific policy. Precisely because of their experience gained on the ground, they may contribute to more ethically oriented global governance.

6 The Content and Structure of the Book

The book opens in Chapter 2 by addressing the question of how researchers of the IR discipline can account for the concept of community in practical ways to make it empirically accessible. To that end, I start out by identifying the central *problématique* underlying most IR accounts of community beyond the state that requires to be redressed: Linklater's (1990) initially stated "problem of community" amounts to the "community problem' of the IR discipline. Extant accounts of community are identified to suffer from black-boxing the normative background from which community is made meaningful. A review of prominent IR accounts of community in beyond-the-state contexts reveals that the 'community problem' is rooted in the paradigm of modernity that, either explicitly or implicitly, guides the theoretical accounts of community. As a result, I find that they are unable to account for alternative forms of community that do not conform to the modernist inside/outside logic of seemingly stable entities with clear boundaries.

In an attempt to systematise the 'community problem', I highlight two forms in which the modernist paradigm penetrates accounts of community. Here,

I differentiate between macro-perspectives on community which enquire into the possibility and desirability of community and micro-perspectives which take a constructivist perspective and enquire into the ways in which community is constructed. As both perspectives either explicitly or implicitly presuppose a fixed normative background from which a common lifeworld[5] can be constructed, I come to juxtapose these accounts with an alternative, practice-based conception of community. Based on a process-based ontology and interpretive epistemology, I conceptualise community as the contingent result of infinite construction processes by groups of individuals. Whereas community does have a normative 'foundation' or background from which its members develop feelings of like-mindedness and senses of belonging, it remains entirely practice-based and therefore negotiated. Both macro- and micro-perspectives hence prove themselves to be futile as neither perspective is able to capture how macro-social structures are negotiated in micro-social interaction orders.

Chapter 3 further develops the question posed in Chapter 2 and asks how the social phenomenon of community is constituted as meaningful to its members. As a way to understand how members of community make sense of it, the chapter seeks to open the black box of a community's background by proposing a praxiological approach to the constitution of community. The approach is based on a rereading of Etienne Wenger's (1998) concept of 'communities of practice' that reflects three practice-theoretical themes by which the social constitution of community is underscored: first, building on international practice theory that identifies practice as the central 'unit of analysis', the approach suggests transcendence of the traditional dichotomy between macro-structures and micro-processes and follows the ethnomethodological argument that macro-structures always depend on their instantiation in micro-social contexts. 'Communities of practice' then become the prime context within which the researcher can make visible how large-scale phenomena like the EU are made sense of in everyday life settings of interaction. More specifically, macro-structural entities are given meaning in "constitutive orders of practice" (Rawls 2009) that produce the normative background of 'communities of practice' from which members think and act. The innovative move of drawing on ethnomethodological insights lies in foregrounding the reality that the normative background proves to be identical to the practices that evoke it. It highlights that practices are method, skill and resource at the same time.

Second, I seek to recover the identity-building aspect of 'communities of practice' by taking the normativity of practices seriously. To that end, I adopt a Wittgensteinian understanding of practice as "rule following" (Lechner & Frost 2018: 11) and combine it with Garfinkel's ethnomethodological take on constitutive rules to highlight that the normativity of practices precisely lies in their constitutive rules. As I argue, absent the incorporation of constitutive rules in the definition of practices, any praxiological framework cannot capture the social standards that define competent performances in the first place. By contrast, accounting for the social standards of excellence provides clues as to why members of a 'community of practice' bond over their mutual engagement and continue to see value in their joint enterprise.

Third, and finally, I suggest turning to the sites in which normativity is negotiated. As particularly dense sites of interaction, I come to detect boundaries, understood as 'sites of difference' (Abbott 1995: 862), as the principal location in which community is experienced as meaningful. It is here that diversity is possibly greatest so that political negotiation over the boundaries of community, its membership and identity compound. These negotiations allow the laying bare of the constitutive rules that make community.

Thus, based on the modified concept of 'communities of practice', Chapter 3 comes to elucidate that boundary practices are the constitutive rules that create senses of like-mindedness among members of a 'community of practice'. Subsumed under the term 'boundary work', an assemblage of practices of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing serves as the meaningful background scheme that ensures that the joint enterprise of (re)producing community is sustained and considered worth pursuing. In conclusion, the approach points to viewing the EU as a 'community of communities of practice' that is layered into multiple and overlapping sub-communities. Each of these sub-communities negotiates the terms of belonging to the larger community in its own ways. Yet, the constitutive rule of boundary work remains a constant in the ever-changing universe of practices.

Chapter 4 discusses the research strategy that matches the practice-theoretical approach developed in Chapter 3. By asking how we can tap the normative background of community, it seeks to provide concrete steps detailing how and where it can be reconstructed from practices. It proceeds from the ethnomethodological assumption that a community's normativity consists less of political or legal structures and more of socially meaningful patterns of rules that are (re)produced in interaction. Following ethnomethodological insights, then, a community's background knowledge proves itself 'visibilisable' despite its tacit nature. With regard to the EU community, I thus contend that its normative background can be deduced from its members engaging in 'communities of practice'.

The method by which the normative background can be discovered is 'the documentary method of interpretation'. Here, my approach is informed by the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel (1967) who deemed actions to be 'documents' that point to an "identical homologous pattern" that emerges as practitioners make their actions intelligible to one another (Garfinkel 1967: 78). Transferred to the case of the EU community, I come to hold that reconstructing diplomatic practices in Kyiv, Ukraine, enables me to identify the collective rules by which the large-scale EU community is instantiated. To the end of unearthing the 'homologous pattern' according to an abductive reasoning, I develop a strategy of 'zooming in' on practices from three interrelated perspectives: first, I suggest a turn to 'b/ordering sites' that I see as functioning as the testing ground for an otherwise latent order. Based thereon, Ukraine as the 'borderland' is chosen as the litmus test for the EU's internal coherence and viability. The second strategy advances a focus on the carriers of practices. I demonstrate that EU field diplomats are the most likely actors who can be considered representatives of the larger phenomenon of the EU. The final move suggests focusing on crisis moments during which tacit knowing is claimed to take on a particularly explicit quality. The reflexive

momentum reached during or shortly after crisis situations gives researchers the opportunity to tap into the now reified background knowledge.

Preceding the case study findings, I also provide insights into the intricacies of interviewing in light of praxiographic research that naturally requires ethnographic participant observation as the method of data generation. I then proceed with an overview of suitable interview questions for tapping background know-how, delineate the method of interview sampling and finally outline the method used to reconstruct the 'homologous pattern' of boundary work underlying the manifold practices of EU diplomats in Kyiv. The 'integrative basic technique of analysis' developed by sociologist Jan Kruse (2015) proves itself as the appropriate method when adopting an abductive research attitude. Its processual core consists of an iterative-cyclical process between an inductive phase of open coding and 'thick description' of gathered data, on the one hand, and a deductive phase that makes use of analytical heuristics as structuring elements.

Chapter 5 zooms in on the b/ordering site of Ukraine and provides detailed evidence for the empirical argument that EU field diplomats' boundary work forms the nexus of constitutive practices that composes the normative grid of the EU community. By way of a fourfold distinction of boundary practices developed earlier in Chapter 3 – boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing internal to the EU diplomatic 'community of practice' as well as external boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing – I present my findings as reconstructed from interviews with EU diplomats in Kyiv conducted in 2012 and 2014. I reveal that boundary work is anything but a harmonious and coherent undertaking, but a melange of sometimes contradictory practices in which multiple layers of belonging are exposed. Boundary work is established as a constant play on boundaries in which the practices of linking and demarcation compensate one another, thus never losing the overall balance. Ultimately, it is not substantial agreement among the diplomatic 'community of practice' in Kyiv that creates senses of like-mindedness, but the joint engagement in boundary work.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss my findings in light of the theoretical arguments and consolidate the work's major strengths as well as its overall contribution to the IR discipline. Following a self-reflexive review of the limitations of the book, I offer some proposals on how the argument could be evaluated and refined by further research.

Notes

1 I take this insight from the practice theorist Nicolini (2012: 94) who succinctly states: "It is the practice itself that provides the common background: [...] it is practice which performs community and not the other way around".
2 The ethos I have in mind resembles the "ethos of engagement" which William Connolly has propagated for plural democratic societies (see Macdonald 2002: 178–179).
3 Only more recently, Adler has acknowledged the importance of constitutive rules for anchoring practices to define and stabilise social entities (Adler 2019: 127). He directly bases his argument on Searle's definition of constitutive rules, though. For a Wittgensteinian approach to constitutive rules that diverges from Searle's see Frost and Lechner (2016); Lechner and Frost (2018: 19ff.).

4 Note that the similarity with Ruggie's (1998) lead question of 'What makes the world hang together?' is intended.
5 For a short explication of the 'lifeworld' concept see Chapter 2.

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2 The Community Problem of International Relations

1 Introduction

In this prelude, I lay the basis for the praxiological framework I develop in the ensuing Chapter 3. I engage in a critical review of prominent – by now classic – International Relations (IR) accounts of community in beyond-the-state contexts based on which I shall be able to explicate why the IR discipline needs a practice-based conception of community. To this end, I develop a simple heuristic along which different perspectives on community can be distinguished. Broadly differentiated along their varying scope and degree of abstraction, I distinguish between 'macro-social' and 'micro-social' analyses, outline their core claims, point to their weaknesses and reveal the paradigm of modernity feeding their normative assumptions[1].

Against this background, I conclude that the alleged *problem of community* in IR that has been so aptly detected by the critical theorist Andrew Linklater in his 1990 article essentially amounts to a *community problem of* the IR discipline[2]. As I shall argue, it has been during the course of enquiring into the possibility of community under conditions of anarchy that IR theorists have remained trapped in the *modernist paradigm* and thereby artificially fixed the foundations from which this order could ever be imagined to emerge in the first place. It is precisely this practice that I come to define as the *problématique* which has predisposed IR scholars to think of community in the binary logic of inside/domestic order vs. outside/international anarchy and has, in turn, prevented them from investigating the social foundations of order in the global realm. In contrast, a rigorous discussion of the social foundations of order beyond the state reveals that the allegedly preexisting 'inside'-order with fixed sovereign boundaries is, in fact, the result of infinite attempts at closing, which reveals the 'inside'-order to be the social outcome of practices of inclusion and exclusion that make order simply appear as meaningfully whole. Consequently, what seems as a given is only the temporary fixing of boundaries of a *negotiated order* among groups of individuals that happen to represent states (see Jackson & Nexon 1999a). When broken down into its constituent parts, however, this negotiated order looks much less like the formal aggregate order of the Westphalian state system and is rather characterised by pluralist and less formal forms of order that all too quickly escape

the social-scientific eye, that is, primarily informal social orders that emerge as groups of individuals interact in a given transnational context – be it diplomats, international lawyers, traders, brokers, humanitarian aid workers, representatives of non-governmental organisations and activists or even alleged 'terrorists'.

The inside/outside logic of modernity has come in two forms. In its most direct form, and usually found in macro-social accounts that focus on the systemic dimension of order, this logic has led theorists of international political thought to operate with ontological givens: they have not only rendered the modern state with territorially fixed boundaries a bounded container (Jackson & Nexon 1999b: 300) but also made it the only viable reference frame within which community may thrive. Through the spatial principle of the sovereign state, they have thereby determined a supposedly "original condition" of community to provide a 'definitive answer' as to where political community is possible at all (Walker 1993: 64). In its less overt form, and reflected in micro-social accounts that stress the situated, interaction-based quality of order, the question of the possibility of community is replaced by the question about the processes of its very construction. This reorientation analytically opens up towards capturing non-state forms of community that emerge beyond the confines of the sovereign state. Yet, even where the inside/outside logic is stripped of its territorial characteristics and the social ontology of community is acknowledged, it subtly carries the modernist paradigm through a positivist epistemology. Although the social foundation of communities is held to be intersubjectively defined, they are ultimately asocial because a social-scientific epistemology compels the researcher to identify an ultimate point of origin from which shared understandings and subsequent order can evolve: a predetermined set of socio-cultural beliefs and values that come in the form of a liberal democratic market economy. Any other form of (dis)order that is not the result of a reasoned 'contract' reached on the basis of the enlightenment belief in universality and progress, and which does not translate into formal institutions, operates outside that which is held to be possible and, as a consequence, remains invisible. Back we are to modernity's inside/outside logic embodied by the sovereign nation-state.

If IR scholars seek instead to explore ways in which community can be achieved in its concrete empirical form with a self-reflexive view of modernity's legacy, their research focus should shift away from both the normative question of the possibility of community and the ontological question of the processes of its social construction towards the methodological, indeed epistemological question, of how the *constitution* of community can be grasped empirically. So instead of giving *accounts of* community, practical ways of how to *account for* community must be found. This can only be accomplished if one is to problematise the social foundations of order since one would otherwise fall into the trap of reification, assuming the *a priori* being of 'things' (Jackson & Nexon 1999b: 299–301). As will be shown later in this chapter and the Chapter 3, I contend that a relational, process-based ontology and an interpretive epistemology help us grasp how the *constitution* of community resides in its infinite *construction* process by agentic practices (for Western relationalism in IR see Jackson & Nexon 2019; for interpretivism in

IR see Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012). A large-scale community is thus based on specific small-scale normative orders – I will come to call them the 'constitutive orders of practice' after Rawls (2009) (see Chapter 3) – that are not static, but require a constant instantiation of their members *qua* practice. Thus, it is practices that bring about these multiple normative orders that remain ever-emergent and can thus be regarded as negotiated orders. Unlike the implicit, yet profound modern normativity underlying traditional *accounts of* community, the understanding of normativity as negotiated during the course of agreeing on organising principles opens up the possibility to *account for* community that does not correspond to formal institutions, but instead comes in the guise of informality[3]. Irrespective of their operating below the surface of visible institutions, practices serve as a meaningful communal resource upon which individuals draw to make sense of their collectivity. It is thus negotiated orders of practice where the social resides.

Arguing, as I do, that practices both produce order and are instantiated structures in the sense of 'constitutive orders of practice' at the same time is not an attempt to reify community 'through the backdoor'. On the contrary, it seeks to bring to light the processual character of "things" (Onuf 1994). Once we realise that entities have no clear boundaries, but are instead the contingent result of boundary practices, the essentialist assumption of predefined boundaries inherent in the inside/outside logic can no longer be upheld. As I will make plain in Chapter 3, entities and their boundaries may appear as ontological givens, but only if researchers adopt a substantialist ontology and thereby dismiss those practices that make them look stable in the first place. Jackson and Nexon (1999b: 311) have illustrated the illusion of a fundamental given with the example of the "state-as-project". They proceed from Ruggie's (1993) claim that the idea of the territorially based sovereign state is in fact based on "two fundamental spatial demarcations: between public and private realms and between internal and external realms" (Jackson & Nexon 1999b: 308). However, in order to underline the intersubjective quality of the state project in time and space, they go even further and argue that

> […] the state project does not, in our view, *derive from* these demarcations of social space as much as it *produces and reproduces* them, by drawing and redrawing conceptual and territorial boundaries, declaring certain aspects of social life to fall within or outside the scope of state regulation, defining and enforcing standards of acceptable behavior for the 'subjects' (be they individuals, corporations, guilds, towns, subordinate administrative districts, or what have you) of a state, and so on.
> (Jackson & Nexon 1999b: 308, emphasis in the original)

Transferred to the case of community, then, it can be stated that both inclusive and exclusive practices enable communities and their boundaries to come into existence. While they may appear as primordial – and some advocates of foundationalism may conceptualise them so – it is boundary practices that create the seemingly stable divide between internal and external realms of community.

2 The 'Problem of Community'

In the following section, I map the field of extant IR accounts of community and propose a simple heuristic in the form of a coordinate system that distinguishes these diverse accounts along their different epistemic and ontological orientations; that is, their research questions and the respective scale chosen to explore the phenomena under question. Aware of the risk of either brushing over internal differences or ignoring hybrid forms, I use this heuristic as a categorical device to broadly distinguish between accounts of community that are primarily concerned with questions of the possibility and desirability of community and perspectives on community that deal with questions of their practical formation, that is, how they evolve and how shared understandings of a community's underlying norms and values are generated[4]. These I categorise as belonging to either macro-social perspectives (see Figure 2.1, area coloured in dark grey) and micro-social perspectives (see Figure 2.1, area coloured in light grey), respectively, to denote their primary focus on either aggregated units such as states or international organisations, or (face-to-face) interactions among individuals or groups.

   Two further lines of distinction help locate the diverse perspectives on community: first, the accounts differ in the variable degrees to which they make universal validity claims and are bolstered by strong formal institutions on the one hand or emphasise the situatedness of the respective knowledge claims made and focus on weaker, perhaps informal institutions on the other hand. These differences are shown on the y-axis in Figure 2.1. Second, the accounts vary in the extent to which they regard actors of collectivities to be bound by shared understandings or common values and norms; these differences I depict along the x-axis in Figure 2.1, ranging from thin to thick ethos.

2.1 Macro-Perspectives on Community in International Relations

In their review of the ways in which the concept of community has been employed by IR scholars, Vetterlein and Wiener (2013: 78) find surprisingly few studies on the nature and processes of community construction beyond the state. Rather, they argue, the concept has been centrally used as a "referent for the definition and validity of norms and rules of international order" (ibid., translation MH). This appears surprising at first, given the vivid cosmopolitan-communitarian debate throughout the 1990s and 2000s about the observed decline of the Westphalian state system and concomitantly emerging questions as to what principles should undergird new constellations of international order and what kind of political association beyond the state would be imaginable under conditions of anarchy (e.g. Brown 1992; Archibugi et al. 1998; Benhabib 2006; Held 2006). However, in IR, only few theorists have taken up the normative challenge to suggest alternative forms of political community that have redressed and cut across the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide. Those who have are most notably scholars working within the critical theory tradition[5] (Adler 2005: 8–11). Most others have continued to treat community as an analytical vehicle, if at all,
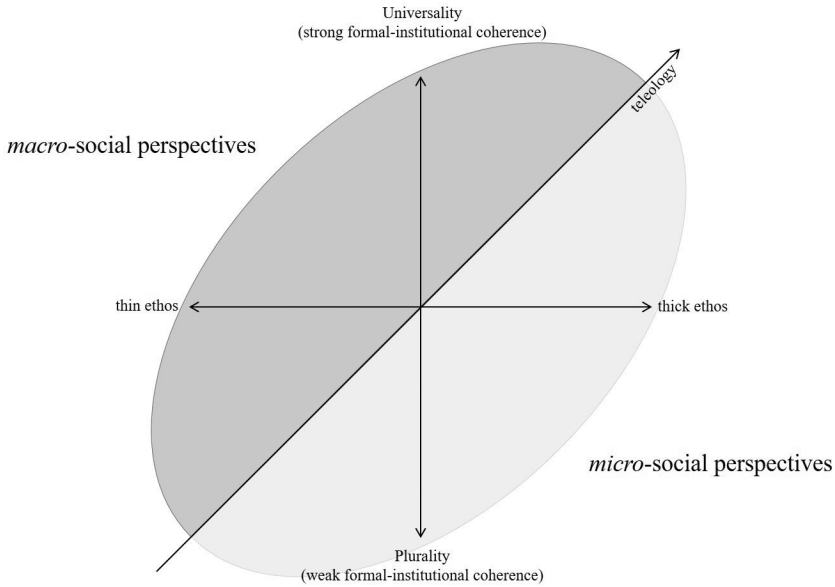
Figure 2.1 Macro-Social and Micro-Social Perspectives on Community in International Relations.

conducive to responding to the overriding paradox of international order in the absence of a shared culture.

Hedley Bull, and more broadly the English School, have been at the forefront of dealing with community through the prism of order, and have served, for reasons of viewing the international system/society as inherently social, as a source of inspiration or reference point for constructivist scholars (Finnemore 1996; Wendt 1999). Moreover, "many of Bull's central themes are echoed in a wide range of current approaches to IR that combine a concern for ethical principles with an analysis of the society of states as a product of historical practices"[6] (Walker 1993: 69). By developing the concept of 'international society', the English School has, in fact, presented itself as a *via media* between communitarian and cosmopolitan IR where its concept of a *society* of states "occup[ies] the middle position of a trip-tych, the other two elements of which are *system* and *community*" (Walker 1993: 69; Brown 2000: 91). In contrast to a 'system of states' that is "the product solely of an interplay of forces and devoid of any kind of normative content" (Brown 2000: 91), a 'society of states'[7] has been defined by Bull and Watson to be

> a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the

conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.

<div align="right">(cited in Buzan 1993: 330)</div>

While still not forming a 'world community', which is both norm-governed and entails states' shared commitment to common projects as well as a common identity, it is, nonetheless, undergirded by common norms and rules and aims at cooperation rather than mere coexistence.

Based on these distinctions, Bull has provided three macro-social visions of world order in his seminal work *The Anarchical Society*, that is, coexistence, cooperation and community. These can be classified or distinguished according to their respective unit of analysis, the relative degree of ethical reach and institutionalised interaction (see y-axis 'institutional coherence', Figure 2.1) as well as the extent to which a commonly shared ethos is present (see x-axis 'ethos', Figure 2.1). Each conception can be traced to a specific tradition of thought or forebears and has been roughly associated with a particular branch of contemporary IR theory. The two extreme positions are occupied by a Hobbesian system of states at one end of the spectrum and a Kantian or universalist idea of a "community of mankind" (sic!) at the other end. In between the two poles, Grotian conceptions of order can be located, albeit in varying forms, and it is here where international society is said to thrive.

As pertains to the Hobbesian or realist account (found in the lower left quadrant of the coordinate system, Figure 2.2), a 'system of states' exists, but power struggles among self-interested states determine their conduct in which the only moral goal pursued is that of the particular state (Bull 1977: 24). This vision is intimately reflected in IR neo-realist accounts and specifically associated with Waltz's structural realism. Based on a clear inside/outside dichotomy, community in the sense of unity and a common identity is only said to exist in the domestic realm; it is here where 'modern liberal community' resides (see Ashley 1987). Outside of it, a plurality of autonomous states is seen to prevail in the form of individual state 'communitarianism' where the balance of power, next to sovereignty, represents the basic systemic institution, lacking a common ethos.

The Grotian vision of order[8] fits squarely with that of the English School (found in the upper left quadrant of the coordinate system, Figure 2.2). It is here that International Society theorists situate the evolution of the constitutive principles of the society of states, for they identify interaction in the form of "diplomacy, trade, migration, and the movement of ideas" but also war as its underlying conditions (Buzan 1993: 331). This view is still state-centric, but due to states' "economic and social intercourse" they are arguably "bound by the rules and institutions of the society they form [...] [, that is, bound] not only by rules of prudence or expediency but also by imperatives of morality and law" (Bull 1977: 25). In its Vattelian or internationalist version, the interest of the individual state and bilateral relations still dominate but states have acknowledged that order requires rules of coexistence and cooperation (Simma & Paulus 1998: 270). This conception of order is similar to liberal utilitarian theories of complex interdependence
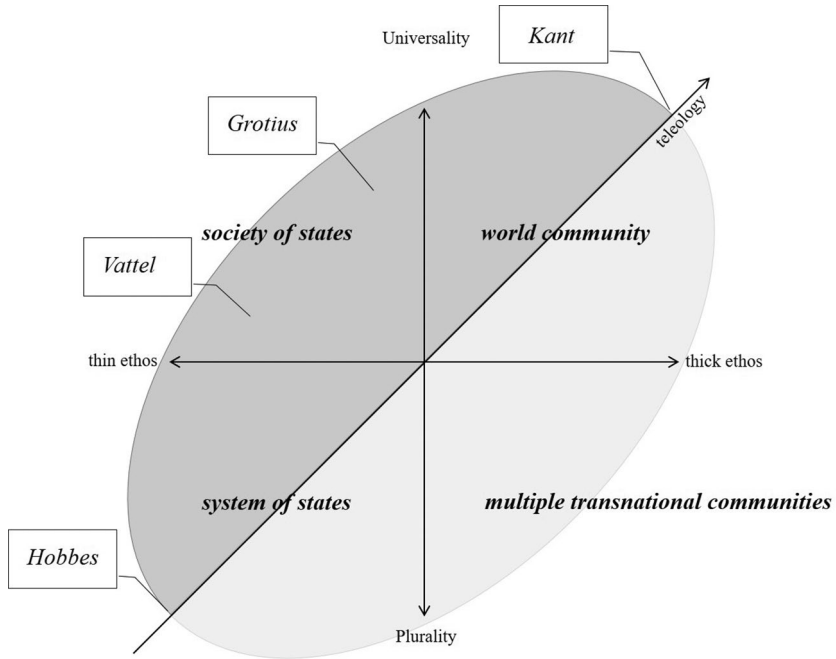
Figure 2.2 Different Versions of Order.

and regime-formation which are based on a functional or instrumentalist under-standing of statist conduct. Here, Walker (1993: 71) claims, ethical concerns are framed in either a "consequentialist consideration of means" or "a deontological [i.e. rule-based] pursuit of ultimate ends". The solidarist version of the Grotian vision, however, does not only accept but genuinely recognises the rules of coop-eration so that "common interests, the development of common values, and the creation of common institutions" can be realised (Simma & Paulus 1998: 271).

  At the opposite end of the spectrum (located in the upper right quadrant of Figure 2.2) Bull locates the Kantian or universalist idea of a "community of man-kind" (sic!) with the moral imperatives of replacing the system of states by a "cos-mopolitan society" (Bull 1977: 25). It is here that "transnational social bonds […] link the individual human beings who are the subjects or citizens of states" (ibid.: 24). In such a cosmopolitan society, Bull (ibid.: 81) imagines,

> individuals form or should form a society or community whose common interests or common good must qualify or even determine what their indi-vidual rights and duties are, just as the rights and duties of individuals within the state have in the past been qualified or determined by notions such as the good of the state, the greatest happiness of the greatest number of its citizens, or the general will.

While Bull (ibid.: 82) discarded this conception as nothing more than an "idea or myth" at the time of his writing in 1977, his threefold classification seems to have been guided by a clear teleological horizon. As Bull (ibid.: 304) himself explicates with a view to the future of international society, "the prospects for international society are bound up with the prospects of the cosmopolitan culture". Today, it is especially reflected in the 'solidarist' strand of the English School which, no less than cosmopolitanism, presupposes a progressive move from anarchy to global community. However, this 'global community' firmly rests within the confines of a modernist reference frame where the good for humanity as a 'whole' is seen best to be achieved by a society of states (Brown 2001: 428). It is precisely this spatio-temporal *telos* with universal aspirations which Walker (1993: 70, emphasis MH) cautions against when he summarises Bull's approach:

> Once one begins to analyse historical practices, to give an account of the emergence of norms and institutions and the constitution of a society of states, *the temptation is to explain these processes as a move from anarchy to community, from difference to identity, from Other to Same*. The road can be mapped as a spatial terrain. It goes from international anarchy outside to some kind of world order or global community predicated on the internal claims of the sovereign state. The road can also be mapped temporally, in which case we find ourselves engaged in the illicit trek from realism to idealism. The domestic analogy and idealism then come to serve as both temptation and prohibition.

Underlying this *telos*, however, is Bull's more particularist argument that "all historical international societies have had as one of their *foundations* a common culture", both intellectually and morally (Bull 1977: 304, emphasis MH). It is particularist because the common intellectual culture and values he identifies are all European in origin. It follows, then, that the actors of international society under conditions of anarchy are presumed to develop their conduct based on a previously enjoyed "degree of cultural unity" (Watson in Buzan 1993: 333). Eventually, while the English School claims the universal reach of international society, it comes down to a communitarian perspective that assumes a preexisting *Gemeinschaft*-form of international society, even though it has been Bull's explicit objective to explain the very emergence of norms and institutions constituting the society of states.

Barry Buzan (1993) has sought to provide a forceful alternative to accounts of an organic, culture-based evolution of international society. Based on sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' famous distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, he rejects its *Gemeinschaft* trajectory and instead proposes a functional *Gesellschaft* logic or 'contractual' mode of how society may evolve in the absence of a shared culture. Here, interaction is considered the key mechanism that stimulates the development of a society of states:

> Whether or not units share a common culture, at some point the regularity and intensity of their *interactions will virtually force the development of a degree*

> *of recognition and accommodation among them.* As ruling elites recognize the permanence and importance of the economic and strategic interdependence among their states, they will begin to work out rules for avoiding unwanted conflicts and for facilitating desired exchanges.
>
> (Buzan 1993: 334, emphasis MH)

While the idea that interaction plays a significant role in the evolution of community (or society in the English School terminology) is not the point of contention, it is Buzan's proposed motivation of states to interact with others that is asocial and thus problematic. In Buzan's (ibid.: 334) view a state's underlying motivation seems to be driven solely by a rational-individualist need for material gains as he argues that a "failure" to interact would, inter alia, result in a "potential loss of competitive advantage". Admittedly, he does consider Hedley Bull's view that the minimum necessary condition for an international society to emerge is the "common desire for order" (Buzan 1993: 334). This desire, however, appears born out of mutual self-interest rather than out of the norm of self-restraint (see Brown 2001: 428).

On a more fundamental level of critique, Buzan's functional account lacks a convincing explanation of how senses of belonging can be established so as to make an association socially cohere over time and develop institutions which aim at the common good (see Buzan 1993: 335–336). He accepts that senses of "we-ness" that transcend a mere commonality of shared goals are decisive not only in situations where states form a society because of their likeness, but also in contexts where recourse to a shared cultural background is absent. Nonetheless, as he discards the mere possibility for the latter constellation to become reality in the near future *a priori*, he only elaborates on the formation of a society of states within the context of "like-units" and therewith discredits his own line of argument (ibid.: 336).

In sum, two points of contention follow from this. First, even if we follow Buzan to the extent that *Gemeinschaft* is not a necessary condition for an international society to emerge, the functional *Gesellschaft* logic remains flawed because some element of common culture or identity is presupposed to be the origin for the emergence of a society of states. The evolution of community, and with it the development of a shared identity, therefore *precedes* the formation of society (Vetterlein & Wiener 2013: 80), for a common identity is seen as the precondition for society (Buzan 1993: 336). Ultimately, then, a society of states remains limited to a specific reference world which is that based on the *modern* conception of a territorially defined state. While Buzan claims that, in theory, such a society could originate in any "regional subsystem", his historical argument of the beginning of a society of states essentially rests on Europe and "the emergence of sovereignty as the basic principle of interstate relations"[9] (ibid.). Second, whereas the option of a shared identity to be based on a legal construction (that is, a set of common rules such as mutual recognition and legal equality) appears particularly attractive to avoid a communitarian understanding of a community of sovereign states, these rules remain to be *commonly understood*. Thus, when Buzan argues that a

shared identity is based on the "acceptance of a set of rules that legitimize the differentiation of units" (ibid.: 334), he is stuck for an answer as to what is left of a shared identity, if states' 'acceptance' of the rules turns out to significantly diverge in practice. The processes of how the meaning of these rules is produced in order to have a common understanding of what is 'acceptable' are not investigated. In the end, Buzan's historical structuralism is unable to enquire into "the meaning of rules" (Klabbers 2006) and therefore essentially lacks a conception of the social.

Above I have demonstrated how macro-social perspectives operate within a state-centric reference frame which forecloses accounting for the mere possibility of transnational forms of political community in beyond-the-state contexts. 'International society' is regarded as the only viable political framework within which community may thrive. This form of community, irrespective of whether it is functionally or communally derived, rests on Europe's "intellectual culture of *modernity*" (Bull 1977: 305, emphasis MH). Macro-social perspectives therefore suffer from a fundamental objectivism which presupposes the essence of entities; that is, the territorially defined 'state' and, as an extension thereof, 'international society'. By the mere extension rather than extinction of the state as the central unit, the binary division of international order into inside/outside is perpetuated. Consequently, the underlying normativity of such perspectives prescribes the universal validity of a modern liberal society as the given 'inside' without questioning its assumed unity and appropriateness in contexts outside of its original reference frame.

2.2 Micro-Perspectives on Community in International Relations

Micro-social perspectives have sought to squarely address the issue of objectivism by zooming in on the very processes of constructing political communities beyond state boundaries without reproducing the inside/outside logic. It follows that, formally, they abstain from making universal validity claims about their respective vision of community. In terms of scale, the geographical reach of the communities in question is either limited to a region or confined to a group of elites that is constituted in the process of, say, international negotiations. The degree to which such communal forms are paralleled by strong formal institutions therefore varies, and global politics are generally expected to reflect the global condition of pluralism, in which a multiplicity of transnational communities overlaps and crisscrosses one another (see lower right quadrant in Figure 2.2). Hence, all micro-social accounts of community can be placed on the lower part of the y-axis of Figures 2.1 and 2.2. Furthermore, since the approaches presented below more or less adopt constructivism's 'methodological holism' in that members' subjectivities are constituted through interaction and their identities are meaningful only within a given context, the chances of shared understandings and thus of a shared ethos are high (see lower right quadrant in Figures 2.1 and 2.2). However, as will be shown later in this section, micro-perspectives like macro-perspectives suffer from a modern liberal normativity; they are unable to see and explain the emergence of community outside of this liberal script. Despite their stress on processes

of emergence, then, the forms of community which they envisage to emerge are subject to a linear trajectory that can be traced back to a specifically modern conception of the conditions that enable a community's evolution.

In a pioneering work on 'security communities' Karl Deutsch and his associates (1957) have given an impressive account of how integration of previously independent political communities can come about. One of the major strengths of their 1957 publication *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* is its attempt to conceive of integration in processual (and thus dynamic) terms and its particular attention to the shifts in groups' and individuals' modes of belonging that occur along the transformation of formal community structures. It therefore departs from a narrow focus on inter-state relations and instead ascribes individuals and social groups, whose transnational actions transcend territorial boundaries, equal importance. Moreover, against the background assumption that political change is a constant condition of political and social life, this temporal dimension implies a conceptual shift from a one-sided focus on structural change to that on change grounded in a mutual conditioning of structure and agency. Modes of communication and transaction in the international sphere do not only transform the international system and help foster communities beyond the state, but these processes have an equal bearing on the behaviour and identities of both states and individuals. Interaction among multiple actors around core areas makes it possible to "think[] the unthinkable", in Adler & Barnett's (1998b: 3) words; that is, communities based on shared knowledge are able to create *senses* of community which are a

> matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of 'we-feeling,' trust, and mutual consideration; of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests; of mutually successful predictions of behaviour, and of cooperative action in accordance with it – in short, a matter of a perpetual dynamic process of mutual attention, communication, perception of needs, and responsiveness in the process of decision-making.
>
> (Deutsch et al. 1957: 36)

These early constructivist insights about the constitutive effect of interaction on shared intersubjectivity have represented an important step towards a more holistic perspective on community formation. Ultimately, however, it remained fruitless to the extent that Deutsch et al.'s (1957) approach was theoretically and conceptually difficult to apply to future studies. As Adler & Barnett (1998b: 8–9) point out in their seminal edited volume on *Security Communities*, the approach suffered from its behavioural methodology that "overlooked the social relations that are bound up with and generated by those interactions". Because of their focus on transactions, Deutsch et al. (1957) did not pay sufficient attention to the practices of political elites and individuals as well as their effects on the normative structure (Adler & Barnett 1998c: 43). Consequently, they were unable to uncover the intersubjective understandings of supposedly commonly held values that are essential for a "mutual predictability of behaviour" to emerge (see

Deutsch et al. 1957: 56). A related point of critique, echoing that on the English School tradition, pertains to the fact that Deutsch et al. seem to have presupposed a common stock of shared ideas and social institutions such as democracy and market economy, which in the end did not enable transaction but rather facilitated transaction among communities that already had an advanced knowledge of each other (Adler & Barnett 1998c: 40).

In their subsequent study on *Security Communities* almost 50 years later, Adler & Barnett (1998a) tried to rectify this bias by way of a modern constructivist approach. In order to examine whether a security community exists as a group of people that is "integrated to the point that they entertain 'dependable expectations of peaceful change'" (1998b: 7), the authors have significantly specified their conditions of emergence. They have, inter alia, asserted to illuminate those aspects on which Deutsch et al. (1957: 57) remained rather vague: without further specification the research group had argued, for instance, that introspection would lead individuals with distinct cultural backgrounds to correctly predict the behaviour of their neighbours sufficiently to develop a level of confidence and trust in them. In contrast, Adler and Barnett (1998c: 40) state, "we are interested in those cognitive structures that facilitate practices that are tied to the development of mutual trust and identity". Accordingly, they have capitalised on the importance of knowledge and social learning which helps actors to make sense of and manage their social world. Collective learning, understood as "an active process of redefinition or reinterpretation of reality", contributes to creating shared identities as the process involves individuals communicating "to each other their self-understandings, perceptions of reality, and their normative expectations" (Adler & Barnett 1998c: 43–44).

Even though Adler and Barnett (1998a) promisingly engage with the transformative potential of collective identities through transactions as to eventually converge on 'dependable expectations of peaceful change', they remain within an essentialist ontological framework. Following the functionalist integration logic that commonality is a question of substance that can be traced to a shared way of thinking or believing, they start out from specific cognitive properties of the actors. Even if this form of mental foundationalism is not as visibly apparent as its material manifestation in the territorially based state, the logic is similar to the inside/outside logic. As Jackson (2007: 39, emphasis MH) puts it, the logic underlying Adler & Barnett's approach "reasons *from the inside out*, from a preexisting consensus of some kind to various actions that are thought to arise out of that consensus". This logic, therefore, *a priori* excludes the possibility of "undecidability" – that is, a situation in which there are no *determining* precepts from which social action ensues, but only the practice itself that guides action through intersubjective meaning-making (Doty 1997: 374–376). Thus, it could be seen as a sign of critical self-reflection when Adler and Barnett (1998d: 434) admit in their concluding chapter of their edited volume that their process-based, yet path-dependent framework is too "linear" as to adequately capture the empirical complexities encountered across the cases examined. In the end, their positivist methodology, which expects to find general causal relationships between specific

independent variables and the dependent variable of security communities, falls short of truly overcoming Deutsch et al.'s (1957) behaviourism.

From a different constructivist research perspective that has relied on Jürgen Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action (TCA), the question of how it is possible that representatives of different states find agreement on norms in international negotiation settings has equally grappled with the mediating processes between subjective and intersubjective values. In the course of the so-called 'ZIB-Debatte'[10], that is, a debate primarily confined to a circle of German-speaking IR theorists in the German Journal of International Relations (*Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen - ZIB*) at the turn of the millennium, scholars like Harald Müller (1990; see also Müller 2004) and Thomas Risse (2000) have sought to apply insights from the TCA on how social relations across cultural boundaries can develop and eventually integrate into a common 'lifeworld' "from which actors can move on to refer to common experiences, develop shared understandings of history, and, thus, to develop a collective culture"[11] (Risse 2000: 16). A 'truth-seeking' exercise among a group of individuals by way of argumentative rationality is seen as to generate mutual understanding about the social facticity of norms and identities. In a free and rational debate among all actors affected, these actors are said to be open to being persuaded by the better argument. The conceptualisation of this "collective communicative process of interpretation" is thus held to provide the necessary micro-foundation for constructivism's metatheoretical claim of intersubjectively (re)produced structures of meaning (Lose 2001: 181). Because of its conceptual stress on communicative action as the mediating factor between agents and norms this 'logic of arguing' significantly departs from the determinist 'logic of appropriateness' and therefore promises to apply in contexts outside of culturally grown *Gemeinschaft*-type communities.

Yet, even Habermasian communicative action theorists presuppose a certain overlap of previously distinct lifeworlds as enabling communication between their members in the first place. "Otherwise", Lose (ibid.: 186) claims, "communication would not be possible as there would be no common understandings, or in Searle's words, no common horizons, to build upon". This overlap, however, requires a common logic of reasoning to reach consensus which is, in Lose's words, "founded on the fact that modern societies possess a *normativity* that is *modern* in the sense that it is self-referring and self-reflecting, and therefore can be subjected to the demand for consensus and collective interpretation" (ibid.: 187, emphasis MH). This last statement most patently demonstrates that common understanding depends on a particular reference frame and cannot be built from scratch. As Reus-Smit (2002: 494) points out, "[s]uch communicative action is never random, actors reason from agreed-upon precepts of action to establish collectively acceptable rules of conduct for the situation at hand". In the case of IR communicative action theorists, then, a universal claim is made for IR in more general terms which, however, fundamentally rest on a modernist understanding of sense making, that is rationality.

The assumption that TCA is universalisable because consensus has been reached by way of reference to some higher order principles is thus misleading.

The way in which individuals are presumed to reason and come to understand the negotiation setting, which constitutes the background from which negotiation is to proceed, is essentially a modern European way of reasoning. It could be considered somewhat ironic that Habermasian communicative action accounts can be criticised for their "lack of social placement" of actors in the ideal speech situation, while at the same time being convicted of cultural particularism, aligned with Western philosophical tradition of modernity (Neumann 1996: 146). However, it has less to do with irony than with Weber's 'paradox of modernity'[12] in which modernity must be seen as a project which self-righteously bases its universal validity and legitimacy on the social contract that has been found by reasoned consensus, even though it is culturally bound to and bounded by a specific temporal space.

3 The 'Community Problem' – and How to Cope with It

Having reviewed the above accounts, it appears that what started out as a *problem of community* in which the possibility of community was subjected to a primarily normatively grounded debate has, in fact, resulted in a *community problem of* the IR discipline in the course of empirically tracing its emergence in beyond-the-state contexts. Let me recall that macro-perspectives have grappled with the question as to what kind of order is possible, indeed desirable in the international realm, and micro-perspectives have sought to provide answers as to the very construction processes of political communities beyond the state. Despite their different points of departure, however, I have demonstrated that both perspectives share a modern epistemology of how the world, or more specifically, community *is to be known*, how it *is constituted* and what it *must become*.

 The paradigm of modernity, epitomised by the belief in reason, universality and progress, has had major implications on how IR scholars have conceived community. Even if community has not always been spatially limited to the sovereign state or, by extension, to the 'society of states', community has been temporally linked to modernity: micro-accounts have presupposed a specifically European point of origin, albeit under the guise of universal norms. R.B.J. Walker (1993: 53) has related this bias to the "epistemological turn" during the scientific revolution where the particular was soon to find its foundation in "universal principles of conduct that might guide rules and laws, cultures and institutions" from which absolute judgement about what was ethically tolerable became possible. Community has thus been presented and explained *as it is*; firmly objectified and separated from the agency of those (practitioners and scholars alike) who engage with it and make it meaningful in the first place.

 That, however, has been the major crux of the *community problem*. Let me qualify the argument. I consider it less of a problem – indeed no problem at all – that the theoretical accounts above are embedded in a specific normative frame. The reason for this is that I do take for granted the resonance of epistemological priors or 'background knowledge' in analytical concepts, since an interpretive epistemology implies that humans are entangled in and are (re)producers of what

Geertz has called 'webs of significance'[13] or webs of meaning; the social world I engage with has always been interpreted by someone else before me[14]. Background knowledge, meaning "intersubjective knowledge and discourse that adopt the form of human dispositions and practices" (Adler 2005: 20), therefore orients individuals' practices towards constructing and thereby making sense of the world. As Jackson (2006: 267) puts it with reference to Heidegger, "[i]nterpretation, whether it is being performed by the historical actors who are the objects of analysis or by the scholarly researcher carrying out that analysis, 'is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented' to the interpreter". Researchers and their subjects of enquiry are therefore inseparably linked in constructing the social world around them so that an 'objective' standpoint is impossible. There is no escape from the "situatedness" of the researcher; in all stages of the research process, researchers are shaped by and actively shape their research (Neumann & Neumann 2015).

In fact, approaches that acknowledge the epistemological principle of the social construction of knowledge as well as the ontological principle of the construction of social reality could be called 'communitarian', a label Adler (2005: xv) has propagated in his book *Communitarian International Relations*[15]. And even before Adler, whose suggestion seems to have fallen on deaf ears in the IR discipline[16], it was Richard Ashley (1987: 403) who had much earlier claimed that all critical social science[17] "must presuppose" the background of community. As he explained,

> [without] the community-shared background understandings, skills, and practical predispositions […] it would be impossible to interpret action, assign meaning, legitimate practices, empower agents, and constitute a differentiated, highly structured social reality. […] [C]ritical social scientists understand such shared background knowledge and skills to be '*the very ontological condition of human life in society as such*' (Giddens, 1976: 19). […] They are seen to provide the framework, symbolic resources, and practical strategies for the coordination and legitimation of action, the disciplining of resistance, and, hence, the historical production and differentiation of the community, its boundaries, its objects, and its subjective agents.
>
> (Ashley 1987: 403–404, emphasis MH)

Consequently, if there is something one could call an ontological 'foundation' of being, it is, in fact, the intersubjectively generated knowledge that humans share on an everyday basis with other members in specific communities. This knowledge comes to be the background from which they think and act.

The *problem of community* in IR amounts to a *community problem* of the IR discipline at the point where theoretical accounts fail to address the background from which the respective theorist subsequently envisions community and thereby makes it possible; it becomes a *community problem* when specific background knowledge is implicitly relied upon but glossed over so that the theorist's normative stance is not made explicit. The precarious result of this ordinary scientific

method is that in such instances the normative and empirical fall into one: that which *should be* is presented as that which *is*. As I have made plain, the accounts presented above reflect this logic as they imagine community from a seemingly Archimedean point where the research 'subject' is in clear distance from (or indeed absent from the account of) his or her 'object' and determines a community's point of origin or trajectory. Based on this Cartesian dualism, or what Jackson (2011: 31) calls "mind-world dualism", the inside/outside logic can fully unfold.

However, precisely because scholars cannot detach themselves from their own – however contingent – precepts as they are part of the truth they are constructing, their positivist epistemology is flawed. An interpretive epistemology, by contrast, invites researchers to contextualise their research, explicating the setting or research subject that guided it. This can be done by way of "thick description" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012: 47–48) or even "accidental ethnography" (Fujii 2015). An interpretive epistemology also advocates a researcher's own reflexivity on the basis of methods such as autoethnography (Brigg & Bleiker 2008; Doty 2010; Löwenheim 2010). On a much more general level, though, it acknowledges that the question about what the normative make-up of community or a given order's "ethical substance" (Tully 2008: 230) *should be* is always decided upon in the course of individuals' engaging with the world, and is ready to be re-evaluated through further practice. In other words, humans only come to know community through practicing and experiencing it. This epistemological principle implies an intimate relationship between the normative and the empirical, and thus suggests that normativity is never given but negotiated.

What does this mean for research on community in the IR discipline? It compels IR scholars to do 'communitarian' IR from a practice-theory driven perspective, which first and foremost requires acknowledging the negotiated order of 'things': it requires recognising that the *constitution* of community, and thus its normative quality, is bound up in the *construction* process of members participating in it. No *a priori* background such as a shared 'we'-identity based on a set of socio-cultural beliefs and values is needed. The engagement in practices is what provides the background of community. This is related to a second major theoretical reconceptualisation of community when taking a practice-based perspective: it requires recognising that the normative quality of this background is always implicit in the moral character of the practices themselves (Nicolini 2012: 84). According to neo-pragmatist Joseph Rouse (2007: 53), the reason for it is that

> […] normativity is not to be expressed in terms of governance by rules or de facto regularities in a community's behavior, values, or preferences. Normativity instead involves a complex pattern of interrelations among performances through time. Such performances are normative when they are directed toward one another as mutually accountable to common stakes, albeit stakes whose correct formulation is always at issue within the practice.

In the upshot, a community's normativity does not lie outside the interactions of practitioners but is present in participants' practical understanding of a

situation; simply because jointly *practising* means that participants are oriented "towards mutually recognizable ends and a communal sense of how things matter" (Nicolini 2012: 85). In the absence of the mutual intelligibility of practices, both practices and entities would not sustain and wither away.

So it follows that community is indeed undergirded by a rule-based order. However, rather than conceiving of it as a single and formally institutionalised order that rests on a set of codified rules or even culturally specific values, it is a myriad of 'constitutive orders of practice' that instantiate or organise the large-scale community. 'Constitutive orders of practice' are here understood in the ethnomethodological sense of order: as a set of 'rules' which are generalisable principles, procedures or, in Harold Garfinkel's (1967: vii) words, "members' methods" whose logical force is only generated in their local production[18] (A detailed elaboration of the 'constitutive orders of practice' follows in Chapter 3). Because they depend on their contextual reproduction to acquire meaning, these orders are never stable, but fragile and constantly emergent-becoming. Taken together, 'rules' applied in the enactment of situated practices come to constitute a 'background' structure *from which* 'members' of a practice make sense of and construct their communal environment. A community is thus constituted through (re)negotiated orders that themselves entail meaningful background schemes which orient members' practices in communities.

This ethnomethodological insight on the production of social order has crucial implications for how we conceptually approach political communities in beyond-the-state contexts. If the foundation of any community is, in fact, continually reproduced *qua* practice, and its meaning negotiated through interaction, it does not make sense to view the type of community under investigation in this book – the EU as the world's most institutionalised non-state political community – through *either* macro-social *or* micro-social lenses. On its own, neither perspective captures the simultaneity with which groups of individuals produce political community in their everyday practices and thereby give normative meaning to the more formally institutionalised structures of this political community. Neither one acknowledges how the aggregate order of community, abstracted from the microscopic encounters of individuals, is animated through the practices of agents in situated interactions. In turn, the perspective needed is one which acknowledges the mutual imbrication of the 'constitutive orders of practice' that take place in micro-social interaction processes and the aggregate orders of phenomena that attain a macro-structural status through their *use* in context.

Critical constructivists have referred to the latter orders as discursive "structures of meaning-in-use" because they are held to be intersubjectively shared structures that are socio-linguistically enacted by individuals (Weldes & Saco 1996: 373; Weldes 1998: 218; Milliken 1999: 231). Antje Wiener's (2008, 2009, 2014) subsequent adaptation of the concept to norms research is particularly insightful as her critique of scholars working within the frame of the liberal community assumption highlights how the normativity underlying norms cannot

be considered shared across socio-cultural contexts *a priori*. The reason lies in a norm's dual quality, implying that while a specific type of norm, say sovereignty, may have gained almost universal validity, its meaning varies depending on the spatial and temporal context within which it is embedded and interpreted. It follows that across time-space norms are subjected to diverse processes of negotiation so that their normativity is equally negotiated or, in Wiener's (2009: 179) words, "contested by default". Transferred to research on community, her insights point towards viewing the EU political community as a 'structure of meaning-in-use' whose very normativity can be reconstructed by enquiring into how the aggregate order is negotiated by those practicing it in interactional contexts.

The proposed way in which to address the social foundations of the EU community is now to develop the analytical and methodological toolkit that shall allow me to provide a contextualised view of the EU's macro-social structure by zooming in on the micro-social practices of its diplomats in a specific locality. This I will do by reconstructing the constitutive orders of diplomatic practice which perpetuate the EU community in its macro-social representations and hold the underlying 'rules' that make it possible. To that end, I will draw on Etienne Wenger's (1998, 2000; Wenger et al. 2002) conceptualisation of 'communities of practice' that serve as the observable medium through which the macro and micro are negotiated and connected (see Brown & Duguid 2001: 202). Wenger describes the interplay between the 'local' and 'global' with reference to learning in the following way: "It takes place in practice, but it defines a global context for its own locality" (Wenger 1998: 228). So, while Wenger ventures into analysing the experiential dimension of knowing in individuals' immediate local environment, he always sees it as inherently related to the macro – that is, related to abstracted, reified forms in the wider global realm. I deem this conception a particularly fruitful way to investigate the phenomenon of the EU community as its focus on socially shared practices-in-context bridges the artificially created macro-micro-social divide without necessarily prioritising the local or worse 'romanticising' it (Wenger 1998: 130).

The concept of 'communities of practice' is thus what I turn to in the next chapter. The discussion is embedded in the wider context of practice-oriented theories and the 'practice turn' in IR. A review of practice theories' core commitments will help situate Wenger's (1998) approach. As will be detailed, thus far neglected insights from ethnomethodology's understanding of practice will prove crucial in enriching IR debates about 'communities of practice': ethnomethodologists do not only consider the normative make-up of order residing in the practice of creating social order itself. They also provide ways of how to go about witnessing and reconstructing it by focusing on the situated everyday 'methods' or procedures of those practicing community in local settings. It therefore aligns closely with my main objective to account for and thus make visible those less formal practices of community members that, nonetheless, turn out to be the glue that holds the macro-social EU together.

Notes

 1 Note that I borrow the terms 'macro-social' and 'micro-social' from Coulter (2001)
   to stress that any phenomenon of international politics is at its root a *social*
   phenomenon.
 2 I here follow Wiener and Vetterlein (2011) who were the first to distinguish between
   the "problem of community" and the "community problem". The idea was expressed
   in an unpublished paper prepared for presentation at the *Young Researchers' Conference*
   "Liberalism: Causing or Resolving the Crises of Global Governance?" at Goethe Uni-
   versity, Frankfurt/Main, 3–6 February 2011. Unfortunately, their intriguing idea lost
   its poignancy in their later piece that was published in *Leviathan* (see Vetterlein and
   Wiener 2013).
 3 The idea of negotiated normativity stems from Wiener (2014: 64).
 4 Already in 2005, when Emanuel Adler first introduced the concept of 'communities of
   practice' in his monograph *Communitarian International Relations*, he made a similar
   distinction among differing community accounts; yet, he did so along the axes of 'nor-
   mative' *vs.* 'analytical', arguing in a footnote of his introductory chapter that

   > [w]hereas normative IR approaches raise questions primarily about the 'good and
   > just' international life and about the possibilities of moral communities evolving
   > beyond the state toward universality, analytic IR approaches focus mainly on the
   > explanation or hermeneutic understanding of social reality (including norms) and
   > on its ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications. Normative
   > theory and analytic theory are not incompatible, however, and have been success-
   > fully combined, primarily by critical theory.
   >
   > (Adler 2005: 259)

   At first glance, the distinction is surely convincing because the possibility of commu-
   nity beyond the state has been squarely addressed in the cosmopolitan-communitarian
   debate among normative IR theorists (Brown 1992). However, it loses its appeal as
   soon as one comes to realise the "subterranean normativity that motivates much of
   [supposedly analytical constructivist] work" (Reus-Smit 2002: 488–489). It follows that
   my abstaining from differentiating along normative/analytical lines is grounded in the
   observation that the notion of 'analytical' only obscures the implicit normativity, that
   is, universalist assumptions that underlie much of scholarly empirical IR research.
 5 In his work, Adler (2005) discusses the works of Richard Ashley, Mervyn Frost,
   Andrew Linklater, Mark Neufeld and Richard Shapcott. I would most certainly add
   R.B.J. Walker and William Connolly as two further antifoundationalist thinkers who
   by way of reference to post-structuralism have been at the forefront of questioning the
   sovereign state as the epicentre of community and have particularly criticised positiv-
   ism for its 'foundations' in Enlightenment thought. Especially Walker's (1993) *Inside/
   Outside* has influenced my critique of modern IR's theorising of community. A look
   outside of the IR 'box', however, shows that antifoundationalist approaches to commu-
   nity formation are not as exclusive as suggested; see, for example, Benedict Anderson's
   (2006, c1983) or Eric Hobsbawm's (2003, c1983) more historical studies focusing on the
   nation. In anthropology, Anthony Cohen (1985) has provided a valuable alternative
   to structural-functionalist accounts with his work on *The Symbolic Construction of
   Community*.
 6 Walker lists the work of a group of scholars as heterogeneous as Richard Ashley, James
   Der Derian, Friedrich Kratochwil, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Onuf. However, see also
   Albert, Brock & Wolf (2000) in which the authors have particularly taken issue with
   the English School's notion of 'world society' by drawing on insights from classical
   sociological thought.
 7 It must be noted that it is difficult to pinpoint which understanding of the term 'soci-
   ety' underlies the English School's use of 'international society'. Brown (2001: 427),
   for instance, contends that it uses 'society' in a much looser sense than sociology

does – the latter mostly focusing on individuals rather than states. Accordingly, "usually, the 'society of states' means little more than an association of states whose mutual relationships are norm-governed – perhaps a 'club of states' would be a better formulation". Yet, in his 1993 article, Buzan argues the opposite, directly making reference to Ferdinand Tönnies's famous distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* forms of association as to explicate the understanding of society from an English School perspective. While Buzan (1993) concludes that the more functional, contract-based *Gesellschaft* notion of society fits best to analyse contemporary 'international society', diverse usages of society remain present in the school (the same applies to sociology, of course). This ambiguity may be based on the English School's own plurality, being broadly divided into the 'pluralist' and 'solidarist' strands of thought. Their understanding of the substance of international society varies significantly. Specifically the Grotian conception, Bull argues, is separated into

> those who see international society as bound together in solidarity by common values and purposes and those who hold that states have a plurality of different purposes and that international society rests solely on the observance of common rules of coexistence.
>
> (Reus-Smit 2002: 497)

8 Please note the distinctions present in the Grotian conception of international society (see Bull 1977: 25, especially footnote 3) and the internal divisions of the English School itself. The latter is regarded as being divided between pluralists and solidarists, between those who have considered 'international society' taking ontological priority in international politics and those who acknowledge the desirability and indeed presence of transnational solidarity, and finally between scholars who either adopt a positivist or more interpretive methodology (Reus-Smit 2002).

9 See however Buzan's more recent attempt together with Amitav Acharya in *The Making of Global International Relations* to look beyond Western thought and its core concepts "sovereignty, territoriality, international anarchy, war and international society" (Acharya & Buzan 2019: 3). The authors seek to explore ways in which a Global International Society (GIS) can be constructed under conditions of *deep pluralism*, characterised by "a diffuse distribution of power, wealth and cultural authority, set within a strongly integrated and interdependent system, in which there is a significant move towards a GIS in which both states and non-state actors play substantial roles" (ibid.: 265).

10 See Risse (2003) for a summary and Deitelhoff (2006) for the most advanced translation of Habermas's discourse theory into the realm of global governance.

11 In Müller's (2001) terms, Habermas understands 'lifeworld', that is *Lebenswelt*, "as the *sum* of shared, inherited experience, a culturally inherited store of models of interpretation that is organised through language. [...] [T]he lifeworld *as a whole* serves as an *unquestioned background* and provides the *shared* assumptions for the principles accepted as validity grounds" during the discursive intervention (Müller 2001: 162, emphasis MH). The lifeworld concept must be distinguished from an *individual's* non-representational cultural background information which, in Pouliot's (2008: 258) words, is "the inarticulate know-how from which reflexive and intentional deliberation becomes possible".

12 For a detailed elaboration of Weber's two-sided notion of modernity see Walker 1993: 54ff.

13 What Geertz describes here is the contested term of culture. Drawing on Weber, he believes

> that man [sic!] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun [so that he] take[s] culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.
>
> (Geertz 2000: 5)

14 See Sigmund Freud's famous quote "Everywhere I go, I find a poet has been there before me" (quoted in Doty 2010: 1047).
15 See Guzzini's (2000) reconstruction of constructivism from which Adler takes these two principles.
16 It is surprising that the prefix has to date not resonated more widely in the IR discipline. The reluctance on the part of German-speaking IR theorists could be explained by the term's "political instrumentalizations" during National Socialism or in the German Democratic Republic (Richter 2000: 77). However, it is less explicable in the case of, for instance, the Anglo-American IR community since the term has chiefly been positively connoted in both academic and political debates (ibid.: 77–78).
17 According to Ashley (1987: 403), the following scholars have been considered to conduct 'critical' social science as they have presupposed a background knowledge from which humans come to understand the world (in chronological order): Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Thomas Kuhn, Michel Foucault, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu.
18 Note the striking similarity with Giddens' (1984: 21) process-oriented understanding of rules as "techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices", even though ethnomethodological research has deemed his 'grand theorising' too structuralist (Berard 2005: 200).

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3 'Communities of Practice'
Illuminating the Constitutive Rules of Community

1 Introduction

> We all belong to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school, in
> our hobbies – we belong to several communities of practice at any given time.
> And the communities of practice to which we belong change over the course
> of our lives. In fact, communities of practice are everywhere. […] They are so
> informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus […].
>
> (Wenger 1998: 7–8)

In the previous chapter, I showed that the problem haunting most accounts of
community – irrespective of whether they take a macro-social or micro-social
perspective – is that they presuppose a given community whose normative back-
drop remains unexplained and is taken as the invisible point of departure for
further studies on cooperation, integration or expansion. As a response to this,
I have suggested taking a step back in order to squarely address the question of
what constitutes community. *In other words, what holds community together and
makes it cohere over time?* I made the case for a practice-based approach to com-
munity to highlight the fact that a community's 'nature' is not predetermined or
fixed, but the contingent result of processes by which its members negotiate the
meaning of its constitutional properties and boundaries *qua* practice. This led
me to contend that the orthodox divide in social theory between macro-social
and micro-social perspectives on community is methodologically unrewarding, if
a community's normative makeup is, in fact, produced and reproduced through
its members' engagement in practices. I came to the conclusion that large-scale
formations such as communities should hence be conceived of as 'structures of
meaning-in-use', for their macro-structural properties are instantiated and made
sense of through *practicing* community in various micro-social contexts.

   In the present chapter, it is my objective to furnish this argument with a fully
fledged praxiology of community for the IR discipline. To that end, I will draw
on the 'communities of practice' approach, which was first developed in social
anthropology by Jean Lave together with her former student Etienne Wenger in
their 1991 book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* and later
translated into the IR discipline by Emanuel Adler's (2005) *Communitarian*

International Relations. Building especially on Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Adler sought to shed light on those informal groups of practitioners that, by way of shared practices across national borders, constitute the principal "vehicles" through which international social orders develop and stabilise (Adler 2019: 2). By now, Bueger and Gadinger (2018: 30–31) have ranked the 'communities of practice' framework as one of the "key approaches" in international practice theory. As the framework is continuing to rally a growing number of IR followers in light of the rise of the discipline's 'practice turn', the landscape of transnational 'communities of practice' identified in the global realm is becoming increasingly diverse, ranging from tightly knit diplomatic 'communities of practice' in international and regional 'security communities' (Adler 2008; Bicchi 2016; Bremberg 2016; Davies 2016; Hofius 2016; Glas 2018) to looser and more nascent inter-communal arrangements that move beyond statist and formally institutionalised forms of cooperation, for instance, in humanitarianism or even piracy (Bueger 2013a; Græger 2016; Barnett 2018).

Over time, the concept has travelled immensely – from social anthropology and education over sociology and management studies to law and political science. In IR, various practice-oriented scholars have tailored the concept to an IR audience by clarifying its added value for IR theorising more broadly, and for advancing the 'practice turn' in particular (Adler 2005, 2008; Adler & Pouliot 2011b; Bicchi & Bremberg 2016; Bicchi 2022). Yet, as the approach is becoming ever more popularised, the danger is growing that scholars mechanically apply its analytical features to a case and thereby reify the concept. In fact, already in 2010 Wenger warned that "[t]he concept has been adopted and used in ways that are not always consistent with its origins and the diversity of adoption means that the concept is in some sense 'out of control'" (Wenger 2010: 192). While I embrace the diversity with which IR has adopted the framework, the danger of cooptation and instrumentalisation is real, especially in light of the trend in international practice theory to rid practices of their socially meaningful content, even moral character, and instead mistake them for merely regularised patterns of action (see Section 4.2 below).

To obviate this risk, the present chapter aims at elucidating some of its key dimensions that either got lost in translation, or, for reasons of disciplinary narrowing of the practice concept in IR, led to a dilution of Wenger's original take. Without doubt, I will engage in a revision of the concept, for any theorising means engaging in a "creative activity" (Lizardo quoted in Bueger 2022: 56). However, in presenting a praxiology of community that attends to some of IR theory's key problems of analysing the emergence and stability of order, I seek to remain truthful to Wenger's original spirit when devising the 'communities of practice' approach. I will reread the framework in three steps: first, I will provide the conceptual vocabulary to better comprehend and make visible how 'communities of practice' present an intermediary space between macro-social structures and micro-social interaction context. While this conceptualisation has been implicit in earlier practice-theoretical writings (Adler 2005: 13; Adler & Pouliot 2011a: 17), my ethnomethodological reading of the production of social order through

'communities of practice' clarifies that meaning evolves and is negotiated in 'constitutive orders of practice', but is nonetheless intimately tied to macro-structural phenomena. 'Constitutive orders of practice' instantiate and organise large-scale communities.

What value does such a view on order have for IR? The intermediary position taken by 'communities of practice' between macro-social and micro-social accounts of community is especially useful for studies of transnational relations that take place in beyond-the-state contexts that have traditionally been defined as culturally diverse. For one, while global governance is regulated by an increasingly dense network of international organisations, the resulting legal frameworks most often lack the normative and affective ground for identifying or complying with them as they do not have at their disposal a shared normative background from which to make sense of them. 'Communities of practice' fill this void by allowing for sociality to emerge in the absence of a homogeneous 'we'. Since the primary source of coherence of 'communities of practice' is practice, 'communities of practice' unfold wherever human agents mutually engage in joint enterprises. Bound together by a shared sense of these projects, the recurrent interaction over time leads to sustained relationships and can produce a shared repertoire of communal resources, which help maintain the community.

In a second step, I extend my ethnomethodological take on social order production and furnish it with a Wittgensteinian understanding of practices as rule following. Together, these perspectives not only foreground that the normative background of community is always implicit in the moral character of its constituent practices. They also highlight that for a practice to be social, it must be grounded in constitutive rules that meaningfully guide participants in a practice. Rather than abstract and explicit rules, these constitutive rules represent contextualised standards of excellence that help individuals identify which action is appropriate or competent in a given situation. Zooming in on the concrete contexts within which everyday practices are carried out therefore promises to unveil the meaningful background schemes that make a community cohere. These contexts hold the key to the resources for collective processes of identity-making.

In a final step, I advocate turning to the boundaries of 'communities of practice' to zoom in on those localities in which a community's underpinnings – its constitutive rules – are most intensely experienced and, as a result, become visible. Even though the "locality" and "sitedness" of practices has already been emphasised by practice-theoretical scholars (Neumann 2013: 1–7; Bicchi & Bremberg 2016: 394–395; Bicchi 2022: 28), they have paid little attention to the boundaries of 'communities of practice' as distinct sites. However, different from the centre of a given community, it is at the boundaries that the background knowledge of community members in unearthed. Due to the boundary encounter with the Other, it is here that the constitutive rules of the Self must be continuously reenacted to stabilise the community. As will become plain, it is here that boundary work turns out to be the constitutive rule of community.

What implications does the above rereading have for my empirical case of the EU political community? Consistent with the 'communities of practice' approach,

I suggest that the EU is conceived of as a meaningful community because its members negotiate its normative make-up by perpetually appropriating it in their everyday life contexts through practice. The background from which macro-structural entities become meaningful thus consists of the reflexive quality of practice that both creates the rules for members' engagement and constitutes the shared resources for the development of shared identification with the community. Conceived as primarily informal and local social structures of meaning, 'communities of practice' are the context in which modes of belonging to a larger community are negotiated through the enactment and reification of shared practices. As a consequence, the EU must be understood as a 'structure of meaning-in-use', layered into multiple, overlapping 'communities of practice' that all reflect in their diverse ways the individual members' direct and local experience of belonging to the larger community (Wenger 1998: 243). This calls for reconceptualising the EU as a "community of communities of practice" (Brown & Duguid 2001: 203; see also Bicchi 2011: 1119) that underlies no single overarching order, but has at its disposal multiple realities in different sites of interaction. The EU then becomes a "community without unity" that is, however, held together through boundary work[1].

2 Positioning 'Communities of Practice' in the Wider Space of Practice Theory

2.1 (Re)Turning to Practice in Contemporary Social Theory

One of the main points of contention in contemporary social theory has been the ontological question as to what the social world consists of. Is it made up of stable social 'entities' or rather process and practice? The answer is most often divided into *substantialism*, which holds that 'things' exist before or precede interaction, or *relationalism*, which posits that "recurrent sociocultural interaction" is what makes entities in the first place so that the world is better described by means of an ongoing process of relations between various aggregates (Jackson & Nexon 1999: 291–292).

Since the early 2000s, a growing group of scholars across the social sciences has 'turned' (Schatzki et al. 2001) to practice as the central unit of analysis. For such a practice-oriented programme is not new and "part of a larger family of relational social theory" (Jackson & Nexon 2019: 583), however, it might, in fact, be more suitable to say that the social sciences have "re-turned" to analysing practice (Miettinen et al. 2009). Classical pragmatists like Dewey, James, Mead and Peirce have been identified as the vanguards of contemporary practice theory – at least when viewed in light of one of its two major traditions, that is, pragmatism (Bueger & Gadinger 2015: 454–455). In its current form, however, it has particularly regained momentum through the reliance on a group of late twentieth century sociologists and social theorists – including Foucault, Garfinkel, Giddens and Goffman, but with Bourdieu leading the way – who believed that the world we live in is the contingent result of a nexus of practices (Miettinen et al. 2009: 1312).

Even the most durable features of social life, such as order, institutions, community or their boundaries, these theorists viewed as essentially socially constructed.

2.2 The 'Practice Turn' in International Relations Theory

In the IR discipline, it was especially Emanuel Adler together with Vincent Pouliot who seized the so-called practice turn (Pouliot 2008, 2010; Adler & Pouliot 2011b), even though IR scholars had referred to the ontological value of practices much earlier. This was achieved either through a constructivist lens drawing on Anthony Giddens' work (Wendt 1992) or that of Pierre Bourdieu (Guzzini 2000), through a post-structuralist lens primarily drawing on Michel Foucault (Der Derian 1987; Doty 1997) or through lenses adopted by others who returned to the philosophy of language, most prominently represented by Wittgenstein (Fierke 1998; Neumann 2002). That said, it has been Adler and Pouliot (2011c: 3) who most notably claim practices as ontologically prior to both structure and agency and take them as the point of departure to "explain and understand how world politics actually works, that is, *in* practice". While the two authors did not aim at developing "the universal grand theory or totalizing ontology of everything social" (Adler & Pouliot 2011c: 2), they have nonetheless been part of, or indeed leading, an *ontological project*. This bold argument seems warranted since all practice theories "are fundamentally ontological projects in the sense that they attempt to provide a new vocabulary to describe the world and to populate the world with specific 'units of analysis'; that is practice", Davide Nicolini (2012: 9) reminds us. Since the advent of IR's 'practice turn' in the later 2000s, multiple IR scholars have jumped on the bandwagon of practice-based theories to take part in enriching this vibrant intellectual space by either fully embracing or advancing the 'practice turn' through constructive critique (Bueger & Gadinger 2008, 2015, 2018; Adler-Nissen 2013; Ringmar 2014; Schindler & Wille 2015, 2019; Adler-Nissen 2016; Kustermans 2016; Cornut 2017; Hopf 2018; Wille 2018).

With regard to its overall theoretical contribution to the IR discipline, the 'practice turn' has made important inroads into highlighting the social and informal foundations of order that lie beneath the formal foundations of politico-legal institutions. By foregrounding the tacit, embodied and commonsensical dimensions of knowing and acting that meaningfully guide human action, "practice turners", as Cornut (2017) calls them, have both exposed the "representational bias" (Pouliot 2008: 260–265) of social and IR theory and dispelled the myth of formality pervading political science sub-disciplines (Bueger & Gadinger 2014). With special regard to EU studies, for instance, Adler-Nissen (2016: 89) has highlighted that for too long European integration theorists "focused on the institutional and regulatory dimensions of the EU system", while ignoring the more mundane processes of the everyday that keep the EU machinery up and running.

In retrospect, the rise of constructivism in both IR and EU studies at the end of the 1990s had paved the way for the 'practice turn'. Yet, it did not succeed in fully breaking with the representational bias and preference to study formal institutions. Writing at the turn of the past millennium, constructivists studying

the emerging non-state polity of the EU from an IR perspective changed the ontological coordinates of an entire sub-discipline by foregrounding "the social construction of Europe" (Christiansen et al. 1999). In doing so, they triggered a wealth of research on the role of norms, rules and identity-building processes in the advancement of the European integration project – be it through EU member states' 'rhetorical entrapment' during the EU's 'big bang' Eastern enlargement (Schimmelfennig 2000, 2001), through socialisation within the EU's institutional apparatus (Laffan 2004; Beyers 2005; Checkel 2005; Lewis 2005), or through the Europeanisation of the EU's member states (Cowles et al. 2001; Featherstone & Radaelli 2003). Yet, while ground-breaking at the time, this strand of research remained focused on the ideational dimension of norms and, relatedly, wedded to constructivism's then still widespread assumption that agents are norm-conforming animals, even 'judgemental dopes', who comply with norms according to a 'logic of appropriateness' (March & Olsen 1998; Checkel 2001, 2005; Müller 2004; critically, see Wiener 2004, 2008; Pouliot 2008).

Despite the persistence of this representational bias, the idea that norms and rules entail stable social scripts that, once internalised, shape and regulate human behaviour according to a 'logic of appropriateness' developed a significant staying power. In the guise of what Wiener (2004: 192) has called the "liberal community thesis", constructivist-leaning scholars never questioned the very normative background of communities developing in beyond-the-state contexts. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, such accounts of community posited that a set of norms or values constitutes the bedrock of community by its 'immanent' force, be it that of 'international society', a community of 'liberal states' or that of a 'civilised community' of states (see Franck 1990; Slaughter 1995; Jepperson et al. 1996; Risse-Kappen et al. 1999; Risse 2000). With respect to studies on the EU, most accounts have traced – and continue to trace – the EU's normative backdrop to its 'founding' norms and values such as peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights (Schimmelfennig 2000, 2001; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Lucarelli & Manners 2006). No other scholar has argued this more forcefully than Ian Manners (2002: 241) in his widely cited piece on *Normative Power Europe* where the above norms are held to be the "crucial constitutive factors determining its international identity". Yet, Manners' (2002) approach is paradigmatic of the failure of norm-oriented IR approaches to properly account for the work which is involved in instantiating and enacting the norms undergirding political communities beyond the state in the first place.

In light of the inability of norm-oriented constructivism to enquire into the practical foundations of transnational communities, international practice theory has provided a forceful alternative. First, at the epistemological level, international practice theorists have foregrounded the centrality of practical reasoning. Reasoning is neither directed towards some higher order value nor abstracted from a historical performance that is followed somewhat mechanically. Humans, as Pouliot (2008) has seminally demonstrated, rather follow a "logic of practicality". Intention does not only precariously emerge from the social order that is created in the very course of social interaction. Human action also unfolds against

the often inarticulate background of a "stock of unspoken know-how learned in and through practice and from which conscious deliberation and action become possible" (Pouliot 2008: 270). In contrast to both a 'logic of consequences' and 'appropriateness', then, the knowledge from which people act is practical and primarily unconscious, not representational and consciously acted out on the world (ibid.: 271). At the ontological level, the focus on experiential knowing is matched by the interest in the very evolution of (formal) institutions. A core argument of IR practice theorists is therefore that the constitution of these institutions is dependent on and shaped by practitioners' *everyday experience* of working in them (Adler-Nissen 2016: 91–92; Bicchi 2016: 462). Accordingly, practice turners advocate more people-centred and micro-political accounts of the emergence and change of formal institutions (see Kuus 2013: 117). Identifying and zooming in on distinct 'communities of practice' then becomes a key strategy towards uncovering the implicit and practical "know-how" orienting people in their social constructions of reality and, hence, of political institutions (Pouliot 2008: 266–267).

2.3 'Communities of Practice' in International Practice Theory

Since Emanuel Adler introduced the 'communities of practice' approach to the IR discipline in 2005 with his book *Communitarian International Relations*, the framework has ascended to the rank of one of the "core approaches" in international practice theory (Bueger & Gadinger 2018: 30). Adler, one of the leading IR constructivists of our time and pioneer of the 'practice turn' in IR, initially found value in the 'communities of practice' approach to capture those transnational communal arrangements in the global realm that would otherwise go unnoticed and fall through the cracks of orthodox state-centred IR theory, that is, all those non-state, supra- and sub-state agents that "mediate between state, individuals, and human agency, on the one hand, and social structures and systems, on the other" (Adler 2005: 13). As a an umbrella term for other communal and network formations in IR – for example, 'epistemic communities', 'security communities' and 'transnational advocacy networks' – he has identified 'communities of practice' as "one of the leading ontological factors in the study of IR" (ibid.: 3). While the concept of 'communities of practice' had originally been coined by Lave and Wenger in 1991 to primarily capture the interactions between domestic groups of people, it was Adler who scaled up the concept, arguing

> [t]here is no reason why we should not be able to identify transnational or even global communities of practice. The closer we get to the level of practices, in fact, the more we can take the international system as a collection of communities of practice; for example, communities of diplomats, of traders, of environmentalists, and of human-rights activists.
>
> (Adler 2005: 14)

Adler employed the concept as part of his broader move of advocating a "communitarian IR" to account for the "community-shared background understandings,

skills, and practical predispositions" (Ashley cited in Adler 2005: 3) that enable meaningful action and make possible an intersubjectively shared lifeworld. Following Adler, 'communities of practices' are those loci within which such background knowledge evolves to shape our conceptions of social reality (ibid.). "More specifically", he detailed with reference to a definition given by Wenger et al. (2002),

> they are a configuration of a *domain of knowledge*, which constitutes like-mindedness, a *community of people*, which "creates the social fabric of learning," and a *shared practice*, which embodies "the knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains".
>
> (Adler 2005: 14, emphasis in original)

As a result, studying 'communities of practice' in IR holds out the prospect of learning about the key drivers and mechanisms not only of transnational life as such but also of the social foundations of the global system and its institutions. In short, their study is vital for understanding what factors contribute to "world ordering" (Adler 2019) below the surface of formal institutions.

Adler's (2005) call for IR to take a 'communitarian turn' initially fell on deaf ears and only gained momentum in the wake of the 'practice turn'. The use of 'communities of practice' experienced a significant uptick when Adler and Pouliot introduced the concept as the "social space where structure and agency overlap and where knowledge, power, and community intersect" in their seminal edited volume on *International Practices* (Adler & Pouliot 2011a: 17). 'Communities of practice' here served as the methodological access point through which to study the diffusion and institutionalisation of practices as well as their background knowledge in the global realm (ibid.). So while practices were considered the building blocks of global politics, 'communities of practice' came to be the "vehicles" through which practices and social orders evolve (Adler 2019: 26).

By now, an increasing number of IR scholars has focused on individual transnationally operating 'communities of practice', each providing evidence for Adler's (2005: 14) original hunch that the global realm is populated and defined by "a collection of communities of practice" (Bicchi 2011, 2016; Brunnée & Toope 2011; Gross Stein 2011; Bueger 2013a; Bremberg 2016; Græger 2016; Hofius 2016; Mérand & Rayroux 2016; Orange 2016; Zwolski 2016; Glas 2018; Ekengren & Hollis 2020; Kenney 2020). Despite its growing popularity in the IR discipline, the literature entails a number of blind spots, however, that have prevented practice scholars from providing a convincing answer as to what exactly holds macro-structures together.

To address this shortcoming, I will in the following attend to three interrelated themes. First, no book-length study on 'communities of practice' exists to date that meaningfully embeds these experiential communities in the dynamic interplay between the micro-social processes and macro-social structures of global governance. Second, because of an abridged definition of practices as routinised patterns of individual action, extant studies have – ironically – neglected

the communal and affective aspect of 'communities of practice', even though identity-building processes are vital for understanding why people engage in shared practices and thereby feel bound to sustain larger scale entities over long periods of time. I will fill this void by proposing a thick conception of community, which acknowledges the normativity of practices and grounds it in its constitutive rules. Third, and finally, I shed light on the benefit of zooming in on the boundaries of community. At a time during which research on the boundaries of 'communities of practice' is attracting growing interest among international practice scholars, I provide the analytical tools with which to reconstruct the constitutive rules of community in those "sites of difference" (Abbott 1995: 862) in which senses of belonging to a given community are most intense. Before I furnish the 'communities of practice' framework with these fresh insights, however, I will briefly outline three of its conceptual building blocks – 'community', 'practice' and 'knowledge' – in light of their uses in international practice theory.

3 'Communities of Practice' 101

3.1 'Community'

With IR's turn to practice, it is precisely the delicate combination of 'community' and 'practice' that has led scholars who have dealt with the concept of 'communities of practice' to grapple with the question as to which ontological understanding underlies this approach. Does practice 'perform' community through a regime of participation or does community amount to a structure that determines practice? Nicolini (2012: 88) has related this uncertainty to "the risky juxtaposition of two terms, […] each of which has a distinctly different lineage". Specifically the term 'community' has had a "long, and somewhat troublesome meaning, both in current parlance and social science jargon", he explains (Nicolini 2012: 88). On the one hand, the term was politically instrumentalised during the periods of National Socialism as well as of the German Democratic Republic and therefore carries considerable historical weight (Richter 2000: 77). On the other hand, Ferdinand Tönnies' famous distinction between the traditional and organically determined Gemeinschaft-form of community and the modern functionalist Gesellschaft-form has contributed to social scientists romanticising the image of the organic community as "a form of social life for which solidarity and harmony are characteristic, as well as cooperation amongst members and a common goal based on tradition" (Wiener & Vetterlein 2011: 11). Notions of commonality, homogeneity and unity have since accompanied the term and led to its 'positive' connotation. Against these value-laden notions, Nicolini (2012: 92), albeit sympathetic to the concept of 'communities of practice', has warned that "once we couple the notion of practice with a 'stronger', more entrenched notion, such as community, the former tends to lose its main processual, social, temporary, and conflictual character" (see also Roberts 2006). Based on this criticism, Bueger and Gadinger (2018: 30) even conclude that "communities become established as a

container of practice with clearly identifiable boundaries and recognizable social coherence".

Ironically, the reification of the concept was never intended by Lave and Wenger (1991) who coined it. On the contrary, the two authors took pains to explicate the use of the term in the following way:

> we do not imply some primordial culturesharing [sic] entity. We assume that members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activity, and hold varied viewpoints. In our view, participation at multiple levels is entailed in membership in a community of practice. Nor does the term community imply necessarily co-presence, a well-defined, identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries. It does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities.
>
> (Lave & Wenger 1991: 98)

'Communities of practice' are therefore nothing more than an 'activity system', that is, a "pattern of sociality performed by a practical regime through its repro-duction process" (Nicolini 2012: 87). They do not denote a clearly carved out entity. On the contrary, the configuration of the community is temporally defined and flexible as its 'existence' depends on the recurring realisation of its meaning through mutual engagement.

Etienne Wenger, who developed the concept further in his later monograph *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* in 1998, has held firm to the processual quality of 'communities of practice', even though it has been especially his conceptualisation that attracted most of the criticism of progressive reification (Contu & Willmott 2000; Roberts 2006; Nicolini 2012; Bueger & Gad-inger 2018). The present book is an attempt to argue against such criticism and rid the concept of some of its ambiguities that may have led to its reificatory bias.

3.2 'Practice'

So what does Etienne Wenger mean by a 'community of practice' and how is it related to what Schatzki et al. (2001) have called the 'practice turn' in contempo-rary social theory? Wenger (1998: 72) starts out by treating the term 'community of practice' as one unit. The term 'community' is thus intrinsically tied to the term 'practice', which he defines as the negotiated "experience of meaningfulness" of life (Wenger 1998: 51). More specifically, he states, "practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is *doing in historical and social context* that gives structure and meaning to what people do. In this sense, practice is always social practice" (Wenger 1998: 47, emphasis MH). This ties in neatly with conceptions provided by other practice theorists, albeit defined in multiple ways as "organized nexuses of activity" (Schatzki 2001: 56); "the temporally unfolding, symbolically-mediated interweaving of experience and action" (Simpson 2010: 1338); or "socially meaningful patterns of action which […] simultaneously embody, act

out and possibly reify background knowledge" (Adler & Pouliot 2011a: 6). Even though these three definitions differ in focus, they share the assumption that practices are always associated with repetitive, interlinked or relational occurrences that 'house' the social (see Nicolini 2012: 162); that is, they are a patterned activity whose meaning extends beyond the individual and is collectively shared. Wenger, together with other practice theorists, therefore radically departs from two key perspectives of classical social theory that, roughly speaking, have found their way into IR theorising in the form of the two meta-theories of rational choice and constructivism: while the model of *homo economicus*, dominant in rational choice approaches, places the social in subjective interests, the model of *homo sociologicus*, chiefly found in modern constructivism, locates the social or meaning in norms and rules (Reckwitz 2002: 246). According to the model of *homo practicus*, however, all 'things' social reside in practical activity. As will be made plain later in Section 4.2, some IR practice scholars have emptied practices of their social content and reduced the concept to mere patterns of individual-level action. To recover the social nature of practices, I will call on international practice theorists to adopt a thick conception of practices and, hence, of community.

3.3 *'Knowledge'*

To place the social in everyday practices has obvious epistemological consequences for the practice-theoretical conception of knowledge. Knowledge is not stored in some individual's 'unconscious' or 'conscious' mind, but is inherently "situated" in practice (Bueger & Gadinger 2015: 453). This means that knowledge and practice are bound up in a reciprocal relationship. *Knowing*, the act of acquiring knowledge, is at once part of and a resource for a generative social practice; it is both social in that it is generated through 'living-in-the-world' and historically situated because it serves as the repertoire of background knowledge from which further practice can unfold and some sense of a collective identity can emerge. It follows that the epistemological principle of how humans come to know is inseparable from the human condition of actively engaging with the world. Nicolini (2011: 605, emphasis MH) therefore suggests following Schatzki's 'site ontology' where practices are the 'site of knowing' and "knowing is neither substance nor a static capability but [...] more an *accomplishment* repeatedly produced in and through social practices".

   If knowledge is neither substance nor purely individual capability, how then can we characterise the background from which agents come to think and act? Insights from one of the trailblazers of IR's 'practice turn' are instrumental in this respect, as Vincent Pouliot (2008) has convincingly highlighted the fact that the modern conception of knowledge as reflexive and conscious action suffers from a representation bias. The representational knowledge of 'knowing that', he argues, insufficiently accounts for the "stock of unspoken know-how learned in and through practice" that orients individuals' actions (Pouliot 2008: 270). By way of the prominent example of diplomacy, he demonstrates that diplomacy is

much less "about strategic action, instrumental rationality, and cost-benefit calculations" and much more about commonsense and the application of intelligence and skills (Pouliot 2008: 258). He supports his argument with a quote from diplomat and English School scholar Adam Watson who has noted that diplomacy is "not a matter of mathematical calculation; it is not an exact science; it remains a matter of human skills and judgments" (2008: 258). Diplomatic competence is thus acquired less through books and more through apprenticeship (Berridge cited in Pouliot 2008: 272).

The ensuing argument that practical knowledge exists prior to representation is most often related back to Wittgenstein's practice-based understanding of rule following. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he has thoroughly undermined the rationalist argument that deciding precedes acting by claiming that: "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*" (Wittgenstein & Anscombe 1989: §219). This prereflective knowledge has subsequently been associated with Polanyi's (1983) 'tacit knowing' or Ryle's (2002, c1949) 'know how'. Yet, it would be premature to dismiss their respective counterparts of 'explicit knowing' or 'know that' as both Polanyi and Ryle have pointed to the interdependence of the two dimensions of knowledge (Brown & Duguid 2001: 203–204). While the collective knowledge of a group or community may take the form of taken-for-grantedness under conditions of healthy trust, it may at times become explicit, for instance, when its constitutive orders threaten to break down because of external disruption or due to too little commitment by its members. Both situations demand a conscious effort by the group to reconfigure or adjust its practices. It follows that specifically in new or unfamiliar situations a greater emphasis can be placed on the articulate, representational knowledge of practice.

Unlike Vincent Pouliot, Etienne Wenger takes account of both these dimensions and, in fact, contends that practice is based on a fundamental duality of participation and reification. This encompasses both an unreflective dimension of knowing through 'living-in-the-world' as well as a reflective dimension that produces objects. Accordingly, Wenger (1998: 47) states that

> [s]uch a concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed. It includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specific criteria, codified procedures, regulations, and contracts […]. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognisable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Most of these may never be articulated, yet they are unmistakable signs of membership in communities of practice and are crucial to the success of their enterprise.

As an illustration of the relationship between participation and reification, Wenger takes the example of lawyers who wish to fix everything in writing in order to 'prevent' diverging interpretations among groups who primarily

coordinate themselves informally. The vagueness of the taken-for-granted knowl-
edge must hence be 'rectified' and anchored in reified objects. We produce objects,
Wenger (1998: 58) states, to "create points of focus around which the negotia-
tion of meaning becomes organised". On the other hand, in the case of treaties,
for instance, diplomats are sent off to reappropriate their meanings. This way
of participation can either help find the initial purpose of a treaty where it has
been 'lost' or loosen up the rigorous text to adapt it to a specific context (Wenger
1998: 64).

It follows from the above that participation and reification complement each
other to constitute the primary source of coherence of a 'community of prac-
tice'. However, for 'communities of practice' to function as the "prime context"
(Wenger 1998: 47) or visible expression of how humans know how to make sense
of and relate to a larger scale phenomenon, they require specific dimensions of
practice to be activated. According to Wenger (1998: 72–85), it takes the com-
bination of 'mutual engagement' and the definition of a 'joint enterprise' that is
communally negotiated through mutual accountability for a 'shared repertoire'
to emerge, entailing participants' shared resources. Over time, therefore – almost
in the fashion of a hermeneutic circle – the communal repertoire can deepen as
the shared histories of mutual engagement create further resources from which
participants can draw, for example, "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things,
stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" (Wenger 1998: 83). In sum,
these three dimensions of practice "create a context for the negotiation of mean-
ing" (Wenger 1998: 84).

Saying that 'communities of practice' are a context rather than a 'thing' with
clear boundaries is crucial for it undermines its critics' accusations of its reificatory
bias. Instead, we must conceive 'communities of practice' as primarily informal
and local social structures of meaning in which modes of belonging are negoti-
ated through both the enactment and reification of shared practices. They may,
in fact, be so informal that members are not even aware of their membership
(Roberts 2006: 625). This implies that 'communities of practice' need not, but can
be equated with institutionalised, geographically and spatially bounded commu-
nities. They may constitute part of and strengthen a more formal form of commu-
nity, yet they may also merely criss-cross or overlap in some areas. This image can
be linked to what Wenger (2000: 242–243) calls the "'fractal' layers of belonging"
of individuals whose identity is made up of different degrees of commitment and
connections to others. As he states,

> if a community is large, it is a good idea to structure it in layers, as a 'fractal'
> of embedded subcommunities. […] With such a fractal structure, by belong-
> ing to your […] subcommunity, you experience in a local and direct way your
> belonging to a much broader community.
>
> (Wenger 2000: 243)

It is this layering analogy that I regard as a useful bridge and point of depar-
ture for thinking about the first practice-theoretical issue on which my revised

approach to 'communities of practice' focuses: the link between the macro-social and micro-social dimensions of community. In the present book, I therefore conceptualise the EU as a community made up of manifold sub-communities in which practice is the central (re)source of their respective coherence and link to its reified, institutionalised structure. In other words, to borrow from Brown and Duguid's (2001: 203) insights from organisation studies, the EU is a "community of communities of practice".

4 Rereading the 'Communities of Practice' Approach

4.1 'Communities of Practice' as an Intermediary Space between Macro-Structures and Micro-Interactions

In this first move of rereading the 'communities of practice' framework, I seek to prop up Wenger's argument that 'communities of practice' strike a balance and reflect the reciprocal relationship between macro-social structures and micro-social processes. I shall therefore seize the 'middle ground' in new ways by drawing on ethnomethodology's distinct approach to the production of social order: rather than dismissing the very existence of macro-phenomena or, by contrast, reducing micro-interactions to mere reflections of macro-structures, ethnomethodology holds that macro-phenomena exist, but that they depend for their existence on the local production of social order in everyday life settings of interaction. In other words, the meaning of large-scale aggregated orders emerges from and is locally negotiated in "constitutive orders of practice" (Rawls 2009: 508).

If we transfer this ethnomethodological perspective on social order to the 'communities of practice' approach, 'communities of practice' come to be the intermediary space between constitutive and aggregated orders. They are the 'observable' medium that links large-scale aggregates to their practical instantiations because, as a specific context, it allows researchers to see how micro-practices are assembled in such ways that participants meaningfully belong to the aggregate order. It is here that researchers can reconstruct how members of a community develop a particular sense of place, for it is here that meaning is in use.

4.1.1 Overcoming Dualisms

It was Emanuel Adler (2005) who first saw conceptual value in the ability of 'communities of practice' to bridge the traditional dualism between macro- and micro-studies where either structural determinants or agents are given ontological priority to explain specific outcomes (Adler 2005: 15). 'Communities of practice' then are the "social space where structure and agency overlap" (Adler & Pouliot 2011c: 18) and where more abstract, reified concepts are given shape and meaning through parties organising them in specific localities.

Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, each in his own way, had already sought to resolve the 'macro-micro' debate by avoiding reducing either structure or agency to the other. Subsequent discussions in IR theoretically followed their

lead to stress the recursive relationship between structure and agency, such as Wendt's (1987, 1992) early constructivist reading of Giddens' structuration theory. While significantly furthering the debate in theoretical terms, they never quite 'left the runway' empirically. Later writings in constructivism conceptually pointed to the mutual constitutiveness of structure and agency but often ended up lapsing into either objectivism with a strong focus on discursive structures (e.g. Diez 1999) or subjectivism with a stress on conscious agency in their empirical analysis (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Keck & Sikkink 1999; Risse 2000; Checkel 2001). During the 1990s, it was more 'marginal' contributions such as Roxanne Doty's (1997) piece on the play of discursive practices or Jackson and Nexon's (1999) relational approach that provided an alternative to the agency-structure conundrum by suggesting practice take an intermediary position between structure and agency, or process constituting actors, respectively.

With Adler and Pouliot (Adler & Pouliot 2011a, 2011b) heralding the 'practice turn', this view has taken centre stage and has thereby challenged the well-known distinction between different levels and, more recently, scales of analysis. Practice-oriented theorists are increasingly criticising the orthodox analytical distinction between macro- and micro-levels of analysis (see especially Berard 2005; Miettinen et al. 2009; Bueger 2014: 385), with Bueger insisting that practice as a unit of analysis is entirely open in scale (Bueger 2013a: 302, 2016: 410). While the 'levels of analysis' analogy has generally been seen as a useful typology by IR scholars to orient their research focus (critically, see Onuf 1995; Jørgensen 2010: 17), practice theorists call for a transcendence of the division between such levels to highlight the spatio-temporal interconnection and mutual conditioning between phenomena taking place in different sites. For, as Boden explicates,

> [i]n many ways ... there is no such thing as 'micro' and 'macro', but [...] our theories and analytic strategies try to make it so. This state of affairs ... is, in effect, part of what the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls the 'retrospective illusion', [...] namely that having invented structure we take it to be the pre-existing condition of our research.
>
> (quoted in Miettinen et al. 2009: 1310)

It follows that "there *are* no 'observable' levels to social reality, and no 'social structure' discrete from concepts and practices" (Berard 2005: 224; see also Onuf 1995). Such artificial scaling, first, obscures the fact that practices take place simultaneously and evade clear distinctions between the 'global' and 'local' and, second, reifies macro-phenomena as if they simply existed, be it the state, the nation, the military or governments.

Having said that, I hold on to the distinction between 'macro-social' and 'micro-social' (Coulter 2001) perspectives precisely for the sake of highlighting their productive tension and elucidating how my methodological approach differs from both macro- and micro-level accounts. Instead of viewing each of them as providing separate explanations for the same phenomenon, I hold these two

to condition one another. Symbolic interactionists would immediately deny the existence of the macro-social, arguing that

> [n]o existential or ontological status is to be accorded to any 'macro-categories,' since all that exists sociologically is said to be social interaction in all of its forms. 'Macro-social' phenomena are illegitimate objectifications of interactional processes […], no matter what their status is within the confines of everyday, commonsense reasoning. They would assert that only the micro level exists.
>
> (Coulter 2001: 40)

However, this crucially misses the 'ordering power' that the mere use of aggregated concepts in our everyday language has for our conception of, say, politics or international order. If neo-realist scholars, for instance, could not refer to the 'state' as a 'macro' phenomenon, they would be unable to conceptualise the modern make-up of international order as one that is based on the principle of anarchy and insist on the absence of any form of transnational community. Yet, this conception only exists through its instantiation by realist scholars' scientific practices. How their state-centric conception of order is interpreted and used is thus fundamentally dependent on actors' practice-in-context.

Macro-phenomena are therefore rendered relevant and "observable" (Coulter, 2001), if and only if actors make 'visible' efforts to make these concepts intelligibly relevant to themselves through accomplishing them in their everyday life. This understanding has led the sociologist Berard (2005) to conclude that the question of

> [w]hether states are being represented and whether 'foreign relations' obtain, or any other macrostructural entity, act, process, etc., *boils down to the rule-governed use of macrostructural concepts or categories in practice, members' methods of recognizing their situational relevance, or not, seeing them in action, or not.* The essence of the macrostructural, and the key to understanding its relation to the practices, are to be found by attending to macrostructural concepts and categories, especially to *the logic of their use in practice, their practical grammars.*
>
> (Berard 2005: 224–225, emphasis MH)

Thus, macro-structural entities *do* exist, but they cannot exist without the *rule-governed* practices that repeatedly actualise them. If we want to enquire into what macro-structural phenomena such as community actually mean, we need to look at how the macro-structural properties are used, negotiated and enacted by specific rules in smaller scale orders of interaction.

4.1.2 Constitutive Orders of Practice and Constitutive Rules

To better understand what exactly these rules consist of that govern the use of macro-structures, and where they are located, it is useful to turn to the sociologist

Anne Rawls (2009) who has highlighted how social order has been approached from two different, albeit interlinked theoretical perspectives. The mainstream of sociological theory has approached social order from an 'aggregate' perspective, assuming that "all social orders (or at least the 'important' ones)" result from the sum of individual actions and choices (Rawls 2009: 503). A second and much neglected perspective sees social order to emerge from "constitutive orders" or "constitutive orders of practice" instead (ibid.: 508). Constitutive orders of practice are said to unfold performatively in face-to-face encounters and are "*constitutive of* objects and identities within it" (ibid.: 517, emphasis MH). The latter perspective perceives constitutive orders as "first-order social phenomena" that are foundational to aggregated orders (ibid.: 504). Along these lines, meaning, self and institutional order derive their existence from this locally produced – constitutive – order, not some aggregated order of individual actions (Rawls 1989: 147).

The idea that social order cannot be grasped as a given entity or foundational structure, but must be seen as a local constitutive order, goes back to ethnomethodology's founding father Harold Garfinkel[2]. Order, in Garfinkel's view, is entirely a 'members' phenomenon so that the constitutive order exclusively "consists in methods of its production" (Korbut 2014: 483). In its most basic form, then, inter-subjective meaning and understanding is procedural and context-dependent. The production of order becomes a substantive, empirical 'problem' because any phenomenon of order – may it be meaning, language or normative order – is, in fact, a "situated accomplishment" carried out by those people "whose local practices 'assemble' the recurrent scenes of action that make up a stable society" (Lynch 2001: 140).

Unlike what even hard-line practice theorists would posit, that is, that no stable social order exists but "only endless attempts at ordering" (Law in Bueger 2011: 174), Garfinkel (2002) suggests otherwise. In his view, "there *is* order in the most ordinary activities of everyday life in their full concreteness [...]" (Garfinkel 2002: 95–96). Yet, because these activities are ongoing and contingent upon the situation at hand, this does not mean a departure from the ever-emergent nature of order. It simply means that order is present whenever it is *accountable* to those people participating in its procedurally enacted, *lived* production (Garfinkel 2002: 92). 'Accountability' here means that their engagement in a practice must be 'publicly' witnessable or recognised by each participant so that the existence or relevance of a phenomenon is stipulated if "members are demonstrably oriented to such structures [...]" (Berard 2005: 212). Any social phenomenon is therefore only important, if it is *invoked* or *used* in practice (see Emirbayer & Maynard 2011: 239).

For accountability to succeed, however, members are assumed to comply with a set of moral or normative background expectancies: first and foremost, Rod Watson (2009: 475) notes, it is "trust in the mutual commitment to rules of engagement", so that everyone understands they are taking part in the same practice. As Rawls (2009: 508) astutely summarises,

> [w]ithin constitutive orders of practice, objects exist only when, and as, participants in situated practices, adhering to constitutive expectations that are

shared, perform such acts, in such a way that other participants in the same situated practice recognize their performances as social objects of a particular sort. The existence of the objects is not only performative (and must meet performative criteria), it is also reciprocal – requiring mutual cooperation in, commitment to and confirmation of practices that exist independently from individuals and in advance of action. A single actor cannot claim the mutual intelligibility of objects if they are the only one who is committed to a practice.

Consequently, the background expectations from which order becomes intelligible and thus meaningful do not lie in some external set of abstract rules, but "*in the actions themselves*" because they are repeatedly confirmed in and through practice (Korbut 2014: 487). This reflexive understanding of order implies that the activities whereby members produce and manage contexts of organised everyday affairs are *identical* with members' procedures for making those settings in which they occur accountable. These procedures Garfinkel has alternately called 'methods' or 'constitutive rules'.

Importantly, these constitutive rules should not be mistaken for rigid rules or routines that are statically applied to a situation to provide for the stability of order. Instead, such rules should be understood much more as skills or competencies that help people flexibly organise their day-to-day activities in an ordered fashion. Watson (2009: 481) specifies these constitutive rules and argues that they should be conceived as

> glosses of arrays of constitutive practice that comprise a local *gestalt* contexture. They are sense-making instruments deployed *in situ*: known and used in common. This means there is a reciprocity in the use of these rules.

They function as essential resources for members of the constitutive order and hence serve as the background against which objects become meaningful and identities emerge.

What is the use in adopting an ethnomethodological conception of constitutive orders for the 'communities of practice' approach? Crucially, it helps us understand how macro-structural entities are made and ascribed meaning by being locally appropriated by members' shared constitutive rules. Very much in tune with the concept of 'communities of practice', the concept of the constitutive order emphasises that it is the ordinary practices of members that create a normative background which, in turn, constitutes the shared repertoire or resources of community that provide orientation towards shared understandings and a sense of belonging. This is also the reason why 'communities of practice' can be understood as an intermediary space between macro-structures and micro-interactions. As if they were a magnifying glass, 'communities of practice' make visible the ways in which practices, together with their constitutive rules, impinge on macro-social phenomena such as community (see Figure 3.1)

4.2 A Thick Conception of 'Communities of Practice'

As a second move, I seek to recover the identity-building aspect of 'communities of practice' by working towards a thick conception of 'communities of practice' that takes the normativity of practices seriously[3]. To date, IR practice theorists have predominantly adopted a thin conception of community that is unable to capture the moral and affective dimensions of practices that are central for identity-building processes among groups of individuals. This thin notion of 'communities of practice' I see grounded in most international practice theorists' 'regularist' conception of practices that largely overlooks the normativity of practices. To reclaim the normativity of practices, I suggest adopting a Wittgensteinian understanding of practice as "rule following" (Lechner & Frost 2018: 11) and combining it with Garfinkel's ethnomethodological take on constitutive rules as laid out in Section 4.1.2. Together, these perspectives help foreground that the normativity of practice lies in its constitutive rules, which are a moral guide to action. Absent the incorporation of constitutive rules, any praxiological framework lacks explanations for why members of a 'community of practice' bond over their mutual engagement and continue to see value in their joint enterprise.

4.2.1 The Normativity of Practices

To recover a practice's normative dimension and understand its value for community-building processes, we need to first distinguish it from other conceptions of practices. In the following, I shall therefore take inspiration from the neopragmatist Joseph Rouse (2007) who, based on Robert Brandom's (1994) philosophical work, has identified three distinct conceptualisations of practice: a regulist, regularist and normative conceptualisation. *Regulism* conforms to the Kantian view of norms, which holds that following a norm always presupposes an explicit or abstract rule that regulates or even determines how a practice is correctly carried out (Brandom 1994: 19). *Regularism*, as found in Bourdieusian practice theory, acknowledges the existence of implicit rules and norms in practices, but is not interested in how their normative content shapes conceptions of correct or incorrect conduct. Its sole interest lies in identifying the patterns or regularities of behaviour (Rouse 2007: 47).

   While a significant advancement from regulism, a regularist conception of practices is problematic in that it trades correctness or appropriateness for mere regularity. For regularism, "[a] norm implicit in a practice is just a pattern exhibited

Figure 3.1 'Communities of Practice' as an Intermediary Space.

by behaviour" (Brandom 1994: 28). "To violate that norm, to make a mistake or act incorrectly according to that norm", Brandom continues, "is to break the pattern, to act irregularly" (ibid.). This regularity cannot be equated with normativity, though, because a practice in the regularist sense lacks social standards that define and differentiate between correct or incorrect performances. If groups of individuals cannot refer to shared standards to know how to carry out a practice, each individual falls back on "action *simpliciter*", Frost and Lechner (2016a: 345) conclude. Such individual-level 'action' is, however, not only void of inter-subjective meaning but also of the social standards with which a community of practitioners judges a practice to be performed well, appropriately and competently (or not). For this reason, Nicolini (2012: 85) has argued that "a practice without standards is not a practice". It follows that for a practice to be normative, it must – in stark contrast to regularism – entail *social* standards of excellence that are held in common by a particular group of individuals (Frost & Lechner 2016a: 344–345). To move beyond a thin conception of community, it is therefore necessary to adopt a normative conception of practices that identifies not only the "socially meaningful patterns of action" (Adler & Pouliot 2011a: 6) in a given communal context but also the underlying standards that make them meaningful in the first place.

As IR's 'practice turn' has gained momentum, criticism of regularist, Bourdieu-inspired practice theory has mounted and an increasing number of norm-oriented IR scholars has called for investigating the normative ends of practices[4] (Gadinger 2016; Ralph & Gifkins 2017; Ralph 2018; for an overview see Hofius 2021). Even Adler (2019: 4–5) has most recently indirectly distanced himself from a regularist conception of practice and underscored the normative quality of practices. More than this, in a passionate plea to overcome the divides between cosmopolitanism, communitarianism and pragmatism, he has even identified the possibility for "ethical normativity" (Adler 2019: 270) to arise from practices so that, potentially, "ethical standards that recognise our common humanity" in one 'community of practice' can spread globally across a diverse set of 'communities of practice' (ibid.: 275).

To date, however, Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner's philosophical treatise of practice is unmatched when it comes to foregrounding the normative standards underlying practices (Frost & Lechner 2016a, 2016b; Lechner & Frost 2018). Their Wittgensteinian understanding of a practice as 'language game' presents a stark alternative to Aristotelian *praxis* (2016a: 343ff.), which, despite notable differences, also underpins Adler and Pouliot's Bourdieusian understanding of practice (Lechner & Frost 2018: 88). While Aristotle's concept of *praxis* arguably only pertains to "individual-level action, which does not invoke a background of rules" that is shared by the members of a given community (Frost & Lechner 2016a: 345), Wittgenstein's 'language game' is at its root a "rule-based framework" (ibid.: 344). Rules in the Wittgensteinian sense are defined as

> *meaningful social standards* […] that *govern* the actions of a number of individuals, and transform these individuals into participants in a shared practice. To qualify as social standards the rules must be upheld in common […]
>
> (ibid., emphasis MH)

Approached from this perspective, rules are essentially those social standards of excellence that define how a practice is appropriately performed as to be in line with the social expectations and norms of a given community context (ibid.: 344–345). 'Rule following', then, is what makes a practice a "competent performance" in the first place, for rules are *constitutive of* practices (ibid.: 339). More than that, as Lechner and Frost (2018: 19) clarify with respect to Searle's concept of "constitutive rules", these rules also define the identity of community members. They tell them how to 'go on' and "navigate their lives" (ibid.: 22). Consequently, if we are to understand what makes a macro-social entity cohere over time, it does not suffice to identify the practices in which groups of individuals regularly engage. IR scholars also need to discover the constitutive rules upon which these groups agree when they engage in practices. They provide the reasons for why participants in a practice consider their joint enterprise worth pursuing.

Both the Wittgensteinian understanding of practice as rule following and Searle's notion of constitutive rules chime in with the Harold Garfinkel's use of constitutive rules to explain the phenomenon of social order. As I made plain in Section 4.1.2, rules should neither be confounded with explicit rules in the Kantian regulist sense nor with rigid routines in the regularist sense. Instead, rules in the ethnomethodological tradition are agents' "sense-making instruments deployed *in situ*: known and used in common" (Watson 2009: 481) that help them make those settings in which practices occur *mutually intelligible*, and thus *accountable*. Social order, then, is present – and normative – whenever it is accountable to those people participating in its procedurally enacted, lived production (Garfinkel 2002: 92). Precisely this ethnomethodological and self-reflexive notion of order is reflected in Rouse's (2007) definition of the normativity of practices. According to Rouse,

> […] normativity is not to be expressed in terms of governance by rules or de facto regularities in a community's behavior, values, or preferences. Normativity instead involves a complex pattern of interrelations among performances through time. *Such performances are normative when they are directed toward one another as mutually accountable to common stakes, albeit stakes whose correct formulation is always at issue within the practice.*
> (Rouse 2007: 53, emphasis added)

Linked back to Garfinkel's concept of constitutive rules, this means that the normativity of practices lies in the constitutive rules – or 'methods' – that participants in a practice deploy to make the self-same practice mutually intelligible. Being 'directed towards one another' also implies a sense of 'oughtness', for participants share an understanding of and accept how something *should be* carried out (Schatzki 2002: 192). In a nutshell, then, the normativity of practice is grounded in a background of shared meanings that is negotiated in the course of practitioners making their action intelligible to one another. If the 'communities of practice' approach lacks a concept of constitutive rules, and thereby only adopts a thin conception of community, scholars cannot retrieve the normative

background against which practices become intelligible. They would be unable to reconstruct the shared repertoire of community that provides orientation towards shared understandings, a sense of belonging as well as a "communal sense of how things matter" (Nicolini 2012: 85).

I have so far made plain that it is 'communities of practice' that by their very informal nature allow us to mediate the rigid separation between macro-structures and micro-social processes of interaction and therefore make visible how macro-structural properties of community are used and negotiated in small-scale normative orders. I have also argued for a thick conception of 'communities of practice' to show that the normative background of community lies in the ever-emergent constitutive rules of practices. Yet, it remains to be demonstrated what these constitutive rules consist of and where they are located. This is what I turn to next.

4.3 The Boundaries of 'Communities of Practice'

In this final move of revisiting the 'communities of practice' framework, it is my aim to do justice to the call for a 'return to experience' by classical pragmatism (Emirbayer & Maynard 2011: 225). To this end, I will specify the sites in which community is experienced as meaningful. For if we are confronted with the empirical question as to how people develop senses of belonging to a community, we need a more nuanced understanding of how these are related to and bound by specific locales; we need to understand how they are experienced in their concrete organisation *in situ*. Whereas 'communities of practice' are understood as a context or social space, I shall argue that it is specifically their socially constructed boundaries as *sites* that best lay bare the processes by which a community comes to be known, is constituted as a 'thing' and felt as a meaningful whole. The reason for this lies in the fact that boundaries are "sites of difference" (Abbott 1995: 862) where categories of membership are experienced and most contested, and thus definitions of the 'inside' and 'outside' of community are most intensely negotiated. Consequently, if we pay attention to those boundary sites, we can carve out the very modes of organising and managing those differences that, when accomplished, create more or less explicit markers of membership. In line with ethnomethodology's argument of order as the situated accomplishment of members' work, I shall conclude that it is boundary work, consisting of practices of linking and demarcating locations of difference, that serves as a community's constitutive rule. Agents' capacity to engage in boundary management on an everyday basis is thus the ever-emergent background of community that allows a community to emerge, cohere and reproduce itself.

4.3.1 Sites and their Spatial Reach

The concept of 'communities of practice' is not solely analytical. 'Communities of practice' may also be considered to fulfil the pragmatist call for a 'return to experience' as it proposes a radical turn to practice in its full concreteness

and lived experience (Pappas 2008; Emirbayer & Maynard 2011: 223). It thereby provides methodological orientation for 'where' to look when we seek to identify practices for the purpose of reconstructing their meaningful background or constitutive rules: if we want to emphasise the situatedness of background knowledge, we must look for its localities, that is, *sites*. I shall argue in the following section that it is the boundaries of 'communities of practice' that as sites allow the researcher to disclose how social phenomena are experienced. Before I dwell on boundaries, however, let me start by approaching the term 'site' by a definitional exercise provided by Iver Neumann (2013: 4) who has, *inter alia*, highlighted the importance of *sited*-ness for diplomacy:

> [i]n Latin, both *locus* (cf. Gr. *topos*) and *situs* denote place, but the meaning of *situs* is tilted towards a place where something happens. When archaeologists talk about an object being *in situ*, they mean that it sits where it was found and, presumably, once used. One of the meanings of site listed in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is: 'place where some activity is or has been conducted'.

To be more precise, however, it is a place of a complex nexus of interweaving patterned activities across both time and space that can but need not be physically fixed. I want to use Olwig and Kastrup's conception of "cultural sites" for they regard places as both spatially and discursively coded by everyday practices and experience (in Huffschmid & Wildner 2009: 13). As 'cultural sites', then, places or localities become a specific context within which assemblages of practices evolve that reciprocally shape the context (see Schatzki 2003: 176).

In Wenger's (1998) example of 'communities of practice', the site involves a limited number of people engaged in claims processing whose practice takes place on the premises of a large insurance company. Following his line of argument, an intimate circle of people is important for 'communities of practice' as it allows for mutual engagement; in contrast, were he to examine a larger group of people, such as the insurance company as a whole, the people would no longer *engage* with one another in practice. They would follow similar patterns, but merely *participate* in the firm and engage in different, largely disconnected daily practices (Wenger 1998: 124). This is based on his observation that, if the 'community of practice' grows in size, the affective, context-bounded dimension of practices gets lost. Complexity is then traded off for size (Wenger 1998: 132). Engagement therefore requires intimacy among practitioners.

The argument that propinquity is necessary for 'communities of practice' is, however, disputed and has led to various adaptations, both in scale and spatial reach – not least because Wenger long remained ambiguous about whether propinquity is limited to geographical proximity or can also be interpreted in terms of temporal or relational proximity[5]. The adaptations allow for the possibility of 'communities of practice' either expanding beyond their originally local confines or evolving among people who have never met, but who engage in the same practice on a regular basis (Roberts 2006: 631–633). In management studies, for

instance, internet communities have been identified as exhibiting the characteristics of 'communities of practice' (cf. Teigland in Roberts 2006: 631). In the IR discipline, Christian Bueger (2013b) has analysed Somali piracy as a 'community of practice' that is sustained by a 'grand narrative' and Federica Bicchi (2011) has found that the COREU network operative in the EU's foreign policy realm resembles 'communities of practice', despite COREU not only spanning the EU's entire geographical area, but also involving people 'merely' via a computer-based information exchange system[6].

   I consider these looser adaptations that reach beyond a geographically bounded conception of 'communities of practice' worthwhile in light of globalisation's 'push and pull' that has led to what David Harvey (1990) called "time-space compression". Here, through advances in travel and communications technology, transnational networks and links intensify and the density and interweaving of these networks grows to such an extent that they are eventually dissolved in endless transnational flows. As Manuel Castells (quoted in Massey 1995: 54) has argued, this has had the effect

> that social meaning evaporates from places, and therefore from society, and becomes diluted and diffused in the reconstructed logic of a *space of flows* whose profile, origin, and ultimate purposes are unknown.

While advantageous in terms of strengthening global interconnectedness, Castell's quote already underscores the risk associated with 'communities of practices' becoming mere networks: in networks, social meaning is lost, it 'evaporates'. With regard to virtual EU diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic, Kuus (2021) has, for instance, demonstrated how the very loss of diplomats' copresence in physical spaces led to a significant decrease in diplomatic effectiveness, for the pandemic rid diplomacy of the very places in which to socialise. Letting go of territorial boundedness, then, implies neglecting a 'sense of a particular place' that, I believe, arises only with the experience of and encounters in localities in which practice is contextually linked to territorial space (see also Kuus 2014: 45; Solomon & Steele 2017: 277–278). Yes, the 'local' is always tied to the wider context of the 'global' in that we come to develop a 'global sense of place' (Massey 1995: 58), but the 'global' is locally experienced. And yes, the meaning of the 'local' is socially constructed and not given. But its meaning is materially anchored and related to the particular site in which an occurrence evolves[7]. Wenger (1998: 131) explains the difference between formal large-scale institutions with global reach and their local instantiations through the example of working within the United Nations context:

> [t]he cosmopolitan character of a practice […] does not free it from the locality of engagement. Day-to-day work in an office at UN headquarters is still local in its own way, even though it deals with international affairs that have broad ramifications.

With respect to diplomatic practice, for instance, it thus makes a difference whether a field diplomat is out in the streets and *witnesses* first-hand the revolutionary protests of citizens in the host country and then engages in diplomatic crisis management or whether a diplomat does so while he or she is sitting 'at home' in the ministry watching events unfold live on TV. Therefore, the larger in scale the phenomenon becomes which one seeks to explore with the concept of 'communities of practice', the more one loses sight of the site-specificity and its potential discontinuities and internal ruptures. Emanuel Adler's (2008) translation of the concept to NATO as a regional security organisation is therefore paradigmatic of what Wenger (1998: 125) warned against: it places "too much emphasis on the overarching continuity of a configuration reified by its name". In Adler's (2008) example, it is difficult to distinguish the transnational elite as a 'community of practice' from its larger institutional form so that it becomes static and loses its contingent character. As a preexisting structure then, NATO as a 'community of practice' projects its practices outward without significant tension or conflict.

4.3.2 Boundaries as 'Sites of Difference'

A way to avoid reification through the distant abstraction of practice is to look for the 'things of boundaries' instead of the 'boundaries of things', as Andrew Abbott (1995: 857) has forcefully argued. In his view, zooming in on 'what happens' at the boundary allows us to examine how people actually create entities since he considers boundaries a precondition for all things social (Abbott 1995). This should not be mistaken for a strategic move to simply reverse the order of what is ontologically prior as if boundaries are now the essentialised and preexisting entity to all subsequent phenomena. Rather, it underlines the nature of boundaries as neither absolute nor pure, but inherently relational (Cohen 1985: 58; Henrikson 2000: 130). "Borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time", Van Houtum and Naerssen (2002: 126) explain, "rather they symbolise a social practice of spatial differentiation"[8]. So while they have in the past been primarily conceived of in the material, territorial sense of state borders, more recently their socially constructed nature as products of human practice has been acknowledged by political geographers together with sociologists and anthropologists (Newman & Paasi 1998; Newman 2001, 2006b; Houtum & Naerssen 2002; Berg & Houtum 2003; Houtum 2012; Wilson & Donnan 2012). These authors have sought to evade the longstanding "territorial trap" in IR theory that has consisted of three interrelated assumptions: that of states being reified as "fixed units of sovereign space", that of the inside/outside logic found in the clear separation of domestic and foreign as well as that of society only thriving within the sovereign state (Agnew 1994: 59; see also Walker 1993).

But what exactly is a boundary then? For Abbott (1995: 867), boundaries are for a start nothing more than "sites of difference", that is, random locations of difference that "emerge from local and cultural negotiations" between diverse 'units' such as people, physical locations or prior social entities. For these to constitute

a coherent 'thing', however, they need to be actively 'yoked' or linked together "such that one side of each becomes defined as 'inside' the same entity" (Abbott 1995: 871). I find Abbott's conception of boundary highly instructive and follow his line of thought for it captures two crucial elements of a boundary: (1) it is spatially embedded – hence Abbott's stress on locations – and (2) active work is required for 'sites of difference' to become linked into a coherent 'thing' – hence his emphasis on interaction as in negotiations. Boundaries must then be seen as particularly dense sites of interaction where differences and diversity are possibly greatest and must undergo intense negotiations, maybe even conflict among practitioners to create new entities or sustain particular divides between separate ones.

In light of Abbott's sketch, I would thus argue that boundaries are not only an essentially constitutive element of communities, but that they also represent the ideal site in which to investigate how a community becomes meaningful. They might be compared to what Heidegger called a *Lichtung*, that is, a clearing in the woods where entities take form and come to light[9] (cited in Nicolini 2011: 604, footnote 2). It is furthermore compelling because boundaries are the sites where differences can be confirmed, for example, through the clash of practices, but also where commonly shared understandings can be generated through encounters. Boundaries therefore have a dual quality in that they create possibilities for conflict and sustained inside/outside divides, on the one hand, and/or knowledge of and mutual understanding for differences, on the other. They are never barriers or bridges by default (cf. Newman 2006b). They merely become sites of exclusion or inclusion depending on their use in context.

4.3.3 Boundaries in International Relations Scholarship

If it is their use that determines whether a boundary constrains or enables boundary crossing, then we need to pay due attention to the processes that organise or manage the boundary and thereby create and maintain communities as social phenomena. Yet, with regard to the concept of 'communities of practice', scholars have largely neglected boundary practices or portrayed boundaries in an exclusively positive light. This is grossly negligent, given the increasingly symbolic significance that boundaries have for the meaning of entities in light of globalisation processes that have, at least in the EU context, led to the weakening of traditional territorial borders and a concomitant increase in their cultural dimensions (Delanty 2006: 185). As Newman (2006a: 172) has highlighted,

> [w]e woke up to our borderless world only to find that each and every one of us, individuals as well as groups or States with which we share affiliation, live in a world of borders which give order to our lives. We discovered that these borders are not confined to the realm of inter-state divisions, nor do they have to be physical and geographical constructs. Many of the borders which order our lives are invisible to the human eye but they nevertheless impact strongly on our daily life practices. They determine the extent to which we are included, or excluded, from membership in groups, they reflect

the existence of inter-group and inter-societal difference with the 'us' and the 'here' being located inside the border while the 'other' and the 'there' is everything beyond the border.

Thus, largely irrespective of whether we are concerned with those boundaries 'internal' to a particular community or with 'external' boundaries that previously separated two or more distinct communities, boundaries are always sites of political negotiation, contestation or even conflict over what it means to be an 'insider' (see Oommen 1995).

Wenger (2000: 233) for his part has pointed to the dual quality of boundaries, but primarily elaborated on the positive effect of the boundaries of 'communities of practice' to create new opportunities for learning. It is at the border of one community to another, he contends, that one's own competences and experience diverge most. The exposure to an experience of difference at the border demonstrates that one's competences no longer match the new situation and therefore require adaptation. Learning is then part of an individual's effort to close the perceived gap between his or her competences and experience. This process can be facilitated by connections that are generated across the boundary through specific actors who act as 'brokers', through specific artefacts, a shared language or coordination procedures that serve as 'boundary objects' or through boundary encounters (ibid.: 235–237).

Until recently, international practice theorists have largely abstained from systematically addressing the boundaries of 'communities of practice'[10]. Emanuel Adler acknowledges the role that boundaries play for community-building, its expansion or overlap with other communities. In a jointly authored piece with Patricia Greve, *When Security Community Meets Balance of Power*, he promisingly starts a debate about the boundaries of regions as the two authors point to the implications that overlapping security mechanisms among regions may have for the nature of their respective boundaries. However, they leave it to others to empirically probe the effect of travelling security practices across borders (Adler & Greve 2009: 82). Similarly, in his 2005 monograph on *Communitarian International Relations*, Adler already refers to boundaries as one of the main characteristics of 'communities of practice', yet does not conceptualise the idea further. Instead, he conveys the impression that boundaries are effortlessly overcome and primarily function as the positive link between communities that enable community expansion and integration (see Adler 2005: 24, 2008: 200). Unfortunately, this reinforces a static conception of 'communities of practice' in that his illustrative security community NATO becomes a stable, 'container-like' entity, which progressively spreads towards integrating 'outsiders' into an ever-larger community. Even though he seeks to understand how change is possible through practice, what he shows is how former 'outsiders' are successively transformed into 'insiders' through the process of socialisation that follows a linear logic: the end state appears to be fixed as newcomers adopt those practices they were 'taught' by existing members based on a rule-following behaviour. Through participation, the 'pupil' learns how to be a 'good' member of a community.

Post-structuralist analyses of collective identity formation provide a stark alternative to this inclusive understanding of boundaries and point to their exclusive effects instead. In his 1996 article *Self and Other in International Relations*, Neumann (1996: 167) argued that "social boundaries are not a consequence of integration, but one of its necessary *a priori* ingredients". Since post-structuralism suggests that the Self cannot make sense of its being without the Other, collective identities are formed through specific *processes of differentiation* of the Self from a perceived Other. As the necessary markers between an 'inside-group' and 'outside-group', then, boundaries make processes of identification possible in the first place. The corresponding mechanisms of exclusion were first conceptualised by David Campbell (1992). In his study on how the state as Self is constituted in its foreign policy, he found that it is through "boundary-producing practices" that the state instantiates its identity to create a constitutive outside and thereby secures its ontological Self through distinction (Campbell 1992: 85). While he sees the potential for a positive association between Self and Other in principle, Campbell exclusively focuses on negative Othering, where the Other is portrayed in antagonistic terms as radically different (Wæver 1996: 122). Lene Hansen (2006: 36) has sought to provide a more nuanced picture of this binary mode of Othering in that she has stressed how different degrees of difference exist that can lead to *less-than-radical* Otherness. However, a convergence between Self and Other in the sense of the Other becoming or eventually merging with the Self is still considered impossible as it would threaten the very ontological security of the Self. Following the line of post-structuralist IR scholars, then, implies that boundaries can never be overcome, as they are a constitutive element in the construction of identity. Even though they are regarded as essentially productive, they work as barriers or constraints rather than enablers for trans-boundary action.

While post-structuralism is thus strong on highlighting how 'boundary-producing' practices or Othering are specific modes of organising that create categories, classifications of objects, people and collectivities, it is weak on conceptualising the boundary as a site that can be used for both exclusion *and* inclusion. It follows that, if inclusive accounts such as Adler's (2005, 2008) operate with stable conceptions of community, it is exclusionary accounts that operate with static conceptions of the boundary. The latter approach to community is therefore no less one-sided because it is equally unable to capture the whole spectrum of members' practices that make their community meaningful. As a response, I propose an integrated approach that acknowledges that community dynamics cannot be explained by a simple binary logic of internal/linking *vs.* external/differentiating, but that community is the result of a complex interplay or overlap of both practices of linking and differentiation. I hence argue that on an everyday basis, members of a community enact the rules undergirding it both through practices of linking (*boundary-spanning*) and practices of differentiation (*boundary-drawing*). These I shall subsume under the generic term of *boundary work*, a longstanding concept in sociology and the interdisciplinary fields of science and technology studies (STS) and management and organisation studies (MOS), but little known in the IR discipline[11].

4.3.4 Boundary Work as the Constitutive Rule Organising Community

Boundary work captures people's efforts to 'yoke' or link diverse, heterogeneous, sometimes even contradicting practices into an assemblage that creates a sense of like-mindedness among members of 'communities of practice'. For this exercise, people do not necessarily need to share the same interests or be of the same opinion. It is the mutual engagement in boundary work, that is, the negotiation of difference, that creates a joint enterprise. Over time, then, the experience of how the diverse locations of difference are managed comes to constitute a shared repertoire of resources and helps the community cohere. Boundary work is hence the community members' capability learnt 'on the job' to engage meaningfully in their community. This competence serves as what I have called 'background knowledge', that is practice and resource at once, and thus bears the negotiated normativity of the community.

In conclusion, the above elaboration on the site of 'the social' suggests that looking at how the diverse boundaries are managed highlights how a community is meaningfully experienced. Moreover, it shows that the constitution and identity of community is more complex than functional-constructivist accounts of integration suggest and less antagonistic than post-structuralist accounts assume (Rumelili 2004). While members do indeed 'span' across boundaries through generating strong interdependence, shared discourses and processes of cooperation and coordination with a perceived Other, they equally draw or maintain boundaries vis-à-vis an Other to secure the Self's position *ex negativo*. Here, senses of belonging are not brought about by shared norms, but by the shared practice of creating a constitutive outside, which obscures the internal diversity. Thus, the constitutive outside helps enhance the distinctiveness and social cohesion of the 'inside'.

That the Other is not necessarily 'external' to the Self, but can also form a temporarily external*ised* part of the Self, has been substantiated by Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014) in her study on stigmatisation in international society. Accordingly, the seemingly clear separation of an 'inside' from an 'outside' is conditional upon the productive work of agents: through stigmatisation states are pushed outside the bounds of international society by being labelled as 'pariah', 'rogue', 'failed' or otherwise. Rather than constituting the 'outside' of international society, however, they are, in fact, an intrinsic part of it. They are what makes the seemingly 'normal' 'inside' possible. By serving as the constitutive outside, then, they ensure the ontological position of 'core' members of international society as they "secure[] the performative enactment of the normal" (Adler-Nissen 2014: 150). How the 'normal' and, reversely, the 'deviant' are defined necessarily varies since their boundaries are subject to negotiation in time and space. The relationship between Self and Other is therefore not static but a dynamic process of 'operating across difference' that breeds various degrees of difference and undergoes different stages of development. It is hence the combined effect of both processes of linking and differentiation that determines a community's constitution and

coherence as it is its members' negotiation *at and of the boundary* that affects their degree of mutual affinity, their ways of belonging and feelings of membership (see Newman 2006b: 147).

Table 3.1 gives a heuristic overview of the diverse practices pertaining to boundary work that I have identified on the basis of my interview data generated in 2012 and 2014. In addition to displaying the two different sets of 'linking' and 'differentiating' processes, it shows a two-fold partitioning into 'internal' and 'external' 'boundary-drawing' and 'boundary-spanning' practices. Together they make four different types of boundary work in which EU field diplomats engage in Kyiv, Ukraine. The rationale behind this additional distinction is to take account of 'boundary-spanning' and 'boundary-drawing' practices that go beyond the simple 'inside'/linking and 'outside'/differentiation dichotomy. The reconstruction of my interviews yielded more complex processes of boundary work that included not only the generally anticipated 'boundary-spanning' or 'boundary-drawing' by EU field diplomats vis-à-vis actors 'external' to the EU, such as those pertaining to the host state or other 'international players'. Given the contingent nature of community, 'boundary-spanning' and 'boundary-drawing' practices also take place 'internally', that is, among the members of the EU diplomatic 'community of practice' as well as with a view to the wider EU community in Brussels or the member state capitals. On the one hand, such practices show in the hierarchies, subgroups or coteries that exist among EU diplomats and therefore create internal differentiation and gradations of membership. On the other hand, they become highly visible in the way in which member state foreign services and the European External Action Service are either portrayed as clear proxies who belong to the same EU community or are constructed as the constitutive outside of the local EU diplomatic community. In light of these manifold and sometimes contradictory modes of organising, critics might question the very distinction of 'internal' and 'external', suggesting that this artificially reifies the EU as a given community with preexisting boundaries. I would object here, however, for the typology does not only help us to pin down the diverse practices of "b/ordering" (Houtum & Naerssen 2002; Houtum et al. 2005; Houtum 2012), it also makes particularly prominent the idea that we cannot assume the presence of a homogeneous EU community, but rather the ordered practice of creating a "community without unity" (Nicolini 2012: 94).

Table 3.1 Types of Boundary Work in a 'Community of Practice'

Direction of practices / Type of practices	Inwards	Outwards
Practices of linking	(1) Internal boundary-spanning	(3) External boundary-spanning
Practices of differentiation	(2) Internal boundary-drawing	(4) External boundary-drawing

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have developed a relational conception of community that represents an alternative approach to both normative and functional accounts of community that take the foundations of community as given and therefore fail to question their socially constructed nature. My practice-based approach proposes to squarely address the very constitution of community by investigating how agents 'do' or accomplish community in their everyday life contexts as to unearth the 'constitutive rules' that both serve as a 'method' of *and* resource for experiencing community. Locating agents' practices in 'constitutive orders of practice', I have argued, provides crucial insights into why large-scale entities such as community cohere over time. The analysis of the mundane practices of groups of individuals discloses the normative background from which macro-structural phenomena obtain meaning because these provide an orientation towards the communal sense of why a project like community is worth pursuing.

This argument I have built on the basis of a rereading of Etienne Wenger's concept of 'communities of practice' that yields three practice-theoretical themes through which the dynamic constitution of community is made prominent: the transcendence of the traditional division between macro-structures and micro-processes by highlighting how macro-structures depend for their existence on their instantiation in micro-social contexts; the normativity of practices; and the turn to the sites in which meaning is negotiated. Against this backdrop, I have come to consider the EU as a 'structure of meaning-in-use' that is 'layered' into multiple sub-communities whose central resource is practices. The meso-concept of 'communities of practice' here serves as the 'observable' medium through which the researcher can reconstruct the meaning that is attached to large-scale configurations in their respective small-scale interaction orders. As an intermediate space, it makes visible the background knowledge that is located in the relationships among those people who mutually engage in a specific set of practices and establish a shared repertoire of communal resources.

Since 'communities of practice' are also regarded as context-bound and tied to a specific site, the concept of 'communities of practice' methodologically helps situate the locales in which a sense of what it takes to belong to the community is communally negotiated. I have contended that examination of a community's boundaries reveals that it is practices of 'boundary-spanning' and 'boundary-drawing' that serve as a community's constitutive practices as they are the glue that holds a community together. The background from which agents create community is thus their competent performance of crossing boundaries on an everyday basis. An analysis of the EU field diplomats' 'community of practice' thus promises to make visible the micro-social processes by which its diverse 'sites of difference' are linked or separated and lead to a precarious instantiation of the EU's macro-structural community. It must be grasped as an emergent structure of possibilities whose meaningful existence and, thus, its normativity is made possible by constant *boundary work*.

Notes

1 See Nicolini (2012: 94) who has employed this term to stress that members of 'communities of practice' do not have any substantial interests or values in common as traditional 'communitarian' approaches would suggest. The only 'commonality' shared by its members is their joint enterprise. The term was originally coined by William Corlett (1989).
2 This understanding of social order is, however, also visible in the works of Erving Goffmann on interaction orders or Harvey Sacks' conversation analysis (Rawls 2009: 503).
3 I thank Christian Bueger for suggesting the distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' conceptions of 'communities of practice'.
4 See also the growing group of critical constructivist norms researchers that have explored the norm-practice nexus and see norms to emerge in and through practice (Wiener 2014, 2018; Lesch 2017; Bode and Huelss 2018; Niemann 2018; Wiener 2018; Bode and Karlsrud 2019).
5 In a more recent interview, he clarified that he never saw 'communities of practice' to operate in close *physical* proximity only, for "[b]y 'local' I mean local in the *geography of competence*, not local in the physical geography" (Farnsworth et al. 2016: 149, emphasis MH).
6 The acronym COREU stands for *CORrespondence EUropéenne*.
7 See e.g. Jones (2009) who has relativised the 'relational turn' argument that the 'local' is displaced by the 'global'.
8 The two terms 'boundary' and 'border' need terminological specification, even though they have mostly been used interchangeably in the geographical literature, as Newman (2001: 150–151) has pointed out. While Newman himself favours a turn to the border rather than the boundary, I conceive of the border as a specifically material or reified form of the boundary, the latter of which figures as the broader concept.
9 Since the German word *Lichtung* comes from *Licht*, that is, 'light', Heidegger also implied that the situated 'being-in-the-world' becomes intelligible to us through its illumination (Dreyfus 1995: 163).
10 For first attempts at systematising the role of boundaries for the formation and dynamics of 'communities of practice', see, however, Bicchi (2016), Græger (2016), Hofius (2016), Sondarjee (2020).
11 For a selection in sociology, STS and MOS, see Gieryn (1983), Yukich (2010), Yagi and Kleinberg (2011), Leung (2013), Liu (2015), Bucher et al. (2016), Quark and Lienesch (2017), Swedlow (2017), van Bochove et al. (2018), Pereira (2019), Glimmerveen et al. (2020). For a very good review article in management studies, see Langley et al. (2019). For the nascent turn to boundary work in IR, see Purnell (2014), Hofius (2016), Orsini et al. (2017), Kranke (2020).

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4 From Methodology to Method

Reconstructing the Background of Community

1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the concept of 'communities of practice' as an analytical access point to discover the constitutive order of rules that gives agents a sense of belonging to macro-structures such as the EU. 'Communities of practice' constitute the contexts within which belonging to the EU is meaningfully experienced because the mutual engagement in joint enterprises creates a sense of we-ness. In particular, I highlighted the role of practitioners' boundary work in creating senses of like-mindedness among those constructed as 'insiders' or members of a given community. Boundary work must be understood as the practice-based and thus meaningful background knowledge that makes community possible; it ensures that members' continued participation in the project of constructing community remains a worthwhile enterprise.

It is now my objective to underpin the theoretical argument with a research strategy that provides concrete steps detailing how the background can be reconstructed from practices. Since background knowledge is notoriously difficult to capture due to its tacit nature, the chapter seeks to make 'visible' what is generally held 'invisible'. In fact, it advances the argument that the normative background that underlies practices is always publicly witnessable because it is an intersubjectively constructed phenomenon. It does, however, require a different conception of normative order to be adopted through which it can be recognised as such – one that does not understand order to essentially derive its normative force from explicit rules, norms or institutions, but from social practices. To understand what I take to be the 'invisible' background of the EU community, consider the following simile put forward by Merje Kuus (2014: 45) that I believe aptly captures the problem of understanding the EU in all its complexities: [t]he study of the EU is like an iceberg: the visible part of the object has received much attention but the broader social processes supporting it are left out of view. Given the wealth of textbooks in EU studies (e.g. Hooghe & Marks 2001; Wallace et al. 2010; Peterson & Shackleton 2012) that focus on the EU's *institutions* to analytically describe and explain its network-like governance structures, Kuus's (2014) observation serves as a timely reminder that these textbooks say little about the practices of EU professionals that actually get the EU machinery up and running and make the EU

polity cohere over time. In line with International Relations (IR) scholars associated with the 'practice turn' or international political sociology more broadly, Kuus has therefore sought to rectify this formal institutional bias by looking at the informal social order and the concomitant social practices by which the EU and its institutions are enacted and given meaning to on an everyday basis (for similar approaches see especially Adler-Nissen 2014a; McNamara 2015; Adler-Nissen 2016; Bicchi & Bremberg 2018; for earlier attempts in IR see Wiener 1998a, 1998b; Kauppi 2003; in anthropology see Bellier 2000; Bellier & Wilson 2000).

What applies to the predominant approach towards the EU's institutions also applies to its *constitution*. Researchers have most often referred to its legal, contractarian notion, that is, a contract in the form of a legal document that sets out the terms under which individuals subject themselves to political authority. Yet, what is missing in this conventional understanding is a constitution's more ordinary meaning of "a relationship of mutual 'constitution' between human beings and our forms of life" (Packer 2011: 10). This notion highlights that the question of how people intersubjectively make sense of their world through interaction is, in fact, at the bottom of things 'constitutional'. This is why critical constructivist norms researcher Antje Wiener (2008) argues that for international norms, rules or principles to obtain validity and be complied with, it takes more than their formal validation by way of enshrining these in a legal document such as an internationally negotiated treaty or convention. Their validity also hinges on the "social recognition [of distinct social groups or epistemic communities prevailing in international organisations or regimes that] provides a framework of reference for the implementation of norms, rules and principles in international negotiations" (Wiener 2008: 5). Above all, however, she claims that it is the "cultural validation" of norms that ensures their adherence, that is, individuals' everyday practices that give meaning and substance to these norms against a distinct cultural background. Together with norms' formal validity, these socio-cultural practices form the ever-emergent "invisible constitution" of global politics, Wiener (ibid.: 6) holds. This invisible constitution is a normative "structure of meaning-in-use" (ibid.: 5; for the original use see Weldes & Saco 1996: 373; Milliken 1999: 231) that operates beneath the surface of formal legal structures and institutions but crucially guides people in making sense of and meaningfully engaging with the social world around them.

It follows that the normative order that orients people's actions, identities and sense of belonging in a political community consists less of political and/or legal structures and more of socially meaningful patterns of rules that are produced and reproduced in interaction. Consequently, rather than looking at explicit and formal structures that have a regulative effect on agents' behaviour, I suggest looking at the constitutive social processes of community-building and -maintenance *qua* practice of its members instead. For the maintenance of both the EU's extensive *acquis communautaire* and institutions (the 'visible' tip of the iceberg) this implies that these formal structures essentially rely on the daily social practices of the EU's 'members' by which the EU political order is made mutually intelligible and meaningful (the 'invisible' part of the iceberg). Enquiring into how the 'invisible'

part of the iceberg can be 'visibilised'[1] as to understand how the macro-social structure of the EU is brought to life becomes the key methodological challenge for the praxiologist[2].

Accordingly, in this chapter, I shall seek to find ways to confront this challenge by developing a reconstructive methodology that matches the theoretical argument delineated in the previous chapter. I contend that, if it is the rule-governed and yet contextual *use* of macro-phenomena that constitutes community, the researcher is tasked to reconstruct the "meaning-in-use" found in agents' practices (cf. Wiener 2009). How the reconstruction proceeds in practical terms shall, first, be discussed with a view to Karl Mannheim's 'documentary method of interpretation' that was employed by the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel (1967). Second, I shall introduce abduction as a specific logic of enquiry that encourages the researcher to engage in the 'discovery' – or rather the invention and creative construction – of new concepts. In a third step, I advance the strategy of 'zooming in' on practices. It provides a useful 'tool box' that indicates where to look when aiming at unearthing the normative order of practices. To that end, I suggest focusing on b/ordering sites, the carriers of practices and crisis moments[3]. In a final step, I move from methodology to method to discuss not only strategies of accessing a field that is notoriously difficult to access and present interviewing as an alternative to participation observation, which is praxiography's 'natural' method of data generation. I also provide insights into the technique I used to discover the "homologous pattern" (Garfinkel 1967: 78, drawing on Mannheim) of diplomats as boundary workers. I have relied on sociologist Jan Kruse's (2015) "integrative basic technique of analysis" that builds on both Karl Mannheim's 'method of documentary analysis' and ethnomethodology's 'conversation analysis'. As will become plain, this method is consistent with my reconstructive methodology as the technique's process-based ways of analysing text take due account of the iterative-cyclical research process that abductive reasoning entails.

2 "There Is Order in the Plenum"[4]: The Visibility of Order

What I seek to demonstrate in the first section of this chapter is that practices and larger assemblages of practices are not elusive objects that evade the researcher's analysis, but can be analysed: first, because practices are ordered, visibly accountable and therefore public for the eye of both the 'lay person' and the researcher and, second, because researchers can reconstruct their meaningfulness based on the analysis of practitioners' patterned practices that point to their commonsense knowledge. The need for demonstrating that there is, in fact, order underlying the generally conceived 'unruliness' of practices stems from the scholarly observation in both IR and International Law (IL) that the singular normative order that once undergirded the Westphalian system of sovereign states and which structured international conduct is increasingly put into question by the pluralisation, overlap or even clash of different international regimes or legal-normative orders (in IR see Raustiala & Victor 2004; Alter & Meunier 2009; Gómez-Mera 2016; Alter & Raustiala 2018; Kreuder-Sonnen & Zürn 2020; in IL see Fischer-Lescano & Teubner

2006; Walker 2008; Dunoff & Trachtman 2009; Kötter & Folke Schuppert 2009; Blome et al. 2016; Krisch et al. 2020; for an overview of the debate in IR and IL see Faude & Gehring 2017). Public IL scholar Walker (2008: 373) sees a "disorder of orders" emerging for which there is no "underlying basic grid" anymore, no common understanding that makes these new configurations meaningful. In a similar fashion, but from a sociological perspective, Saskia Sassen (2008: 71–72) has detected denationalising dynamics to have led to a "disaggregating of the glue that for a long time held possibly different normative orders together under the somewhat unitary dynamics of nation-states". In light of the 'old' structures collapsing and giving way to increased fragmentation in both its politico-legal and socio-cultural sense, it shall hence be my objective to demonstrate in the following section that a different conception of order is not only possible, but also 'visibilisable'.

Similarly to the previous chapter, I take my cues from ethnomethodology and argue that a turn to the situated practices of practitioners in small-scale normative orders highlights that order can indeed be found and that diversity can be managed and made sense of. As concerns the very existence of order, I draw on Harold Garfinkel (2002: 95–96) who famously argued that "there *is* order in the most ordinary activities of everyday life". As for the ways in which to make sense of it, I refer to Anne Rawls (2009: 511) who has contended that, if "the old cultural and societal structures have broken down", social scientists need to "think about different ways in which rules are being 'institutionalized', and different ways in which 'following' something like rules together can be conceptualized". Yet, unlike positivist scholars in IR who would readily concede to the regulative, functional-structuralist sense of rules, ethnomethodologists like Rawls conceive of them as belonging to situated practices. Readers will remember from the previous chapter that ethnomethodologists consider rules intersubjectively produced "sense-making instruments deployed *in situ*" (Watson 2009: 481). This process-based understanding of rules calls for a change in perspective, away from the formal or functional reference frames of institutions and towards those concrete contexts in which rules are meaningfully enacted by practitioners. Anne Rawls (2009: 511) even points to the emancipatory, democratising potential of this move, forcefully stating,

> [i]f rules belong to situated practices of these kinds […], then participants – in choosing to participate – are also choosing the sets of rules (or constitutive expectations) that they will/must use/orient in enacting that participation intelligibly.

In light of this assertion, and against the background of the theoretical argument developed in the previous chapter, I shall argue in the following section that the constitution of the EU community is visible, but that we need to abstain from exclusively looking at its formal institutions. As I will demonstrate, it can be found and reconstructed through examination of the mundane details of EU diplomats representing the EU at its borders in a 'community of practice'. Here, in

Ukraine's capital Kyiv, the background knowledge that orients their practices is acted out on the material world and becomes visible to the researcher.

2.1 Reconstruction: Of How to Tap Background Knowledge

In his article *Pathways to Practice*, Christian Bueger (2014) has prominently set out to provide practice-near guidelines as to how to do praxiography. What seems tautological at first glance – after all, praxiography is "the practice of doing practice theory driven research" (Mol quoted in Bueger 2014: 385) – has, in fact, been a rare enterprise among the many theoretical treatises of praxiology in IR[5]. His praxiography thus remains a valuable proposal for investigating an object such as practice that all too quickly appears as though it were intuitive to study. While the carriers of practice, be they bodies or artefacts, are more or less easily identifiable, it is their meaning that is more difficult to capture. If not explicitly verbalised in speech or reified in artefacts, it remains implicit and therefore seemingly elusive.

An ethnomethodologically inspired research strategy suggests otherwise: since communication – be it mediated by language or non-verbal means – necessarily relies on rules that orient the actors in their conduct, researchers need to reconstruct these rules. This is based on ethnomethodology's central idea that

> […] in the process of everyday actions methods will be brought to bear by means of which the actions just enacted are made accountable as representations-and-evidences-of-a-social-order.
>
> (Bergmann 1994: 6, translation MH)

So even though it was Garfinkel himself who extensively dealt with the indexicality of expressions and human language as such, he believed that these are ordered, rational properties and "consist of organizationally demonstrable sense, or facticity, or methodic use, or agreement among 'cultural colleagues'" (Garfinkel 1967: 11). It follows that the initial problem of indexicality, which implies that any word can, in principle, mean anything unless sequentially developed and understood in its context of application, can be practically remedied. While it "can never be fully 'repaired'", it can be solved by practitioners managing to 'get by' through reflexively appropriating their conduct based on "giving accounts, by 'hearing' what was 'meant' rather than what was 'said', etc." (Have 2004: 21–22; see also Rawls 2008: 719–720).

Order is then the contingent result of the 'methods'/procedures/rules developed by actors to make their actions accountable to one another, even if the literal descriptions always remain vague and incomplete. In the absence of a previously shared culture or shared context of experience, this means that groups of individuals *do* develop commonsense knowledge of situations through the joint management of their practical affairs. How this social order is accomplished then comes to be ethnomethodology's main topic of interest. Ethnomethodology, in Garfinkel's words, thus "refers to the investigation of the rational properties of indexical

expressions and other practical actions as *contingent ongoing accomplishments of organised artful practices of everyday life*" (Garfinkel 1967: 11, emphasis MH).

The question remains, however, as to how the commonsense underlying a collective's practices or 'methods' can be discovered. To that end, Garfinkel (1967) has relied on Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, and more specifically on his 'documentary method of interpretation', to clarify the process by which the more abstract commonsense knowledge can be uncovered from the concrete and situated practice. As Garfinkel (1967: 78, emphasis MH) explicates,

> [a]ccording to Mannheim, *the documentary method involves the search for "… an identical homologous pattern underlying a vast variety of totally different realizations of meaning." The method consists of treating an actual appearance as "the document of," as "pointing to," as "standing on behalf of"* a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of "what is known" about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.
>
> The method is recognizable for the everyday necessities of recognizing what a person is "talking about" given that he does not say exactly what he means […].

Order hence emerges through the recursively organised search for meaning: it emerges through the reflexive moving back and forth, through the alternation between a 'document of' actions and the emerging underlying 'identical homologous pattern'. The 'documentary method' is thus a method to reconstruct the indexical or documentary sense of discursive or non-discursive practices. Once these have been reconstructed, the researcher is able to convey what kind of collectively shared 'rules' or resources are created and sustained by a specific collectivity that, in turn, provide clues for how a specific (macro-)social phenomenon is possible at all. In other words, he or she can represent the membership characteristics of a group or community that make this community viable. Transferred to the case of the EU community, this means that the reconstruction of diplomatic practices in Kyiv shall enable me to identify the common rules by which the large-scale EU community is instantiated and given meaning through this local 'community of practice'.

3 The 'Logic of Discovery': A Rule-Governed Way to New Knowledge[6]

Ethnomethodology's reconstructive research strategy outlined above seems to point towards an interpretive approach that stresses a logic of enquiry that is inductive. It calls for what is generally known as 'getting the native's point of view' or the full-time immersion in the lifeworld of the practitioners under study to capture their understandings. The analysts' task is therefore "not to decide what an action means, or even what it is, but to describe what it is *taken to be* in

members' work" (Packer 2011: 195). For Fox (2008: 743, emphasis MH), it follows that "[t]he aim of ethnomethodological study is to understand members' practices as studied *from within the practices of the members*". In fact, ethnomethodology requires analysts to become members of the practice themselves, to become "vulgarly competent in the local production" of order (Garfinkel and Wieder quoted in Packer 2011: 195).

This form of internalism and inductive mode of knowing has also been propagated by key IR practice theorists (Pouliot 2007: 364, 2010: 59; Frost & Lechner 2016; Ekengren 2018: 28; Lechner & Frost 2018)[7]. Taking their cue from Hart, Lechner and Frost (2018: 12), for instance, explicitly advocate adopting "[t]he internal point of view […] [that] poses the problem of understanding (making sense of) a social practice from 'within'". The rationale for adopting the internal stance is "honourable", I have elsewhere stated, "for its wants to do justice to the internal standards a group of practitioners under study develop and have in use" (Hofius 2020: 176). This stance is, inter alia, informed by the Wittgensteinian conviction that, different from theory in the natural sciences, social scientific theory should not be ascribed any "privileged status" over the sense-making tools and concepts developed by 'ordinary' actors (Grimmel & Hellmann 2019: 205). While the natural scientist seeks to make sense of a "meaningless" object, the social scientist needs to interpret an already meaningful world (ibid.). It follows that the social science researcher "has no superior access point or method" than his or her research subject (Hofius 2020: 174). Or, as Bohnsack (1999: 66, translation MH) puts it with reference to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, the researcher's interpretation cannot be accorded any "higher rationality" than the commonsense interpretations of the practitioners under study[8].

In practice, however, such internalism "remains a utopian quest because it misses the theoretical baggage a researcher carries and ultimately disregards the epistemic constraints and customs of the scientific community, within which practice theorists are embedded" (Hofius 2020: 176). Similarly to deductive reasoning, then, inductive reasoning – internalism's 'natural' logic of enquiry – is a reductionist presentation of the research process and, more generally, of our "ways of knowing" (see e.g. Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012: 24ff; Kruse 2015: 136–142). While practice theorists like Pouliot or Lechner and Frost take the problem of the double hermeneutic seriously (Pouliot 2007: 365; Lechner & Frost 2018: 18), they overestimate their ability to recognise the commonsense categories of their research subjects. In turn, they underestimate the interpretive gap to be bridged between the language and rules in use by the community of practitioners and those by the community of researchers (Hofius 2020: 174). On the one hand, it would take years of 'apprenticeship' to become fully competent in, say, diplomatic practices and skilfully use the commonsense language and criteria of diplomats. Anything short of such immersion remains subject to double hermeneutics. On the other hand, even if researchers had succeeded in becoming competent members of the practitioners' community, they would need to translate the meaning of a given practice and, as a result, make it amenable to the conventions and concepts of the research community (Yanow 2009a). Such translation would

require an additional hermeneutic moment. Whichever way practice theorists look at practitioners' practices, they usually take "one hermeneutic 'loop' too few" (Hofius 2020: 173): by falling prey to internalism's promise of reproducing the commonsense of practitioners, they either underestimate the extent to which prior concepts shape their approach to and understanding of their research subjects' practices or are ignorant of the language of their scientific community to which they must tailor their analytical accounts.

In the following section, I shall therefore highlight the pitfalls of inductive reasoning and present abduction as an alternative mode in the next section. Thorough engagement with abduction – also known as the 'logic of discovery' – is only slowly taking root in the discipline of IR (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009; Yanow 2009b; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012; Hofius 2020). Nonetheless, abduction should become the preferred research route to take, if researchers are not only interested in learning how to cope with prior knowledge but also in creating genuinely new knowledge. Since I have posed a research question that has not been asked before and now seek to reconstruct the meaning of a not-yet-fully understood practice, it is compelling, even imperative to adopt the abductive mode of reasoning as it enables me to engage in creative concept-building. As I will have made plain by the end of this section, the conceptual combination of 'communities of practice' and boundary work was only made possible through the application of abductive reasoning.

3.1 Handling Prior Knowledge: From Induction to Abduction in IR

Widely acknowledged as one of the two scholars who heralded the 'practice turn' in IR, Vincent Pouliot (2007: 364) has suggested that an inductive methodology that is based on Glaser and Strauss's (1999) grounded theory methodology (GTM) is one of the necessary ingredients for constructivist research. Induction, he argues, "is the primary mode of knowing because social facts constitute the essence of constructivism. Research must begin with what it is that social agents, as opposed to analysts, believe to be real" (Pouliot 2007: 364). He starts out from the assumption that we need to move "from the local to the general" because "constructivism's foundations of knowledge rest not on a set of *a priori* assumptions but on agents' taken-for-granted realities", that is, on 'social facts' that are recognised as 'real' by a relevant group of people (Pouliot 2007: 364). The ethnographic concern with understanding reality 'from the native's point of view', which was most famously voiced by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1974), is not limited to practice theorists in IR. In other disciplines, such as organisation studies, scholars have equally turned to the micro-level to study everyday practices with the aim of understanding how order is constituted. In an effort to develop a more 'empirical' programme, they have particularly drawn on ethnography. Miettinen et al. (2009: 1315) substantiate this move by arguing that

> rather than beginning with concepts defined a priori and seeking to test them in the field, the ethnographer goes in search of what might be called, drawing

on Wittgenstein, the 'ordinary language' and conceptualizations used by members of the situation under study for making sense of their surroundings, their everyday activities, and the objects used in those settings and activities.

The problem underlying these efforts is, however, that both Pouliot (2007) and Miettinen et al. (2009) miss the crucial factor of the researcher being implicated in the construction of 'social facts' and, by extension, the research object, too. This is surprising in light of Pouliot's (2007: 365) explicitly stated interpretive methodology. In that regard, he *does* acknowledge what Giddens called the 'double hermeneutic' problem, that is, that researchers need to bear in mind that "what they are interpreting are interpretations of situations that those actors themselves have made" (Jackson 2006b: 266). Yet, he does not fully engage with it. Otherwise he would thoroughly problematise the preexisting or background knowledge with which an object or subject is not only constructed by the researcher, but above all, from which it is approached in the field.

This lack of self-reflexivity may be partially explained by the attitude that Vrasti (2008: 281) has termed "ethnographilia". Pouliot, she holds, is part of a group of IR scholars that show ethnographic sensibility in their study of everyday practices in an effort to offset IR's representational bias. Accordingly, in IR constructivist writing, the turn to ethnography has been regarded as "the missing methodological link that would make constructivism whole" (Vrasti 2008: 290) by, inter alia, balancing between macro- and microanalysis through a return to empiricism. Yet, Vrasti identifies two problems that are associated with this endeavour. On the one hand, most of the work has largely ignored that ethnographic texts are interpretations in and of themselves and therefore do not reflect a 'pure' account of what is 'really going on' (ibid.: 291). The necessary awareness of the researcher's presence in the text is thus absent and comes close to naïve empiricism. In the worst case, this can result in "secondary ethnocentrism" where the researcher does not push beyond the 'native's point of view' (Shore 2006: 47). On the other hand, a clear dismissal of orthodox social science methodology has not resulted from the turn to ethnography. It is especially Vincent Pouliot's (2007) attempt to bridge subjectivity and objectivity with his *subjectivist* methodology that does not succeed in 'shaking off' the social scientific desire for objectivity. As Vrasti (2008: 294) laconically remarks, he does this for fear of "subjectivity, language or reflexivity […] represent[ing] the risk of advancing a purely discursive understanding of social reality".

His general misconception of inductive reasoning is probably related to what Kelle (2005: 45) has called the "inductivist self misunderstanding"[9] of grounded theory that developed out of the methodological contradictions in its founding fathers Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss's (1999) earlier work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. It is now widely understood that the authors were motivated by the desire to counter the then prevailing deductive-nomothetical paradigm by "an inductive rhetoric of the 'return to the empirical data'" (Kelle quoted in Kruse 2015: 9, translation MH). Since then, specific variants of the myth that grounded theory sees theory simply 'emerge from the data' have evolved: the

tabula rasa-metaphor as well as the emergence-metaphor. These were created based on Glaser and Strauss's (1999) earlier suggestion to literally ignore the relevant literature of the field and instead trust in codes 'emerging from the data' (Kruse 2015: 97). "The false premise that the researcher is a blank sheet devoid of experience or knowledge" (Suddaby 2006: 634), however, stands in sharp contrast to the practical process of understanding and explaining phenomena: every perception is dependent on the researcher's own knowledge and relevant concepts that are prior to or used in the research process (Kruse 2015: 96).

This should not be regarded as a problem as long as analysts do not force their own views on the data at hand, but rather remain "theoretically sensitive" (Glaser & Strauss 1999: 46). This notion implies that a researcher's prior knowledge, including experiential knowledge, serves as "the mental capacity to respond to and receive the messages contained in data" (Corbin & Strauss 2008: 33). Ian Dey (quoted in Corbin & Strauss 2008: 33), for instance, poignantly remarked that

> there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head. To analyze data researchers draw upon accumulated knowledge. They don't dispense with it. The issue is not whether to use existing knowledge, but how.

Moreover, grounded theory's pioneer Anselm Strauss later pointed out himself that grounded theory had falsely been regarded as an inductive method and that 'theoretical sensitivity' should be considered a precondition for the research process[10]. Consequently, while researchers can use any data at any stage of the research process – so that reading the literature and analysing the data becomes an "iterative-recursive play" (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012: 28) – they must not become "prisoners" of their own literature so that the researcher's theoretically derived patterns are not imposed onto the data (Corbin & Strauss quoted in Kruse 2015: 100).

Theory, then, is neither ignored nor readily applied to one's research subject. It rather functions as useful heuristics or what Bourdieu has called 'thinking tools' that need to be reinvested to build the empirical (in Wacquant 1989: 50; in anthropology see Hirschauer & Amann 1997: 37; in IR, see Leander 2008; Wiener 2014, Chapter 5). In a similar fashion, it was Herbert Blumer (1954: 7) who pointed to the significant role that concepts play throughout the research process: in his view, they function as "sensitizing concepts" that remain vague and yet provide the frame within which research problems are generated (see also Kruse 2015: 109–110). So in contrast to what the inductive logic implies, the researcher does not enter the field value- or concept-free; rather, his or her research strategy is "concept-driven" (see Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009: 716–717). Yet, contrary to concepts being defined *ex ante*, they are specified and filled with 'content' during the course of the research process so that they align closely with the data generated in the field. Friedrichs and Kratochwil (ibid.: 717) therefore suggest that the researcher orient him- or herself along the hermeneutic circle-spiral of the process of understanding according to which our concepts and the research field constitute one another in a dynamic relationship. This is what *abductive* reasoning seeks to capture.

In their pragmatist plea for moving "from deconstruction to reconstruction in research methodology", Friedrichs and Kratochwil (ibid.: 701) forcefully begin their critique of standard scientific methodology with the plain argument that research experience has taught philosophers of science and political scientists alike that "the traditional epistemological quest for the incontrovertible foundations of scientific knowledge is futile" (ibid.). They therefore deplore

> the methodological "organized hypocrisy" of positivism, which is a self-vindicating and self-justificatory discourse that seeks to establish social scientific credibility and rigor despite its practical nonapplicability. Everybody knows, but nobody recognizes openly, that no one actually follows the stylized steps of hypothesis formulation, testing, and so on.
>
> (ibid.: 710)

Instead, any researcher who takes constructivism's core claims about the construction of social reality and the social construction of knowledge seriously (see Guzzini 2000) should therefore acknowledge social reality's intersubjective nature and be aware of the fact that he or she is inevitably bound up in constructing his or her object of study so that "there can be no direct testing against reality" (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009: 705).

As an alternative to positivist research, they suggest turning to pragmatism that recognises science as a "reflexive practice of discursive communities of scholars" and sees its theory "as a device for the generation of useful knowledge" (ibid.: 711). The logic of enquiry underlying pragmatism is held to be abduction. According to the authors, it more accurately corresponds to how humans accumulate knowledge in their everyday practices (ibid.: 714). First introduced by the pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce, abduction is, then, less a mode of reasoning than an attitude towards data in light of the researcher's prior knowledge. Different from both deduction and induction, it seeks to genuinely generate new knowledge based on a 'puzzle' that needs to be solved, but for which there is no matching conceptual explanation available. The remaining two logics of enquiry merely apply extant knowledge, either by imposing theoretical concepts or rules onto case-specific data (deduction) or by generalising from these case-specific data (induction)[11]. Since Jo Reichertz (2010: 5) has so astutely summarised abduction as a "rule-governed way to new knowledge", it is useful to quote him at length here:

> [abduction] consists of assembling or discovering, on the basis of an interpretation of collected data, such combinations of features for which there is no appropriate explanation or rule in the store of knowledge that already exists. This causes surprise. […] Since no suitable 'type' can be found, a new one must be invented or discovered by means of a mental process. One may achieves (sic) a discovery of this sort as a result of an intellectual process and, if this happens, it takes place 'like lightning,' and the thought process 'is very little hampered by logical rules' (PEIRCE, 1931–1935, Vol. V, p.117). An order, or a rule, in this procedure must therefore first be discovered or invented, and

this has to happen with the aid of intellectual effort. […] The logical form of this operation is that of *abduction*. […] Abduction is therefore a cerebral process, an intellectual act, a mental leap, that brings together things which one had never associated with one another: A cognitive logic of discovery.

(Reichertz 2010: 16)

Based on the tension between what is seen in the field and what was expected before venturing into the field, abduction thus helps the researcher invent or *discover* a new 'type' or concept through the creative combination of the empirical pattern at hand and his or her prior knowledge. This research strategy is hence a reiterative back and forth between the empirical data and the researcher's relevant literature until the 'puzzle' seems less surprising (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012: 27). It combines deductive and inductive reasoning.

Consider my research question about what makes the EU cohere as a community (see introduction). Had I chosen a deductive logic of enquiry, I would have simply matched Etienne Wenger's (1998) indicators of a 'community of practice' with those patterns observed on the ground in Kyiv. Probably I would have 'identified' a coherent and harmoniously collaborating group of diplomats and would have dismissed all those contradictory remarks made by diplomats that would have pointed towards internal fragmentation or even conflict. If I had chosen an inductive mode of reasoning, I would have either dismissed the concept of 'communities of practice' altogether as unsuitable or would have, intentionally or not, made the empirical material fit with the approach. Based upon my implicit theoretical background of 'communities of practice', I might have been biased towards the concept and ignored other routes of theoretical explanation. In contrast to these two, I have chosen to adopt an abductive attitude along which I have moved back and forth between the conceptual and the empirical plane to eventually come up with an adapted version of Wenger's (1998) concept of 'communities of practice'. Only this recursively organised enterprise has allowed me to discover that boundary work is not only a nexus of practices thus far neglected in the approach, but that it also functions as a resource that enables a community to cohere over time. This discovery I was only able to make because I was very attentive to my interviewees, used different theoretical approaches as heuristics rather than rigid templates and was prepared to be 'taken by surprise'. The pattern of boundary work was not readily apparent, but only slowly emerged during the research process. In the end, I did not only reconstruct the practices of EU diplomats, but equally constructed the concept of boundary work as a necessary complement for the 'communities of practice' literature.

The move towards a (re)constructive methodology that is found in pragmatism, and that has been so vigorously propagated by Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009), is not new, of course. The two authors even use Rosenau's (1989) description of his research strategy as an example for "Rosenau-the-positivist" having followed a pragmatist reasoning without, however, calling it 'by its name' (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009: 707). Within post-positivist or constructivist circles, abduction has not figured prominently in the literature and, if at all, has been 'dropped'

as a term rather than being thoroughly elaborated[12] (ibid.: 709). I would like to take Karin Fierke's (e.g. 1998, 2001) work as an example of how abduction seems to have guided her research strategy without, however, explicating it. In her Wittgenstein-informed, consistent constructivist analysis of how the end of the Cold War became possible, she argues for a methodological "return to a logic of discovery" (Fierke 2001: 127). Highly critical of post-structuralism's deconstructive reasoning, she proposes a reconstructive alternative based on the fact that

> [t]he use of language, as opposed to its deconstruction, necessarily relies on rules, which are a positive construction. […] The question is not positive construction or its absence, but rather what kind of construction, which is precisely what is at stake in most political contests. One way to avoid the reification of theoretical categories is to privilege the analysis of meaning in use in actual contexts of political contestation over the creation of theoretical languages.
>
> (Fierke 2001: 120)

Here, the researcher is tasked to reconstruct or 'discover' the patterns of rules that structure or organise social phenomena and provide a shared language or 'grammar' for actors to draw on. Without using the term abduction, her reasoning nonetheless closely resembles it as she follows Wittgenstein who suggested to "'look and see' how identities are constituted in specific contexts" (ibid.: 119). It follows that despite her focus on discursive practices only, Fierke's interpretive approach entails ample elements I have in the previous paragraphs considered essential when outlining a reconstructive analysis. Reconstructive analyses have therefore not been entirely absent in IR (for good examples see Jackson 2006a, 2006b; Wiener 2009). Yet, I believe it is necessary to make them more explicit as part of the endeavour to provide signposts to scholarly and lay readers alike and to create a shared language that allows for comparison across different theoretical approaches[13]. This is what I seek to accomplish in this chapter.

4 The Strategy of 'Zooming in'

In this section, I outline the research strategy I developed over the course of my research project to attain access to how the EU community is meaningfully experienced by its members. To that end, I have found it useful to structure the 'tool box' along three lead questions by means of which I have been able to zoom in on practices from three different, yet interrelated perspectives:

1 What are the *sites* in which the EU community is experienced most intensely?
2 Who are the relevant *carriers* of practices, that is, agents that promise to give compelling insights into the constitution of a macro-social phenomenon such as the EU community?
3 And what are the *conditions* under which it is most conducive for the researcher to tap the background knowledge of agents?

As for the first question, I suggest venturing new sites of research, that is, borders or borderlands as b/ordering sites. Understood as the objectified territorial form of the boundary that clearly separates an 'inside' from an 'outside', borders and borderlands magnify the various ways in which individuals and groups negotiate "sites of difference" (Abbott 1995: 862, see Chapter 3). Consequently, I have focused on what happens in the borderland of Ukraine to gain access to studying the EU's processes of constructing community at its Eastern fringes. Its capital Kyiv comes to serve as a specific example of a b/ordering site in which multiple 'sites of difference' overlap and are subjected to negotiation. With respect to the second question, I have identified field diplomats from both the EU member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to be the most likely actors to act as carriers of the practices that instantiate the EU community in Ukraine. Because of their function as representatives of the EU member states, or of the hybrid EU non-state, respectively, they are the actors whose practices are most exposed to the public gaze. As 'France', 'Poland' or 'the EU', they personify their respective political entity and act on behalf of the larger whole. In principle, this facilitates the researcher's task to relate the constitutive practices to a specific macro-social entity.

Finally, as regards the question of timing, I shall argue that crisis situations increase the chance of tapping background knowledge. In contrast to settled times during which commonsense goes unformulated, moments of crisis or upheaval compel agents to make their taken-for-granted background knowledge explicit. It is here that active work on the part of agents is no longer needed to merely sustain a given order, but is necessary to either reestablish the previous order which has recently broken down or construct new strategies for managing the crisis. Against the more general background of the recently established EEAS that has posed a challenge to the 'old' ways in which EU diplomacy was conducted, I have chosen two consecutive periods of hiatus in which the EU diplomatic routine was threatened or interrupted in Ukraine: first, the period leading up to the 2012 Ukrainian parliamentary elections and, second, the period following the suspended signature of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (AA) on the part of the Ukrainian authorities that triggered the mass protests and eventually a national revolution on (Euro)Maidan from late November 2013 onwards.

4.1 'Zooming in' on B/Ordering Sites: Ukraine as the Borderland

In his outline of praxiological research strategies for IR, Christian Bueger (2014: 392) has proposed to 'zoom in' on "structure-making sites". These are sites in which the production of order is most likely to take place, based on the density of interrelated practices as well as connections to other sites that these specific locales hold. Since he rejects the artificially created scaling based on macro- and micro-'levels', he believes it is more fruitful to see the "[t]he global [...] [as] an emergent dimension of arguing about the connection between sites" (Marcus quoted in Bueger 2014: 392–393). His strategy is consistent with my own in that I have argued that 'communities of practice' always appropriate the global or macro-context for their

own locality. I opine, however, that the question as to what sites are methodologically most suitable for seeing practices unfold demands yet another strategy, that is, the strategy of 'zooming in' on b/ordering sites. But why should researchers turn to b/ordering sites and what does the term actually mean?

Besides my conceptual turn to boundaries as 'sites of difference', I argue for a methodological turn to borders. As the objectified, territorially defined outcome of practices of ordering *and* bordering, a border can be conceived of as the "testing ground" for an otherwise latent order whose norms are worked out on the bordering collectivity (Houtum & Naerssen 2002: 129). As Lamont and Molnár (2002: 183) point out with reference to national borders, these

> provide most individuals with a concrete, local, and powerful experience of the state, for this is the site where citizenship is strongly enforced (through passport checks, for instance). The social experience of borders encompasses formal and informal ties between local communities and larger polities, and hence constitutes a privileged site for analyzing micro and macro dimensions of national identity.

Borders are thus the site where the inside of political entities is reproduced on the outside and where the members of a community *experience* their belonging to a community most intensely. Borders, and borderlands respectively, are hence assumed to closely reflect the constitution of a given polity.

Even though I previously sought to make plain that 'sites of difference' – (non-)discursively constructed or reified in material form – exist everywhere in social space, I nonetheless contend they are more easily observable in localities that lie in so-called "power margins" rather than "power centres" (see Kuus 2004: 473). B/ordering sites lie in such power margins. Although, or precisely because, b/ordering sites are located on the margins of a given entity, boundary negotiations are expected to compound here as contestation over questions of membership and belonging is intensified. Thus, they might shape the entity more strongly than the normality at the centre (see Wæver 2009: 175). The reason lies in their Janus-faced nature: while both the notion of b/ordering (Houtum & Naerssen 2002; Houtum et al. 2005b; Houtum 2012) and power margin imply a site's marginal existence in a materialised or territorial form, they equally connote the power that is exerted through agents' practices – hence the gerund border*ing*. The concept of b/ordering thus underscores the productive quality of practices in not only organising, but actually *ordering* objects and entities in political space (Bueger & Edmunds 2021). Because of the frequency of cross-cultural encounters and their resulting web of interweaving practices, b/ordering sites should be understood as sites that order multiple 'sites of difference' at once.

For the purpose of analysing the EU's constitution as a community, I take the EU's neighbouring country Ukraine, and specifically its capital Kyiv, to constitute such a b/ordering site. Following Friedrich's and Kratochwil's (2009: 718) pragmatist suggestion to choose the "most important" or "most typical" case, Kyiv must be considered among the "most important" cases due to its archetype role

as a borderland. This claim is grounded in a two-fold rationale: on the one hand, Ukraine is part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that was conceived in 2004 as an alternative to the EU's enlargement policy and later divided into a Southern and Eastern dimension, that is, the "Union for the Mediterranean" in 2008 and the "Eastern Partnership" (EaP) initiative in 2009. Hence, it politically lies at the borders of the EU and thereby belongs to the group of 16 "outsiders" that currently encircle the EU on both its Eastern and Southern fringes[14]. Until most recently, none of the countries has to date been offered EU membership[15]. From the start, however, Ukraine has contested its 'outsider' status and consistently demonstrated its aspiration to become a future EU member. In February 2019, it even amended its constitution to cement its 'European choice', that is, its objective to obtain full membership in both the EU and NATO (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty 2019).

Because of the subsequent negotiation over what EU membership requires, and what Ukraine currently still seems to lack, the contestation over Ukraine's EU membership aspirations provides insights into what the EU as a community actually means. Moreover, its very name *ukraina* is also representative of its troubled history, and indeed political present. Kristof (1959: 269–270) has explicated that the term *ukraina* literally means 'borderland' and denotes an area 'on the margins' of some larger entity[16]. Thus, while Ukraine has been an independent state since 1993, its past as a peripheral area still extends fully into the country's present – be it for its embodiment of the "bloodlands" between Hitler and Stalin during World War II (Snyder 2010), for its status as one of the Soviet Union republics until its breakup in 1991, for the colonialist client role it has time and again been ascribed by its patron Russia that still considers Ukraine to belong to its geopolitical 'sphere of influence' or, yet again, for the "frontline of liberal democracy" that the protestors on Maidan were said to constitute vis-à-vis the *ancien régime* from late November 2013 onwards (Speck in Techau 2013). As variegated as Ukraine's past and present have been, the country has seldom been portrayed as independent, always part of or in-between larger wholes. Even with the revolution on Maidan, the above-mentioned 'frontline'-metaphor created by an EU-based analyst implicitly forces Ukrainians to take sides, to belong to the liberal 'West' instead of the non-liberal 'East'. As the borderland, then, it is the site where the 'Western' liberal *EU*rope directly encounters its former absolute Communist Other.

On the other hand, Ukraine is where diplomacy is taking place at multiple levels at once: while it is the "mediated exchange" (Neumann 2013: 6) between the EU and the third state Ukraine, it is also that among the EU member states who struggle to find a common EU approach towards this very country. The consequence of these multiple exchanges is that they do not only show how the constitutive parts of this post-Westphalian polity negotiate their community among themselves and try to represent it abroad, but that, as the site where intra-EU diplomacy and external EU diplomacy overlap, it is where its external representation is at times challenged by intra-EU diplomatic struggles over, and narratives of, what *EU*rope actually means. Moreover, since Constantinou (1996: 113) has highlighted that "[d]iplomacy's raison d'être is [...] established only when there

are boundaries for identity and those boundaries of identity are crossed", Ukraine constitutes an exemplary case for demonstrating how the manifold 'sites of difference' are managed and negotiated.

4.2 'Zooming in' on the Carriers of Practice: EU Field Diplomats in Kyiv

Whereas Kyiv constitutes the b/ordering site in which an ensemble of practices unfolds most visibly, the question remains as to how their meaning reflects back on the larger EU community. In line with ethnomethodology, I contend that this 'transfer' is undertaken by a group of individuals – the *corps diplomatique* of the EU and its member states in Kyiv – that acts as a 'carrier' (Weber's *Träger*) of practices, rather than as a collective of *owners* of practices. This perspective departs from both structure-oriented and actor-centred theories, for, in Garfinkel's view, individuals neither take on roles pertaining to a larger institution nor are they containers with autonomous interests and motivations whose properties are only strengthened or constrained by a particular institutional context (Rawls 2008: 717). Rather, for Garfinkel, individuals are "situated actors" (ibid.: 707); they only exist as actors "in relation to a particular situation" (Samra-Fredericks & Bargiela-Chiappini 2008: 661). 'Situated actors' therefore only form a group for as long as they are mutually committed to the same situation, that is, for as long as they "play the same game" (Rawls 2008: 707). If EU field diplomats 'play the same game', such as repeatedly engaging in public diplomacy by way of, for instance, the 2013 "Stronger Together/СИЛЬНІШІ РАЗОМ" information campaign that aimed at informing the Ukrainian public about the benefits of closer EU-Ukraine association in the face of mounting Russian pressure on the Ukrainian government to turn eastwards, they can be conceived of as the carriers of practices. In fact, they can be conceptualised as representatives of the EU. Coulter (2001: 42) justifies the term of 'representation' in the following way: "when certain persons do and/or say specific sorts of things according to specific rules […], then these cases instantiate the conduct of macro phenomena. They bring these phenomena to life".

Given the ethnomethodological conception of actors, who better to zoom in on than diplomats whose primary task has traditionally been that of *representing* their prince, government or now even a (non-)state? Admittedly, the idea(l) entertained by diplomats of constituting the prime representatives of their state has undergone significant changes and has been subjected to criticism from outside diplomatic circles (for an overview of different evaluations see the exchange between Sharp (1997) and Cooper (1997)). The institution of diplomacy and the role of diplomats are increasingly under pressure to reform and adjust in light of the allegedly fading state system that is giving way to new forms of post-Westphalian governance with non-state actors challenging the monopoly of statist diplomacy (Bátora 2005; Betsill & Corell 2008; Adler-Nissen 2009). This has led scholars to observe a "new diplomacy" (Cooper et al. 2002; Riordan 2003; Scholte 2008; Kelley 2010) or even a "diplomacy without diplomats" (Kennan

1997) emerging. Accordingly, an evolving network of new actors – may it be non-state actors such as the EU, paradiplomatic and regional actors or international non-governmental organisations that seek to represent global civil society – is undermining traditional diplomacy between states. Others, however, consider the purported demise of traditional, inter-state diplomacy as premature and rather see diplomacy as having creatively adjusted to the new constellations in order to emerge as key actors in global governance (Sending et al. 2011, 2015). Sharp (1997: 632) even reminds us that the claim to representation remains inextricably linked to the very recognition by others; some diplomat's claim to represent no country and instead "no one and everyone" is arguably more problematic than the challenges inter-state diplomacy is facing in a post-Cold War environment. After all, he insists, state diplomats derive their authority first and foremost from the fact that they are "representatives of sovereign states, that this is their *raison d'être* and a precondition for anything else they might aspire to be or to do" (ibid.: 634).

Up until the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the subsequent establishment of the EU's EEAS, launched on 1 December 2010, Sharp may have felt vindicated, and, as my interview material shows, state-centric diplomacy has not suddenly disappeared from view (see Chapter 5). Benson-Rea and Shore (2012), for instance, have shown the clear differentiation discernible between state diplomats and "diplomats without a flag", as Dimier and McGeever (2006) called the European Commission's external representatives in third states prior to the Lisbon Treaty. As a former Head of a European Commission Delegation quipped in an interview 2009,

> [i]f you go into a country and say 'I'm the Ambassador of France', everybody thinks they know what an Ambassador is and what France is. If you say 'I'm the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission', they really haven't got the slightest idea what you're talking about.
>
> (Benson-Rea & Shore 2012: 1)

Today's picture is more mixed, however. Since the inception of the EEAS, both the legal status and political standing of the EU's external representation have been upgraded. The rotating Presidency scheme was replaced by the Union Delegations that permanently hold the Presidency now. This has provided for more coherence of EU action on the ground and increased their relative visibility towards host countries. Overnight, former Heads of European Commission Delegations turned into Heads of European Union Delegations so that they now have "the rank and courtesy title of ambassador" (Blockmans & Hillion 2013: 34). Furthermore, the post-Lisbon arrangement now explicitly calls on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security to enter into negotiations with third countries and international organisations to 'contract-in' privileges and immunities set out in the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations (Duquet & Wouters 2012: 44–45). It thereby systematises previous international legal custom according to which bilateral 'establishment agreements' provided that European Commission staff could assume diplomatic and representational functions

(Duquet & Wouters 2012: 38–39). Today, all Union Delegations except for one – the EU representation in Jerusalem running under the official name "Office of the European Union Representative - West Bank, Gaza Strip, UNRWA" – are granted the same privileges and immunities as state embassies (Duquet & Wouters 2012: 44–45; Bicchi 2016: 468).

Moreover, the EU's fully fledged Foreign Service has from its inception posed a considerable challenge to the very notion of diplomacy. Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014b: 679) has convincingly demonstrated that the EU, or more specifically the EEAS, does not necessarily pose a challenge to state-based notions of diplomacy and national foreign services in terms of "formal competencies or material resources". But it is its symbolic capital with which it impinges on the sovereign state and its monopoly on diplomatic representation (Adler-Nissen 2014b: 659). The very capacity to shape conceptions of what it means to be 'a good diplomat' underlines the EEAS's emerging role on the diplomatic scene alongside national foreign services.

Highlighting the EEAS's accumulation of diplomatic capital should not be mistaken for a neo-functionalist argument in disguise, though. Following these lines would mean to assert that the EU will in the near future develop an autonomous diplomatic service at the expense of those of its member states. In terms of the numbers of EU member state diplomatic missions, this is clearly not the case as member states "have maintained and even partly expanded their diplomatic network" in spite of the rise of the EEAS and increase of EU Delegations worldwide (Bicchi & Schade 2021: 9, 17). Rather, "Europe is likely to see the emergence of a hybrid form of diplomacy", Adler-Nissen (2014b: 680) notes. In times of what Neil Walker (2006) has called "late sovereignty", Adler-Nissen (2009: 122) equally sees the EU as having entered a phase of "late sovereign diplomacy" that

> is characterized by the intense legal, institutional and social integration of national representatives adhering to the sweeping notion of 'an ever closer union' and producing legislation that challenges the sovereignty of their own nations.

Against this background, it seems unlikely that a loyalty transfer will take place as a result of socialisation among the EEAS staff. The thesis of 'political spillover' among political and economic elites, that was originally voiced by neo-functionalists such as Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg and resonated in the later concept of 'Europeanisation' (e.g. Featherstone & Radaelli 2003; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005), has often been repudiated. On the basis of extensive field work, scholars found hybridisation or diffusion rather than homogenisation among civil servants and political elites working in the Brussels context of EU institutions (e.g. Bellier 2000; Beyers 2005; Hooghe 2005; Lewis 2005; Wiener 2008). The very hybrid composition of EEAS personnel defies the emergence of a 'genuinely' European diplomatic culture. Next to two-thirds of staff coming from the EEAS and the Council Secretariat, the remaining one-third consists of seconded national diplomats who carry with them their national socialisation in foreign ministries

and that increasingly seize high-level positions such as those of Heads of Delegation (Novotna 2014: 5–6).

Despite the heterogeneity of 'cultures' prevailing in EU foreign policy, pre-Lisbon studies exclusively focused on the European Commission Delegations as potential EU embassies. With notable exceptions (Bot 1984; Bale 2002), in which cases the authors paid explicit attention to the coordination (problems) among EU member state embassies in third countries, the remaining studies were informed by an implicit normative bias towards discerning an emerging EU diplomatic actorhood (see e.g. Bruter 1999; Dimier & McGeever 2006; Benson-Rea & Shore 2012). This normative bias continues to inform studies on Union Delegations in which these serve as evidence for the centralisation of European diplomacy at the EU level (Austermann 2014; see, however, Bachmann 2016 to the contrary). Yet, while the 2009 Lisbon Treaty and, more generally, the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy have increased consistency in the EU's external policy, EU diplomacy remains a multi-layered and multi-sited process. This inevitably entails coordination problems not only within EU institutions in Brussels, but also in multilateral settings such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, in summitry diplomacy like the G7, G8 or G20, or among the EEAS and EU member states in third countries[17]. Questions about 'Who is in charge?' particularly abound among the diverse EU actors when policies are concerned where the EU and member states have shared competences (see more generally Emerson et al. 2011). Consequently, this has led Duke (2009: 212, emphasis MH) to conclude that "[i]n spite of the treaty-based importance attached to consistency in the external relations of the EU as a whole, the Union remains *a confusing hydra-headed actor for many third parties*".

It follows that especially in third country contexts it does not suffice to look at EU Delegations only. While for some non-EU countries, "the EU has come to be personified by its external representations, or more specifically, its delegation ambassadors and other officials" (Benson-Rea & Shore 2012: 3), this cannot be generalised. In the EU's external relations, there is no 'one size fits all' template. That is why, in 2018, Bicchi and Maurer compiled a special issue in *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* to, inter alia, explore the variance in "intensity, regularity and leadership" of European coordination in third countries across different diplomatic sites (Bicchi & Maurer 2018: 11): Washington D.C. and Moscow (Maurer & Raik 2018), Ankara (Terzi 2018) as well as the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood (Baltag 2018; Bicchi 2018). Especially the comparative findings by Maurer and Raik (2018) on EU diplomatic coordination in Washington and Moscow indicate a high degree of country and issue specificity, with the two host countries still preferring bilateral contacts to member state embassies over a direct engagement with the EU Delegation or even seeking to "divide and rule", as in the case of Russia (Maurer & Raik 2018: 65). Consequently, the EU has many external faces, which demands a thorough case-by-case analysis of the interaction dynamics among EU member states and the EEAS on the ground. It is for reasons of the EU's diplomatic hybridity that I have chosen to focus on how the officials

of the EU Delegation in Kyiv coordinate the EU's policy towards Ukraine with their counterparts in member states missions.

4.3 *'Zooming in' on Crisis Situations: Unsettled Times in EU-Ukraine Relations*

I have thus far argued that knowledge is a practical accomplishment and therefore an empirically observable phenomenon. At any point in time, the indexical properties of order need to be 'repaired' by its members through sequences of concerted actions in which they aim to make the situated order intelligible to one another. While order is never 'objective' *a priori*, it is accomplished as such through tacit agreement by practitioners. This tacit agreement consisting of common-sense knowledge is thus visible because members leave marks of their 'methods'/procedures/rules used to make sense of situations – Garfinkel's 'documentary evidences'. These can be traced by the researcher. Yet, timing does make a difference, for background knowledge works differently depending on the time period concerned. In 'settled' periods, it can function as the stock of cultural know-how that reinforces a given order; in times of social and political transformation, it serves as the resources that are used to reestablish the old order or to create a new one[18]. In the following, I contend that during or immediately after crisis situations background knowledge acquires a markedly explicit quality and provides a convenient moment for the researcher to enquire into the background knowledge of his or her research objects.

   To date, critical theorists in IR have generally seen crisis periods or conflict as turning points and thus an opening towards policy change or renewal (Hay 1999; Roitman 2016: 20). Yet, only more recently have norm-oriented scholars specifically focused on crisis moments to explain change in normative structures and situations of non-compliance within a given community of states based on the contested meaning of norms (Wiener 2004, 2007a, 2007b; Sandholtz 2008; Liese 2009). Wiener (2007a: 6–7), for her part, has highlighted that the possibility of conflict over the validation of norms is generally enhanced in transnational contexts because individuals do not necessarily share a common background that jointly orients their actions. And even if individuals do, they usually belong to "restricted groups of inter-national elites" (Wiener 2007b: 65) whose joint background cannot be expected to be shared by fellow nationals in individuals' respective root community where internationally agreed norms must be implemented. This "inter-national" condition – defined as the situation in which a diversity of individuals with distinct nationalities and, thus, differing cultural baggage interact with one another in transnational arenas (Wiener 2014: 6) – is intensified during moments of crisis that disrupt the tacitly agreed ways of organising action within a distinct societal reference frame. It is here that the fragile order threatens to break down as a result of controversies about a norm's meaning that are most likely caused by divergent background experiences. As a mode of action and normative principle at the same time, contestation over the precise meaning of a set of norms presents an opportunity to enact

the structures of meaning-in-use, though. The reason for it lies in the fact that individuals' "knowing-in-action" (Schön 1983: 49–54), that is, the commonsense knowledge that guides their action without them being aware of it, can no longer be carried on unformulated. It must be articulated by the participants to allow for negotiating the meaning of the order. IR practice theorist Christian Bueger (2011, 2014) has followed a similar line of thought by putting conflict, moments of crisis or, more generally, controversies at the centre of his research framework. This is echoed by Frank Gadinger (2016: 198) who specifically follows pragmatic sociology's recommendation to focus on controversies understood as site-specific "disputes", "affairs" or "scandals". For his part, Bueger has identified two reasons why moments of conflict are specifically worthwhile to study: first, because practitioners' interpretations often diverge to such an extent that they need to argue, indeed, justify their case. This requires the respective individual to make his or her background knowledge explicit. Second, because crisis situations are also moments of change, "newly emerging practices" can be studied next to 'old' ones (Bueger 2014: 396).

Against this background, I seek to buttress both Bueger's (2014) and Gadinger's (2016) proposals by highlighting the paradoxical effect that crisis moments have on the visibility of social order. Once again, the ensuing argument is informed by Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology. Crisis moments can be conceived of as situations in which members of a given group or 'community of practice' potentially face an as yet unknown situation in which their everyday or routine practices fail to provide an adequate response to restore the previous order. Hence, it is a situation in which practices no longer match the unfamiliar situation at hand. This mismatch has two interrelated consequences. First, drawing on pragmatists such as John Dewey, Emirbayer and Maynard (2011: 228), for instance, suggest that in such situations practitioners are compelled to give ad hoc responses and engage in creative problem-solving that is largely based on intelligence rather than reason[19]. This is paralleled by what Donald Schön (1983: 43) considers copying strategies informed by "trial and error, intuition, and muddling through" – ways of reasoning that are all based on actors' previous "experience" rather than technical expertise. Hence, it is here that one's tacit knowing-in-action most forcefully comes to the fore. Yet, and this is the second effect, 'ad hoc-ing' is followed by what Schön calls "reflection-in-action" (1983: 49ff.). When the 'normal' ways of knowing are interrupted and cause perplexity, a process of reflection sets in. As Daniel Spencer (2008: 464) explicates, "[t]he person then restructures their understanding of the situation: the frame of the problem, the mental representation of what is happening, or the strategy of action employed in addressing the problem". It follows that specifically in new, unfamiliar situations a greater emphasis can be placed on the articulated, representational knowledge which is required to address these situations by *account*-giving (Garfinkel 1967). Crisis situations are thus rare moments in time during which the tacit agreement among practitioners is disrupted and leads to a visible 'break' in the 'order of things'[20]. The researcher is, then, confronted with the paradoxical situation that background knowledge commonly held by a group of practitioners is unearthed, while

the lack of a substantial foundation is equally disclosed. In the end, it forcefully demonstrates that the social order of everyday life is highly fragile and for that reason needs constant reinstantiation and repair (Garfinkel 1967; Graham & Thrift 2007; Denis et al. 2015).

With respect to my case study of EU diplomats collectively accomplishing the task of *representing* the EU in Ukraine, I have chosen to focus on two interrelated crisis situations in the hope that background knowledge would become most explicitly articulated. Both situations pass for crisis moments because diplomatic routine, that is the 'daily business' of regular and institutionalised practice, is either heavily strained or suspended outright and sought to be reinstated. In both cases, the previous strategies of action are questioned as a consequence of their (partial) failing to bring about the intended policy aim. The first period concerns the time leading up to the 2012 Ukrainian parliamentary elections whose outcome as 'free and fair' was not only one out of three EU conditions under which the EU-Ukraine AA would be signed, but was also considered to represent a genuine litmus test for the sincerity with which Ukraine sought closer approximation with the EU. The second period concerns the time following the suspended signature of the AA on the part of the then Ukrainian Prime Minister Azarov shortly before the EU's EaP Summit in Vilnius on 28–29 November 2013. The time period, now widely known as (Euro)Maidan, was not only a domestic political crisis for Ukraine, causing more than one-hundred deaths, but also a source for major political tension between EU officials and Ukrainian authorities, that was, inter alia, fought out in the domain of EU field diplomats who experienced the tensions particularly acutely.

Despite both periods being clearly interrelated, there are notable differences in topical emphasis and severity of crisis. As regards the former, the year of 2012 still saw a nascent EEAS operating on the ground, whose infancy occasionally caused confusion or even rivalry over competences between the EEAS and EU member states. The year of 2014, by contrast, saw a more mature EEAS, or EU Delegation in Kyiv. The difference must, of course, be carefully evaluated against the background of Ukraine's political crisis that might have glossed or overshadowed some internal EU divisions. With respect to the magnitude of crisis, however, it is safe to assume that the 2013/2014 crisis that unfolded pursuant to the Maidan protests surpassed the crisis of 2012. Following harassment and ill-treatment of protestors by riot police units, the kidnapping of wounded demonstrators from hospitals and the eventual sniper shootings on Maidan in mid-February, a spiral of escalation was set in motion that was yet unknown to diplomats posted to Kyiv. Evacuation plans for embassy staff were ready to be executed. While the year 2012 primarily saw a struggle over standards for democratic elections, the 2013–2014 crisis that culminated in the *Revolution of Dignity* in February 2014 was all-encompassing, profound and touched all of the EU's purported 'core values' simultaneously: democracy, the rule of law and human rights. All in all, however, the sustained negotiation efforts on the part of EEAS and EU member state diplomats in both periods provided me with a unique opportunity to tap the resources from which

their action originated. In both instances, I was able to examine the extent to which diplomats' joint enterprise of managing these crisis moments sustained a 'community of practice' and, by extension, the EU community.

5 The Practice of Analysing Practices

5.1 Talking about Practice: The Intricacies of Interviewing

When we move from methodology to method and start to ponder the most suitable data generating techniques, what first comes to mind in praxiography is that capturing diplomatic practices is notoriously difficult. Because of the secretive nature of diplomacy most of its practices evade the public gaze. While the mandatory handshake among political leaders and the infamous family photos at various bilateral or multilateral summits are on public display, the pertaining negotiations take place behind closed doors. Even more so, the everyday work of diplomats in the ministry, or abroad at the embassy, mostly remains a closed book. For scholarly research this implies that participant observation of the everyday diplomatic practices is largely hampered by a lack of access to meetings, field operations or training workshops. This has led Merje Kuus (2014: 53–54) to conclude that "[t]here is still a veritable glass ceiling on ethnographic work with the consequence that the upper reaches of the social system are almost entirely in the shadow". IR scholars who have decided to "study up" (Nader 1972) the higher echelons of transnational bureaucracies or organisations to explore the everyday practices of elites such as diplomats have therefore mostly relied on textual analysis and interviewing (Pouliot 2010; see also Adler-Nissen 2014b; Kuus 2014: 54).

Most recently, however, a new generation of IR scholars interested in practice-driven research on diplomacy has creatively adapted ethnographic insights from anthropology (for innovative strategies see e.g. Nair 2019, 2021; Eggeling & Adler-Nissen 2021), following in the pioneering footsteps of Iver B. Neumann (2005, 2007, 2012) who undertook his research in the Norwegian foreign ministry in the double-role of researcher and temporary diplomat. The idea that IR more generally has been witnessing an "ethnographic turn" (Vrasti 2008) since the 1980s needs to be taken with a pinch of salt, though. Scholars increasingly warn that the uptick in using ethnographic methods in the IR discipline often only means little more than doing fieldwork or, as Kuus (2013: 116) quips, "'being there' on a daily basis". All too often this results in "'ethnographic lite' forms" which lack the essential aspect of critically reflecting and actively engaging with the analyst's own prior (theoretical) knowledge and positionality in the field (Wilkinson 2012: 131). Worse even, Wedeen (2010: 259) has cautioned, "[e]thnography is often deployed in the service of the very sorts of objectivist aims that current ethnographic approaches in anthropology and interpretive political science challenge".

When access to the researcher's object is denied, the most viable and widely used alternative to ethnography becomes qualitative interviewing or, to be more precise, the expert interview (Bueger 2014: 400–401). Especially with a

view to praxiographic research, however, this method may be criticised for its language-centric bias where the researcher focuses less on the participatory and implicit elements of practice and more on its reified forms that come in the guise of discursive interventions (Kruse 2015: 284). Moreover, representatives of ethnomethodology might object here that qualitative interviews are not sufficiently situated in natural action contexts. As Kruse explains, since they occur in the artificial setting of the research situation, the researcher cannot (re)construct the social reality from the interviewee's everyday reference frame (ibid.). Contrary to the objective of praxiographic research, then, the researcher and interviewee merely *talk about* practice[21] (ibid.; Bueger & Gadinger 2018: 89). While these objections cannot be ignored, they undervalue that representation and performance are two sides of the same 'practice coin'. As I explicated in Chapter 3, explicitly reified forms of practice often close the gaps left open by the vagueness of its participatory forms so that these two aspects must be understood to be in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship. It is not without reason that Garfinkel's notion of 'accountability' implies that interactants provide *accounts* to one another in order to make their practices intelligible, which, in the end, serve as "*narrative justifications* of order production" (Rawls 2008: 714, emphasis MH).

The question as to whether interviewing can be regarded as an appropriate technique for praxiographic research boils down to the ontological relationship between practices and discourses. In a seminal piece, practice theorist Andreas Reckwitz (2008) has provided a thorough treatise of the productive tension between practices and discourses. While a discourse theoretical perspective assumes practices to always be "discursively impregnated" (Reckwitz 2008: 192, translation MH), a praxiological perspective posits that "discourses are nothing other than practices"; they are borne by the tacit knowledge that underlies their production and reception (ibid.: 193–194, translation MH). From the latter viewpoint, then, discourses are "practices of representation" (ibid.: 203, translation MH; see also e.g. Doty 1997; Hansen 2006). Thus, discourses come to be the practice of using signs "in which objects, subjects and connections are presented in a specific and regulated way and are only produced as meaningful entities in this presentation" (Reckwitz 2008: 203, translation MH). It follows that the meaning that remains implicit in non-discursive practices is explicitly addressed by discourses.

In turn, at the level of methodology, Reckwitz assigns primacy to participant observation as the 'natural' method for praxiology and only secondary importance to qualitative interviews. The immediacy with which the researcher can (audio-)visually perceive practices predisposes him or her to engage in participant observation. However, since implicit knowledge is "*per definitionem* not directly accessible via perception or the comprehension of utterances", *a priori* methodologically rejecting qualitative interviewing is short-sighted (ibid.: 196, translation MH). As Reckwitz points out, even in practice analysis, "[t]he researcher always relies on the inference from the explicit to the implicit, from movements to meaning" (ibid.). Consequently, he concludes,

[i]n this context, the method of qualitative interviewing can grow in significance, representing an appropriate method for praxiology. Principally, praxiology confronts this method with a degree of mistrust: interviews 'about' practices and their knowledge are precisely not the practices themselves. But the speech uttered in the context of interviews can provide means to indirectly tap those orders of knowledge that constitute the practices [under study].

(ibid.: 196–197, translation MH)

Consequently, qualitative interviewing can be seen as part of the methodological toolbox that is available when engaging in praxiography.

5.1.1 Finding the Right Balance of Interview Questions

Adopting the technique of interviewing for data generation in the context of praxiographic research, however, requires attuning the questions asked during the interview situation from *What?* to *How?*. Even though interviewing arguably taps only the interviewee's represented knowledge, because he or she is invited to *reflect* on his/her own doings, *How?*-questions can provide opportunities to disclose and thus make explicit the interviewees' methods used to make sense of their context (Simpson 2010: 1341). Furthermore, interviews also allow exploration of how interviewees construct their "social selves in context" (ibid.). This is crucial in light of my endeavour to reconstruct field diplomats' self-understanding as boundary workers. To this end, it is fruitful to ask comparative questions so that interviewees are required to position themselves. Accordingly, the interviewer can choose from a range of questions, such as asking the interviewee to recount or evaluate other practitioners' practices (Pouliot 2010: 69), weigh other practitioners' quotes as presented by the interviewer or put their own role into comparative perspective.

Obviously *How?*-questions depart from the *What?*-questions of "policy talk" and always carry "the risk of being consigned to irrelevance by departing from this terrain" (Kuus 2014: 56). Interviewing then becomes a precarious balancing act when one's interest goes beyond the usual 'policy talk' and rather aims at the collective "background texture of relevances" that is tapped by posing *How?*-questions (Garfinkel 1967: 53). As Kuus (2014: 56) puts it, the interviewer needs to "navigate" the "analytical terrain" interviewees are most familiar with – asking "questions about national and institutional interests, norms diffusion, and international socialization" – while at the same time trying not to frame the questions along the lines of the usual EU studies literature that yields little new knowledge and, in the worst case, even bores the interviewee (ibid.). Throughout the interview situation, due attention was paid to posing as open questions as possible around a catalogue of themes of interest. This I did to find out whether my questions resonated with my interviewees' systems of relevances, and if they did, my interviewees could unfold the answers in their own language (Bohnsack in Kruse

2015: 32). This approach ensured that I kept (pre-)structuring the conversation at a minimum.

With respect to content, the interviews in 2012 broadly focused on the EU's efforts and problems encountered while implementing the ENP in Ukraine. Yet, I specifically solicited diplomats to talk about how they experienced the coordination and task-divisions among diplomats from both the EU member state missions and the EU Delegation[22]. I was particularly interested in enquiring about the means by which EU diplomats coordinated themselves, the frequency of contact and the perceived quality of their networks. I also wanted to learn about my interviewees' self-positioning – for instance, their perceptions of the relative role of their own missions in light of that of others – and the perceptions of their counterparts posted to other EU member state embassies. With regard to the EU Delegation, I particularly posed questions concerning its supposedly changed role since the Lisbon Treaty came into force. Building upon the themes of interest from the interviews in 2012, those conducted during 2014 specifically zoomed in on how EU diplomats in Kyiv had experienced and managed the political upheaval during (Euro)Maidan. During a time of heightened tension, I wanted to discover whether the crisis had affected the quality and modes of coordination among EU diplomats and whether group dynamics had changed. With regard to the individual member states' policies towards Ukraine, I especially sought to elicit from my interviewees whether the official line and the respective capital's viewpoint diverged from that of field diplomats posted to Kyiv and, by contrast, whether field diplomats converged on specific positions and attitudes (for a more detailed outline of my semi-structured interview guide see Box 4.1 and Box 4.2).

Opening questions were usually geared towards what work was like in the respective mission and contact with the foreign ministry or headquarters 'back home'. Here, I specifically enquired about the national similarities and differences among EU countries so as to gauge their respective dispositions or background know-how. Comparative questions ensued as to educe from my interviewees their views of their colleagues from the EU Delegation and other member state missions – whether and how they cooperated, whether they did things differently, and if so, how they evaluated the differences. Over time, I was able to map which countries collaborated most closely and formed specific groups on certain issues so that I could in the following interviews confront diplomats with these supposed groupings and alleged fragmentation on the ground by way of detailed anonymous accounts given by their colleagues. This was usually the time at which diplomats either started talking openly about the sometimes conflictual dynamics, closed up or made significant efforts at impression management or saving face. In these instances, I felt I had unsettled some taken-for-granted knowledge.

Box 4.1 Interview Questions in 2012

In the year 2012, participants were asked about:

1 Work and organisation of the embassy or mission

- Main tasks, issues and priorities of the country/EEAS in Ukraine, related diplomatic goals and priorities as well as projects undertaken
  Role of the embassy/mission in fulfilling these tasks for the capital/headquarters
  Internal structure of embassy/mission
  Task divisions and flow of information between embassy/mission and capital/headquarters as well as scope of discretion or leeway vis-à-vis capital/headquarters
- Question of changed tasks and role since launch of EEAS and the upgrade of European Commission Delegations to EU Delegations
- Perceived role in comparison to other embassies and missions in Kyiv, e.g. in terms of visibility and influence

2 Cooperation and coordination among EU member state embassies and the EU Delegation

- Question of modes and dynamics of interaction with other EU member states and the EU Delegation
  Main cooperation partners, allies, groupings
  Perceived effect of increased role of EU Delegations since Treaty of Lisbon
- Difference between Kyiv and Brussels scene
- Effect of coordination on EU's role and image in host country and for sense of identity as an EU member state (internal)
- Difference between being an EU or non-EU member state

3 Management and Perception of relations with host state

- Quality of cooperation (frequency, intensity, modes)
- Strategies of problem solving in case of deadlock or crisis
- Question of Ukraine's European credentials and readiness for closer approximation with the EU

4 Outlook for future relations between Ukraine and the EU
5 Personal attitude towards host state in view of previous postings

Source: Author's own compilation.

Box 4.2 Interview Questions in 2014

In addition to questions 1, 2 and 5 from the year 2012, in 2014, participants were asked about:

1   Crisis Management
    – modes of dealing with the crisis over (Euro)Maidan
    – dynamics of coordination among EU member states during crisis difference compared to routine periods
    – innovation/new strategies
2   Effects of Crisis: Change in
    – policy towards host country
    – internal procedures and *modi operandi* of the embassy/mission
    – relationship between embassy/mission and capital/headquarters scope of discretion and leeway
    – group dynamics among EU member state missions, together with the EU Delegation
    – EU coherence and consistency in the host state
    – image and role of the EU as an (effective) actor
3   Difference in Perception and Evaluation of Crisis
    – embassies/missions on the ground vs. capital/headquarters 'at home'
    – visible high-level travelling diplomacy vs. less visible local field diplomacy
4   (Proposed) Troubleshooting and Future Prospects for Ukraine
    – reflection on crisis escalation – how was the crisis possible?
    – lessons learnt for the EU policy towards Ukraine (neighbouring countries), incl. Russia
    – Ukraine's future trajectory and prospects for reform
    – question of Maidan's geopolitical significance and impact on Ukraine's European identity
5   Personal attitude towards host state in view of previous postings

Source: Author's own compilation.

5.1.2 Selecting Interviewees: Data Generation and its Limits

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012: 69) have highlighted that the positivist methodological literature on 'small-n' case study research has remained largely "silent on the work involved in *accessing* such cases once selected". Similarly to experimental or survey research designs, it appears as though

access, if treated at all, [is] relatively unproblematic, conceptually. It is as if such selection were entirely within the researcher's power and control, without access difficulties interfering; and one case is treated as if it were as good as another for the purposes of causal inference […].

(Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012: 70)

Yet, praxiography that seeks to tap the implicit meaning behind agents' practices and is sensitive to the researcher's interaction with his or her research informants is highly dependent on the latter's willingness to grant the researcher access to the field. While research on diplomatic practice during crisis situations is notoriously difficult for reasons of time constraints on the part of the potential interviewees, the individual personality of interviewees also matters. At the start of my fieldwork, I was therefore reliant on 'gatekeepers', that is, key persons in Kyiv-based institutions of universities, think-tanks or political party foundations that were close enough to the diplomatic community to enable the initial contact with diplomats. Whereas I occasionally got hold of interview partners based on my personal request, most interviewees were reached on the basis of the so-called snowball method, that is, they had been recommended by previous interview partners who functioned as internal 'gatekeepers' (Helfferich 2009: 156).

The target group remained constant throughout the research project, yet not without difficulties. Since I was to enquire about the political coordination of the EU's policy towards Ukraine, I targeted personnel from the political sections of EU member states embassies as well as from the EU Delegation. In order to obtain a relatively homogeneous group of diplomats that, based on rank, meet relatively often, I principally sought to interview Deputy Heads of Mission who usually serve as the heads of the political sections of their respective missions. In embassies where deputies are responsible for trade issues, I generally talked to political counsellors or officers instead to ensure diplomats were charged with doing similar tasks. On three occasions I deviated from this script, though, as I talked to one press officer from an EU mission as well as two representatives from non-EU missions. The latter two were a political counsellor as well as a local staff representative from the political section.

During the four months I spent and 'hung out' in Kyiv, I also attended multiple events and formal receptions by individual embassies, scheduled interviews or engaged in informal chats with individuals and groups from Ukrainian ministries, civil society organisations or political parties. While these encounters significantly informed my knowledge-production of and helped me get a feel for the place Kyiv, the data I gathered during these instances did not form part of my final data corpus that I analysed. The ultimate text corpus comprised 19 interviews in total, ten thereof from mid-September till the end of October 2012, the remaining nine in June 2014. The anonymous interviews usually lasted between one to one and a half hours, some even two hours[23]. Following grounded theory's principle of 'theoretical sampling', I started out by interviewing diplomats from those countries that had in the secondary literature been portrayed as traditionally most important. In these exploratory interviews, I quickly learned that interviewees

would usually point to a distinction between 'active' and 'less active' member states, which presented a pattern of differentiation that did not neatly coincide with the coalitions identified in the literature.

This led me to modify the selection of interviewees and successively build my sample around the maximum contrast of 'active'/'passive' to reach an "internal representativeness" (Helfferich 2009: 173, translation MH). Accordingly, where standardised representation is not the aim of the study, "internal representativeness" can be reached when the core of the field is well represented, but also deviating cases are sufficiently taken into account so that the researcher has captured the maximum diversity of cases as well as those generally considered to be "typical" (Merkens in Helfferich 2009: 173–174). Yet, due to problems of access, this criterion could not be fully realised. In an effort to compensate for the lack of internal representativeness, I relied on 'outsider'-perspectives from non-EU diplomats to contrast the self-perceptions of EU member state and EEAS diplomats (see above).

5.2 Analysing 'Talk-in-Interaction'[24]: An Integrative Basic Technique of Analysis

In the following, I shall give insights into the technique I used to discover the constitutive rule of diplomats as boundary workers. I have relied on sociologist Jan Kruse's (2015) "integrative basic technique of analysis" that principally builds upon Karl Mannheim's 'method of documentary analysis' as well as ethnomethodology's 'conversation analysis'. It ties in neatly with my reconstructive methodology as the technique's process-based ways of analysing text take due account of the iterative-cyclical research process that abductive reasoning entails. Kruse (2015: 465, translation MH) himself describes his integrative technique as a "toolbox" or "key ring" to which "many keys [i.e. methods] – individually only useful to a limited degree – can be attached". Hence, it is an *integrative* technique because no single method is held to adequately establish a means by which to analyse text, and it is a *basic* technique because it seeks to access data with all openness possible based on a (micro-)linguistic-descriptive analytical approach. It follows that *in the process* of an inductive linguistic-descriptive analysis of text one comes to add and deductively apply specific analytical heuristics so as to reconstruct the central sense-making structures (ibid.: 463).

The processual core of the technique hence consists of two interrelated dimensions. The first dimension relates to an inductive phase of a linguistic-descriptive analysis on the level of pragmatics, syntax and semantics. This phase can be compared to what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call "open coding" where data are sought to be 'broken open' and concepts are provisionally identified based on a 'thick description' of how specific phenomena are constructed in the text (see also Mey & Mruck 2009: 117–129). Simultaneously, this description proceeds along the three levels mentioned above. While the level of pragmatics is geared towards analysing how the interviewee discursively positions him- or herself in the interview situation or through the narration of other persons, the level of syntax and semantics requires the researcher to look at grammatical and metaphorical specificities (see also Lakoff & Johnson 2003). Accordingly, a researcher, inter alia, pays attention

to the use of pronouns, verbs, direct or indirect speech, semantical fields, binary oppositions and metaphors or allegories, as well as idioms (Kruse 2015: 471–475). The second, deductive phase is more interpretive as the researcher draws on analytical heuristics as additional structuring elements. On the one hand, these can be related to the research subject because the sequential reading of the text corpus usually yields "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer 1954: 7) in the form of recurring themes the interviewees address themselves. On the other hand, they are provided by well-established methods like discourse analysis, positioning analysis or the analysis of metaphors that equally offer useful heuristical tools.

For my part, the analytical heuristics I have drawn on are Etienne Wenger's (1998: 125–126) list of indicators of 'communities of practice' (see Box 4.3) as well as Lene Hansen's (2006) post-structuralist discourse analysis. Both informed my ordering of the multifarious practices of EU diplomats. Wenger's (1998: 125–126) list of indicators specially served to identify possible practices that diplomats enacted internally to the group to create a common identity based on common language codes, shared perspectives and discourse. In contrast, Lene Hansen's (2006, especially chapter 3) approach was useful in highlighting how identity constructions of the Self can entail significant ambiguities; that is, that they can be the contingent result of both boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing practices at the same time. They are neither the sole result of practices of linking, nor are they the simple outcome of a Self-Other duality where the Other is drawn in clear opposition to the Self. On the contrary, as she holds,

> meaning and identity are constructed through a series of signs that are linked to each other to constitute relations of sameness as well as through a differentiation to another series of juxtaposed signs.
>
> (Hansen 2006: 37)

Outlining both processes of linking and differentiation thus served as a heuristic tool that helped me analyse how interviewees created relations of sameness and difference to construct their social Self vis-à-vis diverse Others according to patterns of linking and differentiation. As my empirical analysis shows, the manifold ways in which the boundaries between Self and Other were symbolically constructed delineated an Other in space and time as well as in terms of responsibility[25]. With respect to the wider semantic field of 'Europeanness', for instance, Ukraine often functioned as the diplomatic community's spatial and temporal Other based on the (interlinked) discourses of development, democratisation, human rights and the rule of law. The degree to which it was marked as different or rather similar to the *EU*ropean Self, seen as capable of transformation or not, occasionally differed. Nonetheless, a consistent pattern of EU superiority emerged. In a different instance, diplomats on the ground engaged in ethical constructions of Self pursuant to the moral responsibility they felt towards the (Euro)Maidan activists and accordingly sought to prevent the violation of human rights. Here, boundaries were markedly drawn vis-à-vis their respective capitals as the Other that did not grasp the severity of crisis, while those boundaries towards Ukrainian activists were so narrow that EU diplomats virtually 'spanned' these boundaries.

Box 4.3 Indicators of 'Communities of Practice':

– Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
– Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
– The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
– Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
– Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
– Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
– Knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise
– Mutually defining identities and common identification vis-à-vis others*
– The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
– Specific tools, representations and other artefacts
– Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
– Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
– Certain styles recognised as displaying membership
– A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

Source: Wenger (1998: 125–126).

*Based on insights gained from my own data, I have added the indicator 'common identification vis-à-vis others'.

As this small preview demonstrates, once the process of abstraction increases and specific patterns start to emerge from, crystallise and consolidate themselves in the text, analytical heuristics that have proven useful are employed more systematically to the whole text corpus. The aim is hence to identify the central rules or motifs where specific structures of meaning become consistent in the form of Mannheim's 'homologous patterns'. Kruse (2015: 553, translation MH) answers the question of how researchers recognise a central motif when they see one as follows:

> The criterion for which a bundle of linguistic-communicative phenomena […] can be labelled as a central motif is specifically its central occurrence in dense passages (e.g. most often already in the introductory passage of the interview), but also its consistency across different thematic passages […]. Thus, this consistency of central motifs refers to the fact that it occurs at different levels of analysis.

Consequently, if a central motif or constitutive rule is identified not only across the transcribed text of one interview, but consistently appears in other interview transcripts too, the researcher may claim to have reconstructed the 'documentary sense' underlying an array of vastly different meanings of practices.

6 Conclusion

The chapter set out to strengthen my theoretical argument about the practice-based foundation of community by outlining a research strategy by which the meaningful patterns underlying ensembles of practice can be unearthed. To that end, I developed the strategy of 'zooming in' on practices, approaching them from three interrelated perspectives. First, I suggested turning to b/ordering sites as members' feelings of belonging to a given community are arguably amplified at the border. The experience of the Self vis-à-vis the Other intensifies and therefore brings to light the 'methods'/procedures/rules that help a community sustain its coherence. Second, I argued to justify focusing on the carriers of practice as the representatives of a larger whole. Here, I proposed analysing the practices of field diplomats from both the EEAS and EU member states operating within third countries. Since their primary function is to act *on behalf of* their principals, they are the most likely actors to represent the macro-social community of the EU vis-à-vis the host state, Ukraine. Finally, I suggested focusing on crisis moments during which implicit knowledge takes on a particularly articulate quality.

The developed strategy of 'zooming in' is grounded in ethnomethodology's basic tenet that order is visible and therefore also methodologically 'visibilisable'. For this purpose, the researcher is asked to "look down" (Bueger 2014: 398), to turn to those locales and concrete situations in which structures of meaning are enacted through practices. While practices may appear messy and incoherent at first, Karl Mannheim's 'documentary method of interpretation' provides for the structured, reiterative search for an identical, homologous pattern underlying the seemingly 'unruly' practices. According to Garfinkel (1967), who drew on Mannheim's documentary method, the constitutive order of practices can be reconstructed because actors' methods of making sense of the multiple versions of reality must be seen as visible 'documents' of actions pointing to that order. Once the homologous pattern or the practical grammar of structures of meaning is reconstructed from the data, the researcher has discovered the resources on which agents draw to experience 'their' community in meaningful ways and to develop a sense of belonging.

As I already demonstrated in the previous chapter, boundary work serves as the sufficiently flexible capacities of diplomats to get by in their everyday affairs. As both a nexus of practices and resource for shared ways of engaging in a community, it constitutes the homologous pattern that I discovered as a complementary concept to 'communities of practice' during the research project. Instead of the concept having emerged from the data, however, I came to invent the concept as a result of a cyclical research process. I creatively combined deductive reasoning, based on prior knowledge from the literature, with inductive reasoning, which involved inferring generalisations from the particular data from the field. This abductive logic of enquiry, to date seldom adopted as a deliberate research attitude in IR, allows for genuine creativity and concept-building on the part of the researcher. Its major strength lies in the principle of theoretical sensitivity that is also known from GTM. Theory here assumes the role of a thinking tool rather than a rigid template, and thereby provides for the necessary flexibility of the researcher to adapt his theoretical frame to the research object. In that way,

an abductive attitude does justice to the co-constitution of the researcher and his or her research object. How the attitude is implemented in practice shall be the subject of the ensuing chapter in which I provide a detailed analysis of diplomats' *leitmotif* of 'boundary work' underlying their everyday practices.

Notes

 1 This term I take from Nicolini (2009: 204, 210).
 2 For a similar endeavour, see Wiener's (1998b) *The Embedded Acquis Communautaire* in which she has sought to make visible the informal resources that inform the EU's *acquis communautaire* that comprises the formal 'rules of the game'.
 3 See especially Houtum and Naerssen (2002); Houtum et al. (2005a); Houtum (2012) on the concept of 'b/ordering'.
 4 This statement by Harold Garfinkel (2002: 95; see also Garfinkel 1988) represents the most direct critique of Talcott Parson's idea that the abstract and conceptual are to be separated from the concrete levels of experience. Formal analysis, in Parson's view, is hence needed to explain everyday activities. In contrast, Harold Garfinkel saw no need for their distinction as ethnomethodology's concepts are "not part of a causal *explanation* of events and actions, but of procedural *explication*" (Have 2004: 146). The term 'plenum' here refers to the interaction level at which individuals interact.
 5 For another rare account, see the Bourdieusian praxiography by Pouliot (2013); for the epitome of theoretical accounts of practice, see the monumental and masterful work by Kratochwil (2018).
 6 This expression is taken from Reichertz (2010: 5).
 7 Note that Lechner and Frost would only reluctantly consider themselves practice theorists in the narrow sense, that is, as delineated by some of IR's most renowned 'practice turn' scholars. Their seminal book *Practice Theory and International Relations* (2018), for instance, presents itself as a strong critique of Pouliot's (2010) Bourdieusian practice theory.
 8 In pragmatic sociology, Gadinger (2016: 190) highlights, this translates into the "principle of symmetry" between the ways of knowing of practitioners and social science researchers.
 9 This is Kelle's own translation from the German original term *induktivistisches Selbstmissverständnis*.
10 Note that Reichertz (2010: 39) has even drawn parallels between Anselm Strauss's research strategy and Charles Peirce's abductive logic of discovery, arguing that Strauss was familiar with the latter but did not use the term for his own research.
11 Even in the latter case, however, one must concede that some prior knowledge in the form of 'concepts' must be present and inform the judgement about the phenomenon observed as to be able to 'classify' it at an abstracted level (for a detailed discussion see Kruse 2015: 136–142).
12 Among others, Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009: 709) name Wendt, Ruggie, Checkel, Stone Sweet and Finnemore, but also P.T. Jackson and Pouliot as scholars who have more recently referred to the term.
13 Note that the *ZIB debate* among a group of German critical norms researchers has contributed to popularising the use of reconstructive methodology in IR (see especially Engelkamp et al. (2012) whose article triggered the debate as well as Hofius et al. (2014) for a reconstructive analysis of the contested norms of freedom and equality in the context of the 'Arab Spring').
14 Karen E. Smith (2005) was the first to call the ENP countries 'outsiders', thereby criticising the inside-outside logic of the ENP.
15 In an unprecedented move by the EU to answer Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Ukraine was given an EU membership prospect when European

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivered a membership questionnaire to the Ukrainian President Zelensky in early April 2022 after the country had officially submitted an EU membership bid. On 23 June 2022, the European Council granted Ukraine official candidate status.

16 It is worthwhile mentioning Kristof's (1959: 269–270) explication in full:

> The Ukrainian (and Russian) equivalent of the English 'march' (French: *marche*; German: *Mark*) is *ukraina*, meaning literally 'borderland.' *Krai* (or *kraina*) means in Ukrainian 'land' or 'country,' but *krai* (or *ukrai*) means also 'border' or 'margin.' *U kraia* (or *na kraiu*) means 'on the margin,' and *ukraiaty* (or *ukroity*) is to 'cut off,' especially to cut off a smaller piece (e.g., margin) from some larger entity. *Ukraina* (like the several German *Mark*) was originally not a proper name of a specific country, the Ukraine of today, but a general description of the lands on the periphery of Russ or Lithuania (later Poland).

17 See, however, Article 35 of the Treaty on European Union which calls on the EU Delegations and member state missions to closely coordinate their actions on the ground:

> The diplomatic and consular missions of the Member States and the Union Delegations in third countries and international conferences, and their representations to international organizations, shall cooperate in ensuring that decisions defining Union positions and actions adopted pursuant to this Chapter are complied with and implemented.
>
> They shall step up cooperation by exchanging information and carrying out joint assessments.
>
> They shall contribute to the implementation of the right of citizens of the Union to protection in the territory of third countries.

18 I take the idea of the distinction between 'settled times' and 'unsettled times' from Swidler (1986: 278) who has elaborated on the different roles that culture takes in "settled" and "unsettled lives".

19 See Garfinkel (1967: 21) on "ad hoc-ing".

20 Note here that this 'break' was intended by Garfinkel with his so-called breaching experiments: he sought to bring to the fore the "seen but unnoticed" (Garfinkel 1967: 44). In one of his tutorials, students were asked to engage in everyday conversations with friends and 'breach' the underlying expectancies by "insist[ing] that the person clarify the sense of his commonplace remarks" (ibid.: 42). As in all other experiments, they were to de-familiarise themselves with the commonsense structures or expectations. The result of puzzlement or outright anger on the part of the conversation partners indicated that the tacitly assumed agreement of being committed to order-production was breached, but uncovered at the same time.

21 One should note, however, that the interview itself is a form of practice that is generated by the interviewee and interviewer and is ordered according to specific rules (Kruse 2015: 290).

22 In broader terms, I took inspiration from the interview questions Benson-Rea and Shore (2012: 7) proposed in their study on the representation of the EU in third countries by EU Delegations.

23 With regard to interviews coding, I chose to alphabetically order them from IA, IB, IC… to IS. Each code is preceded by a specification of the year in which the respective interview was conducted, e.g. "Interview 2012/IA" or "Interview 2014/IN". The coded letters were randomly allocated to my interview transcripts.

24 The term 'talk-in-interaction' was coined by conversation analyst Emanuel Schegloff, see, for instance, Schegloff (1992, 1998).

25 On the different dimensions of difference, see Hansen (2006: 41–45).

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5 EU Diplomacy as 'Boundary Work'

Anchoring the Practices of Community

1 Introduction

> [T]he feeling of being European is stronger here than when you are in Brussels or when working in other member states. This is also because of the attitude of the Ukrainians […] – for them we are the European Union. And this is true. […] [W]hen we [EU diplomats in Kyiv] agree on something like an EU position or we agree on any actions together […], we feel that we are quite a united entity and […] [w]e can take decisions collectively. There is a feeling of being the EU.
>
> (Interview 2012/IM)

In this chapter, I turn to the b/ordering site of Ukraine to highlight that boundary work by EU diplomats forms the nexus of the EU's constitutive practices that must be understood as the backbone of the EU community. Without the constant praxiological instantiation of the EU community through its constituent members' boundary work, the EU community would falter as its members would lack the competences to make it cohere over time. Thus, I identify boundary work as the *leitmotif* orienting EU diplomatic practice; it is what Mannheim called the 'homologous pattern' or what ethnomethodologists consider the constitutive rule that orders the infinite ways of actualising meaning. The individual practices pertaining to boundary work together form the pool of skills, competences and resources that govern the EU diplomats' activities in the field in ways that make the joint enterprise of representing the EU in a third country a task worth pursuing. Diplomats' boundary work, understood as the management or negotiation of the 'sites of difference', thus makes the EU community meaningful in the first place. The practice of negotiating difference leads to shared ways of knowing that, in turn, create a sense of belonging and attachment to the EU among the local diplomatic 'community of practice'.

Boundary work turns out to be the essential constitutive rule and communal resource that addresses the EU's internal and external challenge not to overcome boundaries but to manage them without compromising on diversity. Even if the EU is believed to be the prime example of a postmodern entity that has succeeded in overcoming state borders, it is more illusion than fact. Not only have

the EU's formerly hard internal borders shifted outwards, rendering the EU the infamous 'fortress Europe', but socio-spatial boundaries abound in the case of the EU. Boundaries have therefore never vanished; they may have only become less visible and more diffuse. The fact that globalisation has made pluralism the "contemporary global condition" (Campbell & Schoolman 2008) and has contributed to an increase in boundary encounters makes it all the more necessary for individuals and groups to know how to handle difference.

As my analysis reveals, diplomats from EU member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) posted to Ukraine are a key example of 'boundary workers' who succeed in linking their diverse and potentially contradictory practices into an assemblage that engenders like-mindedness among their 'community of practice'. This like-mindedness, however, is not the result of a convergence of interests; it is the contingent result of *experiencing* how they jointly manage the diverse boundaries with which they are confronted. The lived experience at the border hence creates a shared stock of knowing-in-practice that, in turn, constitutes an "act of belonging" (Wenger 2000: 238). Consequently, diplomats' ways of knowing in 'communities of practice' have the distinct effect of identifying with the EU in a positive way. As the above quote by one of my interviewees (Interview 2012/IM) suggests, *representing* the EU brings about feelings of *being* the EU. *Being* the EU, however, does not mean embodying a single transcendental 'EU identity'. *Being* the EU entails the process of practitioners coming to terms with diversity, coming to terms with managing one's multiple memberships in changing contexts of relevances. It means developing the skills to accommodate diversity. These skills, I argue, are subsumed under the practice of boundary work that implies the continuous work of balancing diverse interests and memberships at once.

In this chapter, I turn to the heart of the book, that is, my case study findings. Here, I shall provide a detailed analysis of the diverse practices of boundary work by way of the four-fold differentiation made at the end of Chapter 3. To that end, I will first present the internal boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing practices identified among the group of EU diplomats in Sections 2 and 3. While EU diplomats' boundary-spanning practices disclose their disposition to coordinate themselves on a regular basis which, in turn, creates a regime of mutual accountability over time, their boundary-drawing practices show that coordination does not rid community members of their different layers of belonging. Internal differences therefore remain. In a second step, I turn to the external dimension of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing in Sections 4 and 5. Here, I reveal that external boundary-spanning involves diplomats' joint experience of balancing between the occasionally clashing objectives of representing 'home' and feeling responsible towards the host country's citizenry. Whereas the boundaries towards Ukrainian citizens are almost removed in this case, they are, in fact, erected with respect to boundary-drawing vis-à-vis the host country's political elite. Here, a coherent EU 'inside' is created by way of Othering. Based on a discourse of development, Ukraine is considered to have the same civilisational roots as the EU, but has apparently not yet reached the

same level of development to know how to comply with the 'European rules of the game'. Since compliance is less a matter of cognitive learning than it is a question of learning through practice, I argue that this discourse is publicly witnessable and can be interrogated by the analyst. However, the process of learning, and thus the analysis, does not start at the centre of the EU. It is at the boundary that learning takes place based on the lived experience and management of Otherness.

2 Internal Boundary-Spanning

Sending (2011: 648) has argued that "what is shared by diplomats is also what separates them". In his view, "diplomatic culture" is, therefore, a rather "thin culture" because it is based on shared *procedural* rather than *substantive* values, of which the mutual recognition of sovereignty is the most foundational (see also Lose 2001; Sending 2011: 644). Communication and mediation of friction then come to serve as the constitutive practices with which the principle of mutual recognition of difference is ensured among diplomats. This definition of diplomatic culture is, however, too minimal for a community of EU diplomats that represents a polity that is held to have "mov[ed] beyond the hard boundaries and centralised sovereignty characteristic of the Westphalian, or 'modern' state, towards permeable boundaries and layered sovereignty" (Buzan & Diez 1999: 56). In the following section, it shall therefore be my objective to provide a more nuanced account of which practices serve as meaningful resources for the EU diplomats to instantiate the EU macro-community on the ground.

   As I shall demonstrate in this section, what makes EU field diplomats share an everyday lifeworld is the melange of procedural as well as substantive values. On the procedural level, permanent diplomacy's "key knowledge-producing practice" (Neumann 2012: 20) of information gathering is accompanied by a sustained exchange of information that comes in both formal and informal guises. On a substantive level, field diplomats from EU member states share the joint enterprise of (re)presenting a common stock of EU values and principles to the host country, which functions as their common reference frame within which they interact. This enterprise is what distinguishes EU field diplomats from non-EU member states as it provides for considerably more cohesion among the EU diplomats' 'community of practice'.

2.1. A Joint Enterprise: 'Defending' the EU's Values

A joint enterprise is a collectively negotiated response to what participants understand to be their context of action (Wenger 1998: 77). It does not exist *a priori* as a "stated goal", but is the contingent result of the daily practice of making situations accountable to one another (ibid.: 78). To 'join' in an enterprise does not mean being of the same opinion or sharing the same views. It does, however, mean that members of the same 'community of practice' respond to a given situation in the same way and that the perceived need to jointly manage the situation

leads them to establish a "regime of mutual accountability" that breeds trust and shared senses of responsibility to one another (ibid.: 81). Though artefacts are not essential prerequisites for the effective functioning of the enterprise, treaties, roadmaps, implementation provisions of agreements or reports nonetheless often represent the reified statements of purpose of the enterprise.

In the borderland Ukraine, EU diplomats are in unison about their main objective of approximating Ukraine with the EU. Even though significant nuances of emphasis exist – differences exist as to whether the EU's "values" or rather the EU's economic standards and regulations are stressed more heavily as the stated goal for Ukraine – the aim of integrating Ukraine into EU structures is an unequivocal target. The goal has become self-evident among diplomats that one of them even jeeringly added, "[it is] the same thing that everyone will tell you" (Interview 2014/IP). The common repertoire of reified structures upon which EU diplomats draw when dealing with their Ukrainian counterparts is provided by the EU's *acquis communautaire*: at the most foundational level, Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) sets out the principles which shall guide the EU's actions in its Common Foreign and Security Policy, such as democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights, and Article 8 states the aim of 'good neighbourly relations' with Ukraine. Yet, due to their vagueness, these legal provisions have been complemented by further contractual relations between the EU and Ukraine. The 1998 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement long formed the overall legal frame within which official bilateral relations proceeded throughout the 2000s. Since 2004, however, it was reinforced by the regional European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) framework that provided for additional Action Plans, inter alia, in the area of freedom, security and justice, and was further beefed-up with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative in 2009. Following Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004/2005, relations started to deepen in 2007/2008 with the beginning of negotiations over a more far-reaching legal framework that would include an Association Agreement (AA) in the political sphere and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) in the economic realm.

With Viktor Yanukovych from the pro-Russian Party of Regions taking presidential office in 2010, however, the political and economic situation in Ukraine considerably worsened and was accompanied by a clear retreat of democracy and the rule of law. Corruption, clientelism and selective justice reached a new peak under Yanukovych's increasingly authoritarian-style rule and the freedom of assembly and that of the media were increasingly under attack. Hence, the changed domestic context also left its mark on EU-Ukraine relations as it contributed to seven years of cumbersome negotiations over and several postponements of signing the AA and DCFTA, with the EU side in 2011 finally making the ratification of the agreements conditional upon specific criteria. As the joint statement at the 2011 EU-Ukraine Summit read, the parties had

> reached a common understanding that Ukraine's performance, notably in relation to respect for common values and the rule of law, will be of crucial

importance for the speed of its political association and economic integration with the EU […].

<div align="right">(Council of the European Union 2011: 6)</div>

At the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting on 10 December 2012, the conditions were further specified so that the Council conclusions read as follows: "Electoral, judiciary and constitutional reforms in line with international standards are integral parts of it [the AA and DCFTA] and commonly agreed priorities" (EU Foreign Affairs Council 2012: 5). In concrete terms, these primarily meant ending the selective justice cases, especially freeing former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison as well as conducting free and fair parliamentary elections in October 2012.

While the political chapters were finally signed on 21 March 2014, followed by the signing of the economic parts on 27 June 2014, the country had in the meantime witnessed a revolution and was in the midst of a hybrid war with Russia, which had annexed the Black Sea peninsula Crimea in March 2014 and now covertly supported the so-called 'separatists' in Donbas. This dramatic turn of events had been triggered by then Prime Minister Azarov who, by way of a government decree, had formally stalled the preparations for signing the AA one week before the EaP's Vilnius Summit in late November 2013, "blaming its move on Russian pressure" that had, inter alia, urged the government to join the Eurasian Customs Union (Rettman 2013). EU leaders, especially those from the new EU member states, who had supported Ukraine's association with the EU most strongly, seemed paralysed. Yet, even more sceptical countries such as Germany had departed from their 'minimal' stance of association, switching from strict conditionality towards embracing the goal of signature despite Ukraine's visible lack of reforms (Interview 2014/IJ). As the political outcry over the suspension mounted among protestors on the central square of Kyiv, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, the nationwide revolution started to take its violent and bloody course, eventually culminating in mid-February of 2014. President Yanukovych was ousted from office after he had fled the country to Russia only hours after he had signed the 'Agreement on Settlement of Political Crisis in Ukraine' with the political opposition and under the mediation of the Weimar Triangle on 21 February 2014[1].

The contractual framework together with the events described above, that time and again affected the agreed upon 'rules of the game' of the prospective EU-Ukraine association, have had significant effects on the practices of EU field diplomats on the ground. They have provided overall direction and functioned as a common denominator of diplomats' everyday activities, which have included the task to assess and report which political and economic direction the country is taking. In 2012, for example, the "correct conduct" of the autumn parliamentary elections was considered a "genuine indicator" for EU member state and EEAS diplomats to evaluate whether Ukraine was developing democratically[2]. One diplomat even contended in 2012 that she felt she and her EU colleagues had never met as frequently as in the run-up to the elections, interrupting my question as to the reasons for it with a strident "because it is so important" (Interview

2012/II). As she went on, "it simply is one of the criteria, the correct conduct of elections in line with international standards, that Barroso and Van Rompuy declared here last December" (ibid.). It follows that throughout the negotiations over the AA, its repeatedly stated purpose and the pertaining conditions set for finalising the agreement have been a constant point of reference for local diplomatic practice. It has been EU field diplomats' common pursuit to appropriate the set of substantive objectives that have over time been negotiated and agreed upon by the triad of the EU Commission, the EEAS and the EU member states in Brussels. As one diplomat elaborately detailed the distinctive condition under which EU diplomats operated,

> we are all defending the same common values, the same interests, while in Brussels there is often a fight or battle between member states at the level of COREPER for the formulation of certain EU legislation where the national interests are at stake. […] Brussels, that's a kitchen. That's where the meals are being cooked. Here, we are supposed to present these meals. […] So it's based on the consensus of twenty-seven member states. […]. Then we are one team. While in Brussels, it's within the team, 'Who will do what?'. So there's a lot of shuffling and a lot of fight for [sic] power, for more concessions […]. Here, when it's being done, […] we all know what the country has to do in order to be eligible for the membership. So we all evaluate the situation in Ukraine through the same formal criteria, the Copenhagen Criteria, for example. And here, there is no way to have different opinions among us. We can just evaluate certain facts differently, but when it comes to certain benchmarks that the EU has, for example, with respect to public procurement law, the evaluation of the French, German, British diplomats cannot be different. Because we have one common benchmark that has been worked out in Brussels, within the EU.
>
> (Interview 2012/IC)

Two interrelated factors thus stand out as enabling an *esprit de corps* among EU diplomats: first, Kyiv represents a de-politicised context within which the meals only need to be 'presented', not 'cooked', because political bargaining among coalitions of member states and bickering over the largest influence on policy decisions take place in Brussels. This, in turn, allows for consensual relations and the development of a 'team' spirit among field diplomats remote from Brussels. Second, as a result of consensus reached in Brussels, specific benchmarks and criteria guide diplomats' ways of engaging with Ukrainian officials. While he concedes that different points of view exist, benchmarks seem to virtually force diplomats to make identical assessments and eventually 'defend' the EU's values and interest.

Ironically, maybe even tragically for Ukraine, the above quote also discloses that this EU diplomat applies the Copenhagen Criteria to evaluate Ukraine's *EU*ropean credentials despite EU member states' continued refusal to grant the country candidate status over the period of my research. Even though this

diplomat was the only interviewee who explicitly named the Copenhagen Criteria as an agreed-upon rule set along which to assess Ukraine's performance, other interviewees' statements reflected a similar logic. As one interviewee conceded, Ukraine's performance was scrutinised more thoroughly than that of other states because, unlike Russia for instance, it had time and again declared its aspiration to become an EU member (Interview 2012/II). One might conclude that repeated proclamations on the part of Ukraine have 'rhetorically entrapped' the country and have subsequently led EU diplomats to judge the country along EU standards, while it has for long remained an 'outsider' (see Schimmelfennig 2001).

2.2 Mutual Engagement: Information, Coordination and All That

Shared points of reference are not enough, though. For them to be realised, the goals must be instantiated and appropriated on an everyday basis. What it takes for a 'community of practice' to cohere over time is sustained ways of engaging with one another around a nexus of practices. The following sub-sections shall therefore demonstrate precisely how, that is, through which means EU diplomats develop shared ways of doings things together and, as a result, come to share a repertoire of resources.

2.2.1 Sharing and Exchanging Information

Whereas information gathering is arguably the "key knowledge-producing practice" of permanent diplomacy (Neumann 2012: 20), the sharing and exchange of information is perhaps one of the crucial practices of EU field diplomats that anchor the EU community. With respect to intra-EU foreign policy coordination in Brussels, Tonra (2003: 744) has identified these as having constituted the very *raison d'être* since the inception of European Political Co-operation in 1970. As will become apparent throughout the following sub-sections, while the practice of gathering information thus amounts to a disposition that all diplomats share in the field, the extent to which information is self-evidently shared and exchanged among EU diplomats is to date unmatched. The EU is unique in the way in which coordination, irrespective of whether it is formal or informal, has become a reflex.

   With respect to information gathering, the majority of diplomats I interviewed talked about the almost ritualistic review, collection and compilation of the daily and weekly press of the host country in the early morning and, if considered relevant for their respective capital, the writing of small reports which would be sent to the colleagues 'back home' to inform them. Information collected from visits to the host country's foreign ministry for the purpose of specific issue-related enquiries, from visits to press conferences of national and locally based international (non-)governmental organisations as well as from the exchange of views with local experts and staff from think tanks would all feed into such reports in order to give the capital a better picture of current developments in the host country. In times of crisis, the need for information gathering increases and challenges the established networks and resources of embassies to a great extent. As data

about the crisis period of (Euro)Maidan disclose, the crisis concentrated most of the diplomats' resources on reporting to their capitals/headquarters and therefore occupied individual diplomats day and night, including weekend shifts. Existing networks were generally fed with at least one analytical situation report per day, but most often complemented by a second report dispatched in the morning hours (e.g. Interviews 2014/IJ, 2014/IQ, 2014/IH). Moreover, new (intra-)networks for information sharing were at times created by national foreign ministries to channel information more quickly between them, their respective representation in Brussels and their diplomatic missions in the Eastern European region (Interview 2014/IQ). In addition, embassies were given temporary or even longer term reinforcements in the form of additional staff in their political sections.

While the above tasks slightly differed in detail from one embassy to another, and work during the period of (Euro)Maidan was often as time-consuming for the individual diplomats that official coordination meetings had to be suspended at times (see Section 2.2.2), EU diplomats were nonetheless well-informed about the positions and situations of other EU member states. On the one hand, this was due to the fact that most diplomatic tasks mentioned above constitute 'routine' business. The procedural dimension of collecting and evaluating information as well as reporting back to the capital is something every diplomat is acquainted with. Even though the task is individually performed, it is part of a shared stock of know-how that diplomats 'learn on the job' and is thus commonsensical. On the other hand, being well-informed is the result of frequently exchanging information, ideas and perspectives on the host country in various sites of interaction. I will turn to this aspect of diplomacy in the following sub-section.

2.2.2 Cultures of Coordination

2.2.2.1 FORMALISED CHANNELS OF COORDINATION

One dense site of interaction that is uniquely accessible for EU diplomats is coordination meetings at the EU Delegation's premises. Compared to other non-EU diplomats, EU diplomats in third countries have an institutionalised consultation mechanism at hand that helps them engage in sustained mutual relationships. As formally laid down by Articles 32(3) and 35 TEU, EU member state diplomatic missions are encouraged to "contribute to formulating and implementing the common approach" by, inter alia, "step[ping] up cooperation by exchanging information and carrying out joint assessments". These are supposed to form part of showing "mutual solidarity" (Article 32(1) TEU). Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, these objectives were primarily dealt with within the framework of monthly coordination meetings of Heads of Missions (HoMs) from each EU member state present in the host country and, depending on the proactivism of the respective country holding the EU's Presidency, also at lower levels of Deputy HoMs (DHoMs) or heads of specific sections[3] (see also Maurer & Raik 2018: 68). The post-Lisbon setting now provides for regularised contact among the two major configurations of coordination meetings, that is, among HoMs and DHoMs. Convened and

chaired by staff from the EU Delegation at least once a month, these coordination meetings formally function as the forum within which common positions, joint *démarches* vis-à-vis the third country and the so-called HoMs report are agreed upon, subsequently written up by staff from the EU Delegation, and then communicated by the EU Delegation on behalf of the EU[4]. With regard to the case of Ukraine, these formats have been extended to issue-related meetings to cover areas such as trade, visa issues, development cooperation and human rights as well as energy. These, however, take place irregularly and are demand-driven[5]. While the latter formats are thus often overshadowed by short-term priorities, and even the DHoMs meetings were reported to have been suspended during (Euro) Maidan, HoMs meetings increased in frequency and took place up to three times a week (Interview 2014/IE).

Similar to other third-country contexts like the United States and Russia (Maurer & Raik 2018: 69) or Turkey (Terzi 2018: 105), the main objective of the above formats is information sharing and the exchange of views on perceived problems, concerns and expectations regarding Ukraine's most recent developments (Interview 2012/II). More specifically, though, they are conceived of as a forum that serves to help member states form a better picture of their colleagues' views, "gage their temperature" (Interview 2012/IN) when it comes to different member states' views on Ukraine and develop a better understanding of the EU's proposed initiatives (Interviews 2012/IG, 2012/IN). Ultimately, coordination meetings represent efficient ways for a diplomat to meet the ends of expanding his or her horizon by obtaining new information from reliable sources and based on different perspectives. The result, as one diplomat summarised, is "knowing about the others' positions by ninety-nine per cent" (Interview 2012/IL).

Beyond these standardised formats of consultation, the EU Delegation becomes an effective coordination hub that creates synergies with member states. While it has still not reached the status of a "leader" (Interview 2014/IP) in Ukraine, let alone an instigator of policy initiatives on a regular basis, it functions as a platform on which individual member states propose initiatives in issue areas that they feel strongly about, but in isolation lack, the political weight to effectively realise them[6] (Interviews 2014/IO, 2014/IP). Consequently, especially smaller member states 'download' and filter information, but are also given the opportunity to lobby for their positions and thus 'upload' issue-related objectives in the hope to rally support and give their ideas more prominence as the EU 'as a whole' (see e.g. Interviews 2012/IC, 2012/IL). Accordingly, as a diplomat from a small member state highlighted,

> […] for us […], we know that we can push more through the EU. So we go to the meetings, we try to raise our ideas, we try to make coalitions even here. […] We can only be stronger together.
>
> (Interview 2014/IP)

This does not imply that member state embassies suddenly stop cultivating their individual bilateral contacts with other member state missions. On the contrary,

these remain intact and especially bigger member states often prefer to draw on their own bilateral networks of informants. However, EU member state diplomats do value the EU Delegation as a "service point" or "facilitator" that eases especially smaller member states' tasks of information gathering as they often lack the time and resources to cover their diverse portfolios[7] (Interviews 2012/IC, 2012/II, 2014/II, 2014/IO, 2014/IP, 2014/IQ). Briefings on recent EU and member state delegation visits or the daily press review do not only constitute 'expert' information on which member state diplomats willingly and regularly draw. These actions are also signs of mutual solidarity where the EU Delegation, almost in the fashion of a boundary-spanner in its own right, seeks to offset potential information asymmetries. One EU diplomat neatly summarised the added value of EU coordination by recounting what her Swiss colleague had repeatedly pointed out as the EU's major strength – and, in turn, as something the Swiss genuinely lacked. As she quoted her in active voice,

> maybe you don't realise how important it is to have this coordination mechanism, you know, here at the EU Delegation among EU member states and so on. Because we don't have it and we have the feeling we are cut off from information. […] The fact that you are all together, the fact that you create, work on some common positions definitely makes your position much stronger. So […] you have a bigger platform of information sharing. You are better informed. You unite your strengths in terms of information and then in terms of position.
>
> (Interview 2012/IA)

Regular consultation among EU diplomats hence engenders a twofold advantage vis-à-vis non-EU diplomats: pooling one's resources does not only imply that a diplomat's respective capital can take more informed decisions based on comprehensive reporting by the field diplomat, it also entails increased political weight for the individual member states on the ground when, for instance, the EU Delegation carries out *démarches* on behalf of the group of 25 EU member states present in Ukraine.

2.2.2.2 INFORMAL CHANNELS OF COORDINATION: 'IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE'

From the above, it follows that institutionalised *fora* for consultation ease field diplomats' tasks and are an additional source of valuable information. Yet, these formal provisions also have their limits. While they prestructure practices, they do not help diplomats organise their day-to-day business. This is only achieved by additional informal coordination. As was repeatedly underlined by EU field diplomats, EU coordination succeeded on the ground not because of institutionalised channels, but thanks to well-functioning relationships on the interpersonal level. Informal networks, then, generally matter much more than what textbooks on the EU's political system have us believe[8]. As an essential element to breed "trust" (Interview 2014/IO) that is an enabling condition for intelligible action among

EU diplomats, the maintenance of informal networks makes up for all the gaps that are left open by the treaties and helps appropriate them to the conditions on the ground.

It is true that the Lisbon Treaty as a "major agreement", together with coordination meetings among HoMs and DHoMs, has helped EU diplomats "structure" EU coordination (Interviews 2012/II, 2014/IO). Yet, such formal structures do not suffice in diplomats' day-to-day business. As one diplomat already claimed in 2012,

> [The] Lisbon [treaty] is a huge legal agreement and surely this has concrete implications, the EEAS, for example. But I have observed that this is incredibly dependent on the people on the ground. […] And the fact that we have regular meetings, both at the HoMs and DHoMs level – this helps structure it, but if we only saw each other at these meetings once a month, we would by no means be as effective as now that we see each other everywhere else.
>
> (Interview 2012/II)

While the image of a "champagne-drinking diplomat" might be the commonly referenced, often negatively connoted cliché, this diplomat continued, the celebration of national days at some country's embassy constitutes an equally worthwhile occasion to informally exchange information. It is an occasion

> on which you briefly and informally swap ideas and are happy to see the others, if they are nice colleagues. […] I don't know, we all see each other at least once or twice a week somewhere.
>
> (ibid.)

In the end, as several diplomats confirmed, close contact with one's counterparts had "nothing to do with the Lisbon treaty" (ibid.; Interviews 2014/IO, 2014/IP). As one of them concluded, "it's all about the people. […] Whatever the Lisbon treaty, I don't think it has changed much" (Interview 2014/IP). Other artefacts such as the HoMs report are equally downplayed in their overall usefulness in situations in which decisions have to be taken[9]. One of the diplomats did see their value in that they regularly serve as a summary of the status quo *ex post* that provides opportunities to contemplate the "overall picture" (Interview 2014/IO). However, as the diplomat went on,

> [i]n the end, when decisions need to be made, it is more about phoning each other, brainstorming, debating, openly talking. You would probably not build up a construct of European positions on the basis of a paper. In the end, most things play out in the field of human relations.
>
> (ibid.)

Thus, most EU diplomats do not wait for institutionalised meetings to get information from their EU colleagues; they just pick up the phone, write an email or

meet informally over lunch or a coffee. Irrespective of whether it is their counterparts from national missions or those from the EU Delegation, member state diplomats report to be in equally intensive contact via email and phone as they are with their colleagues 'at home'. "The cooperation here on the ground is good. You can go to any embassy anytime", one diplomat noted (ibid.). Another added that he experienced working with EU colleagues as very "friendly" and "collegial" (Interview 2014/IO). While he did not regard the degree of institutionalisation to play any significant part in the quality of contacts, he did contend that "it simply works because it works at the personal level" (ibid.). Informality is thus crucial for sustaining relations in settings that do not necessarily provide the time and room for regular exchanges and therewith contributes to more effective diplomacy on the ground. While not readily apparent at first glance, it functions as a lubricant that keeps the 'business' going.

2.2.2.3 'AD HOC-ING': KNOWING-IN-ACTION[10]

Thanks to the above outlined informal and inter-personal networks, EU diplomats succeeded in managing the situation of (Euro)Maidan. It was particularly this period of high uncertainty which disclosed that informal ties among EU diplomats and a high degree of personal commitment were key to 'getting by'. During a time in which routine templates no longer provided guidance, these proved to become the two most decisive resources upon which diplomats drew to engage in creative problem-solving. In the absence of institutionalised meetings at the DHoMs level, for instance, less formal coordination based on ad hoc action filled the gaps on numerous occasions. While especially active countries such as Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic (but also Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany) were engaged in individual member state initiatives, the period also showed various instances of crisis-management where diplomatic staff from the EU Delegation channelled or even initiated joint EU actions[11]. Below, I shall give accounts of two of such joint actions that one member state diplomat described as the "visible action" (Interview 2014/IP). She repeated the word 'visible' twice, for, one might conclude, she was eager to stress that these one-off 'showpieces' were not representative of all the 'invisible', and yet equally valuable, action that diplomats had accomplished on a day-to-day basis. I shall therefore only use them as the tip of the iceberg that, however, underlines what Neumann (2005: 73–75) has called the "hero script". The hero script generally emerged as EU field diplomats' dominant script during the crisis. Accordingly, field diplomats' self-initiative, even "courage", as well as the need to "leave the beaten path" (Interview 2014/IO) materialised as some of the key competences and supplanted the oft-mentioned 'routine' work of information gathering that is part of the "bureaucratic script" (Neumann 2005: 73–75).

As for the first 'visible' initiative, upon request by one EU member state diplomat, the EU Liaison Officer on Human Rights Defenders from the Political Section of the EU Delegation coordinated court visits by different EU member state and EEAS diplomats based on email distribution lists that served as an ad

hoc "platform of information sharing" where ideas for new initiatives could be circulated (Interview 2014/IE). The court visits primarily aimed at ensuring that the multiple trials against protestors of (Euro)Maidan, who had been accused of having organised mass turmoil, were taken due notice of and witnessed. The second set of initiatives concerned efforts undertaken to prevent further human rights abuses as a result of abductions of wounded Maidan protestors from hospitals. In the case of two of the most famous Maidan activists, Tetyana Chornovol and Dmytro Bulatov, individual EEAS diplomats gathered a group of EU member state ambassadors during the Christmas holidays to form a "human wall" in front of protestors' hospital rooms[12][13] (ibid.); within a matter of hours, EU diplomats succeeded in grouping together via SMS. Previously, in 2012, joint assessments and task divisions had already been undertaken. On a regular basis, the monitoring and subsequent assessment of the so-called selective justice court proceedings against Ukraine's former political leadership was coordinated on the basis of a weekly rotation scheme where at least two representatives from EU member state missions or the EU Delegation would join forces and observe the proceedings (Interview 2012/IK). The rotation scheme primarily aimed at managing the frequency of hearings which one country could not have afforded to cope with.

The objective thus differed from the 2014 actions in that the latter aimed less for greater resource efficiency and more for lending substance to the EU's protection for human rights. The overriding objective was hence to ensure the respect of the most basic human rights principles such as medical treatment and due process, providing moral support to the Maidan protesters and showing solidarity with civil society at a time during which EU decision-makers in Brussels had demonstrated inertia vis-à-vis the increasing crackdown on demonstrators by the Yanukovych regime. As one member state diplomat explicated, even though these actions had little substantial effect on domestic authorities, they were moments of "symbolism" (Interview 2014/IO). Yet another stressed the aim of sending a "sign of solidarity to those on Maidan, a political signal to the other side [i.e. the Ukrainian authorities]", of showing that "Europe was not resting or taking holidays on such an important issue" (Interview 2014/IE).

In conclusion, the above accounts provide important insights into the different ways in which coordination is, in fact, 'cultivated' on the ground and comes to represent a shared background disposition that makes diplomats share the same outlook. Moreover, mutual engagement does not need to be formally institutionalised to instantiate and sustain a meaningful enterprise. The ad hoc actions have revealed that even (or rather especially) under conditions of crisis, the protection of human rights became a focal point around which EU diplomats' practices self-evidently converged. Thus, coordination has not only constituted a handy way of accomplishing a diplomat's main task of information gathering. It has also entailed the normative goal of showing solidarity. While solidarity was felt with Ukrainian civil society, solidarity also materialised in the way in which individual member state diplomats lent each other support to increase the overall political weight of local actions.

3 Internal Boundary-Drawing

The communal resources that are established by members of the EU's diplomatic community over the course of mutual engagement are neither stable nor distributed and used by individual members evenly. In fact, the local diplomatic community also shows signs of differentiation, both among EU diplomats on the ground and vis-à-vis Brussels as well as the diplomats' respective capitals. Senses of belonging to the EU come in various guises and differ in their degrees of commitment to the enterprise. Due to different prior "normative baggage" (Wiener 2007: 55, 2010, 2014: 41–42) that diplomats carry with them from 'home', and, relatedly, also based on differential access to symbolic and material resources of the local community, boundaries 'inside' the community are subject to negotiation. They reveal that the 'community of practice' is an informal social structure of meaning whose boundaries are anything but fixed.

The following section shall thus disclose the various layers of belonging that prevail among EU diplomats. I will identify two sets of these as constituting interrelated and yet occasionally contradictory experiences of belonging. The first set concerns two different forms of coalitions, groups or coteries that are present in Kyiv. At the formal level of institutionalised meetings, such as those of HoMs and DHoMs, coalitions "almost perfectly mirror" those strategic coalitions found in Brussels (Interview 202/IL). At the more informal level that plays out in the sphere of interpersonal relations, coalitions on the ground are not necessarily "hard facts" (ibid.), but are negotiated based on the diplomatic capital accumulated by individual diplomats or a given embassy as a whole. A commonly used term that denotes the relative amount of capital accumulated is the degree of 'activity' of diplomats and embassies on the ground. It follows that even though EU member state diplomats de jure enjoy equal status due to the sovereign rights of their principals, de facto they do not, and are therefore judged differently. Gossip and prejudices vis-à-vis specific member states or groupings exist as open secrets.

The second set of layers regards diplomats' boundary management with their own capitals. As the analysis shows, the pertaining practices entail noticeable modes of differentiation where both Brussels and the member state capitals emerge as the Other. While the first set of layers of belonging thus tends to have a dividing effect on the local 'community of practice', the second set has the effect of bonding, leading to a shared discourse among EU field diplomats on the ground. This discourse is brought about by a unique set of 'expert' competences field diplomats purportedly develop on the ground, which creates mutual understanding for each other's situation and makes them share a common outlook on the world that diverges from that of their capitals. Taken together, the group dynamics and diverse role constellations present a mixed picture of group identification. Yet, the fact that the joint undertaking of representing the EU in Ukraine does not go uncontested and necessarily entails diverging positions only underlines the argument that a 'community of practice' does not represent a definitive and homogeneous structure whose members share a stable idea(l) of

what their community is about. On the contrary, it is the commitment to manage the diverse sites of differences not only with a view to 'outsiders', but first of all among 'insiders' of the EU community.

3.1 *'The Lines that Continue to Separate Us'*[14]

3.1.1 *Representing 'Home'*

In the previous section, I outlined that coordination among EU diplomats, whether formal or informal, has acquired such a taken-for-granted quality that it has almost become a 'reflex' that Glarbo (1999: 644) once regarded as an "in-built disposition" among member state diplomats posted to Brussels. This reflex does not, however, imply that national (dis)positions suddenly disappear from view, either in Brussels or abroad. After all, diplomats derive their principal authority from representing their respective nation-state or the EEAS and therefore have to follow and express the given policy line in official meetings[15]. A plausible consequence that Bot (quoted in Bale 2002: 38) already hypothesised in 1984 could be that cooperation among EU member state diplomatic missions in third countries could "only be a reflection of the degree of harmonisation reached between [member states] 'at home' … and can never develop into a *sui generis* form of cooperation".

   Accordingly, all EU diplomats in Kyiv confirmed that coalitions basically mirrored those in Brussels and that diverging practices from the official foreign policy was untenable. With respect to foreign policy, one diplomat matter-of-factly noted, "we cannot simply be of a different opinion here than in Brussels or in our capitals" (Interview 2012/IM). More generally, since foreign policy traditions are anchored in a state's historically grown identity or self-image, and the related political and commercial interests, changes in a country's foreign policy take place incrementally (see e.g. Wæver 2009 for an overview). Coalitions among EU member states vis-à-vis Ukraine hence appear rather fixed, with historical, geographical, political and commercial reasons influencing the respective policy orientation. To provide a prominent example, I refer here to the account given by a diplomat from one of the Baltic countries whose country acceded to the EU in 2004. He argued that his country's both Slavic and Nordic identity inevitably shaped his country's foreign policy. For him, it was even "natural, historically determined"[16]. Moreover, with respect to his country's relations with Ukraine, he pointed out that after EU accession foreign policy priorities geographically shifted from EU integration towards integrating the EU's new Eastern neighbours. Almost as Ukraine's teacher of 'European standards', his country believed that, in cooperation with Poland,

> we can really provide our democratic experience to those countries and bring necessary changes and also give our experience of reforms, especially reforms that were connected to our integration into the EU. […] I think we went through very similar transformation processes.

Thus, a country's own historical and political trajectory has crucial repercussions on its foreign policy priorities. In the above case, it has been the result of the country's own democratic rite of passage from separation from the EU during the Cold War, to liminality during the EU accession process towards full incorporation into EU structures[17].

Against this background, until the suspension of the EU-Ukraine AA in November 2013, EU member states' positions on Ukraine could be broadly divided into two groups whose views differed along the dimension of the form and pace with which Ukraine should be approximated with the EU (Should Ukraine be given the EU membership perspective? And how quickly?) and conditions under which approximation shall proceed (Should the EU be willing to give up on its value-based approach due to geopolitical reasons or should it apply strict conditionality?). Interviewees in 2012 also related these two positions to the well-known distinction of 'old' vs. 'new' member states, even though refinements of the two groups occurred[18]. New member states were associated with what one of the diplomats called the "geo-political school of thought" (Interview 2012/IA) that, based on their "post-Cold War mentality" (Interview 2014/IE), favoured Ukraine's speedy approximation with and integration into EU structures, while being ready to make concessions on Ukraine's performance in the sphere of democracy, human rights and judiciary. While most of these states are direct neighbours to Ukraine and/or have traditionally had close political ties with Ukraine – Poland and Lithuania in particular – their primary goal was, and still is, geopolitically motivated in fending off Russia's influence on Ukraine or ensuring the safety of their own borders. In contrast, old member states were primarily associated with a "school of thought" that would take a more value-based approach and apply strict conditionality. This group could be further divided into the "big three" countries of Germany, France and the United Kingdom that pursue major economic interests in Ukraine; those which take a specific human rights focus, such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland; and those that would have little interest in the Eastern European region, but silently support any decision taken in official meetings at the EU Delegation (for instance, Italy, Portugal or Denmark)[19] (Interviews 2012/II, 2014/IQ).

As the Vilnius summit drew nearer, however, even member states such as Germany, a country that had consistently followed a balanced foreign policy towards Ukraine, was willing to compromise on the EU's values and sign the agreement despite the increasingly autocratic style of the Yanukovych regime. Coalitions again shifted when debates about sanctions vis-à-vis Russia were held after it had annexed Crimea in violation of International Law and had begun to financially and militarily support separatist groups in Donbas. Coalitions were then formed along the axes of commercial interests and/or security concerns that determined to which degree countries would construct their Ukraine policy through the prism of their relations with Russia. In the end, as one diplomat in an admittedly simplified manner concluded, it boiled down to whether countries could economically afford to turn against Russia or, for "ideological" reasons, take a principled anti-Russian stance (Interview 2014/IE).

The fact that these coalitions did (and still do) not go uncontested can be demonstrated by taking member state and EEAS diplomats' perceptions of Poland and its embassy's actions in Kyiv between 2012 and 2014 as an exemplary case. Poland is commonly held to belong to the 'geo-strategic' grouping of new member states and is generally recognised for its very active and historically special role in Ukraine. Yet, the embassy's staff were occasionally viewed with scepticism as diplomats, especially from old member states, had difficulties evaluating on which 'side' Poland stood[20]. As Poland was reportedly more lenient with Ukraine's reform agenda, old member states, which suggested applying strict conditionality, could not clearly define whether Poland functioned as a close or more distant partner (Interview 2012/IK). Back in 2012, another diplomat from an old member state even called the Polish embassy a "mixed bag", although his country and Poland had been key drivers of deepening the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours after the 2004 enlargement (Interview 2012/IL). During the period of (Euro)Maidan Poland was only occasionally part of informal talks at the German embassy, where the EU's "big three" convened with the Ukrainian political opposition together with their United States and Canadian counterparts. Paradoxically, then, despite repeated praise from EU colleagues for its lead role together with Lithuania in supporting civic protestors during (Euro)Maidan, the tone vis-à-vis Poland sharpened. Even *Visegrád* partners criticised Poland's unilateral approach towards Ukraine that made it act "everywhere and nowhere" at the same time and even abstain from EU coordination meetings because it purportedly perceived its bilateral actions to be more effective (Interview 2014/IP). With a view to Poland's policy in the run-up to the potential signing of the AA in late November 2013, another criticised that "there was simply a messianistic desire to have that agreement signed in any way, at any price" (Interview 2014/IF).

Thus, coalitions were 'real' and dissonances over the appropriate policy towards Ukraine became especially visible in the aftermath of the failed signature of the AA in Vilnius as well as during (Euro)Maidan. Not only the Polish stance, embodied by then foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski, had *ex post* been criticised. Also then European Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP, Stefan Füle, was allegedly led astray by his personal ambitions to make the AA a success. Yet, in spite of the groupings, it was significant to perceive the substantial overlap in interviewees' descriptions of who belonged. There was no instance in which one or more member states were stigmatised to the extent that they functioned as a permanent constitutive outside of the local 'community of practice'.

3.1.2 *What Matters on the Ground: Symbolic Capital*

Moreover, official coalitions are only one side of the coin. The other side that lies in the shadow, but significantly influences group constellations on the ground, is informal relations and groupings that are the result of the relative degree of activity of embassies and individual diplomats. A country's official policy towards Ukraine as well as the material resources of a mission – the size of the mission and its allocated budget – are structural conditions that have significant practical implications for the capacities of a mission. Cyprus, for instance, was represented

by only one diplomat in Ukraine during the research period 2012–2014. Yet, the symbolic resources such as the personal commitment by individual diplomats, the density of their network, and hence access to information and contextual knowledge of the scene are highly valued in the daily work with colleagues. It follows that resources in the material sense are important, but that information in terms of knowledge of the scene weighs heavily as symbolic capital and can, in turn, modify the expected group constellations and establish new forms of social hierarchy. Sweden's relative activity, high esteem and hence influence on shaping other member state opinions, for instance, is to a large degree the result of the country's principled human rights focus in its foreign policy. However, on the ground, it is primarily actualised based on personality, making the embassy cooperate closely with the "big three": as recounted by a colleague from another EU member state, the DHoM posted to Ukraine until June 2014 was high in standing as he had worked in Ukraine several years before becoming the DHoM, spoke the Ukrainian language fluently, and hence was well connected as well as having valuable contextual knowledge at his disposal (Interviews 2012/II, 2014/IJ).

More generally, though, as the interview data reveal, group constellations on the ground are the result of diplomats trusting their counterparts based on a high degree of confidentiality and valuing their colleagues for providing a different perspective (Interview 2014/IO, 2014/IS). As one diplomat explained,

> Specific groups crystallise where you say […] you don't beat about the bush, you don't have to play-act, you can really talk openly and you know that what you say is in good hands. And where you know he really provides some value added because he sees some things differently or because he has different points of access that I do not have.
>
> (Interview 2014/IO)

While national differences do not simply vanish, diplomats know how to manage these differences. At the inter-personal level, specifically with a view to gathering and exchanging information, it becomes a lived reality that "nation-states basically play no role here" (ibid.). This is due to the fact that blending the 'personal' and 'business' is "part of the job" (ibid.). It is the paradoxical effect of diplomats being well trained to neatly separate the public or 'business' aspect of his or her job from the personal aspects of his or her life in the field. Without explicating it, diplomats seem to consensually agree that each of them leads a life 'on the record', where nation-states matter because one represents the official position of one's country, and 'off the record', where nation-states take a backseat (ibid.). It can hence be seen as an invisible rule that everyone blindly obeys to make each other's lives worth living.

3.1.3 *"Because We Are Here": Expertise Based on Proximity*

"Being in the field makes a difference" (Interview 2014/IO) – this statement made by one of my interviewees at the beginning of an extensive passage on life as a field diplomat is representative of my other interviewees' accounts. As the data

revealed, field diplomats arguably have at their disposal a specific set of competences that confers the sharing of a common *raison d'être* that distinguishes them from their capitals and headquarters. Especially during (Euro)Maidan, their shared contextual know-how of the scene and similar outlook on political developments in Ukraine materialised most forcefully and at times contributed to diplomats feeling alienated from their capital.

Field diplomats draw their legitimacy from providing special expertise that arguably only they can generate on the ground. While information flows freely on the internet, one diplomat started to explicate, knowledge does *not* because that latter entails carefully filtering information, making assessments, providing judgement and reasoned opinion. He went on,

> [a]nd this is where I see the value added of an embassy. I precisely see our task in judgement. And based on which authority, competence? Because we are here. We are here, we virtually absorb the atmosphere in the country. We are in touch with the people, a picture of the country is formed that often differs from that which you could google. This is what we want to transport.
>
> (Interview 2014/IO)

This special form of knowledge is thus the result of combining a diplomat's competence to assess and judge with his or her proximity to the host country as well as the strong connection to relevant local sources. With respect to Ukraine's political crisis, for instance, one diplomat was certain that field diplomats "have a better understanding of what's happening" than those in the headquarters, thereby creating a clear distinction between two linked, but separate arenas of action (Interview 2014/IF; also 2014/IP).

Another diplomat even pointed to the power which the compilation of information on the ground implied in relation to their headquarters. Since 80–90 per cent of her headquarters' knowledge about Ukraine's situation supposedly stemmed from the mission's reports, she held her "[i]nfluence in terms of information" to being equal to information as "power" vis-à-vis 'home' (Interview 2012/IA). Unlike the bureaucrat 'at home'[21], the diplomat saw herself as being "not part of a long, long chain of passing just reports", but instead "the first source of this report", almost like a "soldier you send to a battle" (ibid.). As she went on,

> I mean, […] when you are in an embassy you are on the frontline of everything. When you go back to your headquarters you are a number among thousands, obviously.

By way of differentiating herself from those 'at home' she thus enacted the script of the field diplomat *as* expert who feeds the capital with processed local knowledge[22]. Field diplomats surely know their limits, fully aware that this type of influence cannot be mistaken for a direct translation of their views into the official policy of their respective capitals (Interviews 2012/IK, 2012/IA, 2014/IO). Yet, the image makes for an effective narrative among diplomats in the

field and legitimises their *raison d'être* on the ground: distinct from diplomats 'at home' who are considered generalists, field diplomats act out the expert script which creates senses of working under the same conditions and sharing similar perspectives.

Especially during the period of (Euro)Maidan, the different perspectives between capitals and their diplomats in the field gained prominence. Diplomats at times signalled frustration as they felt misunderstood or not taken seriously by their capitals (Interviews 2014/IF, 2014/IP) and deplored that their reporting, assessments and proposals for policy initiatives vis-à-vis 'home' were not taken up and subsequently approved for implementation (Interviews 2014/IF, 2014/IO, 2014/IP). When it came to levying sanctions on key Ukrainian and Russian officials, diplomats related the diverging views between them and their capitals to the fact that their capitals were being influenced from "all sides", being driven by short-terms interests, such as winning the next elections, and above all by economic interests (ibid.). If field diplomats had their way, two diplomats openly conceded in 2014, their capitals' position would be different (Interviews 2014/IO, 2014/IP; see also 2012/IC). As one of them concluded,

> We, here, in the field, we all sing from the same hymn sheet. […] [The fact that our capitals take different decisions than we propose] is the balancing act that we personally need to endure. But this is also where I have to say, okay, I have to be as professional that I distinguish between the two, and that I nevertheless try to put across my insights, my evaluation – hoping that constant dripping wears away the stone. This is the persuading that we […] need to do because we are here.
>
> (Interview 2014/IO)

A sense of a "we"-feeling among EU field diplomats hence emerges based on diplomats' shared situation in the field, their shared frustration over not getting their evaluation of the local scene across to their capitals. Colleagues know what the others are going through when they have to present a position that they personally do not support. The rules along which the diplomatic game is played in Kyiv simply differ from the "Eurocratic" games played in Brussels, not least because diplomatic life in Kyiv is remote from Brussels politics (Interview 2012/IN). With respect to formal coalitions among member states, Bot (quoted in Bale 2002: 38) may have been right when stating that some "*sui generis* cooperation" on the ground is impossible. But then again, he was not as he overlooked the equally important dimension of personal contact among field diplomats that follows a different logic.

4 External Boundary-Spanning

> [O]ur identities are the living vessels in which communities and boundaries become realized as an experience of the world. Whenever we belong to multiple communities, we experience the boundary in a personal way. In

the process, we create bridges across communities because, in developing our
own identities, we deal with these boundaries in ourselves.

(Wenger 2000: 239)

That field diplomats' everyday practices follow a different logic to that of their
colleagues 'back home' in the ministry or in Brussels became especially visible
as a result of my interviewees' accounts of how they had experienced the period
of (Euro)Maidan. As the above quote by Etienne Wenger neatly captures, most
of the field diplomats at times crossed their diplomatic boundaries and created
bridges across their diplomatic community towards civil society. In cases where
diplomats could no longer maintain the "professional detachment" (Sharp 1997:
627) that they themselves think a diplomat generally requires, their identity as a
'split diplomat' emerged. The term denotes that a field diplomat's identity always
involves a "balancing act" (Interview 2014/IO) between the diverse boundaries
that he or she combines and has to manage on an everyday basis. Depending on
the experience that a diplomat makes, the relative balance of a diplomat's mul-
tiple memberships can at times tip and temporally bring one membership more
prominently to the fore than others[23]. The following section seeks to reveal that
crisis situations can trigger the pointed emphasis on one of these by demonstrat-
ing how EU field diplomats spun their boundaries towards supporting the polit-
ical opposition and civic protestors on (Euro)Maidan, periodically abandoned
their diplomatic neutrality and developed a logic of action that one could place
in-between that of diplomats and humanitarian aid workers.

4.1 The Split Diplomat

As a result of being permanently posted to the host country, Niccolò Machiavelli's
friend Francesco Guicciardini already in the sixteenth century held field diplomats
to have a "natural tendency" to "develop a fondness for foreign ways and even to
adopt the outlook of a foreign prince" (Berridge 2001: 24). While this 'worst-case'
or 'shirking' scenario of switched loyalties cannot be confirmed in the present case
study, civil society's (Euro)Maidan demonstrations left a mark on diplomats' per-
sonal perspectives on their host country as well as on their own capitals' policy
during the crisis. More than was already subtly discernible in interviews conducted
in 2012, the understanding of field diplomats as boundary workers materialised.
Like someone 'sitting on the fence', diplomats seemed to be caught between their
capitals' official policy to remain objective observers of the events on Maidan, and
thus abstain from intervening in sovereign affairs, and the direct experience of the
political dynamics in the host country itself. It comes as little surprise, then, that
a clash or hiatus between a diplomat's professional position as an official repre-
sentative of a country and that of the diplomat as private person can develop as a
consequence of *witnessing* with his or her own eyes and *feeling* with his or her own
skin the political dynamics. Quite emotionally, one diplomat recalled,

> I live on Maidan, I witnessed these sensibilities from the beginning to end,
> I marched [over Maidan] every day, I felt what was going on. Often you are,

really inwardly, in the situation that you think 'Damn it, why don't they, back home, get that something's going on here?'

(Interview 2014/IO)

A field diplomat's job thus amounts to a balancing act undertaken on a daily basis which is, however, argued to be accomplished without allowing one's personal sensibilities to gain the upper hand.

At times, this delicate balancing act can be put to the test, though, and result in the situation that what the diplomat witnesses on the ground is hardly reconcilable with the capital's position he or she has to represent. Behind closed doors, EU field diplomats commonly deplored the EU's slow and hesitant response to the unfolding events on Maidan. Until the FAC on 21 February 2014, the EU's policy had reflected little substance beyond the Council's reiterated expressions of "deep concern" for Ukraine's political crisis[24]. Almost as a catch phrase or running joke then, 'deep concern' was figuratively used by field diplomats to convey their deep resentment with member states' divided positions on Ukraine. After all, some contended, they did not expect any other crisis response from Brussels as the EU was "not able to deliver" anyway[25] (Interviews 2014/IP, 2014/IQ, 2014/IH). One diplomat even ironically submitted that, "[i]f you expect a white rider coming and killing the dragon, then you will be very disappointed" (Interview 2014/IQ).

The image of the professionally detached diplomat that acts based on reason rather than emotion also came under strain as events on Maidan developed further. The diplomatic principle of non-interference in sovereign affairs[26], the order to officially cooperate with the domestic authorities 'until the very end', was principally pursued as diplomats talked about the "delicate" balancing act they had to accomplish (e.g. Interviews 2014/IE, 2014/IO). Yet, the frequency with which some diplomats went to Maidan and the intensity of contact with the political opposition during (Euro)Maidan sometimes reached a degree at which diplomatic neutrality was under threat of being undermined (Interview 2014/IJ). Others openly admitted that in their supporting actions of (Euro)Maidan protestors, they could no longer remain objective[27] (Interviews 2014/IP, 2014/IF). Despite the significant risk of losing contact with or compromising respect towards the official authorities EU diplomats felt they had the responsibility to support civilians – staff from the EU Delegation, including EU Ambassador Jan Tombinski, were even threatened by the former government to be expelled from Ukraine as *personae non gratae*[28]. Thus, EU field diplomats sought to mobilise their official channels to the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs and prevent the crackdown on civilians by law enforcement forces by acting as a "deterrent" and by warning of possible official EU condemnation (Interview 2014/IE). Well-established official and private contacts with local NGOs that were active on Maidan helped feed diplomats with the latest updates and issued warnings about possible further police attacks. A sense of caring for civil society in the host country was thus inevitable; one diplomat succinctly pointed out, with reference to the popular uprising against the Yanukovych regime: "If we were strictly diplomatic, you would just sit here, you would not care. But you care for the country" (Interview 2014/IP). This sense

of caring even led some diplomats to disobey diplomatic instructions. As one diplomat conceded off the record,

> I think that we here all behaved like human beings, like people who have their consciousness [sic] and sense of responsibility. Because frankly speaking, there were moments where most of our colleagues in other embassies and us included, we were not doing everything possible to fulfil the instructions from the capitals because we have our own sense of responsibility[29].

What follows from this is that especially during crisis situations field diplomats follow a logic of action that is not purely diplomatic, but also resembles that of humanitarian workers. For in contrast to diplomats, as Ole Jacob Sending (2011: 649) has argued, the latter are "infused with a moral ideal of care for distant others" which makes them share a "set of substantive objectives around which humanitarian activity is organised". The sources from which field diplomats derive their authority differ from those which Sending has identified for diplomats in general. Based on a conceptual differentiation between diplomats and humanitarian actors, he contends that diplomats are generally seen as being *in* authority due to their representational function of a territorial state. Humanitarians, by contrast, are regarded as *an* authority based on the expertise 'from the field'. Following my findings then, one could argue that field diplomats must be placed somewhere in-between these two groups. They might thus be described as *experts in authority*: endowed with authority by virtue of their being state representatives, they nonetheless take on a bridging function between non-governmental experts and their principals back in the capitals. They gather information from their non-governmental networks on the ground, filter and process this expertise for their principals, always in the hope to at least bringing about official condemnation of the regime from the headquarters or capitals. Moreover, it is the above mentioned sense of caring for the country – an "ethics of care" (see also Robinson 2018) – that resembles the logic of action of humanitarian workers. Thus, the "thick culture" that humanitarian workers share through 'witnessing' how those, who they seek to help, are suffering can to some degree be transposed to field diplomats. The experience of witnessing and feeling first-hand potentially provides field diplomats with a thicker texture of 'culture' than the 'thin culture' known to exist in diplomacy. Consequently, as one diplomat firmly stated, the crisis experienced had had the distinct effect of "gluing" the local EU diplomatic community closer together (Interview 2014/IE). Maidan was not only the cultural site in which civic protestors fought for their *Revolution of Dignity*; it also marked the material embodiment of EU diplomats' experience of split belonging that made them engage in boundary spanning.

5 External Boundary-Drawing

Mutually defining identities in 'communities of practice' are often little reflected and rarely articulated explicitly by participants. 'Communities of practice' can

actually be so informal that participants are not even aware of their own membership. While EU member state diplomats are aware of their EU membership vis-à-vis other actors, their ways of knowing are so deeply embedded and taken-for-granted within the circle of EU diplomats that their key practices (let alone identity issues) are seldom addressed internally. As one diplomat told me, interrupted by the diplomat's own laughter,

> [s]ometimes you shake your head in skepticism and say to yourself 'wow, how did we actually accomplish to get the EU this far?'. When you see what we actually discuss [in the DHoMs coordination meetings] and after one hour we're still at agenda point one, it is rather the case that you say to yourself, 'wow, this is actually astounding that we've made it this far'.
>
> (Interview 2012/II)

Against the background of diplomats' own ignorance of the EU's constitutive rules, I shall argue below that diplomats come to terms with what EU membership means when they are made aware of it by others or when they compare their Self with Others. This I already illustrated in the section on 'Internal Boundary-Spanning' with the example of a Swiss diplomat who enviably noted the EU's internal coordination mechanisms as the EU's strength and thus 'held up the mirror' to her EU colleague.

This section goes a step further and invokes specific practices of boundary-drawing by means of which EU diplomats generate shared senses of belonging to the EU macro-community. These discursive practices of imagining and narrating the Other arguably create a (temporary) stable sense of Self. By differentiating the Self from an alleged Other, EU diplomats create a constitutive outside that helps them enhance the distinctiveness and social cohesion of the 'inside'. Especially in times of uncertainty or crisis, boundary-drawing practices potentially increase in frequency and intensity, for individuals and collectivities alike are assumed to strive for "ontological security" (for the original conception see Giddens 1991; for notable applications in IR see Mitzen 2006; Steele 2008; Berenskoetter 2014; Subotić 2016). In the effort to reestablish order, they seek to create an 'inside'-order with clearly defined boundaries to reach a stable identity of the Self.

In the following, I shall demonstrate how EU diplomats' boundary-drawing practices contribute to the "lived experience of belonging (or not belonging)" to the EU community (Wenger 2000: 239). By way of reconstructing how my interviewees negotiate the boundaries of 'Europeanness', I will show that what EU membership actually means and what kind of distinctive identity it entails crucially depends on the constructions of Others. Individual experiences of belonging inevitably vary, but particularly converge on the demarcation line drawn between EU members and the non-member Ukraine. Two major inter-related sites of difference emerge as prominent and thereby make way for a supposedly distinctive identity for EU members: while Ukraine is ambiguously portrayed as 'somehow' European in the cultural sense, it is seen as politically and economically inferior to EU members and is therefore depicted as different.

By implication, EU diplomats create an idealised version of EU membership that they perceive as constituting the building blocks of the EU: similarly to the EU's official discourse, membership is accordingly built upon consistently adhering to the values and principles pertaining to the rule of law, democracy and the protection of human rights as well as to those of a liberal market economy. Complying with what one diplomat called the "European rules of the game" (Interview 2012/IM) comes to serve as the principle rule which all members argue to follow blindly.

5.1 Degrees of Europeanness, Degrees of Difference

The majority of diplomats are very reflective, highly knowledgeable and self-conscious when it comes to portraying Ukraine; they seek to provide a balanced picture, clearly differentiating between Ukrainian civil society and official authorities when issues of corruption and clientelism are addressed, and are considerate in avoiding offending the feelings of Ukrainians by stereotyping them. Except for one diplomat interviewed, all remaining diplomats concluded that Ukraine was part of Europe – "no one has doubts about that", one diplomat confidently added (Interview 2012/IB). The "civilisational fault lines", another colleague explicated, purportedly lay elsewhere; that is, between the "West" and the "Arab Word, China" (Interview 2014/IO). Since all Europeans shared the same cultural "Judeo-Christian humanist humus", there were many things that did not need mutual explanation (ibid.). Yet, as he concluded, *within* Europe, one could discern a "clash" between two different "conceptions of how to organise society" (ibid.).

   This last sentence is paradigmatic of the lines that were drawn between the EU, on the one hand, and Ukraine and Russia, on the other[30]. As a thorough analysis of the interviews reveals, identity ascriptions exist in multiple forms, sometimes even forming concentric circles of belonging. Yet, there is a clearly discernible difference between the geographical continent of *Europe*, to which all of the above were held to belong in civilisational terms, and the very identity of being *European*, that denoted something more specific, but was delineated ambiguously. While Ukraine had all the "appearances" of a European country (Interview 2012/IM) – being "European in the sense of music, films and clothing" (Interview 2012/II) – it purportedly lacked a specifically European political culture and European economic standards. Ironically, what these European attitudes and standards turned out to be were those exclusively pertaining to members of the EU 'club': what EU diplomats broadly considered European was, in fact, *EU*ropean only. Consequently, by equating European standards with EU-specific standards, Ukraine was paradoxically deprived of its European identity altogether and was, in turn, firmly kept in suspense.

   The debate about varying degrees of 'Europeanness', but a generalised 'East', is not new[31] (see e.g. Neumann 1999; Kuus 2004, 2007; Mälksoo 2010). Milan Kundera's (1984) idea of the "stolen West" implicitly or explicitly underpinned the Central Eastern European countries' (CEECs) rhetorical battle cry to "return to

Europe" when justifying their EU membership aspirations (see also Schimmelfennig 2001). Yet, with the CEECs now firmly embedded in EU structures, the debate has regained prominence with respect to a new set of states. As Yermolenko (2014: 5) has highlighted,

> The idea of the "stolen West" may have been liberating for central Europe, but for the Europe situated further east it was disastrous. Instead of breaking down the wall between East and West, it simply shifted it further eastwards.

One of my interviewees who is of Polish nationality confirmed this assessment, arguing that after Poland's accession to the EU

> Western Europe somehow came to terms that Poland is part of the family […]. So we are on the safe side. But Ukraine is still on the other side. […] Ukraine is just outside of that[32].

Whereas this tragic fate for Ukraine is generally acknowledged in academic circles, it is interesting to see that some EU diplomats have had difficulties with understanding why the 'label' of being European has been of critical importance to Ukrainians, thereby underestimating the EU's own role in shaping the very meaning of the term. The struggle over the final text of the joint statement of the 2011 EU-Ukraine summit is a case in point. EU officials had been astounded by the Ukrainian side's insistence to insert into the text that the EU recognised "Ukraine as a European country with European identity" (Council of the European Union 2011). As one of my interview partners explicated,

> From the European side, we never considered that you need a certification for this. […] There is [sic] some geographical parameters where Europe ends, and there are cultural parameters, which we do not set. We do not have a certifying agency saying "you are by culture European or not. This is part of our history". So you know whether you culturally belong to Europe or belong to Asia or other cultures.
>
> (Interview 2012/IA)

Precisely because the term European has been so deeply associated with the EU entity, however, the EU does act as a de facto "certifying agency" that in a hegemonic – even "colonial" (see Kølvraa 2017: 16) – fashion assigns labels of 'Europeanness' or not (see also Risse 2009: 154). Not only have the EU's newest Eastern 'neighbours' tried time and again to prove their degree of 'fit' with EU structures through multiple discursive interventions, such as underlining Ukraine's 'European choice'. But, at a more general level, the question of 'Europeanness' has been at the heart of the EU's latest enlargement debates, the most prominent example having been the case of Turkey (see e.g. Neumann 1998; Buzan & Diez 1999; Rumelili 2008). Thus, the argument of *a priori* 'knowing' where to culturally belong crucially dismisses the dimension of the social construction of

identity and underestimates the political momentum in defining 'Europeanness' (Christiansen et al. 2001). It follows that, even though identities are inherently relational, and hence subject to two-way negotiation, in the case of Ukraine, the country has become a site in which the EU has not only principally negotiated its own identity, but has, in fact, monopolised defining 'Europeanness' by framing Ukraine as the Other.

5.2 Rites of Passage

As I outlined above, I interviewed only one EU diplomat who excluded the possibility for Ukraine to ever develop a "European-type democracy and European-type society", even though he underlined his support for Ukraine's transformation (Interview 2014/IH). All other diplomats practiced a discourse of development in which Ukraine seemed to undergo different "rites of passage" (van Gennep 1960) "towards the community of values" (Interview 2012/IK, 2014/IJ). Ukraine is thus seen to be on the path towards the end-state of EU membership, along which EU field diplomats understand themselves to be the teachers of how to become a "real EU country"[33] (see Interviews 2012/IM, 2012/II). As one of my interview partners sympathetically noted, "this country is different, yet it is a country very similar to us. So there's still a great potential to transform this country into the way we are" (Interview 2012/IB).

Yet, this path of progress was regarded as threatened by Ukraine's latest political developments. While the nuances of my interviewees differed, a major line of argument materialised along three interrelated arguments: first, for reasons of Ukraine's Soviet legacy, the Ukrainian political elite have adopted a mentality that diverges from that of EU members. Second, this mentality has led to a different conception of how to organise society, underpinned by different political and economic practices. Third, the outcome is a country whose character is betwixt and between; 'somehow' European, but not entirely European yet. The possibility of transformation hence exists, but depends on Ukraine's *comportement*. With respect to the first line of differentiation, the roots of Ukraine's ambiguous identity as arguably 'somehow', but not fully European, are seen to lie in the country's Soviet experience (Interviews 2012/II, 2012/IM, 2014/IH) or even in its orthodox Christianity that was brought about by the great East-West schism (Interviews 2012/II, 2012/IC). Even diplomats from the EU's new member states drew a line between them and Ukrainians, arguing that they had gone "through similar transformation processes" as "post-Soviet countries", but that the mentality still differed due to Ukraine's distinct "historical situation" (Interview 2012/IM). The difference hence amounted to a cognitive discrepancy that made Ukrainians "tick" or "think" differently (ibid.; Interview 2014/IH).

In terms of the second line of argument advanced by EU diplomats, a set of political practices of how to organise society were identified as differing significantly from European practice. Among the most pertinent problems mentioned was that politics was reportedly understood to first and foremost serve the personal gain of the political elite and not the common good or society's wellbeing

(Interviews 2012/IN; 2012/IB, 2012/IC, 2012/II). Thus, rent-seeking was a key practice underlying corruption and clientelism. Since Yanukovych had taken office in 2010, the rule of law was increasingly impeded as the state power was no longer contained by an independent judiciary. Especially in the year prior to the 2012 parliamentary elections, courts had been instrumentalised, inter alia, to prevent fair and pluralistic competition for power in elections. The leading principle of the political elite thus amounted to what one of my interviewees termed the "rule by law" rather than the "rule of law" (Interview 2012/IN). Changing or adopting new laws, he explained, was seen as serving to assist the political elite in increasing their political gains.

Unsurprisingly, then, in the year preceding the parliamentary elections, a legislative draft on the reform of the electoral system, that included the return to the mixed electoral system used in 1998 and 2002, was "pushed down the throat on [sic] everyone" (ibid.). Drafted by a conspicuously pro-government working group, the law was adopted by the majority in parliament without prior consultation, broad discussion or parliamentary consensus (ibid., Interview 2012/II). Based on Ukraine's previous experience with a mixed electoral system, it was widely acknowledged that it would benefit the party in power and facilitate vote rigging, including vote-buying and the intimidation of independent candidates in single-member districts (Jilge 2012: 3–4). Consequently, with an increasing monopolisation of power, Ukraine's political leadership was accused of changing laws as it saw fit. This led one diplomat to contend,

> this is what the country needs to learn first, that rules exist […] to ease societal coexistence – like lubricating oil so that everyone feels better. And this is reversed here; here, one plays with the rules, not by the rules.
>
> (Interview 2012/II)

Accordingly, the deeply embedded political culture of rent-seeking has led Ukraine to essentially lack the rule of law that, in turn, comes to constitute the main principle that separates the 'outsider' Ukraine from the EU 'insiders'.

This line of difference is uniquely encapsulated by the observation of another EU diplomat of the different cultures of communication existing in the EU and Ukraine. As he explicated,

> [o]ne [culture] is quite a formal culture, culture of constant consultations, consensus culture. That's the typical thing of the EU. We'll not make a statement unless we reach a consensus among the main stakeholders. So there is a limited space for personal decisions. […] While here in Ukraine, many things are done on the ad hoc basis, the personal comments matter, personal interests matter, they determine the content of these messages. So our culture is more institutionalised, institutions-based, while the other one is very much based on personal attributes or personal statements. […] I'm myself calling that one Byzantine culture because the rulers were the ones who were making the decisions. It was their personal prestige, personal self-esteem that

were determining their policies. While I would say [the other one], I'm calling it European culture, […] is based on facts, […] is based on the attempt to accommodate various interests, being balanced, being empathetic and based on consensus.

(Interview 2012/IC)

The diplomat thus produces a binary opposition between a 'European' and 'Byzantine' culture which roughly differ along the dimensions of institution-person, consensus-conflict and fact-fiction. Byzantine culture was once known for its "meretricious aspect, fraudulent inspiration and manipulative technique" (Neumann 2013: 143); this reputation was paralleled by Ukrainian authorities who were seen as attempting to dazzle the EU by "appearing" European (Interview 2012/IM), while, in fact, applying practices of a bygone era. Because the diplomat explicitly mentions the Byzantine Empire as a reference point for the above juxtaposition of two communication cultures, 'Europeanness' is delineated along a spatiotemporal dimension. In addition to the aforementioned arguments about Ukraine's Soviet-type mentality and governing style of the political elite, Ukraine's identity is portrayed as temporally lagging behind and as inferior to that of Europeans. More specifically, it is essentially depicted as premodern, since the European identity is, in contrast, tied to a specifically modern conception of the liberal democratic constitutional state that emerged in opposition to the monarchical system of absolute rule and sought to contain the excessive and arbitrary use of state power. This essentially modern make-up is only furnished with a *post*modern veneer in that these principles are sustained at the supranational level due to the 'culture of constant consultation and consensus' (see above, Interview 2012/IC).

The consequence for both the EU and Ukraine is paradoxical. First, as for the EU, this supposedly postmodern entity with overlapping authorities that is built on the principle of the rule of law is much more modern than generally conceived in the EU's official and academic discourse (see e.g. Cooper 2000). Yet, it is such a taken-for-granted background scheme that it provides for a highly similar outlook among diplomats. Second, even though Ukraine is regarded to be on the path towards further development, and is thus in principal capable of change, the reference to Ukraine's Byzantine and Soviet history holds the country captive to a seemingly fixed state of development. It is, as its name *ukraina* suggests, a borderland that is stuck in the in-between position of being 'somehow' European, yet not entirely. This definitional margin, in turn, creates a state of undecidability which enables EU diplomats to draw on a wide repertoire of ascriptions of difference that seeks to erase the remaining ambiguity between Ukrainian and European identity and create a clear demarcation line. As a consequence, Ukraine becomes the b/ordering site which functions as the key reference for EU diplomats to define 'Europeanness': 'Europeanness' in essentially EU-terms so that EU diplomats can project the idealised version of the EU Self onto Ukraine and thereby ensure their ontological security.

6 Conclusion

There is no single overarching (let alone homogeneous) EU community, only a myriad of sub-communities that in their own distinct ways reflect fractals of belonging to the larger whole. The EU as the reified institutionalised structure must hence be conceived as a 'community of communities of practice' that is instantiated and whose meaning is (re)produced through practice in the mundane, everyday life context of 'communities of practice'. The EU diplomatic 'community of practice' in Kyiv is one of these sites in which the EU's normative make-up is negotiated. Substantial agreement in the sense of a convergence of viewpoints does not necessarily prevail as member state diplomats are primarily bound by their task to represent the interests of their respective capitals. Officially then, joint action depends on the extent to which agreement is found or compromises are struck in Brussels among EU member state representatives. And yet, on an everyday basis, diplomats converge around a specific *leitmotif* or theme, a set of practices about which they have a shared understanding: boundary work forms the nexus of practices whose meaning is collectively shared by EU diplomats. It is shared because it is experienced and continually negotiated *in situ*.

The normative background is thus negotiated because it combines multiple and contradictory acts of belonging. The relative sense of one's place may therefore shift over time and always remains in the process of (re)construction. Consider the fact that EU field diplomats each carry their own 'normative baggage' that is variously filled with their country's foreign policy towards Ukraine, the related instructions from the home capital, their experience gained from previous postings and their upbringing and education. In the field, this creates potential conflict, not only with a view to the personal experience of living in the host state, but also with a view to making it compatible with representing the EU together with colleagues from 24 other member state embassies and the EU Delegation. As a result, I have highlighted that both loyalty conflicts between 'home' and 'abroad' and the struggle of jointly representing the EU polity in Ukraine are 'real'. Yet, I have also demonstrated that EU diplomats have a disposition to manage boundaries on an everyday basis that has enabled them to enact the EU's macro-social structure in meaningful ways. It is their engagement in boundary work that balances their multiple memberships. Their competence in boundary work does not only mediate the friction arising from diverse member state policies towards the host state Ukraine in order to present a united EU on the ground; it also contributes to a shared lifeworld that generates feelings of belonging to the same community.

In one sense, within the framework of a dense web of legal agreements that provide overall policy guidance, the practice of exchanging and sharing information functions as the prime resource which ensures the smooth run of events and 'spans' national asymmetries. This exchange of information, next to the diplomats' anchoring practice of gathering it, is necessary for producing a shared stock of knowledge and is facilitated by various formal and informal modes of

coordination. If not institutionalised, these more ad hoc formats aim at updating each other, viewing current issues from different angles and exploring opportunities for joint actions or assessments. Together, this set of practices amounts to a culture of consultation and coordination that reflects what Pierre Bourdieu has called a *doxa*, that "operates as if it were the objective truth across social space in its entirety" (quoted in Adler-Nissen 2009: 129). The oftentimes tedious task of finding a common position comes to be "an undiscussed premise" from which EU diplomats shape their enterprise and make it "meaningful in the first place" (Adler-Nissen 2009: 129).

In another sense, EU diplomats draw boundaries in situations when their ontological Self is threatened and/or their mutual engagement does not suffice to produce the coherence of the community needed to act unitedly. In such instances, the coherence is generated through constructing a coherent and ideal(ised) 'inside' by narrating a constitutive 'outside' into effect. Boundaries that may previously have played a subordinate role are suddenly reified or gain greater prominence as they provide a focal point around which meaning can be organised. Internally to the EU community, for instance, members of the diplomatic community are temporally Othered. Poland is considered a 'mixed bag' because it does not play along with the rules regarded as contextually appropriate. Furthermore, member state capitals and Brussels are occasionally portrayed as Other as the gap between field diplomats' assessment of the events on Maidan and capitals' respective policy decisions widened. Notably, the pertaining practices of boundary-drawing have been paralleled by practices of boundary-spanning towards (Euro)Maidan protestors. Thus, erecting boundaries vis-à-vis a specific group of supposed EU 'insiders' can simultaneously lead to almost entirely removing those in relation to EU 'outsiders'. Nonetheless, distinct boundaries towards 'outsiders' remain in place. The reified practice of identifying a 'Byzantine' Other, for example, serves to constitute the EU Self as the superior community whose foundations are rooted in a 'consultation and consensus culture' that is firmly based on a rational and democratic decision-making process, detached from personal exhortation of influence. While the internal heterogeneity of viewpoints in this 'community of practice' does not disappear, it is smoothed out by external boundary-drawing practices.

As the above summary of the diverse modes of boundary work demonstrates, acts of belonging are anything but univocal. There is no straightforward logic of 'inside'/linking vs. 'outside'/differentiation that determines senses of we-ness among EU field diplomats. What may appear ambiguous, even outright contradictory, to the observer seems natural to EU field diplomats. In the end, conceptions of the EU community are not static, but an ongoing, situated endeavour. While the EU's substance is therefore constituted by criss-crossing boundary constellations that alter as the context changes, it remains normatively meaningful as long as boundary work continues to inform field diplomats' practices. What matters is thus the mutual engagement in boundary work which constitutes the 'homologous pattern' beneath diverse acts of belonging. Boundary work is the constitutive rule that gives meaning and structure to diplomats' actions and ensures that the joint enterprise of approximating Ukraine with the EU is reappropriated to

the realities on the ground. Boundary work can remain an invisible lubricant that effortlessly links various sites of differences when routine diplomacy is not disrupted. Alternatively, it can become explicit during times when the community's coherence is threatened and social order must be (re)established. Here, it is reflexively drawn upon so that its function as a useful skill to manage crisis is unearthed. Boundary work hence amounts to a mechanism that buffers or absorbs uncertainty.

This constitutive rule of the EU community ties in with the more normative appeal of how the larger processes of Europe should be understood. As Edgar Morin pointed out, Europe is a "Complex (from *complexus*: that which is woven together) that is marked by the capacity to assemble the greatest diversities and to bring together seemingly irreconcilable contradictions" (Bialasiewicz 2009: 325). As its political likeness, the EU is part of this Complex, out of which the EU diplomatic 'community of practice' in Kyiv represents one of the multiple cases which unite these 'seemingly irreconcilable contradictions' under the panoply of shared boundary-drawing and boundary-spanning practices.

Notes

1 The Weimar Triangle, usually consisting of the foreign ministers of the three countries of Germany, France and Poland, had been mandated by EU leaders to engage in mediation efforts to bring violence on Maidan to an end and find a political solution to the national crisis. While German Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Polish Radoslaw Sikorski attended the negotiations throughout, French foreign minister Laurent Fabius left for a trip to China during the negotiations and was replaced by the head of the Department for Continental Europe of Quai d'Orsay, Eric Fournier. Vladimir Lukin, who had been sent as Special Representative of the Russian President, also attended the negotiations, but refused to sign the agreement.

2 "Correct conduct" here means that the elections are held in line with international standards set by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR). The example was given by one of my interviewees in 2012 (Interview 2012/II).

3 Note that at the time of my 2014 fieldwork, there were 25 out of then still 28 EU member state embassies present in Ukraine, with the exception of Ireland, Malta and Luxemburg. Croatia had just acceded to the EU on 1 July 2013 so that the diplomatic staff of Croatia's embassy in Kyiv had now become part of the EU's diplomatic corps in Kyiv. Since 2020, however, there have been two significant changes in EU member state representation in Kyiv: while the UK decided to leave the EU on 31 January 2020 so that its diplomatic staff no longer belonged to the EU's diplomatic corps in Kyiv from 1 February 2020, Ireland opened its first ever embassy in Kyiv in August 2021. It follows that from August 2021, there have again been 25 EU member state embassies in Ukraine.

4 Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the task of representing the EU's common stance in third countries has been taken over by the EU Delegation, laid down in Article 221 Treaty on Functioning of the EU. Previously, the EU country holding the EU's Presidency internally also communicated the EU's positions externally.

5 For the time period under study (2012–2014), special working groupings were also convened on the occasion of Ukrainian elections and with respect to Ukraine's constitutional reform efforts.

 6 See, however, Terzi's (2018: 104) findings in Turkey to the contrary: in Ankara, the EU delegation has been regarded to "perform[] a successful leadership role in organizing coordination between the delegation and EU member states' embassies". The qualitative difference in performance evaluation of EU Delegations across sites proves that EU diplomacy is site-specific and cannot be analysed in a one-size-fits-all fashion.

 7 This service function is not unique to the EU Delegation in Ukraine, for it has been identified in other third-country contexts such as Kenia, Turkey, the USA and Russia as well as the EU's Southern neighbourhood, too. See Bachmann (2016: 93), Terzi (2018: 104), Maurer and Raik (2018: 69–70) and Bicchi (2018: 125–126), respectively.

 8 See also Kuus (2014: 44) who in her study on transnational elites in Brussels has criticised the mainstay of institutional accounts of EU policy-making for not sufficiently acknowledging the role of informal networks among individuals. She has, in contrast, identified these to potentially provide EU transnational actors with a comparative information advantage over those who do not network as intensely.

 9 However, for a different view that provides detailed insights into how genuine European knowledge is produced through the drafting of the 2009 HoMs report on East Jerusalem, see Bicchi (2014).

10 See Schön (1983: 50ff.) for the term "knowing-in-action".

11 The EU Delegation was particularly valued for taking the lead on the annual Human Rights report.

12 While these actions were coordinated by the EU Delegation, other non-EU states also participated, such as the United States, Canada and Japan. This underscores how 'communities of practice' are not confined to formal institutions such as the EU, but depend for the existence on members' collective pursuit of joint enterprises.

13 As very proactive countries during (Euro)Maidan, Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Germany showed engagement with respect to the medical evacuation (Medevac) of wounded protestors, partly including the issuing of visas and the granting of political asylum. This was, however, not coordinated within the framework of the EU.

14 I take this phrase from Newman (2006).

15 For an intriguing case in which EU member state diplomats sometimes diverge from their official policy line in COREPER meetings in Brussels see Lewis (2005).

16 For reasons of keeping my interviewee's anonymity, and for preventing further quotes from this diplomat being clearly associated with his Baltic background, I here abstain from providing a reference to the interview code number.

17 For an excellent and critical review on the new member states' politics of becoming European, see Mälksoo (2010).

18 By 'new' I mean those countries that acceded to the EU in 2004 and 2007. No value judgement is implied.

19 Note that the countries mentioned in this paragraph only represent prominent examples. Not all countries belonging to the respective groups are listed.

20 Here, the term 'side' refers to the frequently mentioned policy divide that is visible between 'old' EU member states' policy towards Ukraine and that of 'new' member states which joined the Union with the 'big bang' enlargement in 2004 and 2007.

21 See also Neumann (2005: 80) on diplomats accepting that they are bureaucrats 'at home'.

22 It might be possible to subsume the 'expert script' under Neumann's (2005) "hero script".

23 I take EU field diplomats to hold various memberships, inter alia, that of his or her foreign ministry, that of the EU, where he or she represents the EU together with his or her member state and EEAS colleagues in a third country, that of the diplomatic corps of the country to which he or she is accredited, or that of those individuals that care for the wellbeing of the citizens of a country in which they currently live. See also the diplomatist Nicolson who already in the mid-twentieth century warned against "conflicting loyalties" (Nicolson 1942: 122–123).

24 See, for example, the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions adopted on 10 February 2014 (Council of the European Union 2014).

25 Note, however, that such statements did not result in grievance about the EEAS's general incapacity to act. Rather, EU member state diplomats notably blamed the diverging positions among EU member state capitals for the inaction, not the EEAS as an institution.

26 As Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) sets out, any person falling under the VCDR has the duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of the host state (United Nations 1961 [1964]).

27 It must be noted, however, that others firmly underlined that throughout (Euro)Maidan they refrained from going to Maidan because their capital had instructed them to do so (Interview 2014/IH). Thus, there was no unanimous agreement or line of action pursued among EU diplomats.

28 Initially, this information was provided off the record. It was, however, later confirmed by another interviewee in a private email in 2015. While EU member state diplomats were never officially threatened to fall under Article 9 VCDR, that permits a host state to declare mission personnel *personae non gratae*, diplomats knew their actions were closely monitored by SBU, Ukraine's main government security agency. They therefore sought to keep a low profile.

29 As this sensitive information was provided off the record, I make no reference here.

30 Note that in 2012, Russia did not figure as prominently in my interviewees' accounts as in 2014. It was significant to see how Russia suddenly took the place of the Other that previously had been filled by the Ukrainian elites. This shift in Othering demonstrates the contingency underlying the construction of identities.

31 The debate has most recently experienced an uptick in the wake of attempts to decolonise IR and engage in "Global International Relations" (Acharya 2014). For an overview, see especially the introduction to a Special Issue on the "Uses of 'the East' in international studies" in the *Journal of International Relations and Development* by Mälksoo (2021).

32 As with previous quotes, I abstain from putting a reference here in order to eliminate any possible association with other quotes.

33 The image of teachers telling students how to behave is not new. In IR norms research, the asymmetrical relationship between 'norm setters' and 'norm followers' has been extensively studied, inter alia, in the context of the EU's 'big bang' enlargement; see e.g. Schimmelfennig (2000, 2001) and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005). However, these authors did not problematise the very fact that accepting this constellation forecloses any agency exerted on the part of the 'norm followers' and implies a teleological process of progressive norm internalisation. That norms are, in fact, contested and reflexively enacted has been demonstrated by Wiener (2004) or more recently by Epstein (2012) who has criticised the infantilisation of so-called socialisees.

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6 Conclusion

1 Introduction

The aim of this book was to present a praxiology of community, to furnish it with a novel praxiographic research strategy and reconstructive method, and to bring these together in a detailed analysis of European Union (EU) diplomacy in its neighbouring state Ukraine. In Chapter 2, I identified the 'problem of community' in community accounts emerging from the International Relation (IR) discipline and sought to redress the black-boxing of a community's social foundations in Chapter 3 by providing a praxiological approach to community. I proposed to conceive community as layered into multiple and criss-crossing 'communities of practice' that mediate between macro-social structures and micro-social processes of interaction. In order to unearth the normative background of community, I specifically suggested to shed light on the constitutive rules undergirding practices and explore how these are negotiated at the boundaries of community, which are particularly dense sites of interaction in which the Self encounters the Other. To that end, I developed the research strategy of 'zooming in' on the b/ordering sites of community, the carriers of practice and crisis situations in Chapter 4. I bolstered this strategy by devising an 'integrative basic technique of analysis' and applied the praxiographic guidelines to my case study on EU diplomacy in Chapter 5. The analysis revealed that boundary work, an assemblage of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing practices, emerges as the *leitmotif* of diplomatic practice that organises EU diplomats' everyday work in Kyiv, Ukraine, and generates a collective sense of belonging to the large-scale community of the EU. Thus, boundary work carried out by diplomats from the EU's member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) has been identified as the emergent 'normative grid' that makes the EU community cohere. This concluding chapter revisits my theoretical and methodological arguments. Instead of a summary of my findings, I aim at delineating my main results in view of their contribution made to and implications for IRs and the IR discipline. Finally, I outline proposals for possible future research which might extend the use and usefulness of the approaches adopted and created within the book.

2 Contribution to the International Relations Discipline

Within the context of the most recent 'practice turn' in IR, I proposed a specific practice-theoretical approach to the constitution of community via a creative rereading of Etienne Wenger's (1998, 2000) 'communities of practice' concept. The aim was to rid the approach of its static translation into the IR discipline and equip it with a comprehensive methodology, which tackles how to tap a community's tacit background knowledge. To that end, I specifically focused on three interrelated, praxiological themes that, taken together as a triad, prove themselves as a worthwhile contribution to the conception of community in beyond-the-state contexts. The triad encompasses 'communities of practice' as a conceptual framework that resolves the dichotomous relationship between macro-structures and micro-interactions by functioning as the intermediate space within which macro-structures are demonstrably in-use through their practical instantiations in situ; a thick conception of community by elucidating the normativity of practices to lie in their constitutive rules; and boundaries as "sites of difference" (Abbott 1995: 862) in which community is experienced as a meaningful enterprise. Taken together, this triad does justice to a relationalist ontology that emphasises process over substance (see Jackson & Nexon 1999: 291–292). Moreover, I surveyed disciplines such as human geography and sociology to sharpen my conceptual lens for a process- and practice-based understanding of order, community and boundary. The resulting interdisciplinary approach to community helped me to capture theoretically the contingency and heterogeneity of community and methodologically unveil its normative background by reconstructing the constitutive rules of community at its borders.

2.1 The 'Practice Turn', 'Communities of Practice' and their Boundaries

In this book, I have followed 'practice turners' in IR, and in the social sciences more broadly, who have regarded practice as a patterned and historically situated activity and conceived of knowledge as bound up in practice. Any phenomenon is therefore the contingent product of social interaction in context. I have come to see the dynamic conception of knowledge as a critical revision of traditionally mentalist, cognition-based conceptions of knowledge and the ensuing "representational bias that pervades most theories of social action" (Pouliot 2008: 259). Yet, I have specifically relaxed Vincent Pouliot's call for a principal focus on the non-representational forms of knowledge (Pouliot 2008: 258–259). As my case study on EU diplomacy in Ukraine has revealed, practice consists of both knowing-in-action – participation – and knowledge represented in discourses and artefacts. Especially during times of crisis, or shortly thereafter, the taken-for-granted 'know how' that is carried on unformulated is often unsettled and must be rectified by conscious reflection, deliberation and/or contestation (e.g. Wiener 2007: 7, 2008: 64). Thus, when competence and experience no longer overlap and diverge to a large degree, the 'know how' must be objectified to allow participants

to negotiate about how to adapt their competences and skills to the new situation. This is when background knowledge comes to light for researchers to observe and analyse.

A related conceptual advantage that practice entails is "its power to account for how society holds together (is reproduced) and changes in being reproduced" (Gherardi 2008: 523). In other words, a practice-theoretical lens can account for the contingency of and changes in social phenomena. This lens is therefore a useful addition to the constructivist argument that the course and substance of world politics is not structurally given, but affected and transformed by agents' ideas, values and norms. However, practice as the central unit of analysis is, in fact, conceptually superior to ideas or norms in that it is able to enquire into how these and other structures are *constituted* in the first place (Bueger & Gadinger 2015: 3–4). Further, it cuts across the dualism of structure and agency that IR scholars have long sought to overcome. As an "in-between concept" (Gherardi 2008: 523), practice ensures that neither structure nor agency lapses into the other.

2.1.1 Learning from Ethnomethodology

Scholars such as Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot have therefore capitalised on the concept of 'communities of practice' as they consider it the "social space where structure and agency overlap" (Adler & Pouliot 2011b: 18). I have broadly followed their line of argument but bolstered the conception of 'communities of practice' as an intermediary space between macro-social structures and micro-social processes of interaction by an ethnomethodological conception of social order. Accordingly, the macro-social structure exists only because of its members' practical accomplishment, because of participants' recurring instantiation and reappropriation of the macro-social structure in their respective contexts of relevancies. Adopting the concept of 'communities of practice' as translated into IR by Adler (2008) as well as Adler and Pouliot (2011a, 2011b), however, implies losing a community's contingent character and risks objectifying community as a "container of practice with clearly identifiable boundaries and recognizable social coherence" (Bueger & Gadinger 2018: 30). As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Adler's conception of NATO *as* a 'community of practice' has the effect of equating a primarily informal and local social structure of meaning with a formal institution. Unfortunately, bracketing members' practices in context essentially dispense with the original idea of 'communities of practice' that community, like any other social phenomenon, exists only when enacted in context.

Insights gained from ethnomethodology, by contrast, point towards entirely conceiving of macro-structural categories as members' phenomena. In fact, ethnomethodology underscores the "structures of meaning-in-use" argument put forward by critical constructivists (Weldes & Saco 1996: 373; Weldes 1998: 218; Milliken 1999: 231; Wiener 2008: 5, 2009) in that macro-social structures are *enacted*, that is, brought to life by micro-social practices. Conceived in this way, the EU macro-social community is reproduced by members continually making macro-structural categories situationally relevant to their everyday lives.

In turn, 'communities of practice' are nothing but the context or social space within which 'doing-community-in-situation' is visibilised[1]. Equipped with this ethnomethodological cognisance, I was able to conceptualise the EU as a "community of communities of practice" (Brown & Duguid 2001: 203) whose modes of belonging are negotiated in each of its sub-communities through members practicing the macro-structural community in context. Accordingly, I zoomed in on one of these sub-communities in my empirical analysis. As the case study on the EU diplomatic 'community of practice' in Kyiv, Ukraine, disclosed, EU field diplomats, inter alia, reproduced the EU as a (post-)modern community that is portrayed as primarily based on each members' adherence to the rule of law. This self-ascribed, seemingly coherent EU identity has, however, only been brought about through field diplomats' practice of juxtaposing two different "conceptions of how to organise society" (see Interview 2014/IO).

2.1.2 The Dual Quality of Practice

This example points to a further aspect of a practice-based approach to community which, I believe, has thus far been neglected in the IR literature on 'communities of practice'. Principal advocates of the 'practice turn' have acknowledged that practices are responsible for producing and reproducing social phenomena (Adler & Pouliot 2011b: 5). Yet, their productive quality has been primarily taken to be of a positive and integrative nature: security and peace are maintained by diplomatic practice (Pouliot 2010), 'security communities' expand through the practice of cooperative security (Adler 2008) or EU foreign policy is sustained by the practice of sharing and exchanging confidential information (Bicchi 2011). Its dual quality that encompasses both its integrative and exclusionary effects has not been the explicit subject of discussion, though. In contrast, I have made its dual quality the centre of discussion by contending that a shared discourse, feelings of like-mindedness and senses of 'we'-ness among a group of practitioners can be brought about by both, integrative practices of, say, coordination and the exchange of information and/or exclusionary practices of Othering. Having identified that EU diplomats engage in both practices of linking – boundary-spanning – and demarcating – boundary-drawing – enabled me to recognise that practices are not innocent but are infused with power that creates differential social positions within and without community (Adler-Nissen & Pouliot 2014; Pouliot 2016).

Moreover, acknowledgement of practices' inherent power also bespeaks its inbuilt sanctioning mechanism towards those (temporary) 'outsiders' that are recognised by an 'inside' group of practitioners as ignorant of how to perform practices well or correctly. It follows that focusing on the concrete contexts of interaction reveals that a sense of 'oughtness' about what is considered legitimate or adequate is always implied or situated in the very practice of (re)producing a community's normativity. In turn, doing things 'differently', such as the Ukrainian political elite's 'rule by law' rather than conduct based on the 'rule of law', has the distinct effect of being excluded from the community project.

Finally, my conceptual turn to the boundaries of community, and methodological turn to b/ordering sites respectively, has further underscored the productive quality of practices. The EU community's constitutive rules of boundary work epitomise practices' effect of not only organising, but indeed *ordering* objects and entities in political space. EU field diplomats' assemblage of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing practices has demonstrated how their political contestation over questions of membership and belonging compounds along the boundaries of community. Empirically, the b/ordering site Ukraine has functioned as the 'power margin' at which EU diplomats actively yoke diverse sites of difference such that the EU has become a coherent entity of EU 'insiders'. However, this has, inter alia, occurred at the expense of Ukraine remaining the EU 'outsider'. As the principal constitutive outside of the EU community, it has served to define a perceived normalcy on the 'inside' and deviance on the 'outside'. In the end, boundary work stands for the paradoxical effect of an apparently clear demarcation line between an 'inside' and 'outside' that has been brought about by the negotiation of difference through a bricolage of heterogeneous practices.

My explicitly proposed turn to boundaries as a way to zoom in on how the EU's normative make-up is negotiated by diverse modes of organising has been neglected in conventional 'communities of practice' accounts. These functionalist accounts have predominantly seen boundaries as contact zones for exchange, integration or expansion. While post-structuralist scholars of collective identity formation have proposed a powerful alternative by highlighting that boundary practices are "*a priori* ingredients" of integration (Neumann 1996: 167), academics such as Campbell (1992) have equally remained within a binary mode of organising collectivities. My ensuing argument to subsume these modes under the generic mode of boundary work suggests transcending the long-standing divide between constructivist and poststructuralist theory, at least with a view towards creating more encompassing methodological frameworks. Despite significant ontological differences over what unit of analysis exists prior – agentic practices or discursive structures of meaning – both theoretical approaches are communitarian in the sense that they presuppose what Ashley (1987: 403) called "community-shared background understandings" from which social phenomena are assigned meaning (Adler 2005: 3; see also Adler 2019: 274). Both approaches share the basic assumption that reality is socially constructed and is undergirded by a pattern of socially meaningful practices within a given community of practitioners.

2.2 Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries

My interdisciplinary focus on order, community and boundaries has provided me with new perspectives and opened up new avenues of research that conceptually and methodologically enrich the IR discipline. In fact, my work also evidences that International Relations with capital letters could also be redefined as an empirical field in which multiple disciplines that share the interest in 'international relations' with small letters engage. Ontologically, ethnomethodological conceptions of social order have highlighted that the social foundations of phenomena

are the conditional product of members continually reappropriating meaning in micro-social contexts. Moreover, ethnomethodology also offers insights in that it does not *presuppose* a shared understanding of phenomena as endorsed by IR communicative action theorists (Müller 1990, 2004; Risse 2000; Lose 2001; Deitelhoff 2006). In fact, it refutes the very idea that mutual understanding is ever possible in view of the indexicality of language. Rather, ethnomethodologists such as Garfinkel (1967, 2002) suggest that the basic requirement is trust in members' commitment to participating in a practice (Watson 2009: 475). Participants' sense for the 'rules of the game' then successively emerges as a result of the recursive play between a given agent's action and another agent's interpretation of what it could mean in the situation at hand. Since the rules of engagement are entirely a members' phenomenon, and thus social, they are publicly witnessable events for researchers to see. Crucially, then, ethnomethodology opens up the methodological possibility for reconstructing the constitutive rules of community, a point to which I will turn in more detail in the next subsection.

The interrelated turn to sociology and human geography has been instrumental in pointing towards sites in which the reappropriation of a community's meaningful background is most forcefully brought to bear: boundaries. Abbott's (1995: 862) conception of boundaries as "sites of difference" has helped grasp apparently stable entities with fixed boundaries as the result of practitioners' endless processes of linking together diverse sites of difference into a coherent 'whole'. It speaks to my relationalist approach because it rejects the structural givenness of entities, recognises its social constitution and underlines its processual state of 'becoming'. It therefore complements Onuf's (1994: 1) constructivist argument that societies are both "a thing *and* a process". Moreover, Abbott's (1995) argument is conducive to acknowledging diversity as an inherent feature of any social phenomenon. The work of linking random "locations of difference" (Abbott 1995: 868) into stable properties, and thereby demarcating an 'inside' from an 'outside', does not go uncontested but involves "local cultural negotiations" (ibid.: 863).

This processual dimension of social phenomena has also been of central concern to human geographers interested in 'border studies' (Newman & Paasi 1998; Newman 2001, 2006; Houtum & Naerssen 2002; Berg & Houtum 2003; Houtum 2012; Wilson & Donnan 2012). Their insights are critical for IR as they equally seek to avoid the "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994: 59) that has principally led IR scholars to reify the state as a fixed and bounded container and adopt an inside/outside logic that clearly distinguishes between the sovereign state with a thriving political community and an asocial international system (see also Chapter 2). Based on these antifoundationalist approaches, I have been able to build my own argument that a turn to the boundaries of community brings to light the manifold processes of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing that form community in the first place. Insights from human geography have also allowed me to methodologically contextualise the sites within which the management of difference is most intense. As I demonstrated, zooming in on the b/ordering sites within which carriers of practice negotiate difference made visible the constitutive rules of community. Distinct from the centre, the b/ordering site

is replete with boundary encounters that both reveal how community members contest categories of membership and visibilise the resources on which they draw to actualise their community.

2.3 *Reconstructing Practice at the Border*

The methodological implication of following ethnomethodology's claim that the constitution of order, and more broadly knowledge, is an observable phenomenon is that researchers become able to analyse its normative background by way of reconstructing it from practice. Here, I see a major strength of my work as I match my praxiological approach with a praxiographic research strategy and method. To date, this remains the exception rather than the rule as most of the praxiological research in IR has failed to depart from the theoretical plane (Bueger 2014: 384). The technique I employed to reconstruct the constitutive rules of community or 'homologous pattern' lying beneath practitioners' everyday practices is hence unmatched in IR. Yet, it proves crucial when enquiring into what the 'normative grid' is that sustains a community through the creation and maintenance of meaningful resources. Starting out from an abductive logic, I was sufficiently open to adapting my concept of 'communities of practice' to the data generated in the field. While the concept guided my research throughout, I successively adjusted it with new knowledge gained. This new 'way of seeing' therefore allowed me to engage in contextual theory-building rather than theory-testing. My argument that the constitutive rules of community are an identical recurring pattern of multiple, sometimes even contradictory, boundary practices thus became possible only through abduction and a matching reconstructive method. Jan Kruse's (2015) 'integrative basic technique of analysis', which principally builds on Karl Mannheim's 'documentary method of interpretation' and ethnomethodology's 'conversation analysis', led me to identify the EU community's normative background as the diplomatic practice of boundary work.

3 Implications for 'international relations' and the International Relations Discipline

3.1 *Towards a more Realistic View of Diplomacy*

At first, such findings might not seem surprising to readers of 'diplomatic studies' who have long considered one of diplomacy's core functions to be the 'mediation of difference', or in Der Derian's (1987) words "the meditation of estrangement". Neumann (2012: 1–2), for instance, even sees diplomacy as "an integrating mechanism for what is now emerging as a global polity" or a "third culture" that "is a locus for mediation between political entities with diverse cultures" (2005: 72). Yet another scholar of diplomacy has argued that diplomacy exists wherever "there are boundaries for identity and those boundaries of identity are crossed" (Constantinou 1996: 113). All these conceptions of diplomacy share the logic of linking, the inclusive idea that diplomats maintain international order based on their ability to build bridges across boundaries. In this view, diplomats are brokers

and "boundary spanners" (Hocking et al. 2012: 69). I have partly perpetuated this image as I highlighted that EU field diplomats are a prime example of boundary spanners. As EU diplomacy implies simultaneously juggling intra-diplomacy and external diplomacy, EU diplomats are particularly skilled in spanning boundaries. In the case of Ukraine, I outlined in detail the multiple formal and informal ways in which EU field diplomats coordinate themselves. Further, I demonstrated that boundary-spanning towards Ukrainian civil society on (Euro)Maidan went as far as to almost compromise their loyalty towards 'home'.

However, I also discovered boundary-drawing practices as an intrinsic part of EU diplomatic practice. While these practices do have the effect of *maintaining*, this maintenance has a price. EU diplomats maintain the EU community as a coherent entity vis-à-vis a constitutive outside. The EU's normalcy on the 'inside' is thus (re)affirmed through practices of exclusion. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, for instance, has closed ranks among an otherwise fragmented 'West' and has revived the concept of the liberal international order by turning Putin's regime into a global "pariah" shunned by liberal world leaders (Graham-Harrison et al. 2022). With respect to my case study on EU field diplomacy in Ukraine, I have demonstrated that the constitution of community resides in both practices of inclusion and exclusion. Boundary-drawing practices are thus vital for a community to cohere, if it feels its ontological Self is threatened. For EU diplomats, this finding implies that they are not solely 'defending the EU's values', but actively shaping the boundaries of the EU community themselves. Boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing are therefore two sides of the same coin: boundary work. Having identified boundary work as EU field diplomats' *leitmotif* thus rids diplomacy of its romantic image of integrating and provides for a more comprehensive understanding of EU diplomacy.

I do not argue against the image of diplomats as boundary spanners. In light of today's reality of increased transboundary activity, diplomats bear great potential to become the principal agents of global governance (Sending et al. 2015). I guard against romanticising this image, though, given that the 'borderless world' is still more illusion than fact. Part of the reason the EU exists in its current form is that diplomats perpetuate its diverse socio-political, but also symbolic boundaries. Rather than closing with a disillusioning thought, however, I wish to point out ways in which the image of diplomats as boundary spanners can be capitalised on without losing sight of diplomats' equally present practices of exclusion. After all, one of the strengths of EU diplomats is their ability to unite the heterogeneous and contradictory practices of boundary-spanning and boundary-drawing under the panoply of boundary work. Boundary work emerges as the sufficiently flexible and experience-near 'normative grid' that holds the EU together. My closing argument in this section is therefore twofold. On the one hand, I see diplomats emerging as key actors of global governance as they have at their disposal the cultural skills to resolve, not dissolve, diversity. In light of Christian Reus-Smit's (2017: 882) claim that "diversity shapes international order as a governance imperative", diplomats are beneficially positioned to accommodate "articulations of cultural difference". Why? Because they have developed these cultural skills

through practical experience on the ground, not from some instruction manual. Their boundary work, tested and proven in practice, could become an "organising principle" for global governance that provides innovative pathways towards policy-making (Wiener 2018: 5). On the other hand, I argue that with competence comes responsibility. As agents of global governance, they have the ethical responsibility to play out their expertise and develop ways of determining not how difference should be mediated or overcome, but rather how it can be successfully managed so that plurality is maintained.

3.2 Developing a Practical Regime of Mutual Accountability

Throughout the book, I have argued that pluralism is the new global condition with which practitioners of global governance need to come to terms (Campbell & Schoolman 2008; see also Wiener 2014: 39–40; Reus-Smit 2017 on seeing cultural diversity as the key condition). The case of EU diplomacy in Kyiv demonstrated that it is practices rather than abstract rules that carry the sense of 'oughtness' that renders community beyond the state a meaningful reality. Thus, the 'normative grid' informing and ordering EU diplomats' internal and external relations was revealed to be boundary work. For this 'normative grid' or these rules of engagement to sustain the large-scale EU community, a substantial overlap in interests or shared agreement on concrete policies was not needed. Rather, what was required – as the temporally 'deviant' behaviour of Polish diplomats evidenced – was each participant's commitment to jointly negotiating the enterprise of approximating Ukraine with EU structures. The sustained mutual engagement in this practice eventually created "a regime of mutual accountability" (Wenger 1998: 81).

However, this regime of mutual accountability crucially differs from an institutional regime that is designed for common understanding. I have criticised the latter regime for failing to recognise that individuals will always differ in their interpretation of abstract rules or norms. Non-compliance with such norms is then inevitable as long as individuals lack the knowing-in-practice. Common understanding (if at all possible, given the indexicality of language) is generated through the shared experience of resolving difference in those sites of interaction where they occur most intensely. A regime of mutual accountability hence principally builds upon the shared experience of accommodating diverging interpretations under the joint conduct of appropriating the EU's overall objectives in Ukraine. The ensuing repertoire of communal resources is therefore locally anchored. It is a socially generated stock of knowing-in-practice that orients its members in their management of difference.

This repertoire of resources is thus a cluster of competences and skills learnt 'on the job' rather than abstract rules imposed 'from above'. Field diplomats are fluent in the 'language' of different knowledge systems. Their language skills are 'door openers' in that they grant them access to the field. In today's world, increasingly characterised by "network governance" (Kohler-Koch & Rittberger 2006: 33), diplomats have the necessary networking capabilities. Coordination has not

only become a 'reflex' among EU diplomats. I also showed how they link up with civil society organisations and think tanks in the host country and then filter and process this information for the respective capital or headquarters. Due to their experience with and knowledge of other cultures, they know how to mediate between diverse actors and therefore function as both facilitators and translators between concrete actions on the ground and abstract principles. Even though the split identity or 'in-between-ness' can at times cause an individual crisis of conscience, it must be regarded as a political asset to be capitalised on, because diplomats have developed the capacities to traverse different national cultural boundaries and switch among diverse socio-cultural schemes.

Finally, particularly those diplomats working on the ground have developed a set of practices that are conducive to managing crisis situations. Since intrastate conflicts have experienced an upward trend in recent years and are increasingly internationalised, field diplomats are among the first actors to witness trends in political destabilisation or surging violence. Potentially, due to thoroughly evaluating the situation on the ground, field diplomats function as an 'early warning system' that anticipates change and crisis, assesses risks and therefore absorbs uncertainty. This does not always succeed in preventing crisis or immediately bringing about the desired policy responses, though, as Meyer et al. (2020) show with regard to the broader Ukrainian-Russian Conflict that erupted in 2013–2014 (Meyer et al. 2020, Chapter 9). In the case of EU field diplomats posted to Ukraine, trends, such as the increasingly authoritarian-style rule of the Yanukovych administration, were discerned and regularly fed into dispatches to the capitals and headquarters. The possibility of a rethink in policy such that the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine would be withheld, however, decreased rather than increased with successive rounds of negotiation. Diplomats openly conceded in interviews that, while individual member states and political figures in Brussels had zealously pushed for a signature, even field diplomats had been given the run-around by the Presidential Administration (Interviews 2014/IC, 2014/IH, 2014/IJ).

Despite these setbacks, field diplomats displayed remarkable skills in crisis management during the time of (Euro)Maidan. Distinct from their colleagues in the foreign ministries, the EEAS and decision-makers in the Council in Brussels, they flexibly reacted and adapted to the sudden changes by 'ad hoc-ing'. The primarily informal ways of coordination among interpersonal networks of EU diplomats were crucial in compensating for inadequate EU policy responses that were based on the lowest common denominator found in Brussels. Field diplomats sought to do everything in their power to mitigate the unfolding humanitarian crisis on (Euro)Maidan.

What does this example of EU field diplomats imply for the bigger picture of global governance? The above summary of the skill set that EU field diplomats have at their disposal must be considered invaluable resources that are more than merely part of the 'normative grid' of boundary work that glues together the EU community. Especially the sensitivity, empathy and even solidarity that field diplomats displayed vis-à-vis the concerns of Others on the ground must be seized

as an opportunity to strengthen the capabilities of "frontline diplomacy", that is, all those diplomatic efforts that take place "beyond headquarters" (Cooper & Cornut 2019: 300). Field diplomats' insights and 'early warning' signals must feed into and frame foreign policy agendas and decisions to make global governance not necessarily more democratic, but more ethical. The findings gathered from EU field diplomatic practice in Kyiv, for instance, suggest that member states must place greater emphasis on what Fiona Robinson calls an "ethics of care" in order to focus on the practices of care for those experiencing a humanitarian crisis on the ground "rather than [focus on] deontic or utilitarian principles" (Robinson 2018: 561). Within the limits of possible action, EU field diplomats sought to compensate for the EU's more general lack of effective action.

Diplomats' resources and rules of engagement also apply more broadly to global diplomacy as the challenges of cultural fragmentation intensify. Rather than formalising these 'rules' by way of institutional engineering, however, I contend that the conditions for effective coordination must be ensured in the existing institutions so that the 'rules of the game' can be continually adjusted to new situations. In light of diplomats' high level of adaptability, this is likely to be smoothly accomplished. Informal coordination must therefore not be seen as a weakness, but as an asset. More rather than less room for informal coordination and ad-hoc-ing is therefore needed. In his book on the European Council and the Council, Uwe Puetter (2014) has again demonstrated that policy coordination is a more potent tool for effective governance than legislative decision-making. While both the European Council and the Eurogroup, for instance, have been given a legal basis with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, this is a result of incremental steps rather than engineering. With respect to global governance, there is no necessity for the establishment of new formal institutions. Neither do I believe that regional formats designed to mediate between the global and national levels bring about the desired effect of common understanding (see Deitelhoff 2009: 208–212). This unnecessarily reproduces the modernist inside/outside logic and territorial rigidity of, for example, the United Nations regional groups that contain rather than enable the negotiation of difference across cultural divides. Instead, it is issue-related and demand-driven coordination in looser formats of 'communities of practice' that, based on a joint enterprise, create regimes of mutual accountability that breed the necessary trust among participants. The shared experience of negotiating different points of view or ways of problem-solving creates the necessary sense of 'ownership' of the process and generates a feeling of belonging to the large-scale polity within which the 'community of practice' is embedded.

4 The Boundaries of the Book and Possibilities for Future Research

On a final, self-reflexive note to this book, I want to ponder some limitations of my work on the constitutive rules of community. These limitations, however, open up new avenues of research for others to follow. In the following section, I point specifically to two interrelated issues that deserve more thorough analysis

in future studies. First, the idea to turn to boundaries as sites of difference and b/ordering sites could have been exploited more rigorously. Second, the case study findings that have been confined to the EU context raise the question of transferability. Do other 'communities of practice' with different contextual conditions generate the same 'normative grid'?

With respect to the first intervention, I agree with any reader of this book who might have wondered why I did not capitalise more on the boundary encounter in which two 'sides' negotiate the sites of difference. Does the strength of turning to the boundary of community not precisely lie in the possibility of enquiring into the two-way negotiation processes of community between supposed 'insiders' and 'outsiders'? Why did I leave out or even silence the Ukrainian 'side's' agency without bringing the two 'sides' into a meaningful dialogue? I believe these are justified questions. As it stands, the study could be submitted to a thorough post-colonialist critique (see e.g. Kuus 2004) after which it would end up being accused of representing a Eurocentric viewpoint, something which I consciously and specifically rejected in Chapter 2. That said, I would largely submit to this critique.

Nonetheless, I respond to it along two lines of thought. In one sense, it was precisely my aim to delineate the complex processes by which the internal diversity of the EU's members is managed in order to constitute the EU community in meaningful ways. Studies focusing on the EU's international actorhood or presence (see e.g. Manners & Whitman 1998; Bretherton & Vogler 2006) most often treat the EU as a corporate actor. This, however, has the effect of glossing over significant internal differences between member states, which I sought to squarely address. By way of enquiring into the patterns of practices that serve as the EU's normative background, it was my objective to solve the paradox of a "multiperspectival polity" (Ruggie 1993: 172) that despite its internal differences coheres over time. For this specific objective, the way in which the Ukrainian 'side' contested the EU's policy towards the country was of secondary importance. However, in another sense, I entirely agree that future research needs to focus on boundary encounters themselves. One interviewee (Interview 2012/IM) already pointed to the effect that Ukrainian perceptions of EU diplomats have on their respective self-image as EU members (see the opening quote in Chapter 5). While there have been notable studies on how the EU is perceived by 'outsiders' (Lucarelli & Fioramonti 2010; Altman & Shore 2014; Chaban & Holland 2015; Bachmann 2016), the process of negotiating difference from both sides has yet to be placed centre stage. Thus, there is considerable room for further research and I contend that it would significantly benefit from an interdisciplinary perspective that specifically draws on the existing 'border studies' literature in human geography.

With reference to the second concern, that is, of transferability, I hold that future research can be helpful in specifically addressing and probing three issues that were central to the construction of my book. These might provide further insights into how the EU community is constituted by a mosaic of different sub-communities. First, the question of transferring the case to a non-European context; second, the question of whether the 'normative grid' would differ and in what ways; and relatedly the question of how different boundaries affect

the normative background from which the respective community members think and act. At the most general level, it must be stated that all three questions can only be reliably answered through future empirical studies that attempt methodological replication of the current book. However, I believe that case sampling based on "most important" cases (Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009: 716) should now travel beyond the European context. Starting out from the European example between the EU and Ukraine, one might consider comparing it with the case of the EU and Turkey[2]. The analysis of the boundary encounter would yield informative results on how EU members manage the sites of difference when the counterpart ascribes itself the function of a 'bridge' between the 'Western' and 'Arabic World'.

Bicchi's (2016) study on the EU's diplomatic 'community of practice' in Jerusalem and Ramallah represents a very good point of departure to further explore EU diplomacy in contexts of ongoing border conflicts. Drawing on Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015), she has highlighted the importance of boundaries in "landscapes of practices" and mapped the different boundaries of knowledge that exist between multiple 'communities of practice': that in the Jerusalem area, that in Brussels and those in the EU's respective member state capitals (Bicchi 2016: 472). Such studies should be harnessed to not only engage in research that is inspired by "multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1995: 105ff.), that is, research that follows a specific object across several sites, such as artefacts, people, life histories, metaphors or conflicts. They should also inspire analysts to attend to how EU diplomats manage different sites of difference simultaneously.

Aside from research on EU diplomacy, however, my book could also serve as a springboard for studies in diplomatic boundary work more broadly. My research strategy of 'zooming in' is not restricted to EU diplomacy. The case study findings provide for sufficiently detailed 'thick description' from which others might assess the plausibility of transferring my findings to other settings (Schwartz-Shea 2006: 109). However, does my ethnomethodological argument of order beneath the perceived unruliness of practices even hold in less institutionalised contexts such as that of the EU? I answer this question with an unequivocal 'yes'. The order reconstructed from practice may simply fail to match our modernist expectations.

Notes

1 Here, I adapt Gherardi's (2008: 523) term 'doing-society-in-situation'.
2 While Terzi (2018) has explored EU diplomatic coordination in Turkey's capital Ankara during three different crisis situations in 2013/14, her analysis is not geared towards identifying boundary work and its effects. Accordingly, her study says little about the identity struggles involved, neither internally to the local diplomatic community nor vis-à-vis the host state.

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