**Chapter 1 Introduction**

**Abstract:**

This book examines the European Union (EU)’s norm and policy diffusion in relation to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). By looking at the EU’s engagement with ASEAN in trade and security, the book analyzes the drivers, process, and effectiveness of the EU’s norm and policy diffusion in ASEAN and explains the EU’s foreign policy and power projection in the context of its relationship with ASEAN. This introductory chapter sets the scene for this book by providing an overview of the academic debates on the EU’s normative power and norm diffusion in global politics and EU-ASEAN relationship. The chapter also explains the objectives and methodology of this volume.

Normative Power Europe (NPE), conceived by Ian Manners in 2002, sparked widespread debate among scholars of the European Union’s (EU) external relations and the EU’s global role (Bicchi 2006; Birchfield 2013; De Zutter 2010; Manners 2002). For more than two decades, the EU studies community has proactively engaged with the NPE literature and studied EU norm-entrepreneurship at both theoretical and empirical levels (Sicurelli 2020; Wagnsson and Hellman 2018; Whitman 2011). By critically reflecting on this vibrant scholarly literature on the EU’s normative power in global politics, this book provides a comprehensive issue-oriented analysis of the EU’s norm and policy diffusion in relation to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Specifically, this volume examines whether and the extent to which the EU can be regarded as an effective normative power in relation to ASEAN. By assessing EU–ASEAN cooperation in two specific policy fields – trade and security, the book will highlight the key factors that facilitate or constrain the EU’s ability to diffuse its norms and policies vis-à-vis ASEAN across different policy areas. Drawing on analytical tools from NPE literature and diffusion theory, this book seeks to transcend the longstanding division between the disciplines of EU studies and International Relations. To this end, this research not only critically engages with the debate over the nature of the EU’s power in global politics, but also advances the understanding of norm and policy diffusion in international politics – a subject which has not been fully investigated in the context of interregional relationships.

Departing from conventional scholarly discussions in the field which have treated the EU’s projection of normative power and norm diffusion as a top-down and linear process based on the EU’s promotion of a single norm (or set of single norms) in relation to third parties, this book reconceptualizes the EU’s normative power as containing multidimensional elements and a shade of grey, taking into account multiple factors such as the EU’s foreign policy objectives, the mechanisms and outcomes of diffusion, and local contexts at the norm-recipient side. Moreover, whereas most existing literature omits the importance of the EU’s norm diffusion mechanisms and effectiveness, this volume borrows conceptual tools from diffusion literature which help uncover the complex processes of norm and policy diffusion across different policy fields in the context of EU-ASEAN interregional relations. By incorporating theoretical lenses from diffusion theory into the study of NEP, this research not only examines the EU’s diffusion items, mechanisms, and effectiveness of diffusion, but also attaches great importance to the role of the norm-recipient in proactively shaping the processes of norm and policy diffusion – a factor that has long been neglected in the conventional NPE literature.

The particular focus on the EU’s normative power projection and norm diffusion in relation to ASEAN can be seen as a typical case to study NPE for several reasons. Whereas the first generation of NPE and EU-as-a-power research primarily focused on the EU’s impact on its neighboring regions, it is imperative to note that interregionalism, in effect, constitutes a distinctive foreign policy approach for the EU to expand its global influence (Söderbaum and Van Langenhove 2005), and represents a significant channel for the EU to project its normative power beyond its immediate borders (Lenz 2013). Promoting regional integration has been a key feature of relations between the EU and many other regions worldwide. Notably, the EU has developed a longstanding relationship with Mercosur underpinned by the EU–Mercosur Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement (Santander 2005). In Asia, the EU has been actively developing interregional relations with ASEAN since 1972, while offering support for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) focusing on trade integration among South Asian states. The EU has also explicitly recognized the link between the promotion of regional integration and its foreign policy towards the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries (Söderbaum and Van Langenhove 2005). The EU has thus become ‘the hub of a large number of interregional arrangements which, in turn, are strengthening its own regionalist ideology’ (Söderbaum and Van Langenhove 2005: 251).

The EU–ASEAN relationship, which can be traced back to 1972, constitutes one of the oldest interregional and group-to-group relationships (Yeo 2008). Evaluating the EU’s normative power by analyzing the norm diffusion between the EU and ASEAN will be useful because of the relationship’s comparatively long-time span, the continuously evolving norm diffusion strategy, and the particularity of ASEAN’s geopolitical, institutional, and ideational context. The targeted recipient’s local context, especially the ‘normative prior’, is a vital factor in the localization of foreign norms (Acharya 2004). Given the fact that the ‘ASEAN Way’, a distinctive diplomatic and security culture (Haacke 2002), still dominates the political discourse within ASEAN, researching the EU’s norm promotion in ASEAN can be helpful for understanding the effectiveness of the EU’s normative power in the Asia-Pacific context. The EU’s ambitions as a norm-maker and a leader in promoting interregionalism cannot be achieved without cooperating with emerging regional actors, especially with ASEAN, which is often considered the second most successful regional organization in the world (Mahbubani 2017).

ASEAN differs from its European counterpart in many aspects, from institutional setting, level of integration and desire for regional cooperation to socio-political values. This means that the effect of the EU’s norm diffusion can contribute to revealing some features of trans-cultural and interregional communication. As a regional actor that has gained significant importance in the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN’s economic and political power and its normative vision largely determines its role in Asia-Pacific. Its role in the region is also significantly conditioned by the dynamic geopolitical conditions in Asia, especially by the great rivalry between China and the US. The EU’s influence on ASEAN therefore depends not only on its cooperation with ASEAN but also on the changing geopolitical environment in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

The focus of this volume on ASEAN is important for at least three reasons. First, ASEAN is a significant emerging international player. As one of the most successful regional organizations in the world, ASEAN plays a central role in a number of regional and international initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the East Asia summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3, and the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) (Narine 2008). ASEAN’s ten member states provide a critical audience for major powers seeking to leverage material and ideational influence in the region (Ba 2014). ASEAN can therefore be considered a crucial interlocutor of the EU’s normative agenda.

Second, ASEAN has long been an important partner for the EU, not only in trade but also in politics and security, and this interregional dialogue has grown to maturity over the past decades. The ties between the EU and ASEAN date back to the early 1970s, when the EU was the first (and for a long time one of the only) dialogue partners of ASEAN (Yeo 2008). Recent years have witnessed numerous developments in EU–ASEAN relationships, exemplified by the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU–ASEAN Enhanced Partnership adopted in 2007; the EU’s accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2012; the first ASEAN–EU Policy Dialogue on Human Rights, held in 2015, and the High-Level Forum for Maritime Security established in 2013. Given its extensive and complex engagement with the EU, which goes far beyond the traditional policy area of trade, ASEAN offers an ideal case study for exploring how the EU exercises ideational power towards a third party across both traditional and newly developed issue areas and through various policy mechanisms.

Third, it has been widely argued that the EU has sought to increase its normative influence on both ASEAN and the wider Asian region (see for example Allison 2015; Chaban et al. 2015; Pacheco Pardo 2009). Much literature on comparative regionalism and Europeanization points out that the EU is the only international player that systematically promotes regional integration around the world (Lenz 2013). In EU–ASEAN relations, the EU has long attempted to export EU-type norms to ASEAN, such as economic integration and institutionalization, as well as political issues such as human rights (see for example Allison 2015; Hopkins 2015;).

Because of its distinct normative position, ASEAN can make a valuable contribution to the study of the EU’s normative power. It can help overcome the top-down and unilateral approach in conventional normative power and norm-diffusion research, which privileges the role of norm-exporter and underestimates the important role of norm-recipient. Given its rising global status and its relatively symmetric relationship with the EU, ASEAN cannot merely be seen as a passive recipient of the EU’s norms. Instead, with its own strong normative position, ASEAN is more likely to play an active role in contesting these norms and shaping the norm-diffusion processes. Choosing ASEAN as the norm-recipient is therefore useful for exploring the complex causal paths in the norm diffusion processes and uncovering the limitations of the EU’s normative power projections.

The book will investigate the interregional relations and a wide range of cooperation instruments between the EU and ASEAN. The empirical analysis in this volume examines two embedded cases in EU–ASEAN relationship by focusing on two specific policy fields – namely trade and security – in order to scrutinize the processes of norm and policy diffusion between the EU and ASEAN. There are two primary reasons why this research focuses its empirical investigation on EU–ASEAN engagement in trade and security areas. Firstly, EU-ASEAN relations in trade and security are prioritized as embedded cases in this research partly because of the complex nature of these issue areas. In both policy domains, EU–ASEAN interactions have evolved into a wide range of dialogue platforms, institutionalized channels, and concrete policy instruments at multilateral and interregional levels. Moreover, trade and security issues are closely connected to other policy domains, such as development aid cooperation. They are therefore areas where different institutional actors and multiple norm diffusion items and mechanisms co-exist. Analyzing these two embedded cases increases the complexity and variations of empirical observation, providing an ideal analytical scenario for the researcher to develop a comprehensive and holistic view of NPE as well as norm and policy diffusion.

Secondly, trade and security have arguably been regarded as unconventional policy areas through which to study the EU’s normative power and norm diffusion, which leads this research to diverge from most existing research in the field. It is noteworthy that the majority of NPE literature tends to prioritize the diffusion of core EU norms (Manners 2002), especially a set of socio-political norms such as human rights, democracy, labor rights, and sustainable development. Hence, most empirical research looks into NPE and the EU’s norm diffusion by investigating how the EU promotes a single socio-political norm within a relatively narrow policy domain. Given the conventional definition of NPE based on socio-political norms, limited attention has been paid to the EU’s normative power projection and norm diffusion in areas that are more likely to be driven by self-interest and geostrategic considerations. An investigation of NPE and norm diffusion within the context of EU–ASEAN trade and security cooperation broadens the definition of NPE and allows exploration of the complex and dynamic interactions between norm-driven factors and interest-driven considerations in the EU’s foreign policy and power projection.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is structured as follow. The first section provides a literature review, depicting the academic debates on NPE, the research on EU norm and policy diffusion, and EU-ASEAN interregional relationship as well as their limitations. Building on a critical reflection on the existing literature, the second part of the chapter explains the objectives and contributions of this volume. The third section discusses the methodology of this research, which is followed by an explanation of the structure of this volume.

**Understanding the debate on Normative Power Europe and EU-ASEAN relationship**

*Normative Power Europe*

Initially introduced by Ian Manners in 2002, the concept of normative power has received tremendous scholarly attention within EU studies.[[1]](#footnote-1) The first decade of scholarship on normative power focused on the nature of the EU’s international identity as well as the normative foundations underlying its foreign policy agenda. These discussions, which have long been confined to the European context, are characterized by a strong European-exceptionalist perspective. An underlying assumption of much NPE literature is that the EU represents a new and unique type of international actor in world politics. To be specific: according to Manners, still the most important proponent of NPE, the concept of normative power Europe is defined as the ‘ability to shape conceptions of “normal” in international relations’ (Manners 2002: 239). Manners’ core assertion is that the EU distinguishes itself from other international actors because of its ‘normative power of an ideational nature characterized by common principles and a willingness to disregard Westphalian conventions’ (Manners 2002: 239). In fact, NPE shares a number of similarities with the concepts of civilian power (Duchêne 1972) and soft power (Nye 1990), both of which predated the NPE debate. While some scholarly discussions tend to conflate NPE with civilian power or soft power (see for example Hyde-price 2006; Nunes 2011), this book follows Manners and Diez’s (2007) vision which regards NPE, civilian power and soft power as separate concepts with different theoretical traditions.

According to Manners, the EU’s unique normative power derives from three sources: historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution (Whitman 2011). The combination of these three features, in the post-Cold War period, helped bring the common values of member states into a common framework and facilitated commitment to shared norms and principles at both supranational and national levels. These principles and values position the EU as a *sui generis* political entity in policy areas where the EU places a set of universal norms (e.g., peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights) at the center of its external relations with the rest of the world (Manners 2002; Whitman 2011). In the decade since Manners’s original article, many scholars have adopted his concept, both to inform empirical research and to stimulate critical interrogation of the normative basis of European integration and EU foreign policy (see for example Bicchi 2006; Demmelhuber and Kaunert 2014; Del Sarto 2016).

However, the early research on NPE has a number of shortcomings. First, most conventional NPE discussions are characterized by a European-exceptionalist perspective (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013), without sufficient engagement with the broader field of international relations or global studies. Therefore, traditional NPE research, which was deeply embedded in the European cognitive framework (Kavalski 2013), failed to address such questions as to what extent the EU’s normative power differs from the normative dimension that is part of the foreign policies of other international actors (Sjursen 2006), and whether the EU is the unique source of normative power in global politics. A number of scholars have problematized the *sui generis* logic of much NPE literature. For instance, Diez (2005) suggests that the NPE argument should be understood as a practice of constructing a particular European identity. It is further argued that the EU is not the first normative power in world politics, as a similar method of constructing the normative power discourse can be observed in other historical contexts, notably in the case of the US (Diez 2005) and China (Kavalski 2013).

Second, most conventional NPE scholars have largely failed to examine empirically the mechanisms and effectiveness of the EU’s normative power in relation to third parties, especially in relation to countries or regions beyond the immediate borders of the EU. This is partly because mainstream NPE theorists have paid more attention to conceptual and theoretical articulation than to empirical validation and operationalization of the concept (Birchfield 2011). Allison (2015) shares a similar view and argues that within the NPE literature there has been an excessive focus on what NPE is rather than its interactions with third parties and how the EU’s normative power affects them. In addition, most empirically oriented research on NPE is characterized by a top-down approach that sees the EU’s norm diffusion as a one-way process (see Chaban et al. 2015). While these analyses tended to privilege the EU’s normative power discourses and its norm exportation strategies, they largely failed to uncover the norm diffusion process, namely the causal paths of whether and how EU norms are transferred to the local contexts of the norm-recipients. As Manners pointed out in his recent article, it is important for NPE scholars to adopt the ‘micro-analysis’ of the NPA to develop both theoretical and empirical understanding of how the ‘mechanisms of normative power function through empirical analysis and theoretical reflection’ (Manners 2013: 321).

Based on these critical perspectives, the second generation of NPE research shifted focus from the EU’s international identity to the question of whether and how EU norms have been perceived by the wider world. A handful of researchers are paying increasing attention to how EU norms have been adopted, adapted, resisted, and rejected by external actors (Björkdahl et al. 2015; Chaban et al. 2015; Larsen 2014). Moreover, within the NPE debate, increased attention is being given to different categories of EU norms, which go beyond what Manners terms the ‘core norms’ of the EU. Specifically, a growing body of literature explores the EU’s market and economic norms (Damro 2012; Orbie and Khorana 2015) while aiming to unpack the dynamics between the interest-driven and normative elements underlying EU foreign policy. Other scholars seek to widen the NPE debate by including gender norms (Mos 2013), as well as security-related norms (Maier-Knapp 2016; Zwolski and Kaunert 2011). The latest wave of NPE research also seeks to examine the role different EU institutions can play in formulating the EU’s normative agenda in its foreign policy (Mckenzie and Meissner 2017), an aspect that was largely neglected by earlier generations of NPE study.

In sum, conventional NPE literature – notably the first decade of scholarship on NPE during –was largely confined to the specific context of EU studies and failed to address the European-exceptionalist problem inherent to the theoretical debate. These discussions were characterized by a top-down perspective, paying insufficient attention to exploring the causal paths of the EU’s norm diffusion processes and the impact of the EU’s normative power on world politics, as well as the role of norm recipients. Although a handful of NPE scholars have recently revisited the NPE debate and attempted to address these limitations,[[2]](#footnote-2) their discussions are fragmented along theoretical and functional lines. In order to better address the shortcomings of the existing literature, future NPE research requires not only a ‘decentering agenda’ of the EU (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013) and further engagement with the broader discipline of international relations; it also requires a more holistic and comprehensive approach that can better explore the causal paths of EU norm diffusion and the effects of NPE as well as the role of the norm-recipients.

*EU norm and policy diffusion*

In EU studies, the research on the EU’s norm and policy diffusion lies at the center of two distinct yet interrelated academic camps. The first group of scholars has developed a large volume of theoretically informed and empirically exhaustive literature investigating into the EU’s external influence in the context of enlargement and the Union’s neighborhood policy under the label of ‘Europeanization’ (see for example Buller and Gamble 2002; [Börzel](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Gu2E6HkAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra) and Risse 2012; Wallace 2000). A key line of inquiry in this scholarly literature is about how the EU has leveraged its impact on policy and institutional evolution of its neighboring and enlargement countries in various policy areas (Auel and Benz 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2020). Apart from analyzing the EU’s impact, the debate also examined the mechanisms through which the EU leverages its influence including material and ideational ones. While these discussions are relevant for this research, it is noteworthy that the relationship between the EU and its candidate or neighboring countries differs from the relationship between the EU and other far away regions such as ASEAN. For instance, Europeanisation process often entails the mechanism of legal imposition which is characterized by the ‘shadow of hierarchy’, which allows the EU to legally impose its institutions and policies on its candidate states ([Börzel](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Gu2E6HkAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra) and Risse 2012: 2). However, these dynamics are largely absent in the context analyzed in this research because the potential for accession to the EU is absent in the case of ASEAN. Furthermore, although Europeanisation literature also discussed other causal mechanisms of EU policy diffusion, such as positive incentives, socialization, and learning, it has been acknowledged that these approaches have been analyzed from a top-down perspective, ‘which tends to prejudge the EU as the main source of domestic change’ (Bulmer and Burch 2005:845). As [Börzel](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Gu2E6HkAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra) and Risse (2012: 2) rightly pointed out, the further we shift away from the EU and its immediate neighboring regions, the less it makes sense to analyze the diffusion of EU policies and institutions through the lens of Europeanisation.

The second group of literature investigating the EU’s policy diffusion entails the ‘regulatory power’ (Young 2015) and ‘market power’ (Damro 2012) debates. The market power debate has primarily focused on analyzing the union’s ability to diffuse its economic and market-related policies and regulatory measures in relation to external actors (Damro 2012). Similarly, the regulatory power debate examines the EU’s ability and mechanisms to influence the regulations of other states as a result of the union’s large market and sophisticated regulatory capability (Young 2015). Although these scholarly discussions did not explicitly mention the term of diffusion, both ‘market power’ and ‘regulatory power’ debates have paid a particular attention to the EU’s capability to influence external actors by diffusing or transferring its market-related policies and regulatory measures. However, whilst these debates may be relevant to the study of EU norm diffusion in relation to ASEAN, a number of factors limit their applicability in the context of this book. First, while market and regulatory power literature focuses mainly on the EU’s transfer of market-related policies and regulations, it pays insufficient attention to the diffusion of norms and ideational factors. Second, the concepts of market power and regulatory power failed to develop a detailed framework which can unpack the mechanisms underlying the EU’s policy diffusion. Third, similar to the Europeanization literature, this body of literature is also characterized by a salient top-down perspective which regards diffusion as a one-way process.

*EU–ASEAN interregional relationship*

Over the past few decades, there has been a large volume of literature focusing on the EU–ASEAN interregional relations, reflecting the longstanding relationship between the two organizations. Early academic literature on this topic tends to be descriptive and relatively atheoretical, with a particular focus on economic and trade cooperation (Bonet 1998; Chia and Tan 1997; Kerr et al. 1999). For example, some early researchers on EU–ASEAN relationships tended to adopt a descriptive approach by tracing the evolution or historical trajectories of interregional cooperation (Bonet 1998; Rüland 2001), whereas others focused primarily on the specific dimension of economic and commercial relations between the two blocs (Kerr et al. 1999). In addition, there was a consensus among these early scholars that the EU–ASEAN interregional relationship was primarily based on economic and commercial interests of a donor-recipient character (Rüland 2001).

Recent attempts to analyze the evolution of EU–ASEAN relations across different issue areas include political-security cooperation (Wong 2019; Yeo 2017;), dialogues through multilateral forums such as Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Manea 2008; Weber 2013), interregional interactions regarding regional institutional designs (Jetschke and Murray 2012), non-traditional cooperation (Maier-Knapp 2016), and dialogues on social issues (Cuyvers 2014).

A number of scholars explicitly or implicitly link the NPE debate and norm diffusion with EU–ASEAN relations. For instance, Allison (2015) provided a meticulous analysis of the EU’s diffusion of regional integration norms towards ASEAN with a particular focus on economic integration, human rights, and institutionalization. The key objective of her research was to determine the EU’s actorness as a consequence of its promotion of regionalism to ASEAN as well as to broaden the existing research agenda concerning EU norm diffusion. Specifically, Allison utilized the norm diffusion framework presented by the NPE literature to examine the EU’s norm entrepreneur role and the framework of localization introduced by Acharya to evaluate the role of ASEAN as a norm recipient. In doing so, she argued that the views of EU’s external interlocutors and the impact the EU has externally must be incorporated into studies of EU actorness. Moreover, she pointed out that the EU’s actorness is not consistent across a range of policy areas in terms of the EU’s promotion of regionalism (Allison 2015).

In a similar vein, some other studies also examined the EU’s promotion of regionalism norms to ASEAN, with a strong emphasis on the union’s diffusion of institutional design in relation to ASEAN (Jetschke and Murray 2012; Lenz 2013). For instance, in their article which examined the EU’s diffusion of integration in Southeast Asia, Jetschke and Murray (2012) argued that ASEAN members have begun to adopt EU-style institutions, namely the EU’s Committee of Permanent Representatives and economic integration processes as a result of both lesson-drawing and emulation mechanisms. Nevertheless, this has not generated a comprehensive copying of EU institutions by ASEAN. Instead, ASEAN members have selectively adopted EU models in line with their own cognitive priors (Jetschke and Murray 2012)

Additionally, some recent studies on EU norm diffusion towards ASEAN has started paying a particular attention to the role that the norm-recipients can play in impacting the EU’s power project or norm promotion. Specifically, Murray (2015) correctly pointed out the problem of the ‘forth wall’ EU-ASEAN norms promotions. She examined how the EU sought to have an international impact in its promotion of regionalism to ASEAN and argued that there was a necessity to better understand the reaction and perceptions of the norm recipient. Her analysis demonstrated a relatively skeptical view on the EU’s ability to diffuse its norms to ASEAN as the EU did not connect effectively with its ASEAN audiences regarding the union’s non-economic scripts and agenda (Murray 2015:249).

Nevertheless, a number of limitations can be identified in these studies. Despite the increased attention to ASEAN’s external perception of the EU’s norm projection (see Allison 2015; Murray 2015), most of these studies are still largely confined to a top-down perspective. That is, most studies of EU–ASEAN interregionalism have been embedded in the debate about how the EU can serve as a model for regionalism (Murray 2015). Such research assumes that the EU is the primary driving force for this interregional relationship, reducing ASEAN’s role to that of recipient or follower of EU norms. Another potential shortcoming of these studies is that they do not seek to investigate how norm diffusion works beyond traditional areas such as economic integration, institutional design, and political values with a particular focus on political norms such as human rights. There has been scant investigation of how the EU has projected its normative power in specific policy areas in the context of EU–ASEAN relations. And there is an absence of issue-centered research focusing on the EU’s norm diffusion towards ASEAN in areas such as trade, development aid and security. Additionally, although these studies discussed some of the EU’s diffusion mechanisms, they did not offer a systemic evaluation of both sender-driven and recipient-driven diffusion mechanisms. For example, while Allison’s (2015) work draws on Manners’ top-down definitions of diffusion mechanisms, Jetschke and Murray (2012) only examined two indirect mechanisms, namely lesson-drawing and emulation, in their study.

In short, theoretically informed empirical research into the EU’s normative power in ASEAN is still limited and has not taken into full consideration new developments in EU–ASEAN interregional relations over the past decade. There has been insufficient discussion of the causal mechanisms and effectiveness of the EU norm diffusion process and limited investigation into the material and ideational conditions within ASEAN that facilitate or constrain this process. Therefore, this book, which takes an issue-centered approach to evaluating EU norm diffusion towards ASEAN, has special significance, because it adds empirical material on the existing NPE and EU–ASEAN interregionalism debate. It also adds theoretical richness to the literature by carefully examining the role ASEAN can play in shaping the EU’s normative power projection process.

**Objectives and contributions**

The primary goal of this book is to investigate the following research questions: firstly, is the EU and effective normative power in relation to ASEAN, and why? Secondly, under what conditions can the EU be considered an effective normative power in relation to ASEEAN?

This research makes two essential theoretical contributions to the literature of NPE. Firstly, by critically revising the NPE concept through the lens of diffusion theory, this book advances the literature of NPE by detaching the concept from the Eurocentric context. Conventional NPE literature has largely been trapped in the Euro-centric cognitive framework. This volume, on the other hand, draws on the latest theoretical developments of the study of normative power in order to develop a revised framework for assessing the criteria of normative power. This revised framework will facilitate the expansion of the concept to encompass the broader context of international relations.

Secondly, the book also advances the literature of NPE from a methodological perspective. The existing analytical framework has several limitations. Most scholars continue to draw on traditional NPE analytical tools, which can hardly be used to analyze the recipient’s role in the norm diffusion process. Moreover, there is a lack of discussion of the impact and effectiveness of normative power in conventional NPE literature. This is because traditional NPE discussions have paid more attention to conceptual articulation than to empirical validation and operationalization of the concept (Birchfield 2011). As a result, NPE’s existing methodological tools have largely failed to uncover the causal inferences of the norm diffusion processes (Lenz 2013; Allison 2015). This book addresses these shortcomings by adopting two strategies. The first strategy is to establish the theoretical and epistemological standpoint of the research. This research will engage in the theoretical and empirical development of the NPE from what Manners (2013) terms the ‘micro-approach’ perspective, which adopts a positivist epistemological perspective and focuses on the conceptualization of normative power as a form of power in contrast to a characterization of actor/international identity or normative theory. The second strategy is to incorporate diffusion theory into this research. Diffusion theory enables the establishment of a more sophisticated analytical framework. This helps to overcome the methodological limitations of NPE and facilitates the exploration of the complex norm diffusion processes and interactions between the norm-sender and the norm-recipient.

The book also makes an empirical contribution to the growing scholarly literature on EU-ASEAN interregional relationship. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is noteworthy that most existing research on EU–ASEAN relations has focused either on the EU’s promotion of regionalism norms towards ASEAN or on the evolution of EU–ASEAN interregional cooperation from an atheoretical perspective. The book is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive issue-oriented analysis of the EU’s norm and policy diffusion in relation to ASEAN from a comparative perspective, while taking into account the most recent geopolitical dynamics and policy issues in this interregional relationship.

**Methodology**

A substantial part of this book is based on primary data collected from elite interviews, official documents, and news coverage. Interviewing was employed as the main primary data collection method. Specifically, interviewees in this research were former and current officials, specialists, and academics from the EU and ASEAN who have been directly involved in EU–ASEAN relations. European interviewees included officials and diplomats from different EU institutions directly shaping the EU’s trade and security policies towards ASEAN. These EU institutions include DG Trade and DG Devco in the European Commission, the cabinet of the HRVP, European Union External Action, the European Parliament, the EU’s mission to ASEAN, the EU’s delegations to Indonesia and Singapore, as well as think tank experts and scholars providing consultation to or working closely on EU–ASEAN relations. On ASEAN side, interviewees included officials from ASEAN (and its Member States), embassies in Brussels and the ASEAN Secretariat, as well as policy experts and scholars specializing in EU–ASEAN relations.

Interviews were conducted in Brussels and Southeast Asia over a period of five months including the first-round interview (February–April 2017 in Brussels) which aimed to reveal the EU’s foreign policy objectives and normative goals towards ASEAN, and the second-round interview (July–September 2017) to establish whether the EU’s norm promotion efforts had been adopted or rejected by ASEAN. The interviews were facilitated by the author’s visiting fellowships in the European Institute for Asian Studies in Brussels and the EU Centre in Singapore. In order to obtain additional information, follow-up interviews were conducted in Brussels in April 2018 and May–June 2019. A total of 56 interviews were conducted in this research.

The interviews were conducted using the semi-structured method. This method has two advantages when attempting to uncover causal mechanisms. First, it is a flexible way of conducting interviews, allowing new questions to be asked in the light of the responses of the interviewees. It thus facilitates a deeper exploration of the research topic (Blee and Taylor 2002). Second, semi-structured interviews facilitate the gaining of knowledge of the experience and interpretation of reality from the perspective of the people directly involved in the topic under investigation. This method also allows the interviewer to design specific questions according to the interviewees’ expertise and compare answers to similar questions given by other interviewees. In order to increase the success rate of interviews and encourage in-depth conversation, anonymity was guaranteed upon request. The interviews were not recorded; handwritten notes were taken instead. With these protections, interviewees were more willing to discuss sensitive topics.

Other primary data included official documents such as statements, declarations, speeches, and official press releases issued by the EU and ASEAN institutions. Most of these documents can be accessed through official websites and publications of relevant departments. Primary sources also included media reports, as well as internal documents such as internal reports of relevant authorities and the proceedings and joint communications of various EU–ASEAN meetings. These primary materials were carefully evaluated and explored using qualitative textual analysis. Where possible, different sources of evidence were employed to analyze the key events scrutinized in this research. Cross-examination of key events and different categories of data were implemented in order to reduce the possibility of bias that relying on a single source can lead to. Therefore, triangulation of multiple sources of data was carried out whenever possible in this study.

**Structure of the book**

After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 offers a theoretical framework for the discussion throughout this volume. The key concepts, including normative power and norm diffusion, are addressed in this chapter. It reviews available literature and forms a revised theoretical framework by combining NPE and diffusion theory.

While Chapter 2 focuses on the general conceptual and analytical framework of the book, chapter 3 discusses the historical evolution of the EU–ASEAN relationship from the early 1970s to the present. It sets out the historical and empirical context, which facilitates the understanding of the EU’s changing strategy towards ASEAN as well as towards the wider Asia-Pacific region. It also shows how newly developed global and regional dynamics have contributed to reconstructing and reshaping EU–ASEAN interregional dialogue over the past decade.

Chapter 4 studies the EU’s normative power projection in the context of the EU–ASEAN trade relationship. Given the fact that economic and trade relations constitute the most significant pillar of the EU–ASEAN relationship, the EU has developed a relatively mature trade policy agenda towards ASEAN, which is in line with the EU’s wider international trade policy. This chapter investigates the nature of EU policy goals in its trade relations with ASEAN and explores the substance of the norms promoted by the EU through different policy mechanisms. More importantly, the chapter evaluates the effectiveness of EU norm diffusion, before unpacking the diffusion mechanisms and other intervening factors shaping the EU’s normative power projection in EU–ASEAN trade cooperation. A case study on the issue area of trade— the EU’s most powerful policy instrument—is useful to reveal whether the EU can be considered a normative power in relation to ASEAN.

Chapter 5 focuses on a relatively new issue area of EU–ASEAN relations: security cooperation. Given the EU’s increasingly proactive security approach towards Asia in the past decade, the area of security cooperation merits greater scholarly attention. This chapter investigates the types of EU security policy towards ASEAN, and the substance of the EU’s diffusion items in security-related policy areas, followed by an analysis of the effectiveness of EU norm diffusion. Similar to Chapter 4, this chapter further evaluates the norm diffusion process, especially the direct and indirect diffusion mechanisms contributing to this process. Finally, the chapter analyzes whether the EU can be seen as a normative power in the context of EU–ASEAN security relations by examining ASEAN’s local contexts and a number of intervening factors.

Chapter 6 provides an in-depth discussion on the research findings and key arguments drawing from a cross-case comparative analyses of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. This chapter aims at linking the empirical investigations in both cases to the theoretical assumptions. It compares and contrasts the research findings in the two empirical cases, which not only helps assess the explanatory power of the theoretical framework but also explores the reasons for variations between the two cases. Finally, Chapter 7 draws conclusions of this volume, reflecting on the theoretical and empirical contributions of the book, as well as on the future research agenda.

**Bibliography:**

Acharya, A. (2004). How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism. International organization. 58(2), pp.239-275.

Allison, L. (2015). The EU, ASEAN and interregionalism: regionalism support and norm diffusion between the EU and ASEAN. Springer.

Auel, K., and Benz, A. (2005). The politics of adaptation: The Europeanisation of national parliamentary systems. The Journal of Legislative Studies, 11(3), pp.372-393.

Ba, A. (2014). Institutional divergence and convergence in the Asia-Pacific? ASEAN in practice and in theory. Cambridge Review of International Affairs. 27(2), pp.295-318.

Bicchi, F. (2006). Our size fits all: Normative Power Europe and the Mediterranean. Journal of European public policy. 13(2), pp.286-303.

Birchfield, V. (2013). A normative power Europe framework of transnational policy formation. Journal of European Public Policy. 20(6), pp.907-922.

Birchfield, V. L. (2011). The EU’s development policy: empirical evidence of ‘normative power Europe? In Whitman, RG. (ed.) Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.141-160.

Björkdahl, A., Chaban, N., Leslie, J., and Masselot, A. (eds.). (2015). Importing EU norms: conceptual framework and empirical findings. Switzerland: Springer.

Blee, K.M. and Taylor, V. (2002) Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research. In Klandermans, B. and Staggenborg, S. (Eds). Methods of Social Movement Research. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.92-117.

Bonet, M. (1998). EU-ASEAN Relations. In Cosgrove-Sacks, C. (ed). The European Union and Developing Countries: The Challenges of Globalization. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 254-267.

Börzel, TA., and Risse,T. (2012). When Europeanisation meets diffusion: Exploring new territory. West European Politics. 35(1), pp.192-207.

Buller, J. and Gamble, A. (2002). Conceptualising Europeanisation. Public policy and administration.17(2), pp.4-24.

Bulmer, S. and Burch, M. (2005). The Europeanization of UK Government: from Quiet Revolution to Explicit Step‐Change?. Public Administration. 83(4), pp.861-890.

Chaban, N., Masselot, A., and Vadura, K. (2015). Introduction. Asia-Europe dialogue on norms: revisiting the role of norm-receivers in the conceptualisation of the ‘normative power Europe’. Asia Europe Journal. 13, pp.233-239.

Chia, S. Y. and Tan, L. H. (eds.). (1997). ASEAN & EU: Forging New Linkages and Strategic Alliances. Institute of Southeast Asian.

Cuyvers, L. (2014). The sustainable development clauses in free trade agreements of the EU with Asian countries: perspectives for ASEAN?. Journal of Contemporary European Studies. 22(4), pp.427-449.

Damro, C. (2012). Market power Europe. Journal of European Public Policy. 19(5), pp.682-699.

De Zutter, E. (2010). Normative power spotting: an ontological and methodological appraisal. Journal of European public policy. 17(8), pp.1106-1127.

Del Sarto, R. A. (2016). Normative empire Europe: The European Union, its borderlands, and the ‘Arab spring’. JCMS: journal of common market studies. 54(2), pp.215-232.

Demmelhuber, T. and Kaunert, C. (2014). The EU and the Gulf monarchies: normative power Europe in search of a strategy for engagement. Cambridge Review of International Affairs. 27(3), pp.574-592.

Diez, T. (2005). Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering Normative Power Europe. Millennium. 33 (3), pp.613-636.

Duchêne, F. (1972). Europe’s Role in World Peace. In R. Mayne (ed.) Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead. London: Fontana.

EEAS. (2020). EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Available at: <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fact-sheet-eu-asean-strategic-partnership.pdf>

Haacke, J. (2002). ASEAN's diplomatic and security culture: origins, development and prospects. London: Routledge.

Hopkins, W. J. (2015). Falling on stony ground: ASEAN’s acceptance of EU constitutional norms. Asia Europe Journal. 13(3), pp.275-283.

Kavalski, E. (2013). The struggle for recognition of normative powers: Normative power Europe and normative power China in context. Cooperation and Conflict. 48(2), pp.247-267.

Larsen, H. (2014). The EU as a normative power and the research on external perceptions: The missing link. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies. 52(4), pp.896-910.

Lenz, T. (2013). EU normative power and regionalism: Ideational diffusion and its limits. Cooperation and Conflict. 48(2), pp.211-228.

Mahbubani, K., & Sng, J. (2017). The ASEAN miracle: A catalyst for peace. Singapore: NUS Press.

Maier-Knapp, N. (2016). The non-traditional security concept and the EU-ASEAN relationship against the backdrop of China's rise. The Pacific Review. 29(3), PP.411-430.

Manea, M. G. (2008). Human rights and the interregional dialogue between Asia and Europe: ASEAN–EU relations and ASEM. Pacific Review. 21(3), pp.369-396.

Manners, I. (2002). Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?. JCMS: Journal of common market studies. 40(2), pp.235-258.

Manners, I. (2013). Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics. Cooperation and Conflict. 48(2), pp.304-329.

Manners, I., and Diez, T. (2007). Reflecting on Normative Power Europe. In Berenskoetter, F. and Williams, M.J. (Eds). Power in World Politics. London: Routledge.

Mckenzie, L., and Meissner, K. L. (2017). Human rights conditionality in European Union trade negotiations: The case of the EU–Singapore FTA. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies. 55(4), pp.832-849.

Mos, M. (2013). Conflicted normative power Europe: The European Union and sexual minority rights. Journal of Contemporary European Research. 9(1), pp.78-93.

Murray, P. (2015). Europe and the world: The problem of the fourth wall in EU-ASEAN norms promotion. Journal of Contemporary European Studies. 23(2), pp.238-252.

Narine, S. (2008). Forty years of ASEAN: a historical review. The Pacific Review. 21(4), pp.411-429.

Nunes, I. F. (2011). Civilian, normative, and ethical power Europe: Role claims and EU Discourses. European Foreign Affairs Review. 16(1), pp.1-20.

Nuttin, X. (2017). The Future of EU-ASEAN Relations. European Parliament Think Tank. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO\_STU(2017)578043](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU%282017%29578043)

Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft power. Foreign policy. (80), pp.153-171.

Onar, N. F., and Nicolaïdis, K. (2013). The Decentring Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power. Cooperation and conflict. 48(2), pp.283-303.

Orbie, J. and Khorana, S. (2015). Normative versus market power Europe? The EU-India trade agreement. Asia Europe Journal. 13, pp.253-264.

Pacheco Pardo, R. (2009). The political weakness of the EU in East Asia: a constructivist approach. Asia Europe Journal, 7, pp.265-280.

Rüland, J. (2001). ASEAN and the European Union: A Bumpy Inter-regional Relationship. ZEI Discussion Paper, Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung, Universität Bonn, C95.

Santander, S. (2005). The European partnership with Mercosur: A relationship based on strategic and neo–liberal principles. European Integration. 27(3), pp.285-306.

Schimmelfennig, F. and Sedelmeier, U. (2020). The Europeanization of Eastern Europe: the external incentives model revisited. Journal of European public policy. 27(6), pp.814-833.

Sicurelli, D. (2020). External conditions for EU normative power through trade. The case of CEPA negotiations with Indonesia. Asia Europe Journal. 18(1), pp.57-73.

Sjursen, H. (2006). The EU as a normative power: how can this be?. Journal of European public policy. 13(2), pp.235-251.

Söderbaum, F. and Van Langenhove, L. (2005). Introduction: The EU as a global actor and the role of interregionalism. European Integration. 27(3), pp.249-262.

Wagnsson, C. and Hellman, M. (2018). Normative power Europe caving in? EU under pressure of Russian information warfare. JCMS: Journal of common market studies. 56(5), pp.1161-1177.

Wallace, H. (2000). Europeanisation and globalisation: complementary or contradictory trends?. New political economy. 5(3), pp.369-382.

Weber, K. (2013). The ASEAN regional forum and the EU’s role in promoting security in the Asia-Pacific. In Christiansen, T., Kirchner, E. J., & Murray, P. (Eds.). The Palgrave handbook of EU-Asia relations. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitman, R. (2011). Normative power Europe: Empirical and theoretical perspectives. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wong, R. (2019). The European Union’s security strategy in the ASEAN region. In Song, W., and Wang, J. (eds). The European Union in the Asia-Pacific. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Yeo, L.H. (2017). EU-ASEAN security cooperation. In Economides, S., & Sperling, J. (Eds.). (2017). EU security strategies: extending the EU system of security governance. London: Routledge.

Yeo, LH. (2008) EU-ASEAN Relations and Policy-Learning. In Balme, R. and Bridges, B. (eds). Europe-ASEAN Relations. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yeung, M. T., Perdikis, N. and Kerr, W. A. (1999). Regional trading blocs in the global economy: The EU and ASEAN. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Young, A. R. (2015). Liberalizing trade, not exporting rules: the limits to regulatory co-ordination in the EU's ‘new generation’ preferential trade agreements. Journal of European Public Policy. 22(9), pp.1253-1275.

Zwolski, K. and Kaunert, C. (2011). The EU and climate security: a case of successful norm entrepreneurship?. European security. 20(1), pp.21-43.

1. A detailed review and discussion on the concept of NPE will be provided in Chapter 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See discussions within the two special issues on Normative Power Europe: *Cooperation and Conflict* June (2013), 48(2); *Asia Europe Journal* September (2015), 13 (3). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)