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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Normativity in practice: Ordering through enactment, learning, and contestation in global protests

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Abstract
Normative conflict is at the centre of many current discussions about order and change in world politics. In this article, we argue that studying normativity in practice is necessary when analysing processes of global ordering, such as negotiating, cooperating, or protesting. Practices are imbued with normativity. This key aspect, however, remains often overlooked in current International Relations (IR) practice research due to a conservative bias that treats practices mainly as patterned. Focusing on normativity reveals the inherent contestation of practices, providing a conceptual avenue for understanding how international practices oscillate between social order and change. Normativity can be defined as evaluating criteria experienced in practice and used for the contextualised moral judgement of public performances. This perspective is relevant for IR scholars interested in how relational, contested, and learning processes relate to order and ordering in world politics. We propose taking a comprehensive approach hereto based on three key dimensions: how normativity is enacted and disputed in practice; how it must be learnt as practical knowledge in communities; and, how ambiguity remains due to the multiplicity of rules applied in everyday situations. We illustrate our approach by examining global protests in different fields (sports, the environment, and peace).

Keywords: global protests; international practices; normativity; ordering; pragmatism

Introduction

Normative conflict is at the centre of many current discussions about order and change in world politics. A growing body of literature in International Relations (IR) examines, among other things, the erosion of the liberal international order,[1] the legacies of a colonial world order,[2] and the rise of authoritarian and nationalist visions of world order.[3] These developments have been increasingly marked by criticism and politicisation from civil society.[4] Indeed, the past 15 years have witnessed a proliferation of protests, many of which have focused on political failures as well as civil rights

[1]See, e.g., Amitav Acharya, *Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[2]See, e.g., Babatunde Obamamoye, 'When neo-Gramscians engage the postcolonial: Insights into subaltern consent and dissent in the re/unmaking of hegemonic orders', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 48:2 (2023), pp. 115–32.

[3]See, e.g., Rita Abrahamsen, Jean-François Drolet, Alexandra Gheciu, et al., 'Confronting the international political sociology of the New Right', *International Political Sociology*, 14:1 (2020), pp. 94–107.

[4]Jacqueline Best and Alexandra Gheciu (eds), *The Return of the Public in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

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and global justice.[5] Order and change are becoming increasingly shaped by conflicts over values beyond the realm of state-centred international relations and multilateral diplomacy.[6] These developments not only call into question our current understanding of 'order' as a set of international rules and institutions[7] but also demonstrate how normative conflict and order – or more precisely 'ordering', as encompassing all these dynamic processes of establishing, maintaining, and questioning order – are inextricably intertwined. In this article, then, we propose to study normativity in practice, a promising way of approaching the relationship between conflict and order – one driven by practices, as intermediaries of change bound to social context.

Protests are a particular illustrative example of normativity in practice and its role as regards global ordering. Such episodes connect the traditionally state-centred level of world politics to the everyday lives of ordinary people. They also demonstrate that conflicts over normative issues are shaped by transnational practices, in travelling between global and local contexts and drawing on competing ideological premises, ranging from cosmopolitanism to far-right thought. Take the example of kneeling during the national anthem, initiated by American football player Colin Kaepernick in 2016. Many athletes around the world have since adopted this practice as a way to highlight continued racism in sport, thereby interpreting their professional role in a more public and political sense. Protests also make the performative effects of normativity apparent in public contexts.[8] Environmental groups such as Just Stop Oil block roads by having members glue themselves to the tarmac; female protesters in Iran cut their hair as an act of political emancipation. These protests serve to call into question existing normative standards, with a multiplicity of bodies, places, social relations, and grievances involved. At the same time, protest is not confined to seeking only change. Protests frequently arise to maintain an existing order too, as evidenced by anti-racism or environmental protests. Such practices are often based on historical experiences and practical knowledge of 'doing protest' drawn from around the globe, even though new presenting circumstances require their adaptation.[9] Protests thus are lived normativity in practice.

In this article, we propose to understand global order as an inherently normative social arrangement which exists in constant flux rather than as an ontologically stable entity. In detailing this, we follow recent research[10] problematising the prevailing understanding of 'order' by emphasising instead the phenomenon's contested nature and the need to move beyond its conceptualisation 'as a factual condition that either exists or doesn't'.[11] This shift in perspective allows many different forms of ordering – establishing and maintaining but also changing and questioning – in currency to be better recognised. Practices are key here, because they are widely understood as intermediaries between order and change.[12] Analysing normativity in practice is, then, to highlight how

[5]Isabel Ortiz, Sara Burke, Mohamed Berrada, and Hernán Saenz Cortés, *World Protests: A Study of Key Protest Issues in the 21st Century* (Cham: Palgrave, 2021), p. 15.

[6]Vincent Pouliot and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Global Policymaking: The Patchwork of Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson, and Anders Uhlin (eds), *Legitimation and Delegitimation in Global Governance: Practices, Justifications, and Audiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[7]We thank one of the reviewers for highlighting this point.

[8]Donatella della Porta, 'Protests as critical junctures: Some reflections towards a momentous approach to social movements', *Social Movement Studies*, 19:5–6 (2020), pp. 556–75 (p. 564).

[9]Ivan Krastev, *Democracy Disrupted: The Politics of Global Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 9.

[10]See, e.g., Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Ian Hurd, 'The science of world order', *International Politics* (2024), available at: {https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-024-00579-4}; Antje Wiener, *Constitution and Contestation of Norms in Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[11]Hurd, 'The science of world order', p. 2.

[12]Rebecca Adler-Nissen, 'Towards a practice turn in EU Studies: The everyday of European integration', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54:1 (2016), pp. 87–103; Christian Bueger and Timothy Edmunds, 'Pragmatic ordering: Informality, experimentation, and the maritime security agenda', *Review of International Studies*, 47:2 (2021), pp. 171–91; Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning practice to the linguistic turn: The case of diplomacy', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31:3 (2002), pp. 627–51.

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these ordering processes are not only bound to normative judgements and contexts but also take place at the level of people's daily worlds. There are three key dimensions hereto: how normativity is enacted and disputed in practice; how it must be learnt as practical knowledge in communities; and how ambiguity remains due to the multiplicity of rules applied in everyday situations.

We define normativity as evaluating criteria experienced in practice and used for the contextualised moral judgement of public performances.[13] Our definition emphasises normativity's relational nature. The question of what is inappropriate, morally wrong, or unjust cannot be answered universally. Rather, it is a matter which must be considered in the context of the situation at hand, on the basis of the actors involved and with a nod to any analogies and references to broader normative inventories potentially drawn.[14] Actors can confirm or contest normative meaning, making it key to processes of social ordering.[15] By confirming the evaluating criteria for moral judgement, social orders become stabilised as normativity is imbued in their sediment. Critique and contestation of such judgements enable social change, underlining the dynamics of ordering.[16] This definition of normativity feeds into IR's widely accepted definition of norms as 'shared understandings of appropriateness'[17] and of practices as 'socially meaningful patterns of action',[18] respectively. Yet our outlook hereon neither shares the emphasis on the former's fixed meanings nor that on the latter's routines and patterns. Instead, situated judgment of rules and actions rather than patterned or regular performance defines normativity and makes it constitutive of practices.

Explaining order and change is a key concern for practice researchers in IR.[19] A tendency to study them as routines and patterns of action – namely, due to a 'conservative bias'[20] – has, however, frequently led many to prioritise stability over change.[21] Only recently have researchers begun to turn to normativity in their analysis of international practices.[22] According to these observers, normativity has the potential to bring questions of moral ambiguity and contestation to the fore instead. This is in line with earlier concerns, as stressed for instance by Raymond D. Duvall and

[13]Our definition of normativity resembles those developed by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Joseph Rouse, 'Practice theory', in Stephen P. Turner and Mark W. Risjord (eds), *Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), pp. 637–81; Theodore R. Schatzki, *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14]See Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification* for such a plural understanding of normative orders in social life. See also Frank Gadinger, 'On justification and critique: Luc Boltanski's pragmatic sociology and international relations', *International Political Sociology*, 10:3 (2016), pp. 187–205.

[15]See Rouse, 'Practice theory', p. 673.

[16]Robin Celikates, 'From critical social theory to a social theory of critique: On the critique of ideology after the pragmatic turn', *Constellations*, 13:1 (2006), pp. 21–40.

[17]Björkdahl, Annika, 'Norms in international relations: Some conceptual and methodological reflections', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 15:1 (2002), pp. 9–23 (p. 21).

[18]Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 6.

[19]Ted Hopf, 'Change in international practices', *European Journal of International Relations*, 24:3 (2018), pp. 687–711; Neumann, 'Returning practice'; Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille, 'Change in and through practice: Pierre Bourdieu, Vincent Pouliot, and the end of the Cold War', *International Theory*, 7:2 (2015), pp. 330–59.

[20]Jorg Kustermans, 'Parsing the practice turn: Practice, practical knowledge, practices', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 44:2 (2016), pp. 175–96 (p. 193).

[21]Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*.

[22]Frank Gadinger, 'The normativity of international practices', in Alena Drieschova, Christian Bueger, and Ted Hopf (eds), *Conceptualizing International Practices: Directions for the Practice Turn in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 100–21; Maren Hofius, 'Community at the border or the boundaries of community? The case of EU field diplomats', *Review of International Studies*, 42:5 (2016), pp. 939–67; Jorg Kustermans, 'On the ethical significance of social practices', *Global Constitutionalism*, 9:1 (2020), pp. 199–211; Max Lesch and Dylan M. H. Loh, 'Field overlaps, normativity, and the contestation of practices in China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2:4 (2022), pp. 1–12; Holger Niemann, *The Justification of Responsibility in the UN Security Council: Practices of Normative Ordering* (London: Routledge, 2019); Jason Ralph and Jess Gifkins, 'The purpose of United Nations Security Council practice: Contesting competence claims in the normative context created by the Responsibility to Protect', *European Journal of International Relations*, 23:3 (2017), pp. 630–53; Dennis Schmidt and John Williams, 'The normativity of global ordering practices', *International Studies Quarterly*, 67:2 (2023), pp. 1–13.

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Arjun Chowdhury,[23] about the static view of practices. They argued that a focus on pattern and regularity 'can obscure both the social processes that generate change and the inherent instability of practices themselves'.[24] In a separate discussion, IR scholars who follow different variants of pragmatism, constructivism, and international political theory make similar claims when discussing the philosophical foundations of practices, ordering, and rule following.[25]

Instead of simply treating practices as carriers of routinised and uncontested normative meaning, our approach emphasises that the latter can never be fixed – only partially stabilised in and through the everyday. Partial stabilisation not only allows us to study processes of ordering; it also demonstrates that the strict separation of practices and norms into ontologically different categories does not hold. Given the idea of theorising itself being practice and empirical research being impossible to decouple from ongoing conceptual refinement,[26] our approach furthermore confronts researchers with the need to reflect on their own normative stances here.[27] Such a perspective, one grounded in philosophical reflection and empirical investigation alike,[28] encourages scholars to critically evaluate their normative stance and to consider the contested nature of practices equally an empirical and conceptual matter.

This comprehensive approach to these issues is of key relevance for a number of IR fields. For scholars of the discipline interested in world order, politicisation, and contestation, we demonstrate the benefits of studying conflicts, practices, and protests as cases of global ordering. A concept is presented which enables researchers to make the shift towards examining the fragility and ambiguity of practices. Furthermore, we underline the advantages of engaging with international political theory and pragmatism. For those scrutinising protests specifically, we illustrate the value of using practice-theoretical approaches in their studies. In addition, our comprehensive approach also provides IR scholars more broadly with an apposite framework and methodology for studying normativity in practice.

We begin with a discussion of how normativity has been addressed so far, namely by international theorists and practice-oriented researchers. The next section then outlines in detail our proposed approach to studying normativity in practice, as drawing on these scholars' shared background in sociology, practice theory, social philosophy,[29] and practice-oriented empirical IR work. Attention turns hereafter to global protests in the fields of sports, the environment, and peace to

[23]Raymond Duvall and Arjun Chowdhury, 'Practices of theory', in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 335–54.

[24]Duvall and Chowdhury, 'Practices of theory', p. 337.

[25]Gunther Hellmann and Jens Steffek (eds), *Praxis as a Perspective on International Politics* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022); Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Praxis: On Acting and Knowing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Silviya Lechner and Mervyn Frost, *Practice Theory and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Simon F. Pratt and Sebastian Schmidt, 'Pragmatism in IR: The prospects for substantive theorizing', *International Studies Review*, 23:4 (2021), pp. 1933–58; Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'On acting and knowing: How pragmatism can advance International Relations research and methodology', *International Organization*, 63:4 (2009), pp. 701–31.

[26]Andreas Grimmel and Gunther Hellmann, 'Theory must not go on holiday: Wittgenstein, the pragmatists, and the idea of social science', *International Political Sociology*, 13:2 (2019), pp. 198–214.

[27]Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille, 'How can we criticize international practices?', *International Studies Quarterly*, 63:4 (2019), pp. 1014–24; Schmidt and Williams, 'The normativity of global ordering practices'; Nora Stappert, 'The art of aiming at a moving target: A critique of Lechner and Frost's practice theory and International Relations', *Global Constitutionalism*, 9:1 (2020), pp. 183–98; Lauren Wilcox, 'Practising gender, queering theory', *Review of International Studies*, 43:5 (2017), pp. 789–808.

[28]See also Brooke Ackerly, Luis Cabrera, Fonna Forman, et al., 'Unearthing grounded normative theory: Practices and commitments of empirical research in political theory', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 27:2 (2024), pp. 156–82; Sasikumar S. Sundaram and Vineet Thakur, 'A pragmatic methodology for studying international practices', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 17:3 (2021), pp. 337–55; Simon F. Pratt, 'From norms to normative configurations: A pragmatist and relational approach to theorizing normativity in IR', *International Theory*, 12:1 (2020), pp. 59–82.

[29]Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification*; Davide Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Rouse, 'Practice theory'; Theodore R. Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes* (Los Angeles: Sage,

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empirically demonstrate the utility of our envisaged approach. In concluding, reflection is offered on how future IR work on normativity in practice could help advance our conceptual and empirical understanding of ordering.

Normativity and practices in IR research

We identify two different bodies of IR research addressing how normativity and practice relate to each other: on the one side, work by international (political) theorists inspired by pragmatism, constructivism, and social philosophy; on the other, that by practice-oriented scholars. However, the tackling of these issues happens only to varying degrees in their respective studies, and that from quite different perspectives, too. Regardless, a number of commonalities point to the benefits of comprehensive conceptualisation of normativity in practice. While much of the discussion so far has been primarily interested in the normativity *of* practices – that is, as an ontological quality – we find this research helpful also for conceptualising normativity *in* practice.

Normativity, political theory, and pragmatism in IR

Research from political theory is not usually considered part of the practice turn, because herein normativity is often equated with normative theory.[30] Indeed, IR scholars and political theorists operate relatively independently of each other, despite attempts to facilitate conversation within, for instance, the emerging field of 'international political theory'.[31] This lack of dialogue is regrettable, as the two camps share many aligned research interests and deal with similar questions around the multiplicity of normative orders, implicit rules, practical knowledge, and reflexive agency, as well as possibilities for critique and resistance.

Joe Hoover's 'situationist theory of global justice'[32] is a prime example of how political theorists study the contestation of normative orders through the prism of competing moral claims in situations of controversy, in his case the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London. Similarly, studies of agency amid normative controversies around business and human rights[33] and contested practices of civil disobedience,[34] as well as issues of diversity and community in pursuit of global democracy,[35] demonstrate how political theorists develop research questions which resemble those of practice-oriented scholars. Yet this kind of scholarship is often not perceived as contributing to debates around the practice turn in IR.

Pragmatist thinking is another crucial element in this body of work.[36] Often described as a 'sort of hidden paradigm in IR',[37] pragmatism would be highly influential for the discipline's early constructivists and critical scholars. This approach foregrounds the relationship between knowledge and (international) action, for example via the notion of epistemic communities. It seems, however,

2012); Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[30]Molly Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[31]Ackerly et al., 'Unearthing grounded normative theory'.

[32]Joe Hoover, 'Developing a situationist global justice theory: From an architectonic to a consummatory approach', *Global Society*, 33:1 (2019), pp. 100–20.

[33]Terry Macdonald and Kate Macdonald, 'Towards a "pluralist" world order: Creative agency and legitimacy in global institutions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 26:2 (2020), pp. 518–44.

[34]Robin Celikates, 'Democratizing civil disobedience', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 42:10 (2016), pp. 982–94.

[35]James Tully, Keith Cherry, Fonna Forman, et al. (eds), *Democratic Multiplicity: Perceiving, Enacting, and Integrating Democratic Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[36]Pragmatism is often considered part of the practice turn in IR: see Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', *International Studies Quarterly*, 59:3 (2015), pp. 449–60. Given its conceptual origins in Wittgensteinian philosophy, however, we consider it part of the body of research by international theorists.

[37]Alena Drieschova and Christian Bueger, 'Conceptualizing international practices: Establishing a research agenda in conversations', in Alena Drieschova, Christian Bueger, and Ted Hopf (eds), *Conceptualizing International Practices: Directions for the Practice Turn in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 3–27 (p. 10).

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that the ideas of pragmatists like John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Richard Rorty cannot be organically translated into strategies for practice-oriented research. Instead, their scholarship is often a source of reflection on how to do and understand IR in a manner beyond established pathways thereto.[38] It also appears that many pragmatists seem rather concerned with inadvertently treating practices 'like things'[39] or 'atom-like units',[40] as in a positivist methodology.

More recently, though, the similarities between pragmatism and practice theory have come to be discussed with greater frequency. Prominent examples include productive debates on Friedrich Kratochwil's work[41] or Jason Ralph's striving to reconcile pragmatism, constructivism, and practice theory under the notion of 'global learning'.[42] And, indeed, Iver B. Neumann's seminal 2002 article, highly influential in advancing practice research, was part of a special issue on pragmatism in IR.[43] Work by pragmatist IR scholars also increasingly relies on empirical studies; it demonstrates, furthermore, how this line of thinking may lead to different research methodologies and provide new perspectives on normative change.[44]

Normativity and the practice turn in IR

Practice-oriented researchers address normativity in ways different from how international theorists do. The focus of many studies has been either on power relations and hierarchies, mostly drawing on Bourdieu's social theory, or on the performative role of materiality in objects, technologies, and visuality, often related to actor–network and assemblage theory. While these accounts[45] do not ignore the normative dimension of international practices, it plays a somewhat secondary role therein and is thus not at the heart of the analysis either conceptually or empirically.

When Bourdieu-inspired IR scholars study, for instance, the practical sense of diplomats in Brussels,[46] pecking orders in multilateral diplomacy,[47] or the reproduction of diplomacy as a masculinised field,[48] they seek to identify the core reasons behind the perpetuation of social structures which are often unjust, unequal, and unfair but nevertheless still difficult to change. Thus, normativity is deemed to lie in these practices of domination and stratification, interpreted as regular

[38]Pratt and Schmidt, 'Pragmatism in IR'; see also Gunter Hellmann, 'Pragmatism and international relations', *International Studies Review*, 11:3 (2009), pp. 638–62; Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 'On acting and knowing'.

[39]Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Making sense of "international practices"', in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (eds), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 36–60 (p. 55).

[40]Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner, 'Understanding international practices from the internal point of view', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 12:3 (2016), pp. 299–319 (p. 303).

[41]Hannes Peltonen and Knut Traisbach, 'In the midst of theory and practice: A foreword', *International Theory*, 13:3 (2021), pp. 508–12; Hellmann and Steffek, *Praxis as a Perspective*.

[42]Jason Ralph, *On Global Learning: Pragmatic Constructivism, International Practice and the Challenge of Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

[43]Neumann, 'Returning practice'.

[44]Grimmel and Hellmann, 'Theory must not go on holiday'; Deborah Avant, 'Pragmatic networks and transnational governance of private military and security services', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60:2 (2016), pp. 330–42; Sebastian Schmidt, 'Foreign military presence and the changing practice of sovereignty: A pragmatist explanation of norm change', *American Political Science Review*, 108:4 (2014), pp. 817–29; Molly Cochran, 'Activism and international thought: The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and the problem of statelessness in the interwar period', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 3:1 (2023), pp. 1–12.

[45]Our overview resembles the categorisation between 'critical' and 'pragmatist' ways of doing practice research; see Bueger and Gadinger, 'Play of international practice'.

[46]Merje Kuus, 'Symbolic power in diplomatic practice: Matters of style in Brussels', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50:3 (2015), pp. 368–84.

[47]Vincent Pouliot, 'Hierarchy in practice: Multilateral diplomacy and the governance of international security', *European Journal of International Security*, 1:1 (2016), pp. 5–26.

[48]Catriona Standfield, 'Gendering the practice turn in diplomacy', *European Journal of International Relations*, 26:S1 (2020), pp. 140–65.

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patterns, and is considered something rather hidden within routines and implicit, practical knowledge.[49] The practical sense of the *habitus*, the taken-for-granted assumptions (*doxa*) in a distinct field,[50] and the related (yet less used) notion of *nomos*, as the underlying normative grid structuring power relations,[51] all touch on normative aspects, but not as a controversial issue. What counts as making a 'good' diplomat,[52,53] or a 'good' peacebuilding professional,[54] is implicitly (mis)recognised by the involved agents and hence hardly questioned,[55] as making the (re)production of social hierarchies possible in the first place. Given that protagonists are mainly interested in power-seeking and improving their own positioning in the field, ethical concerns, moral standards, and reflective agency play only a secondary role.[56] It is fair to say that normativity – understood as an opportunity to analyse the contested and fragile nature of practices in terms of the moral judgement of public performance – is not the main focus of this corpus due to the overriding interest instead in the evolution of practices and transformations over time in distinct fields.[57]

Practice researchers, inspired by actor–network and assemblage theory, adopt yet another approach. They primarily focus on how these 'materialist characters'[58] affect our lives, and how practices in terms of 'translation'[59] and 'maintenance work'[60] constitute and stabilise fragile networks and assemblages, in particular policy fields (e.g. cybersecurity),[61] at specific sites (e.g. airports and infrastructure projects),[62] or around the role of new objects and technologies (e.g. in modern warfare).[63] Such perspectives do not ignore normative aspects, as they often subscribe to a critical research agenda. Yet they are more interested in showing how these new arrangements emerge and in depicting the ways in which materialist characters 'do govern'[64] – thus having an impact on our political life. Normativity becomes relevant when explanations are needed for the erosion of a distinct network or assemblage and when questions about authority and legitimacy arise. Given the critical nature of this type of practice theorising, normativity is frequently included in concluding reflections and future imaginaries but rarely takes centre stage in the analysis itself.

[49]Rouse, 'Practice theory', p. 646.

[50]Trine Villumsen Berling, 'Bourdieu, International Relations, and European security', *Theory and Society*, 41:5 (2012), pp. 451–78.

[51]Charlotte Epstein, 'Norms: Bourdieu's nomos, or the structural power of norms', in Rebecca Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 165–78.

[52]Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 'Power in practice'; Pouliot, 'Hierarchy in practice'; Kuus, 'Symbolic power'.

[53]Trine Villumsen Berling and Christian Bueger (eds), *Security Expertise: Practice, Power, Responsibility* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[54]Catherine Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace: A Social Analysis of Peacebuilding* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

[55]Stefano Guzzini, 'Power', in Rebecca Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 78–92 (p. 82).

[56]Ralph and Gifkins, 'The purpose of United Nations Security Council practice'. See also Gadinger, 'The normativity of international practices'; Kustermans, 'On the ethical significance of social practices'.

[57]Vincent Pouliot, 'Evolution in international practices', in Alena Drieschova, Christian Bueger, and Ted Hopf (eds), *Conceptualizing International Practices: Directions for the Practice Turn in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 170–92 (p. 171).

[58]Anna Leander, 'Locating (new) materialist characters and processes in global governance', *International Theory*, 13:1 (2021), pp. 157–68.

[59]Jacqueline Best and William Walters, '"Actor–network theory" and international relationality: Lost (and found) in translation', *International Political Sociology*, 7:3 (2013), pp. 332–34.

[60]Bueger and Edmunds, 'Pragmatic ordering'.

[61]Tobias Liebetrau and Kristoffer K. Christensen, 'The ontological politics of cyber security: Emerging agencies, actors, sites, and spaces', *European Journal of International Security*, 6:1 (2021), pp. 25–43.

[62]Schouten, 'Security as controversy: Reassembling security at Amsterdam Airport', *Security Dialogue*, 45:1 (2014), pp. 23–42; Jana Hönke, Eric Cezne, and Yifan Yang (eds), *Africa's Global Infrastructures* (London: Hurst, 2024).

[63]Ingvild Bode and Hendrik Huelss, 'Autonomous weapons systems and changing norms in international relations', *Review of International Studies*, 44:3 (2018), pp. 393–413.

[64]Leander, 'Locating (new) materialist characters', p. 158.

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The practice turn is seen as a source of innovative studies both 'analytically and normatively' progressive in nature.[65] While not seeking to question its achievements, our discussion demonstrates that normativity is often not front and centre herein. Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille similarly observe that 'most IR practice theorists have steered clear of the field of normative analysis [as] practice theory is widely understood to be an analytical and not a normative enterprise'.[66] We contend, accordingly, that integrating the insights generated by practice researchers and international theorists would help us to better understand the meaning of normativity and its role for world ordering.

Conceptualising normativity in practice: A comprehensive approach

How can we make sense of normativity in practice? We consider three key dimensions as relevant: how normativity is enacted and disputed in practice; how it is learnt as practical knowledge in communities; and how ambiguity remains due to the multiplicity of rules applied in everyday situations. We refer to the earlier-discussed work done in social theory, sociology, and philosophy, while using insights from core IR fields as well. Our understanding of normativity emphasises that situated judgment of rules and actions rather than patterned or regular performance is the constitutive element of practices. Normativity, so understood, is relational and bound to specific contexts of application. Through active engagement with its meaning, actors can confirm or contest moral claims. As such, normativity has an ordering capacity. It stabilises social orders by confirming certain standards of moral judgement or initiates social change via contestation over its ambiguous nature. Rather than furthering a bifurcated view of these two processes as but opposing choices, studying normativity in practice is to demonstrate that social order is in flux, oscillating between stability and change.[67]

Normativity is enacted and disputed in practice

Normativity is enacted in practice, because its validity and reach are constituted in social contexts and through interactions shaped by contested interpretations of its meaning.[68] This conceptualisation of normativity speaks to how moral qualifications – correct/incorrect, just/unjust, appropriate/inappropriate, right/wrong, and the like – cannot rely on objective or universal standards. They rather become meaningful only in practice, understood as specific settings and actual social interactions.[69]

Enactment therefore points to the analytical relevance of situations or moments as the spatio-temporal focal point of negotiating normative meaning.[70] Highlighting their core relevance to empirical work is key in arguing for why practices are able to overcome the dichotomy of agents and structures. A focus on disputes or controversies seems especially useful here. Practice scholars occasionally advocate for considering these situations 'exceptional' given that they represent a breach with routines.[71] As Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot have demonstrated, though, such 'critical moments' allow us to study how everyday situations are driven by the uncertainty and ambiguity of meaning and actors' particular need to sort out their different normative

[65] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, p. 31.

[66] Schindler and Wille, 'How can we criticize international practices?', p. 1015.

[67] See for a similar argument Hilmar Schäfer, 'The dynamics of repetition: Translocal practice and transnational negotiations', in Alena Drieschova, Christian Bueger, and Ted Hopf (eds), *Conceptualizing International Practices: Directions for the Practice Turn in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 193–212.

[68] Rouse, 'Practice theory'; Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*.

[69] Joseph Rouse, 'Social practices and normativity', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 37:1 (2007), pp. 46–56 (p. 48).

[70] Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 115.

[71] Sundaram and Thakur, 'A pragmatic methodology', p. 340.

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repertoires in practice.[72] These processes are constitutive of practice, with situations of dispute being characterised by conflicting interpretations of what exactly is meant.[73]

Recent IR practice theory work has demonstrated how the enactment of normativity unfolds during specific moments of controversy. This has been done, for instance, by looking at their role in normalising[74] and (de)legitimising[75] surveillance practices as well as vis-à-vis issues of justice in instances of cross-border conflict.[76] Analysing infrastructure-related affairs, Jana Hönke et al. highlight that enacting normativity in situations of dispute also facilitates normative change by questioning hegemonic meanings and opening up room for agency.[77] Therefore, we argue for less focus on the exceptionality of such occurrences and more on how they reveal the normative qualities inherent to practices.

These traits become apparent due to actors engaged in moments of dispute being equipped to do so on the basis of background knowledge. Any interpretation of a given set of circumstances, and the negotiation of normative meaning within it, 'is only possible against the background of a prior understanding of the situation [at hand]'.[78] While such background knowledge is often implicit and 'performed blindly',[79] it represents a certain intelligibility to engage meaningful in a particular situation rather than simply determining the outcome of a particular practice.[80] Moreover, situations of dispute often have 'indeterminate and contested boundaries'.[81] Such ambiguity sees them evaluated based on normative assessments – whether they are right or wrong, just or unjust – in deferring to background knowledge hereon.[82]

Practice theorists stress that these are public processes.[83] This emphasis is to imply neither that practices occur exclusively in the public domain nor that they cannot also be intimate, too. What matters instead is how the ability to observe and make sense of them – that is, to render them meaningful – is the precondition for accepting, refusing, criticising, or justifying their normative quality.[84] Publics therefore can be best understood as sites that see relevant actors, contexts, arguments, and material artefacts assemble, together constituting a processual, relational space for the enactment of practice.[85] Such an understanding hereof allows us to analyse how normative meaning is enacted in particular situations of interest.

Normativity in practice is also a phenomenon highlighted in IR studies analysing, for example, how religious values are no abstract metaphors but strategic 'devices' in global health discourses[86]

[72] Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, 'The sociology of critical capacity', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2:3 (1999), pp. 359–77.

[73] Roberto Frega, 'The normative creature: Toward a practice-based account of normativity', *Social Theory and Practice*, 40:1 (2014), pp. 1–27 (p. 14).

[74] Claudia Aradau and Emma McCluskey, 'Making digital surveillance unacceptable? Security, democracy, and the political sociology of disputes', *International Political Sociology*, 16:1 (2022), pp. 1–19.

[75] Christopher Smith Ochoa, Frank Gadinger, and Taylan Yildiz, 'Surveillance under dispute: Conceptualising narrative legitimation politics', *European Journal of International Security*, 6:2 (2021), pp. 210–32.

[76] Médéric Martin-Mazé, 'Returning struggles to the practice turn: How were Bourdieu and Boltanski lost in (some) translations and what to do about it?', *International Political Sociology*, 11:2 (2017), pp. 203–20.

[77] Hönke et al., *Africa's Global Infrastructures*.

[78] Rouse, 'Practice theory', p. 643.

[79] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §219.

[80] Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 79.

[81] Andrew Barry, 'Political situations: Knowledge controversies in transnational governance', *Critical Policy Studies*, 6:3 (2012), pp. 324–36 (p. 330).

[82] Luc Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 21–5.

[83] Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 135; Robert Schmidt and Jörg Volbers, 'Siting praxeology: The methodological significance of "public" in theories of social practices', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 41:4 (2011), pp. 419–40 (p. 420).

[84] Hilmar Schäfer, *Die Instabilität der Praxis* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2013).

[85] Schmidt and Volbers, 'Siting praxeology', p. 424.

[86] Tine Hanrieder, 'The public valuation of religion in global health governance: Spiritual health and the faith factor', *Contemporary Politics*, 23:1 (2016), pp. 81–99.

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or how the use of force is justified within the United Nations Security Council.[87] Following Dewey, Jason Ralph argues to understand 'publics' also as those who while not directly involved in a given practice still find themselves affected by it.[88] Reflecting on the consequences of practices is an important normative test helping actors, especially for communities of practice, to identify appropriate courses of action.[89] This public character also underlines that, despite its focus on moments as the unit of analysis, practice research is not limited to simple situationism. While context matters, the normative quality of the claims advanced during times of controversy stems from the stressing of their universal nature.[90] Enacting normativity therefore takes place through practices constituted in a particular situation while simultaneously transcending it.[91]

While the public enactment of normativity demonstrates how specific situations are connected to universal claims, normativity is also enacted by embodying practices. Bodies, objects, or emotions anchor the latter in the spatio-temporal fabric of a concrete occurrence. Bodies are the carriers not only of the physical activities helping constitute practices but also of their normative meanings.[92] They are tied to the contexts with which they are interwoven.[93] If we understand practices as patterns of activity, either in terms of purely human-to-human interactions or alternatively also those with non-humans,[94] they cannot be separated from these bodily forms of enactment. Vice versa, as K. M. Fierke posits, bodies also cannot be understood in isolation from these performances and the particular contexts in which they appear.[95] The exact circumstances at hand serve to define what counts as human, female, old, or attractive, thus constituting these bodies. Building on Wittgenstein, Schatzki therefore notes that bodily activities are what make practices work via the interplay of action and reaction.[96]

The momentary aspect of practices also highlights that their ordering capacity is tied to their bodily enactment. It has been shown, for example, that diplomats embody different roles due to factors such as class or gender[97] or how their bodies represent *habitus* and *doxa*, as affecting how they enact national foreign policy.[98] Gendered approaches to international politics also arise herewith, as research on securitising images of female bodies demonstrates;[99] alternatively, women are rendered the vulnerable objects of humanitarian∧protection policies, such as the UN's 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda.[100] Closely associated with such gendered approaches to bodily practice is the role of affect and emotion. While some claim that IR theorising still tends to sideline

[87] Niemann, *The Justification of Responsibility in the UN Security Council*.

[88] Ralph, *On Global Learning*, p. 31.

[89] Ralph, *On Global Learning*, p. 31.

[90] Boltanski and Thévenot, 'The sociology of critical capacity'.

[91] Markus Kornprobst, 'From political judgements to public justifications (and vice versa): How communities generate reasons upon which to act', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:1 (2014), pp. 192–216 (p. 196).

[92] Andreas Reckwitz, 'Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5:2 (2002), pp. 243–63 (p. 251).

[93] Rouse, 'Practice theory', p. 653.

[94] For the notion of material agency, see Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle Of Practice: Time, Agency and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); for an analysis of non-human agency and practice in IR, see, e.g., Bode and Huelss, 'Autonomous weapons systems and changing norms in international relations'.

[95] K. M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 85.

[96] Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 58.

[97] Iver B. Neumann, 'To be a diplomat', *International Studies Perspectives*, 6:1 (2005), pp. 72–93.

[98] Lourdes Aguas and Stephen Pampinella, 'The embodiment of hegemony: Diplomatic practices in the Ecuadorian foreign ministry', *International Studies Quarterly* 66:2 (2022), available at: {https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac014}; see also Standfield, 'Gendering the practice turn in diplomacy'.

[99] Axel Heck and Gabi Schlag, 'Securitizing Images: The Female Body and the War in Afghanistan', *European Journal of International Relations* 19:4 (2013), pp. 891–913.

[100] Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* (London: Zed Books, 2008).

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emotional practices,[101] research on the constitution of community through collective trauma[102] or gendered judgements of women carrying out acts of torture[103] demonstrate how inextricably linked bodies, emotions, and normativity are.

Social orders are constituted and become visible because of such embodied practices.[104] This also holds true for their normativity. As Schatzki argues, 'participating in a practice is operating in an arena where certain actions and ends are prescribed, correct, or acceptable on certain occasions'.[105] Understood as sites of social interaction, situations of dispute are therefore also shaped by the embodied dimensions of negotiating normative meaning.

Normativity as practical, community-learnt knowledge

'Communities of practice' are especially relevant to our study, as they play a key role in providing the necessary standards of evaluation and judgement.[106] Here, mediating background knowledge and negotiating what counts as competent, correct, or right behaviour in a given situation takes place. Given the wide variety of contexts to be found in everyday life, actors usually belong to multiple such communities simultaneously.[107]

According to Wenger, three dimensions of learning and community-building are constitutive of these communities of practice: participants engage in and maintain the community by actual practices (mutual engagement); they are bound to a common purpose, as the source of community (joint enterprise); and, they utilise the available set of instruments and resources – be they symbols, rituals, objects, narratives, or similar – in negotiating meaning (shared repertoires).[108] Members of a distinct community deliberate, for example, on what constitutes their joint enterprise, with these negotiations giving rise to regimes of mutual accountability in the everyday interactions occurring between relevant parties. Shared repertoires are the carriers of the normativity which informs these practices. They entail the 'routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence and which have become part of its practice'.[109]

The level of social coherence within communities of practice – and therefore also questions about their boundaries and the homogeneity of their members, especially relevant at the global level[110] – has been the subject of keen debate in IR.[111] In Maren Hofius's analysis of European Union (EU) diplomats in Ukraine, for instance, the community of practice is characterised by boundary-drawing at sites of conflict and the issue of who is accepted as a member.[112] Not only is 'European diplomacy … fuzzy at its borders', but, moreover, it is by no means easy to even clarify what is meant by 'European' and 'diplomacy' in a practical sense.[113] This fragile and conflicting notion of the European idea is also present in processes of Europeanisation when EU candidate states (e.g. Croatia and Serbia) hold different positions in terms of identity, as influencing whether or not they

[101] Felix Rösch, 'Affect, practice, and change: Dancing world politics at the Congress of Vienna', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 56:2 (2021), pp. 123–40.

[102] Emma Hutchison, 'Trauma and the politics of emotions: Constituting identity, security and community after the Bali bombing', *International Relations*, 24:1 (2010), pp. 65–86.

[103] Linda Åhäll, 'Affect as methodology: Feminism and the politics of emotion', *International Political Sociology*, 12:1 (2018), pp. 36–52.

[104] Reckwitz, 'Toward a theory of social practices', p. 251.

[105] Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 75.

[106] Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, p. 81.

[107] Shove, Pantzar, and Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice*, p. 68.

[108] Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, p. 73.

[109] Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, p. 83.

[110] Ralph, *On Global Learning*.

[111] Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, *International Practice Theory* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 53.

[112] Hofius, 'Community at the border or the boundaries of community?'.

[113] Federica Bicchi and Niklas Bremberg, 'European diplomatic practices: Contemporary challenges and innovative approaches', *European Security*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 391–406 (p. 396).

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are willing to henceforth accept the rules and practices of a different community.[114] As Davide Nicolini observes, new members of a given community not only acquire the knowledge necessary for engaging in its practices but also 'absorb a moral way of being; that is, a model of excellence specific to [those practices] that determines at once an ethic, a set of values, and the sense of virtues associated with the achievement of the high standard of conduct implicit [herein]'.[115]

This form of situated learning also implies a range of elements being involved in binding a group together, ones which often remain underexplored in IR – such as a shared sense of humour or timing in a specific group context.[116] This is a major point of critique in Jason Ralph and Jess Gifkins's examination of Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Vincent Pouliot's[117] focus on power, status, and hierarchy in diplomatic practices at the United Nations Security Council as markers of 'competence': namely, the overlooking of the normative dimension of ethical competence as a complementary element to the narrow view taken by the latter authors on power-seeking agents.[118]

Learning is a prerequisite for carrying out activities within communities of practice. It is necessary for establishing joint enterprises and shared repertoires, but also for acquiring normative standards of evaluation. From a practice theory perspective, Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' is most relevant to dissecting the nature of learning. As he noted, 'one learns the game by watching how others play it'.[119] Learning is a difficult process, though. As the rules of a game are often implicit, they draw attention to the inevitability of mistakes and failures occurring when interpreting these performances. Think of the first presentation at a conference or a preliminary meeting at work. These often turn out to be awkward moments, because participants suddenly realise they lack knowledge about the implicit rules – where to sit or when to speak, for instance.

Mistakes are made; because of unfamiliarity, then, 'people generally assimilate the understandings and intelligibilities of things that are articulated within the practices in which they participate'.[120] Learning is positioned as a social activity hereby. It requires active participation and is not a two-step process of simply first learning a rule and then subsequently applying it. Learning occurs in a social context encompassing a variety of means; it involves both imitation as well as the corrections and pointers we get from parents, friends, and teachers.[121] Whereas in IR learning is often understood mainly in cognitive terms, practice-oriented research emphasises how it stands for the process whereby one becomes a full member of a given community – seldom a 'smooth or friendly affair'[122] and often involving conflict, for instance between old and new members over the meaning of shared repertoires.[123]

Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner argue that realising when a mistake has been made demonstrates familiarity with the rules of a particular game rather than ignorance thereof.[124] Diplomacy has certainly been the field of endeavour most studied by IR scholars vis-à-vis this process of learning relevant practical knowledge – in this case, of being a 'good' diplomat and thus as regards

[114]Jelena Subotić, 'Europe is a state of mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans', *International Studies Quarterly*, 55:2 (2011), pp. 309–30.

[115]Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization*, p. 84.

[116]Federica Bicchi, 'Communities of practice and what they can do for International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 48:1 (2022), pp. 24–43 (p. 31).

[117]Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Vincent Pouliot, 'Power in practice: Negotiating the international intervention in Libya', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:4 (2014), pp. 889–911.

[118]Ralph and Gifkins, 'The purpose of United Nations Security Council practice'.

[119]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §54.

[120]Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 114.

[121]Kratochwil, 'Making sense of "international practices"', p. 53.

[122]Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work and Organization*, p. 82.

[123]See Emanuel Adler, Niklas Bremberg and Maïka Sondarjee, 'Communities of practice in world politics: Advancing a research agenda', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 4:1 (2024), ksad070 and the various empirical cases in this special issue.

[124]Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner, 'Two conceptions of international practice: Aristotelian praxis or Wittgensteinian language games?', *Review of International Studies*, 42:2 (2016), pp. 334–50 (p. 343).

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speechwriting[125] or *habitus* in the form of style (dress code) and rhetoric.[126] Kristin Anabel Eggeling and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, meanwhile, have demonstrated how external shocks, such as Covid-19, may also trigger learning processes which see communities of practice adapt to new circumstances.[127] At the same time, though, this is a non-linear development; key diplomatic practices, for example, follow trial and error, while behaviour is oriented towards that of established agents.[128]

Normative ambiguity and the multiplicity of rules in everyday situations

Learning processes are complicated by the multiplicity of relevant standards of evaluation in situations of everyday life. Wittgenstein posited that a rule is only one element in a more complex system of multiple rules.[129] How rules can and should be applied in a given situation inevitably creates room for interpretation and misunderstanding. While practices occur amid existing orders and structures, those aspects such as 'cultural background' informing related behaviour are neither monolithic nor uncontested.[130] This is a familiar insight in IR norms research, which has extensively discussed this inherent ambiguity as 'norm contestation'.[131] 'Battles' over the meaning of norms,[132] overlapping moral narratives,[133] and norm clusters[134] speak to the dynamic relationship between the 'is' and 'ought' of international practices, negotiated in specific situations by using a multiplicity of normative standards. Asking 'whose norms and practices count' serves to shift the focus to the roles and effects of agency and power in the ordering of the everyday via practice, ultimately being political questions.[135]

This multiplicity testifies to the need for practice theorists to provide an alternative approach to normativity beyond the study of norms, formal and informal rules, or institutions. Instead of essentialising norms by focusing on their institutionalised or formalised character, our approach underlines their role in the evocation and reiteration of expectations and evaluations in situations of normativity.[136] Simon F. Pratt's conceptualisation of norms not as stable categories but rather dynamic and situated 'normative configurations' is an interesting innovation in this regard.[137] It shows that norms have an ordering capacity when they are used as standards for evaluating practice performance.

[125] Iver B. Neumann, '"A speech that the entire ministry may stand for", or: Why diplomats never produce anything new', *International Political Sociology*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 183–200.

[126] Kuus, 'Symbolic power in diplomatic practice'.

[127] Kristin A. Eggeling and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, 'The synthetic situation in diplomacy: Scopic media and the digital mediation of estrangement', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 1:2 (2021), pp. 1–14.

[128] Pouliot, 'Hierarchy in practice', p. 18.

[129] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §43.

[130] Rouse, 'Practice theory', p. 646.

[131] Wiener, *Constitution and Contestation of Norms*; see also Holger Niemann and Henrik Schillinger, 'Contestation "all the way down"? The grammar of contestation in norm research', *Review of International Studies*, 43:1 (2017), pp. 29–49; Thomas Linsenmaier, Dennis R. Schmidt, and Kilian Spandler, 'On the meaning(s) of norms: Ambiguity and global governance in a post-hegemonic world', *Review of International Studies*, 47:4 (2021), pp. 508–27.

[132] Kees van Kersbergen and Bertjan Verbeek, 'The politics of international norms: Subsidiarity and the imperfect competence regime of the European Union', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:2 (2007), pp. 217–38.

[133] Tine Hanrieder, 'Orders of worth and the moral conceptions of health in global politics', *International Theory*, 8:3 (2016), pp. 390–421.

[134] Carla Winston, 'Norm structure, diffusion, and evolution: A conceptual approach', *European Journal of International Relations*, 24:3 (2018), pp. 638–61.

[135] Phil Orchard and Antje Wiener, 'Norm research in theory and practice', in Phil Orchard and Antje Wiener (eds), *Contesting the World: Norm Research in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 1–25 (p. 8).

[136] Rouse, 'Social practices and normativity', p. 53.

[137] Pratt, 'From norms to normative configurations'.

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This ordering capacity is an underlying principle of world politics.[138] Actors are confronted with multiple normativities in a particular situation, requiring them to decide *what counts?*[139] Contestation arises according to the different levels of competencies and resources available to the involved actors in such moments of overlapping and multiple normative orders. In the case of China's Belt and Road Initiative, for instance, Max Lesch and Dylan Loh demonstrate that most of its educational and infrastructural practices are contested by political actors drawing on competing normative inventories anchored in overlapping fields.[140] Tobias Berger's concept of norm translation, meanwhile, reveals how ordering occurs because normative meaning does not diffuse along linear trajectories; rather, these developments are characterised by constant processes of negotiating normative meaning across scales.[141]

From a practice perspective, this is neither a deficit nor problem in need of solution, only the default mode of social interaction. Ongoing processes of contestation and fragile orders do not negatively affect the validity of rules.[142] They also allow actors to navigate between fixed written expressions: a legal doctrine such as the prohibition of torture for example, and its changing normative evaluation over time.[143] On the contrary, they also provide normative orientation, especially on how things ought to be done in future.[144] The case of Russia is indicative of the constitutive role of dynamics such as stigmatisation for reifying the liberal international order through practices of ordering.[145] Deviation from norms as well as the ongoing negotiation of their meaning does not, therefore, signify the instability of social orders. Instead, as our approach portrays, it requires actors to coordinate or order their competing normative standards of evaluation and shifts the focus of analysis to how they eventually achieve fragile agreements (or not).

Such ambiguity and multiplicity turns our view of normativity towards being the negotiation of moral standards. The necessary analytical move then is to 'locat[e] norms in the practice while considering practices as norm-generative'.[146] However, scrutinising normativity in practice implies to simultaneously look at both the stabilising and destabilising effects of negotiating related standards. Practices constantly reify normative meaning and thus stabilise social orders, while at the same time they entail the possibility of change being induced by, for example, the multiple meanings attached to them as well as the risks of the latter's misunderstanding or misinterpretation.[147] The question which follows, then, is how such a comprehensive understanding of normativity in practice can be used in support of concrete empirical analysis.

Exploring normativity in practices of global protest

We live in a world witness to growing daily protest.[148] These recurrent episodes underline that the normative foundations of the contemporary order are increasingly becoming the subject of ever-greater controversy and contestation. To demonstrate their discontent herewith, global protest movements employ a wide range of practices, objects, symbols, and gestures imbued with

[138] Adler, *World Ordering*.

[139] Boltanski and Thévenot, 'The sociology of critical capacity', p. 360.

[140] Lesch and Loh, 'Field overlaps, normativity, and the contestation of practices'.

[141] Tobias Berger, *Global Norms and Local Courts: Translating the Rule of Law in Bangladesh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[142] Max Lesch, 'From norm violations to norm development: Deviance, international institutions, and the torture prohibition', *International Studies Quarterly*, 67:3 (2023), pp. 1–13.

[143] Dominique Linhardt and Cédric Moreau de Bellaing, 'The "enemization" of criminal law? An inquiry into the sociology of a legal doctrine and its political and moral underpinnings', *International Political Sociology*, 13:4 (2019), pp. 447–63.

[144] Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization*, p. 177.

[145] Adrian Rogstad, 'Stigma dynamics: Russia and the crisis of liberal ordering', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2:3 (2022), pp. 1–11.

[146] Wiener, *Constitution and Contestation of Norms*, p. 9.

[147] Schäfer, *Instabilität der Praxis*, p. 32.

[148] Ortiz et al., *World Protest*.

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normativity.[149] We chose interesting, easily accessible examples from different fields (sports, the environment, and peace) which underline the various facets of normativity in practice[150] – namely, situations where established routines are interrupted and broader normative conflicts come to the fore. Our illustrations are the subject of heated discourse and reveal the everyday nature of normativity in practice and its impact on global ordering. Demonstrated is the interconnectedness of normativity's respective conceptual dimensions (enactment, learning, and contestation); we focus in each part on one of them in particular, so as to explain the theoretical insights generated by our comprehensive approach.

The power of gesture in sport

The politics of global sports is often not considered a relevant field for IR scholars. However, it is an interesting example of a supposedly apolitical realm despite in reality increasingly being shaped by international practices of critique, protest, and resistance. While sports have long been entangled in symbolic political struggles – think of the mutual boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow (1980) and Los Angeles (1984) as part of the Cold War, or iconic gestures like the Black Power salute by United States sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the award ceremony at the Olympic Games in Mexico City (1968) – it can be argued that this is a domain currently undergoing increasing politicisation around the globe.[151] We are especially reminded here that normative disputes do not necessarily start with an official speech or statement. As Andreas Reckwitz remarks, bodies carry normative meaning.[152] Simple gestures and activities in everyday life – wearing a slogan on a T-shirt, displaying a particular symbol, or refusing a handshake, for instance – can lead to broader political controversies around core values and contemporary power relations.

Kneeling and similar gestures have become common practice in the prelude to many global sports events to publicly display normative discontent. Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton, for example, protested against police violence by wearing a T-shirt bearing the slogan 'Arrest the Cops who killed Breonna Taylor' following his Tuscan Grand Prix victory. He asserted that wearing the T-shirt proved to be a potent weapon in drawing attention to racial injustice: 'This is a learning process for everyone. … People have been happy with the norm here of how life and society has operated but the world and the younger generation in particular are more conscious that things aren't equal and that change is needed.'[153] The controversy surrounding the 'One Love' armband planned for athletes to use as a symbol of anti-discrimination during the men's 2022 Football World Cup in Qatar is a similar example of how mundane objects can become important public carriers of normative meaning. The mere possibility of this happening elicited criticism from the Qatari hosts,[154] who labelled it a 'very divisive message' to the Islamic and Arabic world. It led to the announcement of such behaviour being prospectively sanctioned by governing body FIFA. In response, Germany's players, for instance, covered their mouths with their hands, symbolising how they had been gagged

[149]Dieter Rucht, *Social Movements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 20.

[150]See for a similar methodological approach Nora Stappert, Frank Gadinger, Stanislav Budnitsky, et al., 'Practices of (de)legitimation in world politics', *International Studies Review*, 27:1 (2025), viae042.

[151]Kristin Anabel Eggeling 'Politics and power in the global tennis court', *International Affairs*, 100:6 (2024), pp. 2481–500; Ørnulf Seippel, Håvard B. Dalen, Morten R. Sandvik, and Gerd M. Solstad, 'From political sports to sports politics: On political mobilization of sports issues', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10:4 (2018), pp. 669–86.

[152]Reckwitz, 'Toward a theory of social practices'.

[153]Giles Richards, 'Lewis Hamilton says BLM protest is human rights issue, not about politics', *The Guardian* (24 September 2020), available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/sep/24/lewis-hamilton-black-lives-matter-protest-human-rights-issue-not-politics}.

[154]Sean Ingle, 'One Love armband sends "very divisive message", says Qatar official', *The Guardian* (28 November 2022), available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/28/onelove-armband-sends-very-divisive-message-says-qatar-official}.

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by FIFA. The gesture was also criticised by many within the German-language discourse for being less credible in the spirit of global anti-capitalist action, underlining normative contestation.[155]

The recent case of Ukrainian fencer Olga Kharlan presents a different, yet symbolically similar, instance of the practical enactment of public protest. She refused to shake hands with her opponent Anna Smirnova after defeating her at the world championships, as a means of protest against Russia's full-scale war of aggression. In retaliation, Smirnova remained seated on a chair on the fencing piste for approximately 50 minutes, refusing to move. Her protest angered Ukrainians, who saw it as a deliberate attempt to have Kharlan disqualified due to the lack of a handshake. The dispute ultimately reached the level of high politics: Dmytro Kuleba, then Ukrainian minister of foreign affairs, expressed his government's solidarity with Kharlan in declaring that: 'Anna Smirnova lost the fair competition and decided to play dirty with the handshake show. This is exactly how [the] Russian army acts on the battlefield.'[156]

Protest gestures not only illustrate that enacting normativity takes place in particular situations.[157] They also underline that it is a highly politicised act, one deeply entwined with context-specific power relations. The spreading and translation of such performative actions from one situation to another, each time adapting collective-action tactics to unique local cultural and political settings, often lead to significant controversy.[158]

The spontaneous public and bodily enactment of protest also produces a moment of surprise and contestation resembling Boltanski and Thévenot's aforementioned critical moments.[159] In both of these instances, sports officials were unsure about necessary counteractions and underestimated the public's reaction. Simultaneously, international sports federations, such as the governing bodies for the Olympic Games (IOC) and football (FIFA), frequently take extensive measures to suppress such protest practices. This underscores the role of power relations in the enactment of normativity. Kharlan was disqualified by the International Fencing Federation, while the governing body of motor sport (FIA) tightened its rules to now forbid all forms of protest – as enforced through strict dress codes. In tandem, these organisations use normative slogans like 'Say No to Racism' to legitimise themselves as promotors of the idea of sport being a catalyst for international solidarity. Yet the selection of autocratic regimes to host global sports events (FIFA World Cups in Russia 2018, Qatar 2022, Saudi Arabia 2034; Olympic Winter Games in Sochi 2014 and Beijing 2022), amid allegations of corruption and acute human rights violations, lays bare the obvious instrumentalisation of these normative slogans for economic gain and the consolidation of power.[160]

As these examples demonstrate, kneeling or wearing rainbow symbols as practices of protest at global sports events reveals the politicisation and contested nature of enacting normativity in public. Athletes, like other public figures, symbolically represent pertinent contemporary moral evaluations – such as the injustice and indignation felt by ordinary people around a particular occurrence – through these practices. Sport events therefore become situations affected by practices of justification and critique, referring to normative inventories and seeing their material manifestation as concrete objects or symbols.[161] The critical point here, however, is that these situations cannot be controlled or solved through executive decisions. While power relations shape public enactment, global sports – between protest, commercialisation, and political

[155]Felix Haselsteiner, 'Lob aus aller Welt, Kritik zuhause', *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (24 November 2022), available at: {https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/dfb-mund-zu-geste-one-love-japan-1.5702574}.

[156]Julian Borger, 'Ukraine calls for disqualified fencer to be reinstated after anti-Russia protest', *The Guardian* (27 July 2023), available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/27/ukraine-calls-for-disqualified-fencer-to-be-reinstated-after-anti-russia-protest}.

[157]Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 115.

[158]Noa Milman and Nicole Doerr, 'Activists' visibility acts of citizenship and media (mis)representation of BLM', *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 10:4 (2023), pp. 525–51.

[159]Boltanski and Thévenot, 'The sociology of critical capacity'.

[160]Bernd Bucher and Julian Eckl, 'Football's contribution to international order: The ludic and festive reproduction of international society by world societal actors', *International Theory*, 14:2 (2022), pp. 311–37 (p. 313).

[161]Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification*.

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instrumentalisation – represent an ongoing sequence of contestation around competing moral claims.

Learning climate activism

In recent years, images of environmental protest have become omnipresent in the public sphere, provoking heated debate on their legitimacy. Fridays for Future, the by now well-known youth-led climate strike movement initiated by Greta Thunberg, has gained widespread public support. The movement has managed to overcome delegitimation attempts by conservative political figures and to become a recognised voice within international organisations such as the United Nations. However, the more radical tactics employed by the likes of Just Stop Oil, Extinction Rebellion (XR), and Letzte Generation – for instance, using superglue to attach themselves to busy roads – have been the subject of greater controversy. While these performative actions again demonstrate the significance of bodily enactment and materiality, the practices of climate activism especially emphasise how learning is a key social activity – further to highlighting as well the potential for friction among respective community members.

Using the body as a symbol of resistance and vulnerability forms part of a long tradition within environmental activism in both the Global North and Global South alike. In the former, Greenpeace and the anti-nuclear movement's activists have chained themselves to railway tracks. In the latter, as Neelakshi Joshi argues, there is a rich history of environmental-justice movements arising in post-colonial and settler-colonial contexts. A notable example is the women-led Chipko movement which was active in the Himalayas during the 1970s.[162] These women hugged trees to prevent logging contractors from felling them, using their bodies as shields. Their practices enacted a deep connection to the forest and stressed the critical role trees play in sustaining these women's lives and livelihoods. This again underscores the rich global repertoire of bodily forms of protest informing climate activism. It further shows how these various movements learn from each other, developing shared repertoires of actionable knowledge as communities of practice.[163]

Learning to protest is a practical activity and implies participation. In the case of radical climate activism, this includes coming to terms with concrete issues such as organising a successful blockade as well as learning established strategies of peaceful de-escalation rooted in the tradition of civil disobedience. This learning process mainly transpires within workshops, with established members of the community sharing their protest experiences with newcomers. They train them in simulated situations of conflict and instruct them on how to resolve them peacefully.[164] Drawing on the related literature, this learning process can also be said to involve a common sense of interaction (mutual engagement) and developing joint enterprises in a moral sense. Against this background, narratives are crucial for fostering a collective identity and translating feelings of shame and individual responsibility into empowerment and efficacy, but also entitlement.[165] This aspect is particularly important for movements like XR which support the idea of decentralised organisation, underpinned by the ideal of 'leaderlessness'.[166]

These narratives not only provide a legitimising device for guiding political action in the role of heroic protagonists (and delegitimising antagonists), they also work as a glue binding together the

[162]Neelakshi Joshi, 'Radical movements as a call to climate action: A space–time connection, *npj Climate Action*, 35 (2023), pp. 1–3.

[163]Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, p. 81.

[164]Rachael Venables, 'Inside the training sessions where Just Stop Oil's new recruits are taught how to protest', *Sky News* (30 November 2023), available at: {https://news.sky.com/story/inside-the-training-sessions-where-just-stop-oils-new-recruits-are-taught-how-to-protest-13019302}.

[165]Heejin Han and Sang Wuk Ahn, 'Youth mobilization to stop global climate change: Narratives and impact', *Sustainability*, 12:10 (2020), pp. 1–23.

[166]Marianna Fotaki and Hamid Foroughi, 'Extinction Rebellion: Green activism and the fantasy of leaderlessness in a decentralized movement', *Leadership*, 18:2 (2022), pp. 224–46.

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community's shared repertoires, including via elements like humour, emotion, and skill.[167] Leonie Holthaus shows, for instance, how feelings of eco-grief and sorrow are allowed and appreciated as reflexive practices among climate activists who can be regarded as 'emotion entrepreneurs'.[168] They cultivate these practices through the creation of social encounters and rituals furthering experiences of eco-grief, for example in workshops, cafés, or guided mediations.[169] As Emily Westwell and Josh Bunting similarly contend, XR has explicitly attempted to develop a cohesive internal culture built around the ethics of care (for self, others, and planet). This approach, termed 'regenerative culture', creates the normative grounds for community.[170]

A practice-oriented view on learning paints, then, a more complex picture than linear notions of 'norm socialisation' or 'norm diffusion' typically do. Moreover, examining various climate-justice movements sheds light on the normativity of learning and negotiating practices of protest. The abovementioned regenerative culture of XR, which can be interpreted as the movement's ideology and organisational strategy, 'has the potential to be extremely subversive, fostering a new subjectivity for an ecologically sustainable society'.[171] It is obvious that these normative principles are not understood and interpreted in the same manner by all XR members, making disputes within and between movements even more heated. Although XR and Fridays for Future are part of the same discursive community, they emphasise different aspects of just energy futures and operate on the basis of varying political narratives and imaginaries about how to reach their respective objectives.[172] XR's and Just Stop Oil's extreme tactics have provoked discord within these movements' ranks regarding the appropriate means of enacting climate protest – especially as regards straddling the attraction of media attention via radical action and reaching and mobilising a wider public audience.[173] This shows that environmental movements, functioning as overlapping communities of practice, must renegotiate their shared repertoires and establish new forms of ordering, such as through collaboration with labour activists. They find themselves in conflict over the normative question of how best to realise a world marked by climate justice.

The moral ambiguity of peace protests

The community of climate protesters is even more fragile when questions of justice overlap with normative issues arising in other fields. This complexity is exemplified by Thunberg's critique of Israel's response to Hamas's attack of 7 October 2023. Anti-war protests therefore illustrate how normative ambiguity demands more than just enacting practices of learning and ordering, where actors constantly negotiate their related inventories. Instead, these protests also show the inherent risk of normative distortion, because the involved actors are confronted with a need to make choices against the backdrop of the multiplicity of rules encountered in any given situation.

The challenges posed by said multiplicity can be best demonstrated by the 'broad spectrum of positions' on the use of force to be found among peace activists, ranging from fundamental opposition to reluctant acceptance of its use as a means to prevent mass atrocities.[174] Although some have observed a growing acceptance of the latter stance due to the changing nature of war,[175]

[167] Bicchi, 'Communities of practice'.

[168] Leonie Holthaus, 'Feelings of (eco-)grief and sorrow: Climate activists as emotion entrepreneurs', *European Journal of International Relations*, 29:2 (2023), pp. 352–73.

[169] Holthaus, 'Feelings of (eco-)grief and sorrow', p. 362.

[170] Emily Westwell and Josh Bunting, 'The regenerative culture of Extinction Rebellion: Self-care, people care, planet care', *Environmental Politics*, 29:3 (2020), pp. 546–51.

[171] Westwell and Bunting, 'The regenerative culture of Extinction Rebellion', p. 547.

[172] Aron Buzogány and Patrick Scherhaufer, 'Framing different energy futures? Comparing Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion in Germany', *Futures*, 137:3 (2022), pp. 1–10.

[173] Ayurella Horn-Müller, 'Climate activists divided on souping art', *Axios* (26 October 2022), available at: {https://www.axios.com/2022/10/26/climate-activists-protests-soup-paintings}.

[174] Holger Nehring, 'Peace movements', in Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (eds), *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 485–513 (p. 485).

[175] David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 5.

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large-scale anti-war protests remain a signature practice of the peace movement. Those aside, non-violent resistance and civil disobedience also both play a tremendously important role as protest practices.[176] Prominent cases of self-immolation or going on hunger strike also illustrate how peace activists use their bodies as objects helping to articulate protest.[177]

As argued above, the negotiation of meaning does not necessarily question norms' stability or their changing interpretation in different everyday situations. Instead, it shifts the focus to dynamic practices of evaluating their meaning in context.[178] Practising public anti-war protest can have significant normative repercussions, however, as recent responses to Hamas's attack and Russia's full-scale war of aggression demonstrate. Scepticism about Western allies' actual objectives and the risk of further escalation between NATO and Russia have intensified controversy around the normative standards applied to this conflict within the peace movement.[179] For example, an alliance of key organisations from the German peace camp was criticised as pro-Russian after it called for negotiations between the two warring parties. Margot Kässmann, a famous German theologist and supporter of this call, argued that 'the only thing that matters for me is: How do we get to a ceasefire as quickly as possible? And is reaching that goal only possible through more violence?'[180] Such statements demonstrate the ambiguity of the peace movement's normative position and how that itself spurs controversy.

Growing societal polarisation and increasingly complex conflict constellations have also intensified the normative ambiguity of anti-war protests. The tendency to associate the latter with contemporary issues such as Covid-19 and vaccination scepticism is indicative of how participants often hold diverse political beliefs yet typically share a profound distrust of democracy, institutions, and established decision-making procedures.[181] Consequently, right-wing protest movements, such as the German PEGIDA, have begun to explicitly draw upon the symbols and rituals of the peace movement.[182] Normative ambiguity eases the making of such linkages, but it also bears the risk of distorting and instrumentalising the peace movement's normative inventories.

Conclusion

Putting normativity into practice at the heart of IR analysis is to foreground a processual understanding hereof as a key ordering element in a world never fixed but always in flux. Such a relational view speaks to recent IR accounts aiming to overcome the artificial divide between order and change and to emphasise the normative grounds to global ordering. As a starting point for conceptualising 'ordering' on the basis of normativity in practice, we proposed an approach building on three key dimensions: how normativity is enacted in practice; how it is learnt as practical knowledge in communities; and how ambiguity remains due to the multiplicity of rules. Ideally, such a comprehensive approach supports 'the allure of exploring the normative dimension of international practices [and] opens up the possibility for critique and goes beyond merely "mirroring"

[176] Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Non-Violent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[177] Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

[178] Pratt, 'From norms to normative configurations'.

[179] Robert Shaffer, 'Peace movement responses to Russia's invasion: For limited war and restraints on militarism', *Peace & Change*, 47:3 (2022), pp. 272–6.

[180] Melanie Amann, 'Germany's new peace movement has some explaining to do', *Der Spiegel* (28 February 2023), available at: {https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/dubious-alliance-how-present-is-the-far-right-in-germany-s-new-peace-movement-a-d6604351-fc06-49af-ac4c-b9a52220d167}.

[181] Priska Daphi, Sebastian Haunss, Moritz Sommer, and Simon Teune, 'Taking to the streets in Germany: Disenchanted and confident critics in mass demonstrations', *German Politics*, 32:3 (2023), pp. 440–68.

[182] Sabine Volk and Manès Wisskircher, 'Far-right PEGIDA: Non-violent protest and the blurred lines between the radical and extreme right', in Elisa Orofino and William Allchorn (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Non-Violent Extremism: Groups, Perspectives and New Debates* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), pp. 322–333 (p. 326).

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practices'.[183] So doing allows IR scholars to better understand the role of practices as intermediaries between order and change, as normative drivers of ordering.

As we demonstrated in our empirical illustration of practices of global protest, this examination of enactment, learning, and moral ambiguity can shed new light on contested issues of contemporary world politics, ones often overlooked in IR research due to their everyday nature. Protests are, however, normative conflicts now becoming increasingly relevant to the discipline. Their conduct illustrates the performative effects of normativity in practice as well as the role of bodies, materialities, and shared repertoires for carrying out such endeavours. Studying protest practices also lays bare how normative conflicts over world order are linked to the everyday lives of ordinary people. By studying global protests, therefore, we gain further insight into ordering through normativity in practice.

Methodologically, we argued that Boltanski's pragmatic sociology, the community of practice approach, and practice-oriented norm research provide promising conceptual avenues for studying key aspects of this phenomenon. Although IR scholars have begun to reveal the potential these approaches in their recent empirical work, more collaborative exchange is still needed on reflexivity, pitfalls, and sensitive ways of doing research. Also of benefit here would be interdisciplinary conversations with scholars from cultural studies and the humanities in exploring, for instance, 'ordinary ethics' in practices of the everyday.[184] Initiating further debate about normativity in practice would therefore not only help advance our understanding of international practices but also has the potential to deepen discussions around the relationship between the conceptual and empirical groundings of the IR discipline itself.

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[183] Stappert, 'The art of aiming at a moving target', p. 197.

[184] Michael Lambek, *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language and Action* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

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