1 Conceptualizing International Practices
Establishing a Research Agenda in Conversations

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The practice turn arrived in International Relations (IR) because it had become obvious to many that what goes on in international politics every day was largely ignored by IR theory. While many scholars were focused on what elites said and wrote, not many were paying attention to what they, let alone people in general, actually did. Notably, practice scholarship highlights a significant gap between IR scholars' theoretical endeavours and how practitioners of international politics themselves understand what they are doing. It thus allows scholars to shed light on phenomena that have hitherto been at the margins of IR scholarship. When we examine in microscopic detail how state representatives actually conduct negotiations, how international organizations operate or how wars are being fought, we find a series of puzzling phenomena that shape IR. For example, by zooming in on how the permanent representatives of member states negotiate in the European Union, Adler-Nissen and Drieschova (2019) found that, contrary to bargaining theory and rational choice approaches, diplomats reach compromises by editing text. When there are many parties to negotiations that operate at high speed, diplomats can occasionally lose track of the circulation of texts and even agree to something that none of the negotiating parties intended. Such practical activities tend to be overlooked by the more macroscopic generalization-driven scopes that IR scholarship often adopts, be it in the form of large N-studies, grand theory development, causal hypothesis testing or theoretical modelling.

The often unconscious and habitual doings and sayings of people make a difference to international political outcomes. Random coincidences and encounters with technologies matter, whether it is struggling with a bureaucratic form, or the glitches of a social media account. Everyone may potentially be involved in politics, be it interpreters who work in the UN General Assembly or farmers who help to smuggle migrants across their territory. As Walters observes (Chapter 6), everyday practices of farmers in southern France can operate as resistance against the state's migration policies. Farmers smuggle migrants across borders, not for

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profit, but out of a sense of moral obligation. Only a practice perspective allows us to identify these activities as part of the making of world politics, as it is the practices of not-for-profit smuggling that give meaning to the farmers' resistance. Austin and Leander (Chapter 10), in turn, show how aesthetic practices of making torture invisible, and the more or less competent performances of these practices of rendering invisibility, lead world public opinion to perceive some state regimes, such as the Syrian one, as crueller than others, for example the United States.

Several scholars, each from a slightly different theoretical angle, have introduced into IR scholarship practices as an ontological phenomenon and analytical framework, and they have spelled out the spectrum and consequences of the practice turn for the field (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a, 2011b; Bueger and Gadinger, 2015, 2018; Hopf, 2010; Neumann, 2002; Pouliot, 2010). Other works have explored the internal theoretical diversity of practice theories (Frost and Lechner, 2016b). And still others have advocated for a distinct version of practice theory to analyse and interpret specific phenomena in IR with the help of the work of Luc Boltanski (Gadinger, 2016), Pierre Bourdieu (Eagleton-Pierce, 2013; Mérand, 2008; Pouliot, 2010), Michel DeCerteau (Neumann, 2002), Michel Foucault (Neumann and Sending, 2010; Walters, 2012), Gilles Deleuze (Acuto and Curtis, 2013), Erving Goffman (Adler-Nissen, 2014), Karin Knorr Cetina (Bueger, 2015), Bruno Latour (Bueger and Gadinger, 2007; Walters, 2002), Theodore Schatzki (Bially Mattern, 2011; Navari, 2011), Etienne Wenger (Adler, 2005, 2019) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (Frost and Lechner, 2016a; Grimmel and Hellmann, 2019), among others.

These theoretical approaches have informed the study of a wide range of empirical phenomena, ranging from the workings of international organizations (Bueger, 2015; Pouliot, 2016a) and global governance (Best and Gheciu, 2014a; Neumann and Sending, 2010) to processes of European integration (Adler-Nissen, 2016; McNamara, 2015), international law (Brunnée and Toope, 2010), the international political economy (Eagleton-Pierce, 2013; Seabrooke, 2012), peace-building (Autesserre, 2014), diplomacy (Neumann, 2002; Sending et al., 2015), security (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014; Mérand, 2008; Villumsen, 2015) and war (Sylvester, 2012).

With so much theoretical and empirical work already in place, it seems to be the right time to reflect and clarify in what ways the community of practice scholars shares a common agenda that is broad enough to allow for disagreements and controversies but is also recognizable as a dedicated form of IR scholarship. This implies further elaborating what forms the convergence among practice scholars, but also invites discussion of the boundary zones to other forms of IR theorizing, in particular

constructivism. To date no explicit collective discussion has taken shape about the contours that define the practice turn in IR as a distinct set of theoretical approaches, or about the added value of practice theories in general compared with other IR approaches. The purpose of this edited volume is to do precisely that. It provides a clearly laid out understanding of practice theories as an analytical vocabulary with a history anchored in IR theory that can grasp the diversity of practice scholarship on the one hand but also provide a shared direction on the other.

In IR, theoretical approaches have sometimes coalesced around a single monograph, such as Waltz's (1979) *Theory of International Politics* or Wendt's (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*, which have provided the core to neorealism and constructivism, respectively. In many ways, these texts established an authoritative, quite complete and closed statement around which other texts of the given theoretical approach have grouped. While a *Practical Theory of International Politics* might be in the making, scholars engaged in the practice turn do not consider practice approaches to lend themselves to grand theory-making. Practice theories differ. In the words of Nicolini (2013: 9), 'while [practice-theoretical approaches] can be compared to the tributaries of a lake (the "grand lake" of practice-based approaches) they do not contribute to a "grand" theory of practice and form; instead, they comprise a complicated network of similarities and dissimilarities'. Practice approaches do not appear to lend themselves to a definitive canonical and internally complete text that provides a firm foundation on which others can build. Perhaps this is so because of the ways in which practice scholarship has developed in the discipline of IR, with one of its most authoritative texts so far being an edited volume (Adler and Pouliot, 2011c), followed by an emerging plurality of practice voices. Another reason could be the world view that emerges once we direct our attention to practices as the fundamental ontological entities.

Instead of a canonical text this volume proposes a new way for setting out the intellectual identity of practice scholarship and how it relates to other forms of IR research. Concepts, rather than generalized systems of assertions (theory), provide the building blocks of international practice theorizing and allow for unity in diversity (see Chapter 12). Concepts also allow for more ready comparison with existing streams of IR thought, hence highlighting precisely what the contributions of practice theories are to broader debates. How scholars agree and diverge over the meaning and use of concepts, and how they are shared with other approaches in IR, provides the contours of international practice theorizing. The volume thus structures its discussion around concepts. This helps to open up collective, dynamic and necessarily open-ended conversations

to explain different practice-theoretical approaches. The contributions to the volume look at practices through the prism of a key concept in IR (such as power, norms or change) and engage with their interlocutors through that prism. Each chapter showcases how a practice-theoretical understanding sheds new light on familiar IR concepts or introduces an underexplored one. This allows scholars to ask different kinds of questions, direct attention to uncommon empirical material and reach new conclusions about IR phenomena. Each chapter has an empirical illustration that showcases how practice theories provide a gateway to new empirical insights. A focus on key concepts allows for conversations with other IR theoretical approaches and enables conversations and debates within practice theorizing. Each chapter engages in cross-linkages and conversations with other concepts developed in the volume. The outcome is an intellectual clarification of the promises, contours and challenges of practice theorizing and associated research. On the basis of collective conversations rather than canonical texts, the volume situates practice research as a distinct set of theoretical perspectives in the discipline and outlines the agenda for their further advancement.

In this Introduction, we first identify the value-added of practice theorizing for IR scholarship. Next, we provide a narrative of the evolution of practice-theoretical thinking in IR. This is to demonstrate that such research in many ways advances earlier thoughts expressed in the discipline, but also to argue that practice-driven research breaks with existing ideas in significant ways. With this narrative we respond to some allegations and misunderstandings within the discipline that the practice talk is plainly a reinvigoration of old ideas, that there is little new about practice approaches or that they present us with a new version of constructivism (McCourt, 2016; Ringmar, 2014). Third, we proceed in discussing the scope and contours of practice-driven research by discussing how the practice debate might be ordered. Arguing against pitching discrete practice approaches against each other, we draw attention to a number of fault lines that run through the practice debate. We then showcase how each chapter in this volume engages with broader IR scholarship, and how it provides a new practice-driven vista on relevant IR questions.

The Value-Added of Practice Theorizing in IR

For practice scholars, quotidian and more aggregated practices matter. Central banking is, for example, an aggregated practice composed of many individual practices. As an aggregated practice, central banking had a specific historical starting point and went through an evolution

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with important consequences for international political economy (see Dumouchel, Chapter 7). Yet even seemingly mundane practices can make a difference. The outcomes of international negotiations are not only influenced by calculations of the national interest, material capabilities, and norms, but also by small practical details. Quotidian details have an effect, such as at what point in the process negotiators are served a drink, have a smoke, when a light lunch or big meals are provided, how the chairman of the negotiation is dressed, or what degree of language proficiency participants possess (Adler-Nissen and Drieschova, 2019). When alcohol starts rolling in the Council of Ministers of the European Union, the diplomats may become each other's best friends. They frequently pat each other on the shoulder, the negotiations become more amicable and agreeable. A hungry stomach (as well as sleep deprivation), in turn, can lead negotiators to more easily accept an agreement to be able to break for lunch (or finally get some rest). It might not be a coincidence that many multilateral agreements are reached in the early hours of the morning. If diplomats lack adequate language proficiency, and so perform incompetently, their interlocutors might not understand their negotiating position appropriately, and the misunderstood diplomats will not be able to adequately defend their national interest.

Rather than focusing on the motivations in people's heads, or structures of power and meaning, practice scholars direct attention to concrete and observable processes and patterns of activities that shape international outcomes, or to the norms that underlie such activities. They start from a conception of human nature that accentuates the entanglement of conscious and unconscious processes and focuses on situated and embodied action in concrete places, or that highlights the dispersion of global practices. They hence oppose Cartesian assumptions of human beings as disembodied minds wandering in a stylized world. Practical reasoning emerges as an analytical category that is distinct from instrumentalist calculations or technical rule following (Adler, 2019; Bourdieu, 1990; Pouliot, 2008; Kratochwil, Chapter 11). The goal is not to derive abstract theoretical models with universal generalizability. Experience-near research methodologies, such as participant observation and ethnography, lead many practice scholars to favour more inductive or abductive research designs through which they develop empirically grounded, and spatially and temporally specified theoretical perspectives.[1] In the process, practice scholars often uncover and demonstrate the surprising effects of

[1] An abductive approach moves back and forth between deduction and induction, between theoretical generalities and empirical specificity.

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actors, things and processes that might be deemed trivial from the outset in formalized models of theory. Some scholars adopt a more macroscopic lens and historicize practices to get a better understanding of change over time (Go, 2008; Nexon and Neumann, 2018). For instance, Lechner and Frost (2018: 3) conceive of practices as 'an institution which constitutes a meaningful framework for interaction' and focus on global practices, such as non-intervention. Adler (2019) develops a perspective of cognitive evolution to understand how social orders remain meta-stable or change over time through changes and adaptations in practices. Or scholars study anchoring practices and analyse how specific key practices hold societies together by creating a foundational scaffold on which other practices depend (Sending and Neumann, 2011; Swidler, 2001).

Given that a focus on practices has the potential to shed light on the phenomena conventional IR scholarship was at pains to explain, a quite significant number of scholars turned to developing practice-based research and theories. After a series of prolific publications introduced the notion of practices as a distinct ontological phenomenon to the discipline (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a, 2011b; Neumann, 2002), International Practice Theories (IPT) have become a strong voice in the repertoire of IR theory over the last decade. Practice-driven research remains a set of very young, elastic and dynamic theoretical approaches to the study of IR.

Several promises are associated with practice as an analytical lens. Most importantly perhaps, the focus on practice promises empirical insights into the working of IR that have gone unnoticed so far (Pouliot, 2008). It is also seen as opening up avenues for cross-paradigmatic debates (Adler and Pouliot, 2011a). 'It offers a way out of Procrustean yet seemingly inescapable categories, such as subject and object, representation and represented, conceptual scheme and content, belief and desire, structure and action, rules and their application, micro and macro, individual and totality' (Stern, 2003: 185). It promises research that is more perceptive to short-term change and the transformation of order and power relations (Adler, 2019; Neumann, 2002). And lastly, it creates possibilities for engaging in forms of knowledge production that have practical value and are carried out through different forms of collaboration with practitioners (Eikeland and Nicolini, 2011; Tickner, 2014). An expanding community of scholars has seized the opportunity practice theories provide for understanding world politics, developing new kinds of theory and engaging in new forms of empirical analysis. Indeed, the practice turn appears to be one of the most productive theoretical and empirical endeavours of IR scholarship in the present decade.

Border Zones: The Evolution of Practice Thinking in IR

Practice theorizing has not developed from nowhere. Practice-theoretical thinking has seen quite an evolution, and in consequence the list of ancestors is long. It makes little sense to draw out a fully fledged history of the concept of practice (or practice as it relates to the international). Let us point to some of the ways in which the concept of practice has emerged in the discipline before the phrase 'practice turn' was introduced. This brief historical narrative, like any other, is incomplete and highlights certain developments, while underplaying others. If we cannot offer a 'representative' narrative (whatever this may mean), we have two goals. First, revisiting the history of practice thinking in IR allows us to understand where some of the divergences within practice thought come from. Second, it provides us an understanding of the 'border zones' that exist between practice theories and other research programmes in IR.

Historical sketches of practice thinking written in other disciplinary contexts have alluded to the importance of a range of theoretical predecessors (see Freeman et al., 2011; Guzman, 2013; Hillebrandt, 2014; Miettinen et al., 2009). Aristotelian philosophy, Francis Bacon's relational understanding of science and Karl Marx's Feuerbach Theses are emphasized. These thoughts find continuation in the work of Antonio Gramsci, American pragmatists such as John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, the later works of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. More contemporary thinkers, who have been influential for practice scholarship include Hannah Arendt, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Harold Garfinkel, Erwin Goffmann, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Kuhn, Richard Rorty and William Sewell – a list which could without doubt be extended substantially. As Hillebrandt (2014) observed, in particular in two emerging disciplines – science studies and cultural studies – these ideas were taken forward to form a sort of collective movement that speaks about a 'practice turn' (see Schatzki et al., 2001).[2] Following these leads, a number of other empirically oriented social science disciplines picked up these ideas. Especially in organization studies, educational sociology and policy studies, the idea of turning to practice gained a strong foothold from the late 1990s. Indeed, in organization studies, a quite extensive series of collective

[2] It is revealing that the majority of contributors to the edited volume which is hailed as kick-starting the talk about a practice turn are situated in science studies.

publications, even including a handbook devoted to the practice turn (Golsorkhi et al., 2010), documents the strength of the field. IR is therefore to be seen as a relative latecomer to practice theorizing.

For understanding the trajectory of practice thinking in IR, some of the ancestors important in other disciplines, such as the work of Kurt Lewin or of Chris Argyris and Donald Schon in the 1970s, are largely irrelevant. Each of the social sciences has developed its own trajectory towards practices. In IR, prior to the practice turn, practice thought emerged in several different strands of scholarship. Many of these strands present versions of what is conventionally described in the discipline as 'constructivism'.[3] Practice theorizing is rooted in post-positivism and closely related to the interpretive, hermeneutic, phenomenological or post-structuralist traditions to knowledge production. These have often in the discipline been equated to constructivism. As such, the history of practice theorizing, at least in methodological terms, is closely tied to the rise of constructivist thought in IR.

All of the strands presented in the following sections of this Introduction have contributed to shaping the practice turn in IR, and they continue to be close 'neighbours' to practice theorizing, with which they share substantial 'border zones'.

Practice Thinking in IR: A Short History

The first strand of IR scholarship that theorized practices was *pragmatism*. Although hardly recognized by the writers of disciplinary history, pragmatism is a sort of hidden paradigm in IR. Its authors have focused on questions of knowledge and action. A line of thought, influenced by American pragmatism, stretching from the work of David Mitrany and Karl Deutsch to Ernst Haas, John Ruggie and Emanuel Adler, argued that the foundation of IR is epistemic. Approaches such as the epistemic community framework relied, for instance, on ideas presented by Thomas Kuhn and acknowledged the importance of the practical conditions of knowledge production. The core focus of this pragmatist research has been to understand how knowledge is produced and relates to (international) action. Although emphasizing key categories of importance in practice thinking, these scholars did not focus their work on the concept of practice. With the arrival of culturalist theorizing and the reception of the linguistic turn in the discipline in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Ashley, 1989; Ashley and Walker, 1990;

[3] As many authors have pointed out, the term 'constructivism' is ambiguous and has served to cluster together various forms of theorizing. For a recent re-construction, see Kessler (2016).

Lapid, 1989; Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996), a first generation of practice theorizing emerged. As the concept of practice started to be used substantially, pragmatism saw a renaissance. Indeed, Neumann's (2002) influential introduction of practice theorizing was published as part of a special issue on pragmatism.

Constructivists, influenced by Wittgensteinian thought, constitute the second line of reasoning. This was particularly evident in the work of Kratochwil (1989) and Onuf (1989). Two ideas were central. First, the concept of 'rule following' implied that rules do not contain the rules of their application and are hence dependent on practical knowledge and practical reasoning. Second, the concept of 'speech acts' drew attention not only to the importance of 'speaking' – a vital component of widespread definitions of practice – but also led to the recognition that language is not only, or primarily, descriptive, but productive or performative of realities. In these works, practice is used considerably as an important concept. For instance, Koslowski and Kratochwil (1994: 216) foreshadowed the practice-theoretical argument when they suggested that 'any given international system does not exist because of immutable structures, but rather the very structures are dependent for their reproduction on the practices of the actors'. Transformations occur 'when actors, through their practices, change the rules and norms constitutive of international interaction' (Koslowski and Kratochwil, 1994: 216). If many important practice-theoretical ideas started to be expressed in these works, their major theoretical focus was a different one.

Third, the work of Anthony Giddens visibly influenced the discipline. This was largely the result of Wendt's (1987) translation work, which soon – despite the protests of the Wittgensteinians (Kratochwil, 2000; Onuf, 2002) – became recognized as the authoritative voice of constructivism. For Wendt, the work of Giddens was of particular importance to make the discipline aware of the 'agency-structure' problematique. Giddens not only provided the foundations for a meticulous reconstruction of the dilemma (see Wendt, 1987: 356ff),[4] he also provided an innovative solution in that he proposed the concept of practice. Following Giddens, practices negotiate between structure and agency[5] – an insight that shaped the discussion in IR's agency and structure debate, but did not lead to substantial interest in

[4] Wendt used the broader term structuration theory to refer to his work and also included Roy Bashkar and Pierre Bourdieu in this category.

[5] For a detailed reconstruction and critique of the practice theory of Giddens, see Nicolini (2013).

further conceptualizing the notion of practices, as Doty (1997) noted. Nonetheless, Wendt introduced an important practice-theoretical thinker to IR, whose insights for practice theorizing remain to this date underdeveloped in the discipline.

Fourth, neo-institutionalist theory, arriving in the discipline from sociology, provided another line of reasoning. In particular, in March and Olson's (1998) foundational text, practice is an important category. Indeed, institutions were defined in neo-institutional theory as 'settled practices'. Although, in the majority of studies, practice remains an abstract concept rarely filled with empirical content, since the concept of institution does all the work, scholars such as Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore who develop neo-institutionalism stress the significance of institutional culture as action (e.g. in Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). Recent scholarship within neo-institutionalism is concerned with the concept of 'routine', which has many affinities with the concept of practice.[6]

Fifth, post-structuralist thoughts gained traction with the turn to culturalist theories in the discipline in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, the first article we could identify in a major IR journal that extensively draws on the concept of practice develops a post-structuralist perspective. In a 1988 article in *International Studies Quarterly*, Shapiro, Bonham and Heradstveit (1988) argued for the importance of what they called 'discursive practices'. The emphasis on practices here highlights the contingency of structures of meaning. It points to the need that such structures require to be constantly enacted to have constitutive effects on the identity construction of subjects and on policy practices (Doty, 1993; Hansen, 2006; Milliken, 1999). Practices became the concept to study how discourses are contested and how in these processes of contestation some become hegemonic, while others turn into subjugated knowledges (Ashley, 1989; Doty, 1996; Milliken, 1999). While a focus on discursive practices primarily directed attention to the constitutive dimension of linguistic practices, the notion of speech acts – acting through speaking – already vital in the work of the Wittgensteinian-influenced constructivists, added an emphasis on the material context in which words are uttered and on their direct material consequences. The focus is on speech as a performance in the world, which leaves a felt impact (Buzan and Waever, 2003; Waever, 1995).

[6] See, in particular, the development within organizational sociology, where much of the neo-institutionalist theorizing is driven forward. See e.g. Miettinen and Virkkunen (2005) for a summary and discussion.

Sixth, for feminists, gendered practices of discrimination have formed a key object of their study. While postmodern feminists focused on how gendered roles are created in language (Zalewski, 2000), many others looked at the micro-level political practices that have an impact on women. Among the different research programmes in IR, feminism was perhaps the one which took the embodied nature of practices the most seriously. Simultaneously, with their emancipatory focus, feminists have highlighted the contingency of practices, but also their structural effects on creating gendered forms of discrimination (Goldstein, 2001; Tickner, 1997). Feminist scholars have conducted deep ethnographic research to develop experiential knowledge of everyday IR practices and highlight the often hidden, yet key, role that women perform in international politics. They analysed such phenomena as the gendered practices of conflict resolution (Tickner, 2014), practices of social mobilization (True, 2003), international business practices (Hooper, 2001), practices of prostitution around military bases as forms of diplomacy (Moon, 1997) and practices of rape as a weapon of war (Enloe, 2000). The goal of this research has been to develop 'practical knowledge' (Tickner, 2014: 22), that is, not only knowledge about micro-level practices but also applicable knowledge which can contribute to the emancipation of women (True, 2008). To achieve this goal, already in 2005, feminist IR scholars advocated innovative research strategies, such as participatory action research, which are now gaining more widespread traction in IR (Tickner, 2005). In sum, feminist scholarship has developed a rich understanding of practices on which the current turn to practice could perhaps rely more than it has done hitherto. Feminists, in turn, could gain new theoretical insights from practice theorizing in IR but have so far been reluctant to fully engage with the approach. The reason for this may be that they have been studying practices for a long time now and feel that they might not have much to gain from the turn to practices, and, moreover, their engagement with practices has not been fully acknowledged.

Seventh, a range of other theoretical perspectives needs to be taken into account. These perspectives have influenced the practice debate, albeit often more implicitly. Like feminist thought, Marxist scholarship has an emancipatory dimension and is interested in the practical activities that can lead to change in social reality. The objective for Marxists is to develop theories that inform practices, which will then render the theories obsolete, because they will lead to a change in social reality (Kilminster, 1982). Rather than studying practices per se then, Marxists have focused on developing theories with practical value.

Approaches that have not primarily studied the social constitution of reality have also paid attention to the role of practices. Classical realism, for example, deemed 'practical reasoning' a key element for good statecraft (Brown, 2012). Classical realists have emphasized the importance of statesmen's prudence and practical wisdom for conducting sound foreign policies. Practical experience in the real world is key, and theoretical knowledge derived from studies only plays a supporting role. These kinds of practical experience come with age, and older statesmen appear to be more adept in conducting sound foreign policies. Classical realist scholarship differs from current practice theory work, however, in that it focuses on the intellect and entirely omits one of the key foci of international practice theories, namely embodied habitual action.

Moreover, in English School scholarship, practice serves a role, albeit subordinate to norms and rules. Thus, in his study of international order, Bull highlights 'rules of general application, like the rules of coexistence, arise out of custom and established practice, and are in some cases confirmed by multilateral conventions' (Bull, 2012: 68). For Bull, international order is maintained by institutions such as diplomacy, war, international law and the balance of power. These institutions can easily be studied from a practice perspective if the focus shifts slightly from the normative dimension to practical doings. Other English school scholars have similarly concentrated their attention on the normative side of practices – for example, Wight (1966) and Watson (1982) in their work on diplomacy. Bain (2003) and Jackson (2000) have made use of the notion of practices to get a better understanding of prevailing norms, but in doing so they often failed to study the actual material manifestations of practices; rather, they concentrated on the analyses of texts about practices (Navari, 2011). In their work, they were inspired by Oakshott's conception of 'practical activity' that is 'rule-governed' (Navari, 2011: 615).

These approaches all gave the concept of practice some prominence in IR. They hence allowed for core ideas that shape today's practice thinking to gradually influence the discipline's theory debates and opened up the intellectual space in which practice theories could thrive. Foregrounding the importance of episteme, of practical knowledge and reasoning, of the performativity of speaking, the interest in overcoming dichotomies between structure and agency, or questions of how activities become routinized and form institutions, how structures of meaning condition actions and how knowledge becomes embodied, are all relevant to practice thinking. In this sense, Ringmar (2014) was right, when he argued that 'practices of one kind or another are what scholars of IR always have studied'. In contrast to these discourses,

contemporary international practice theorizing promotes 'the concept of practice from a supporting to a leading role' (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015: 450).

The Status and Contours of Contemporary Practice Theorizing in IR

It is noteworthy that the notions of 'practice theory' and 'practice turn' were introduced in the discipline by relating them to these earlier works. In particular, Neumann (2002) argued that post-structuralists had underplayed the importance of practice, and Pouliot (2008) discussed practice thinking in relation to earlier constructivisms and neo-institutionalist theorizing. On the surface, it appears that Neumann and Pouliot presented opposing arguments. For Neumann, practice theorizing was to be seen largely as a continuation of established research, an argument that then later became presented in different cloths by Ringmar (2014) and McCourt (2016). In this perspective, practice theories are a continuation of, complement to or advancement of existing theorizing. It was a reminder to constructivists that discursive formations are made by both sayings and doings; texts needed to be supplemented with practices. By contrast, Pouliot (2008) argued that we should think about practice theorizing as a break from earlier theorizing. For him, it had to be seen as a novel alternative to established constructivist theorizing, which he called a 'logic of practicality'. Most practice work in IR has embraced this latter position. The argument is that practice theorizing provides new tools and reveals phenomena that are fundamental for the working of IR, and which have been neglected in prior research.

The positions can be reconciled by drawing on Reckwitz's (2002) categories that were introduced by Bueger and Gadinger (2015). Reckwitz argued that practice theories should be seen as part of culturalist theorizing. He convincingly showed that cultural theorizing fundamentally differs from works that adopt a logic of consequences and appropriateness and focus on interests and norms, respectively. While the difference to the rational actor model of the logic of consequences is obvious, the crucial difference between norm-oriented research and culturalist theorizing has been best demonstrated in IR by Sending (2002). As Sending showed, the logic of appropriateness fails to account for the collective patterns of action and for changes in ideational structures that are vital in culturalist theorizing. Reckwitz (2002) demonstrated that practice theory is a unique perspective within culturalist theorizing, which substantively differs from the other culturalist approaches

that centre on discourses and structures of meaning on the one hand and cognition on the other. If we adopt Reckwitz's distinction, we recognize a fundamental difference within constructivism, namely between those that adopt a culturalist perspective and those that rely on a logic of appropriateness.[7] It then becomes clear that many of the voices that see practice theorizing as standing for a break argue against the constructivism that draws on the logic of appropriateness. By contrast, those that emphasize the continuity of practice thought foreground the shared assumptions of the different strands of culturalist theorizing and point to the many relations that connect practice thought to the pragmatist or post-structuralist works, discussed earlier. Without doubt, this does not solve the question as to what practice theory brings to the table and what it allows us to do, see and say differently. A debate over whether practice theory represents a Kuhnian revolution and a paradigm shift in IR is, however, unnecessary. Instead, we have to appreciate the variety within practice theorizing and the various links these diverse approaches establish to earlier research. We now turn to the question of how to grasp the complexity and plurality of practice theorizing.

Fault Lines: Categorizing Practice Theorizing in IR

In the recent turn to practice, IR scholars have taken inspiration from a whole series of sociological and theoretical approaches outside of IR when developing their theoretical perspectives on practices, from which different notions of practice have resulted. Bueger and Gadinger (2018) distinguish seven approaches, namely those inspired by (1) Pierre Bourdieu, (2) Michel Foucault, (3) Etienne Wenger, (4) Theodore Schatzki and (5) Luc Boltanski, as well as the looser research programmes of (6) Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and (7) Narrative Theory. The Bourdieusian notion of practice understands practices as embodied, and often subconsciously executed activities that perpetuate existing power dynamics and thus stabilize established social orders. Foucault's highly prolific and disparate scholarship has generated a variety of concepts that made inroads into practice theorizing. One of those avenues focuses on discursive practices in interaction with bodily disciplines and highlights the contingency of established power dynamics (rather than order), married with historicity, which combine in the method of genealogy. By contrast, a Wengerian approach to practices

[7] Several commentators, among them Guzzini (2000), Hopf (1998) and Fierke (2010), have noted a major divide within constructivism.

emphasizes the communitarian dimension of practices and how they integrate individuals and groups into larger collective wholes. It focuses on processes of social learning, but does not pay as much attention to materiality, historicity and power. Practice approaches inspired by Schatzki conceive of practices as 'nexuses of doings and sayings' (Schatzki, 1996: 89) that are amalgamated into larger wholes, such as the practice of central banking. Rules ensure societal consistency. Practices are open-ended and evolving; they create social orders by fluidly establishing relations between their parts. A practice understanding from a Boltanskian perspective focuses on the normative dimension underpinning practices, by directing attention to the everyday practices of justification through which actors adjudicate between different normative orders. The focus is on contestations and the fragility of orders. Narrative approaches focus on linguistic practices. They conceive of storytelling as a social practice which consists of a set of different linguistic practices and helps to create communities and social identity. Narratives have a stabilizing effect on practices and order the world into coherent configurations. Lastly, ANT studies material objects and social practices as parts of contingent actor-networks that can break down at any moment. The focus is on everyday, micro-level practices in their material and discursive dimensions, with little attention paid to power dynamics and longer-term historical processes.

This list of different conceptions of practices merits further expansion in light of new publications. American pragmatism, and notably the work of John Dewey with his notions of practical learning, deserve a mention (see Adler, 2019). But IR scholars keep discovering new theoretical inspirations to study practices, and they also develop new theorizations from their empirical discoveries – a testimony to the vibrancy of practice theorizing in IR. Only one contribution to this volume can be adequately described as neatly falling into the categories listed above. Adler and Faubert substantially draw on Wenger's concept of communities of practice. Walters borrows Foucault's notion of counter-conduct, but considerably expands on it and takes it into new theoretical dimensions in the light of Walters's empirical observations. Gadinger combines three of the approaches listed above to analyse the normativity of practices. The other contributors work with more heterogeneous and diverse resources and hence raise questions about how well international practice theorizing can be grasped through a set number of discrete approaches.

Identifying a precise set of theoretical approaches that inspire practice theorizing in IR only impedes understanding of the emerging and plural nature of the current practice debate. Equating approaches with

a single theorist risks contradicting an understanding of theorizing as a practice, that is, as a process of continuous revisions and readjustments. It invites a focus on interpreting canonical texts instead of explaining and understanding real-world phenomena, of putting theory before practice. Yet most of the branches of practice theorizing in IR are not so much about introspections of the grand writings of particular theorists as they are evolving approaches. Bourdieu's work, for instance, has inspired broader thinking on fields and field theory on the one hand, while work on the concept of habits, on the other hand, significantly departs from the author's original understanding and intentions. Work on communities of practice has evolved in a way that Wenger is hardly more than one reference point among others, and so on. Identifying such approaches also raises questions in terms of the approaches that are not mentioned. For example, to the list above inspired by Bueger and Gadinger (2018) one could add assemblage thinking, which is closely related to ANT but should not be equated with it, symbolic interactionist perspectives or feminist approaches of practices, for instance developed in conversation with Judith Butler's understanding of performativity. This raises the question of whether organizing the debate in such a way is the right way forward.

Thinking with Fault Lines

Instead, we put forward an alternative pathway to group the different conceptions of practice that exist in IR and the ones that are still to emerge. We propose to think in terms of 'fault lines' when delineating the different notions of practice in the discipline. To think in this way is productive as it brings difference and diversity to the fore. Unfortunately, it also carries the risk of reproducing rather problematic dichotomies that practice theories have set out to transcend. We can think of fault lines as rifts or cracks in theorization, where a particular piece of research lies either on one side of the crack or on the other, and it can be very close to the edge, or quite far removed from it. Some scholars, of course, have succeeded and others will succeed to build bridges across the cracks. Bridge-building, however, often requires considerable efforts. Several commentators on practices have already alluded to some of these fault lines (e.g. Bueger and Gadinger, 2015, 2018; Frost and Lechner, 2018; Kustermans, 2016; Wille and Schindler, 2019). We propose to divide the conception of practices along five fault lines, those of (1) stability and change, (2) materiality and consciousness, (3) the everyday and the aggregate, (4) power and communities and (5) theory and practice.

The first fault line concerns the question whether scholars think of practices as primarily stabilizing features or as ways for conceptualizing change. Accounts differ in terms of whether they see practice thinking as implying a continuous process of change (e.g. through the principle of indexicality) and, hence, the puzzle becomes a question of whether and how the social achieves any form of stability, or whether the core challenge is to study and understand change, taking stability as the normal state. For example, Bernstein and Laurence oppose the continuous variation of day-to-day practices with a certain normative stability. Pouliot's answer is that, while practices perpetually vary at the micro-level, only a few of these variations actually get retained and lead to macro-level change.

Second, the question of materiality and consciousness largely concerns the importance scholars attribute to the embodied nature of practices versus the role of discourses, consciousness and normativity. While all practice theorizing agrees on the material and practical effects of practices, some practice scholarship puts more weight on studying discursive practices, the underlying norms inherent in practices, and primarily focuses on the immaterial side of practices as the key explanans. Others insist that bodies and material objects are the primary carrier of practice and hence contend that research needs to be initiated from there. In Chapter 10, Austin and Leander propose an approach that highlights the material dimensions of practices and various tools that, for example, render specific forms of torture invisible, and how this influences the emotionality of the observer. By contrast, Gadinger emphasizes the linguistic justification practices that enter the discussions of the ethicality of particular practices. He thus focuses on the reflective and conscious dimension of practices.

A third fault line concerns the question of the scale of practice theorizing. Here one can usefully distinguish between those studies that are concerned with larger aggregates in terms of time, space, agency and practices, and those scholars who focus on the everyday actions of individuals in concrete settings. The former study, for example, the aggregated practices of warfare over centuries or highlight the profiteering practices companies engage in. In the latter understanding, any larger aggregates are dependent on enactments in concrete situations. In Chapter 9, Schäfer documents how specific micro-practices of drafting documents define the world heritage programme. Kratochwil stresses that taking praxis seriously will imply investigating the choices that actors make in distinct situations. Others, such as Adler and Faubert, Dumouchel and Pouliot, argue for operating at a larger scale.

For Pouliot, evolution operates at the structural level. He believes that it is necessary to consider the structure of different practices to understand which micro-level variations are retained.

The fourth fault line opposes those perspectives that see practices as naturalizing inherent power dimensions in societies, and those approaches that focus on the integrative, communitarian and/or relational dimension of practices. In the latter case, scholars highlight the community-building effects of practices, how they create shared understandings and provide for societal cohesion, or how they contribute to the formation of networks and assemblages. By contrast, others suggest that this community-building dimension of practices actually camouflages inherent power dynamics. The contrast is the most marked between a Bourdieusian and Foucaultian approach to practices versus a Wengerian community of practice approach or narrative perspectives, but these differences run through all practice theorizing. In Chapter 5, Gadinger, with his focus on learning shared social values, emphasizes the communitarian dimension of practices. By contrast, Walters highlights the power dimensions that are inherent in practices and how ordinary individuals can seize those opportunities to mount large-scale challenges against the state and beyond.

A fifth fault line concerns the relations between 'theory' and 'practice' that scholars rely on. Lechner and Frost (2018) have phrased it as a question about whether theorizing evolves from the *outside* or from *within* a practice – an argument that follows from Kratochwil's plea to start thinking from the midst, give up the search for coherence and an overarching logic of practice and instead attend to the messiness of practical activities. To start from the outside is to construct general categories of practice, which are then used to identify what qualifies as a practice and to study its composition. This leads one to start out from theory rather than practice and to continue to entertain the hope for a more general theory of practice. Those arguing for initiating from the midst of practice abandon such hope. As called for paradigmatically by Kratochwil (2011), there is nothing general about a practice and, in this sense, theorizing cannot strive for universality. Identifying a practice then implies to search for patterns that reveal themselves through empirical research and to search for those normative understandings and actor descriptions that give a practice coherence. In Chapter 8, Pouliot develops a more general theory of how practices change at the macro-level with the help of an evolutionary vocabulary, whereas Walters highlights the situated dimension of counter-conduct as a form of power that is not timeless but needs to be adapted to specific circumstances.

This fault line can also be rendered as a methodological question, as a question from where to initiate the empirical study of practice. Studying from within implies a certain degree of immersion and participating in a practice, which allows one to identify patterns and the understandings and descriptions of actors. Those prioritizing theory over practice are less dependent on immersion and the more elaborate conceptual apparatuses allow them to produce insights through more distant research techniques and spectator positions.

These fault lines offer a productive way of introducing order and a sense of debate to what often appears to be the 'mess' of practice theorizing. The chapters in this volume first of all tease out why and how practice-driven research has already lived up to its promises, and then show what practice thought adds to the table. They draw out the relations of practice thinking to other IR theories, in particular constructivism, and detail how practice theories provide new conceptualizations and new empirical observations. In offering various answers as to how to address the fault lines, they also establish new directions for further developing the practice-theoretical project.

Structure and Contributions of the Volume

We have divided the volume into four parts. In the first part, following this Introduction, Ted Hopf investigates the criticisms articulated against practice theories in the discipline thus far, and demonstrates how the chapters in this edited volume address some of those shortcomings. Part II consists of chapters that explore key concepts in the discipline of IR. They demonstrate how a focus on practices allows for a new take on these concepts that leads to original theoretical insights and unfamiliar empirical lenses. The chapters in this part discuss the concepts of knowledge, norms, normativity, power, authority and change. Part III introduces concepts that are at the margins of IR theory but are key for practice-theoretical thinking. Part of the value-added of practice theorizing in IR is that it permits scholars to shed light on phenomena that the broader IR discipline has so far not paid much attention to. Repetition and visuality are two concepts for which practice theorizing is uniquely positioned to elaborate upon. These concepts allow practice scholars to establish important links to other turns discussed in the discipline, in particular the post-structuralist debate and the visual and performative turns. Part IV offers two concluding reflections. The first represents a conceptual critique of practice approaches. The second highlights how concepts form the primary building blocks of international practice theories and how conversations around concepts

form a semiotic web that characterizes the practice approach in IR, as highlighted by the conversations between the chapters in this volume.

Part II starts with Emanuel Adler and Michael Faubert's chapter, which revisits the concept of knowledge by engaging with IR approaches to the study of knowledge, primarily, but not exclusively, the epistemic community framework. The chapter suggests focusing on epistemic communities of practice, a concept which highlights that knowledge and power play a ubiquitous role in international politics. The theoretical framework of epistemic communities of practice broadens the epistemic communities research agenda. Practices are pervasive in international politics, and knowledge is always inherent in those practices, because practices can be performed more or less competently. The actors, who perform well, automatically obtain more power. The chapter illustrates the role of epistemic communities of practice by focusing on the establishment of a nuclear arms control verification practice, particularly regarding test-ban treaties, during the Cold War, and the recent spread of a populist 'post-truth' community of practice and its capacity to disrupt international order.

In the following chapter, Steven Bernstein and Marion Laurence investigate the possible disjunctures that can occur between norms and practices and which scholars can only notice if they focus on practices as a separate ontological category. The authors argue that a practice approach allows us to discern these disjunctures, and that these disjunctures can lead to changes in international norms in the long term. The chapter thus illustrates how practice-theoretical scholarship can complement constructivism, and it provides a new theoretical model to explain international norm change. Empirically the chapter stresses how a whole series of everyday practices in United Nations peacekeeping operations seem – at first glance – to undermine impartiality, a core legitimating norm of those operations. The authors study such practices as the use of force and taking sides in targeted offensive operations, collaboration with host governments in conflict zones, and post-conflict peace-building, including such activities as the drafting of constitutions, the organization of elections and the training of police officers. Interestingly, staff do not see these practices as transgressing existing norms or as establishing new norms, but rather as practical tools that serve to accomplish their mission. The practices do not represent a deliberate challenge to the norm of impartiality, but rather a shift in standards of competent performance, all the while the norm of impartiality remains in place. Over time, however, the practical imperatives on the ground and resulting changes in practices may lead to norm change. This process highlights not just change from below, change

that comes from the daily practices of actual local actors, but also the unintentionality of it all, from bottom to top.

In opposition to Bernstein and Laurence, Frank Gadinger develops the argument that practices always contain a normative dimension, and he suggests that studying norms from a practice perspective would provide value-added to norm constructivism. Normativity is the normative dimension of practices, which also highlights the fluidity of norms. Gadinger introduces three key advantages of normativity in the chapter: normativity includes a power dimension into the study of norms, as norms draw lines between legitimate and illegitimate practitioners. A communities of practice perspective furthermore highlights how newcomers do not just learn how to perform competently within a given community, but simultaneously, and typically unconsciously, learn the moral standards of appropriate behaviour. Third, a practice focus draws attention to the practices of justification and contestation, based on which the normative standards of appropriate behaviour are disputed, and thus highlights the contingent and unstable nature of norms. Gadinger illustrates these advantages of putting practices first in normative scholarship with a few examples. For instance, directing attention to practices of justification in the Abu Ghraib prison controversy permits one to identify the controversy between proponents of two normative perspectives, on the one hand the prohibition of torture, and on the other hand a technocratic perspective about the alleged necessity for efficiency in a context of war. A practice perspective demonstrates the complex and layered nature of the normative environment, whereas a norms perspective might lead one to conclude that the norm of the prohibition of torture has come to an end.

In his chapter, William Walters studies the actions of the French farmer Cédric Herrou, who, with the support of friends, smuggles migrants across the border with Italy, because he feels that the state is not responding adequately to the migrant crisis. In this activity, Herrou makes use of his practices and skills as a farmer in rough mountainous terrain and readapts those practices to new objectives. He purposefully publicizes his activities and voluntarily undergoes trial to raise awareness about the inadequate response of the state to the migrant crisis. He creates a scene – he infuses everyday practices with emotions to generate affect and obtain a public response. Herrou engages in counter-conduct. Foucault developed the concept of counter-conduct to define practices of resistance to power that are based on ethical grounds and envisage a different, normatively superior form of governing. Counter-conduct is a unique practice-oriented approach to power. It falls in line with Foucault's tendency to offer, not a fixed typology of power,

as is common in IR scholarship, but rather to analyse the historically contingent, case-focused, localized and situated forms of power that emerge. Counter-conduct allows us to think about the way that individual actors – dissidents, conscientious objectors and so forth – can make a difference in contentious politics. This goes against the grain of a certain social bias in IR, which tends to focus on major social movements and social forces. IR tends to consider a focus on individuals as old-style history. Yet, as recent cases such as 'Snowden' imply,[8] there is a need for new tools to make sense of situations in which individuals emerge as key figures and nodal points of resistance. In addition, Walters foregrounds the often neglected and perhaps even rejected method of 'description'. Detailed contextualized reconstruction of a meaningful 'doing' is perfectly consistent with the promise of practice in IR, as it reveals precisely how meaning is being made in the most 'de-theorized' site a scholar can create.

Joelle Dumouchel's chapter argues for a contribution that practice scholarship can make to the concept of authority as a form of power that is distinct from violence on the one hand and persuasion on the other hand. She claims that practice scholarship adds a dynamic dimension to constructivist and interactionist accounts of authority that permits scholars to theorize how the intersubjective context under which authoritative relations are considered as legitimate emerges, changes and disappears. Practice scholars focus on two distinct processes, on the one hand on the practices of claiming and recognizing authority, and on the other hand on the practices that produce an object of authority, over which authority can then be claimed. Empirically, Dumouchel studies the emergence of central bankers' authority, which has been an interactive process between the production of central banking as an independent object of governance, the creation of the distinct political and social role of the central banker and the recognition of central bankers' expertise.

Against historical institutionalism, and the more prevalent assumption across the social sciences that self-contained individuals change the social world through reflection and calculation, Vincent Pouliot encourages the reader to consider the messiness and incoherence in the evolution of social orders. Social orders evolve gradually over time

[8] Edward Snowden was a subcontractor of the CIA, who leaked information about the American National Security Agency's surveillance programs. Following his revelations populations and governments across the world were shocked about the extent of the NSA's surveillance of ordinary citizens, diplomats, and governments, even of 'friendly' nations. Snowden is sought in the United States for violations of the Espionage Act, but he escaped to Russia. While some treat him as a traitor, others see him as a whistleblower.

and emerge from agents' struggles over competent practices, and improvisations in the form of various slippages from standard ways of doing things. Individual practices vary considerably, but whether these individual micro-level variations amount to more than minor adjustments to the prevailing social order depends upon the environment of surrounding practices, and three types of practices in particular: (1) demonstratory practices, which permit new practices to be displayed publicly; (2) cross-cutting practices, which allow new practices to travel to other issues areas, and therefore also multiply audiences; and (3) codification practices, which serve to codify and therefore stabilize newly emerged practices. Pouliot illustrates his approach on UN Security Council practices and their variation during the Libya crisis. He finds that giving the dissenting Libyan delegation the floor at the UN Security Council had to be justified as falling within the realm of competent performances, although it was an alteration of standing practices. He concludes, however, that this variation is one of the many instances that is unlikely to be selected and retained.

Part III starts with Hilmar Schäfer's chapter, which analyses the practices of drafting final documents in the UNESCO world heritage programme – one of the most widely ratified treaties, currently with 193 signatories. Schäfer observes the continuity in drafting practices despite frequent changes in committee membership and diplomatic representation. He suggests that the notion of routine is insufficient to capture this phenomenon, and argues that we need to focus on the concept of repetition to grasp the co-occurrence of continuity and change. To do so, he enriches practice-theoretical scholarship with post-structuralist insights. The notion of repetition involves doing almost the same thing as has been done before, as exact replication is impossible. Furthermore, the context in which the doing occurs differs every time, which means that the practices and the meaning they contain will also slightly vary each time. The repetition of practices thus always introduces the possible instability of those practices, and therefore the possibility of change at the micro-level. The chapter complements Pouliot's discussion of change, in that while Pouliot focuses primarily on the role of selective retention, in the evolutionary vocabulary, Schäfer focuses on one mechanism of creative variation.

Jonathan Luke Austin and Anna Leander's chapter develops a new mode of power. Who or what is seen or, inversely, remains unseen is essential for socio-political hierarchies. Regimes of visibility endow actants with greater or lesser (in)visibility 'capital', generating important political consequences: regimes of visibility carve up what can be seen, heard and felt about the world. Politics is about vision, and the

anti-political is about attempting to make invisible; crime remains best unseen if one wants to remain unaccused of it. The chapter illustrates the effects of regimes of visibility in a comparative analysis of extraordinary rendition (and torture) in the case of the United States and the Syrian Arab Republic. When the United States transports prisoners of war, they bind them to the floor by mesh cables, have them wear heavy-duty earmuffs, and make them wear hoods. The equipment ensures total sensory deprivation, and immovability. Soldiers appear relaxed while transporting their 'cargo'. By contrast, Syrian soldiers do not have the same kind of equipment to ensure the docility of their prisoners and have to beat and whip them. They appear to be involved in torture. Regimes of visibility have hidden the US torture programme, which was just as brutal, albeit smaller in scale than the Syrian one. It is important that practice scholars sensitize themselves to the concept of regimes of visibility, because the study of any other set of practices is filtered through regimes of visibility: practices of visibility translate the way we see all practices.

The final part of the book, Part IV, starts with Friedrich Kratochwil's chapter, which provides a conceptual critique of contemporary practice theorizing in IR, arguing that the current debate is destined to fall into the same traps as earlier waves of constructivist theorizing. Taking practices seriously, the author argues, entails a much more fundamental change in the research orientation than just having a new formal object, such as focusing on practices rather than on 'power' or 'systems'. It requires giving up on the idea that theorizing, that is, the universal application of abstract logical principles to concrete situations, is a practically useful endeavour. Kratochwil cautions practice scholars in particular against importing concepts from other disciplines without accounting for the semiotic context into which they are embedded. Instead, he encourages scholars to focus on practical judgement in concrete, temporally and contextually specified situations. This entails identifying a particular situation, the relevant facts and the appropriate, and potentially contradictory, norms and principles that apply to the case. The practical imperatives of the situation require a quick diagnostic, a criterion of completeness in assessing the situation, experience and imagination in applying analogical reasoning and a flexible heuristics.

The final chapter, by Alena Drieschova and Christian Bueger, concludes by showcasing in which sense and to what extent this edited volume has laid out the foundations for conceiving of practice theories as a distinct set of approaches to IR. The volume proposes a new way for setting out the intellectual identity of practice scholarship and how it

relates to other forms of IR research. Concepts, rather than generalized systems of assertions (theory), provide the building blocks of international practice theories and allow for unity in diversity. The conclusion of the volume provides a rationale for the focus on concepts, rather than intellectual figures, theoretical approaches or vocabularies. This approach helps to provide a shared direction while remaining committed to the heterogeneity and plurality of practice thinking. The volume has thus structured its discussion around concepts. This has opened up collective, dynamic and necessarily open-ended conversations to define the theoretical approach and to delimit it towards other approaches. Each of the contributions to the volume looks at practices through the prism of a key concept in IR and engages with their interlocutors through that prism. The conclusion sketches out the semiotic web of interrelated concepts that emerges from these conversations. It investigates the links between concepts and reflects on the epistemological and methodological importance of understanding the flexibility of the vocabulary of international practice theories.