1 Introduction
Norm Research in Theory and Practice

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It has been three decades since constructivism emerged as an approach to the study of international relations. Its emergence at that time is not surprising, as it took place in the wake of one of the largest international events of the twentieth century – the peaceful end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union. Those events had fundamentally challenged the then dominant theoretical perspective in International Relations (IR), that of neo-realism (Kratochwil 1986). They had shown the importance of ideas as part of the explanation (Lebow and Risse-Kappen 1995), whether it was the Helsinki process opening up the Soviet Union to human rights challenges (Thomas 2001), the role of wider transnational forces, or Soviet 'New Thinking' within its own foreign policy (Evangelista 1999). Today, faced with the Russian aggression towards Ukraine, questions about the role and function of fundamental norms and their contestation have reached a new urgency. Do fundamental norms endure as a quasi-constitutional 'glue' (Polanyi 1957) of the future global order and the many suborders it entails? The rising number of contestations of foundational constitutional elements across the globe (Lake et al. 2021; Börzel and Zürn 2021), including in some of the world's leading democracies, such as the USA and the UK, indicate a shift in the target of contestatory practices from contesting norms to contesting order. Does the kind of fundamental breach of the liberal international order (LIO) as witnessed by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the "deep contestation" (Lake and Wiener 2023) it triggers undermine or strengthen global order? Answers to these questions depend on detailed and updated knowledge about norms research.

As we are observing contestations of the world in a context of polycrisis (Tooze 2023) including a range of policy sectors such as security, climate, health, economics, migration, and politics, *Contesting the World* comprises a representative selection of advanced studies of norm contestation conducted by a group of world-leading scholars. The intention is to present the potential of a field that has been growing over more than

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three decades and to identify challenges that are generated by these crises and what to make of them as students of IR (Wiener and Puetter 2009: 1). To that end, the contributors have been asked to explain and illustrate how to best use the toolkit of norms studies by distinguishing norm-types and practices of contestation and interpretation that bring norms to light and reveal their role and function.

Key academic work in the 1980s initiated the constructivist turn – not least Alexander Wendt's (1987; see also Dessler 1989) – and began to situate the agent–structure problem as a critique of neo-realism's structural focus, as did Kratochwil and Ruggie's (1986: 764) criticism that regime theory faced the debilitating problem that its "epistemology fundamentally contradicts ontology!" But the 1990s became a watershed for the development of constructivism following Nicholas Onuf's (1989: 1) coining of the term in 1989 – as he had argued, "people always construct, or constitute, social reality, even as their being, which can only be social, is constructed for them."

Within the next five years, constructivism directly addressed some of the key questions – and problems – for both neo-realism and wider rationalist approaches, including the role played by national interests (Finnemore 1996; Weldes 1996) and how ideas and norms could be critical factors even in the sphere of national security (Katzenstein 1996). As Jeffrey Checkel (1998: 326) would note, the constructivist approach opened up "the black box of interest and identity formation; state interests emerge from and are endogenous to interaction with structures." It did this by bringing in, as Adler put it, a "conception of social science that is – *social*" (Adler 1997: 320). Such a conception intersubjectively focused on the behaviours of both state and other actors in conjunction with the constitution of normative structures of meaning as an understudied and undertheorised dimension in IR (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986).

Thirty years on, constructivism has become entrenched as one of the main perspectives in IR, with a quarter of IR academics identifying it as their approach to the study of the field (Maliniak et al. 2017).[1] As an approach, constructivism remains unified around the concept that ideas – along with material factors – matter at the international and

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[1] The question posed was "Which of the following best describes your approach to the study of IR?" Realism was the second most cited approach, with 18 per cent of respondents selecting it, while almost 27 per cent stated that they did not use paradigmatic analysis. There do remain questions about how entrenched constructivism is in critical gatekeeping institutions, such as key US-based universities, with Jelena Subotic (2017) finding that only 6 per cent of academics in the fifty top-ranked political science departments identify as such.

transnational levels, and that norms, in particular, play a key role in constituting and guiding the behaviour of states and a plethora of other actors at these levels. It is seen as a pluralist theoretical 'mosaic' (Diez and Wiener 2018); but it continues to have its own divides, frequently identified as falling between 'conventional' and 'critical' constructivists. These divisions were initially cast around their theoretical positioning – in particular the use of social theory – and epistemological positioning, with conventional constructivists generally using positivist/post-positivist approaches or a scientific realist epistemology, while critical constructivists tended to use an interpretivist epistemology (Hopf 1998).[2]

This divide in framing constructivism has also given emergence to new interpretations. It may reflect how practices of contestation are understood as either solely problematic, as reflections of the material interests of the existing geopolitical order (Lake et al. 2021), or as an integral part of norm creation (Havercroft and Duvall 2017: 206).[3] It may, alternatively, indicate a generational divide reflecting the evolution of constructivism as a research approach.[4] Or, as Simon Pratt (2020: 62–3) has recently suggested, it may merely reflect different waves of constructivism, with the first bringing forward the concept of norms and the second focusing on their dynamic nature. Irrespective of how we understand these divides, however, the critical question becomes: how have our understandings of norms developed over this period?

We use this Introduction to the book to make three main arguments. The first is that the process of norm contestation not only significantly aids our understanding of norms but has the potential to be the primary theoretical framework through which norms are understood. We show this by considering the history of norm research as a series of three distinct and theoretical moves: first creating an interest in ideas and social facts in IR, then focusing on norm adaptation, and finally shifting to a view of norms as processes. While each move has generally occupied a particular time, and each follows approximately in sequence from the previous one, each

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[2] This labelling is certainly not uncontested in itself, as Roxanne Doty (2004: 379) has noted, because much of 'critical' constructivism has "been subjected to so much intentional misrepresentation on the part of those who self-identify as 'critical constructivists'." Other language used to frame this divide includes 'modern' and 'postmodern' by Richard Price and Chris Reus-Smit (1998: 267–8), who note that the principal difference "tends to be analytical"; or "conventional" and "radical" (Fierke and Jørgensen 2001: 5).

[3] In fact, Jonathan Havercroft and Raymond Duvall see these distinctions as so critical that they propose a third term, 'agonistic constructivists', to incorporate scholars who examine norms "as principles and standards constantly open to generation, critique, and renewal through practices of contestation at all scales of human life from the local to the global" (Havercroft and Duvall 2017: 206).

[4] For a critical assessment of this divide, see Lantis and Wunderlich (2022).

move has also had significant overlaps and interconnections. The second argument is that norm contestation illuminates how norms emerge, change, and are replaced, but, as a process, it is inherently *neutral*. While arguments have been made that norm contestation undermines norms and is therefore a negative process, we argue that contestation is actor-driven, and it is actors' choices that determine whether a particular contestation affects a norm in a positive or a negative way. Thus, we propose the interpretation–contestation framework to demonstrate that contestation possesses three main forms: *reactive*, whereby actors seek to object to norms, and which can, at the extreme, lead to norm violation; *proactive*, whereby actors seek to engage with norms in order to improve them; and *interpretive*, whereby actors possess different understandings of norms from those that are held by the wider international community. Finally, the third argument is that while the process of contestation may be neutral towards the norm, contestations are norm-generative practices themselves – whether strategically intended or not – and as such they have an effect on the normativity of the norm. Public proactive contestations in particular allow for a greater number of would-be stakeholders at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels to become involved in the process and, through their deliberations, enhance a norm's legitimacy and validity.

To assess these three arguments and illustrate how they have contributed to shape the sub-field of norm-contestation research and what they hold for future research, *Contesting the World* brings together a range of junior, mid-career, and senior scholars, working at the leading edge of norm research, across a diversity of issues and sub-fields, and using different epistemological perspectives. This introductory chapter recalls the past trajectory of the field to set the framework from which the following chapters demonstrate why and detail how norm research continues to hold significant potential and promise both about theorising within IR and for studying current issues and problems in world politics. As the world and its constitutive parts have become increasingly contested, this book seeks both to dismantle the looming perception of contestation as a threat and to firmly establish the potential of the concept not only as a virtue but also, in fact, as a *sine qua non* for establishing sustainable and legitimate order in the world.

Three Theoretical Moves towards an Established Sub-field

This book is not interested in divisions – whether between 'conventional' and 'critical' perspectives or between 'first' and 'second generation' constructivists – but, instead, takes a more pragmatic approach. In this

section, we argue that three moves have coined today's status of the field of norms research, spanning programmatic, applicatory, and conceptual advances, respectively: the focus on the 'social' in global politics, the adaptation of norms in processes in policymaking, and a renewed focus on the role politics plays in processes of norm contestation. Each of these moves, we argue, has been integral to the development of norm research as an established sub-field. At the same time, each move has introduced its own set of issues and limitations, while a range of enduring questions continue to affect the sub-field.

The First Move: A Focus on the Social

The *first move* was framed by the constructivist focus on the 'social' in global politics (Adler 1997) and included two important developments. The first was to forge an interest in analysing the role of 'social facts' in addition to material facts that had previously set the standard conditions for political decisions in international relations (Ruggie 1993; Searle 1995). These social facts included norms, standards, regulations, rules, and ideas. The second development was to move away from an agent-centred perspective to instead examine agents and structures existing in a mutually constitutive manner (Wendt 1999; Dessler 1989). Together, these two developments represented a conceptual shift that helped to broaden the research programme in IR considerably (Finnemore 1996; Klotz 1995a; Adler 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; March and Olsen 1998).

Attached to this first move were models designed to portray the cyclic representation of the process of norm emergence, diffusion, and internalisation. This was initially developed by Kathryn Sikkink (1993) and was then adopted to frame a comparative multi-country case study on human rights norms edited by Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink (1999). It is most concisely summarised by Finnemore and Sikkink's now seminal article in *International Organization* (1998). The norm life cycle is a three-stage model, with norm entrepreneurs playing a critical role in the initial stage of norm emergence in placing issues on to the international agenda. Following the emergence of a new norm, early adopting states become 'norm leaders' and socialise other states to follow them through a variety of mechanisms, including legitimation effects, self-esteem effects, and pressure for conformity (Coleman 2013: 166; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 901–2). Once a critical mass of states adopts a new norm, it passes a threshold, or tipping point (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 896–906). After this point, they argue new norms may become so widely accepted that they are "internalized by actors and

achieve a 'taken-for-granted' quality that make conformance with the norm almost automatic" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 904; see also Risse and Sikkink 1999: 15–17).

But the first move also created a limited understanding of how norms emerged and, more importantly, changed. In this work, there was an underlying assumption of *stability* once a norm emerged (Wiener 2004: 23). A norm was seen as having an endpoint once it became "the prevailing standard of appropriateness against which new norms emerge and compete for support" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 895) and hence became relatively 'fixed' (McKeown 2009: 9), or settled, following which arguments would require "special justification" to deny it (Frost 1996: 105–6).[5] Yet, as others have pointed out, "[w]hile norms may appear as stable over a prolonged, albeit limited, period of time, drawing the analytical conclusion of norms as stable social facts implies ontologising norms" (Wiener 2004: 54). Given that "as observable units, norms not only cause or structure behaviour, they also evolve in relation with social interaction" (Wiener 2007: 55). That is, norms are not ontological 'billiard balls' but complex ontological units that represent a range of 'meanings-in-use', which are enacted by agents in different places and at different times (Wiener 2007: 54, 2009; see also more recently Wilkens and Datchoua-Tirveaudey 2022). The first move also privileged the international level, presuming that international institutionalisation created this fixed norm, which would then diffuse downwards in a unidirectional manner.[6]

The Second Move: Norm Adaptation and Diffusion in Policymaking

The *second move* acknowledged these limitations by focusing on how norms were adapted in processes of policymaking. Rather than presuming a norm was fixed or stable, this move introduced new questions

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[5] Others have raised similar critiques: Pratt, for instance, suggests that this period approached "norms as reified social objects" (Pratt 2020: 64). In our view, however, this may be too far a step (and it does depend on the definition of 'reification' used) as it goes beyond an assumption of stability or fixed properties, which reduces the agency to a great degree.

[6] As a two-dimensional process this stable norm transfer may be illustrated with reference to the metaphor of up- and down-loading material. Thus:

[f]rom a global governance perspective, the transfer of norms from national constitutional contexts into the global context of international organisations could be dubbed as 'uploading'. Conversely, following international negotiations, agreements, and treaties, the implementation of these norms by norm-followers around the world could be dubbed 'downloading'. Most of the compliance literature has sought to enforce the latter through shaming, sanctioning, or coercion of states that were unwilling to comply. The point of this illustration is the reification of a norm's formal validity whilst neglecting its substantive content, and, therefore, its potential for change. (Wiener 2022: 313)

around how norms were diffused and localised, why actors complied with them, and how norms could be generated at the domestic as well as international levels (Acharya 2004; Betts and Orchard 2014; Niemann and Schillinger 2017; Orchard 2018; Risse and Sikkink 1999; Risse et al. 2013; Simmons 2009; Zimmermann 2017; Ben-Josef Hirsch and Dixon 2021). Distinctions that mattered specifically to this move included aspects of norm salience, degree of fit, stability, robustness, and power – all of which were considered to lead to more resilient norm implementation (Risse et al. 2001; Checkel 2001, Schimmelfennig 2001; Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2019; Stimmer and Wisken 2019). But alongside this focus on resilience, this work also began to critically analyse norm decline, either from cases of "contested compliance" (Wiener 2004) or full-scale "norm violation," when a norm degenerates if it loses its prescriptive status due to widespread non-compliance, leading to it either fading away or being replaced (Panke and Petersohn 2012).

Finally, this move problematised norm transmission. Rather than assuming a single international norm would diffuse downwards, this literature instead saw such norms as being subject to significant changes. At the regional level, they could be subject to 'framing', 'fit', and 'grafting' on to regional cultural contexts (Börzel and Risse 2001, 2019; Acharya 2004, 2013) or to significant reinterpretation including through regional organisations (Checkel 1999, 2005). At the domestic level, a range of distinct issues can affect implementation (Betts and Orchard 2014). Materially, state capacity has been shown to be central to implementation (Urpelainen 2010; VanDeveer and Dabelko 2001). Institutions can also play a significant role. National legal and constitutional frameworks have been shown to matter for how norms are implemented in different states (Simmons 2009; Risse-Kappen 1995: 16; Cortell and Davis 2000: 66; Legro 1997). Domestic institutions can play the role of policy gatekeepers or veto players if they have "sufficient power to block or at least delay policy change" (Busby 2007: 254; see also Tsebelis 2002: 442).

While this move produced considerable knowledge about handling specific norms under given conditions, it inadvertently led to the 'ontologisation' of norms that reflected the predominant interest in the *structuring* as opposed to the socially constructed quality of norms (Wiener 2007; Wendt 1987; Melucci 1989). The unintended consequence of this shared norm ontology largely led to emphasising the role of agents such as norm entrepreneurs or antipreneurs and norm followers vis-à-vis a norm while bracketing questions of normative legitimacy (Orchard 2014; Bloomfield 2016). This meant that hybrid sources of norms – as both social fact *and* as rooted in moral values: the normativity of norms, in other words (Erskine 2012; Havercroft 2018; Wiener 2020) – tended

to be overlooked. This omission meant that diversity too was less examined. Norms as solely social facts worked well with an underlying liberal community assumption, but such accounts were less effective in the context of a globally pluralist and diverse world (Krook and True 2012; Krieger and Liese 2019), one which is less united and one in which norms sources are multiple and varied. Effectively, this

community ontology relies on a fixed community. It implies that any contestation about the normative structure of meaning-in-use, which guides actors in international relations as they enact that normative meaning, remains bracketed. This bracketing of the norm-generative dimension of practice forfeits the central interactive potential of contestation as a social practice that is not limited to notions of opposition, questioning or protest, but which also represents the basis of legitimate global governance. (Wiener 2014: viii)

The third move begins from taking a critical stance on this ontology and the stability assumption about norms that it carried. The following section details this move and its implications for the growing interest in the contestation of norms as a research theme for IR scholarship more generally.

The Third Move: Norm Contestation

This book embraces and argues that we are now in the midst of a *third move*. This move arguably begins with Krook and True's (2012: 105) reintroduction of the idea of "norms as 'processes', as works-in-progress, rather than as finished products" or 'things', echoing Onuf's call of two decades earlier that norms are both a "a thing and a process" (Onuf 1994: 1). Norm contestation is critical to this move in order to understand norms as processes. Contestation, following Wiener, is a societal practice in which rules, regulations, or procedures are critically questioned (Wiener 2014: 1–15). Contestation lets us highlight new-found understandings of the role of politics at both global and local levels as well as new plural understandings of agency in norm generation and resistance (Wiener 2018; True and Wiener 2019; Pratt 2020).

Most importantly, contestation focuses on the multiplicity who can have 'access' to shaping norms and their meaning-in-use through participation in politics. By asking whose norms and whose practices count, this research introduces a more specific attention to societal agency in the field while also acknowledging North–South and regional power biases that have existed in norms research (Acharya 2004, 2013; Draude 2019; Wiener 2017a, 2022). But, beyond agency, this also acknowledges the dual quality of norms, that "they are both structuring and socially

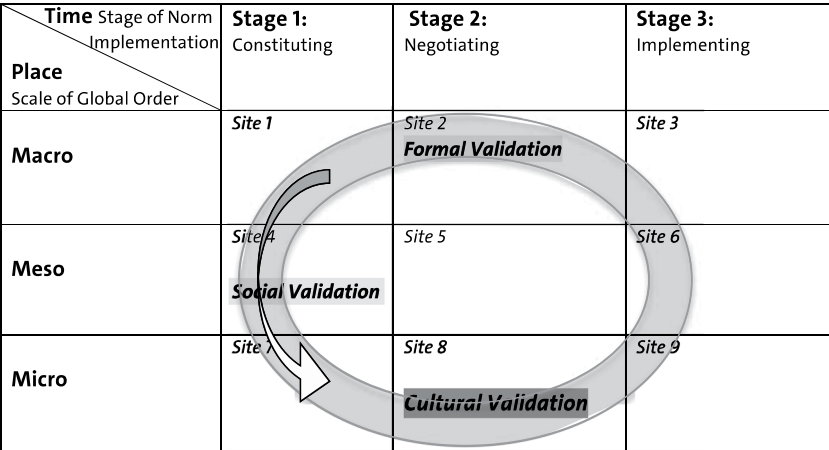| Time Stage of Norm Implementation / Place Scale of Global Order	Stage 1: Constituting	Stage 2: Negotiating	Stage 3: Implementing
Macro	*Site 1*	*Site 2* **Formal Validation**	*Site 3*
Meso	*Site 4* **Social Validation**	*Site 5*	*Site 6*
Micro	*Site 7*	*Site 8* **Cultural Validation**	*Site 9*

Figure 1.1 Cycle-grid model
Source: Wiener (2018: 44)
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constructed through interaction in a context. While stable over particular periods, they always remain flexible by definition" (Wiener 2007: 49).

To identify, locate, and evaluate instances of norm contestation and their role in norm(ative) change in the global order, Wiener has introduced the cycle-grid model (Figure 1.1). Rather than focusing on the international (or domestic) levels, or a particular phase of a norm life cycle, the model demonstrates that contestations which can reformulate normative meaning can occur *in principle* at any time.

The model reflects two processes. The first is descriptive and consists of a three-by-three grid including nine ideal-typical sites of contestation with reference to the scale of a given order on the vertical axis and the stages of the norm-implementation process on the horizontal access. On each site the normative opportunity structure sets distinct rules of engagement that determine affected stakeholder's access to contestation. The second process is evaluative. It consists of the cycle, which entails three distinct practices of validation to indicate the potential range of access for a stakeholder – pending their positionality in the normative opportunity structure – allowing for an evaluation of a stakeholder's potential to influence norm(ative) change based on constitutive, habitual, and/or cultural validation of normative meanings-in-use. That is, contestations take place within specific normative opportunity structures that frame the context in which actors operate. Nine ideal typical sites can be identified, revealing a "normative grid" (Walker 2008, 2014;

Hofius 2016). These sites identify where contestations may occur across the macro-, meso-, and micro-scales of a given order, representing levels of governance and layers of society (Wiener 2018: 52), and as norms move through a process of implementation, focusing on the constitution stage, then negotiations, and finally on implementation.

It is through this process of contestation that norms become validated. Initially, formal validation occurs through negotiations involving committee members of international organisations, negotiating groups, ad hoc committees, or similar bodies involving high-level representatives of states and/or governments. Formal validation therefore makes specific claims with regard to formal documents, treaties, conventions, or agreements. Habitual validation is practised habitually through interactions within a social environment and therefore depends on the context of social groups. The higher the level of integration among the group, the more likely a norm becomes uncontested. This reflects a different process from formal validation, where validity claims are explicitly negotiated, with habitual validation reflecting mediated access to validity claims qua prior social interaction within a group. Finally, cultural validation is an expression of an individual expectation mediated by individually held background experience. Importantly, the qualifier 'cultural' is used to distinguish individual from group practices. It refers to background experience derived through everyday practice and as such carries a thin rather than a thick meaning of culture (Wiener 2014: 9).[7] Norm clashes, then, indicate the sites for empirical research to study the sources of conflict by mapping meanings on to the normative grids as part of the cycle of contestation.

Mapping contestations about universal validity claims of a norm – for example, the rule of law – in one of the nine sites takes account of the shared normative substance with regard to a selected fundamental or *type 1* norm (Wiener 2018: 58–9). The approach enables norms researchers to determine which practices of norm validation are available to legitimate stakeholders at these sites. It therefore offers a novel perspective that allows for the exploration of the opportunities and constraints of agency in global governance. It also opens up important empirical questions including: what is the highest set of *type 2* norms (i.e., organising principles) that is aggregated through cultural validation of *type 3* norms (i.e., standardised procedures and regulations)? The arrow on the spinning cycle (Figure 1.1) indicates the normative condition for the

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[7] Also compare Wenger (1998) and more recent world democratic survey analyses that stress the crucial impact of cultural diversity expressed by attitudes towards 'moral values' (Kistler et al. 2017).

best-case scenario, namely that each of the three practices of norm validation becomes available for the stakeholders affected by a norm.

Against the backdrop of these conceptual advances, the three moves can be summarised with reference to the concept of norm as a *three-layered theoretical advancement* in IR, which included *the identification of norms*, then *working with and applying norms*, and finally bringing in critical questions of *order, legitimacy, and normativity* which address the 'goodness' of norms. This book argues that these three conceptual layers (i.e., norms as social facts, norm implementation, and norm-/ative legitimacy) represent the breadth and depth of the current conceptual background against which to put the value-added of norms research to the test, for example, with reference to the two globally shared crises of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. At present, the theoretical claims of norms research span theories of interaction, discourse, order, identity, normativity, and justice. They are more than matched by outstanding methodological advances that have attracted attention beyond IR, especially from international lawyers. This is an excellent point in time to turn to the proof of the pudding, as it were. Against this background, this book seeks both to reassess how norm studies around these three moves have advanced over this period and to identify and seeks to theorise some of the most critical outstanding questions and divides that exist within the contemporary study of norms. To that end, *Contesting the World* takes a practice-based approach to norms that centres on practices of contestation and/or interpretation. And with it, the conceptual balance between approaches that address the normalcy (i.e., taken-for-grantedness) of norms as social structures, on the one hand, and engaging with the normativity of norms that is inherent to assumptions about norms' 'moral reach' and 'ethical value' (Wiener 2008, 2014; Erskine 2012; Havercroft 2018), on the other, have been highlighted.

In sum, contestation can be either a negative or a positive process, which can help to improve the legitimacy of norms. This has raised the ongoing lively debate among norms scholars about the question of when contestation ends. One position sees any evidence of contestation as an indication that a norm is not a true norm. For example, Michelle Jurkovich has recently suggested that norms need both a sense of oughtness and to "link a specific actor to a specific expected action" in order to create a clear social rule (Jurkovich 2020: 696); this implies, however, that all justificatory and applicatory contestations over the norm have by necessity been concluded in order to have this specific pattern of behaviour created. The other sees norms as "stable over particular periods" but that "they always remain flexible by definition," with the degree of

contestedness of individual norms being variable (Wiener 2018: 58). This then opens up a question of when norms are more likely to be stable. Here norm robustness – which is defined as encompassing both a norm's validity and facticity – becomes important, with norm robustness "said to be 'high' when its claims are widely accepted by norm addressees (validity) and generally guide the actions of these addressees (facticity)" (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2019: 3). Robustness, as we argue later, can also be increased not just when a norm's claims are widely accepted but also when potential access to processes of norm validation are high. As an alternative, Ben-Josef Hirsch and Dixon (Chapter 2) suggest a twofold approach focused on how norms change, reflecting both norm strength – the extent of collective expectations relating to a principled idea at a moment in time – and norm content – focusing on the changes in behaviour, applicability, and distinctiveness – of a given norm. Finally, Anette Stimmer (Chapter 10) suggests we instead focus on individual states' sense of obligation towards a norm, reflected in both their words and actions as well as wider engagement with the international community.

Enduring Questions

In addition, there are two enduring questions that have not been answered by any of the three moves so far. The first – perhaps surprisingly – is *what are norms?* The first move began with identifying and putting selected fundamental norms on the map of IR. Early IR constructivist scholarship understood norms to be shared understandings of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity (Jepperson et al. 1996: 52; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891). Yet norms research "soon noticed that the cocoon of that community was fragile" (Wiener 2018: 59), with the notion of shared understandings being extended from a specific set of primarily liberal states to the global community as a whole. Further, early definitions such as Finnemore and Sikkink's were careful to include language specifying that the norm definition "isolates single standards of behaviour" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891), whereas today 'norms' are used in an increasingly flexible way (Jurkovich 2020: 694). Finally, this early perspective neglected a value-based ethical dimension that raised questions about the legitimacy of norms (Erskine 2012; Havercroft 2018).

Against this background, this book argues that while norms represent shared understandings, they also need to be understood as constituting a form of *soft institution*. Following Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor (Hall and Taylor 1996: 938), institutions are defined as "formal and

informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational structure of the polity or political economy." Alongside hard institutions such as international organisations, soft institutions include principles, values, rules, and common standards. Importantly, norms need to be understood as being *both* value-based and fact-based. As a category of analysis, norms have advanced the analysis of international relations insofar as they offer both an explanation for behavioural change and a yardstick for ethics and moral values. Treating norms as a form of soft institution allows them to be viewed as both a thing and a process (Onuf 1994: 1). And given that norms lie in the practice, and all practices are normative (Wiener 2018: 27–49), *Contesting the World* draws in the main on relational approaches to norms that centre on practices of interpretation and contestation.

The second enduring question concerns a tendency to focus on individual norms at the expense of a wider set of structures. Norms rarely exist in isolation. Other structures including institutions are needed in order to "*emphasize* the way in which behavioural rules are structured together and interrelate" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891, authors' emphasis; Donnelly 2012: 625). Therefore, beyond individual norms, we also need some form of structure which can "provide processes to interpret those rules; and … demark who should have a role in interpreting the rules" (Orchard 2014: 20). These other structures have been marked by a variety of different concepts. These include 'norm complexes' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891; Bernstein 2000), and as an alternative, Lantis and Wunderlich have made the case recently for examining 'norm clusters', which are "collections of aligned, but distinct, norms or principles that relate to a common, overarching issue area; they address different aspects and contain specific normative obligations" (Lantis and Wunderlich 2018: 571). Winston uses the same term to refer to the fact that clusters within a family group may exist as bounded collections "of interrelated specific problems, values, and behaviours," which can be combined in an number of distinct combinations (Winston 2018: 647). Orchard has argued, following Goertz (2003: 15), that regimes can be understood as similarly bringing together a range of what might otherwise be disparate norms in order to provide a clear sense of the scope of international behaviour required. The regime, rather than individual norms, can "frame the nature and scope of a given problem and provide potential response scripts" (Orchard 2014: 241). In turn, True and Wiener have demonstrated how the concept of a 'norm bundle' works to analyse the connectivity between different types of norms in a given policy sector such as the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) in peace and conflict studies (True and Wiener 2019).

In sum, linkages between individual norms can increase cluster resilience alongside higher levels of institutionalisation and legalisation (Lantis and Wunderlich 2018: 572). Here, too, however, a question remains open: is it that norms work better when they are clustered or embedded together in a cohesive manner, with inconsistences between individual norms, logical gaps in their overall structure, and procedural incoherence reducing their effectiveness (Donnelly 1986: 605)? And does this require these norms to be fixed within a formally legalised or institutionalised regime, or can these norms still assume the property of oughtness in less formal regimes, based around soft law or reflecting policy norms?

The Interpretation–Contestation Framework

The practice of norm contestation reflects the third move of norm research. It is important to clarify that while practices of contestation alter norms, contestation itself should be considered as a neutral process because of a range of positive, negative, or neutral effects on how a norm is understood. This also differentiates our view of contestation from an alternative perspective that focuses on norm robustness and has seen contestations as primarily negative: that they can undermine norm strength (Panke and Petersohn 2016) or challenge the authority of international institutions or even the liberal international order as a whole (Börzel and Zürn 2021: 7). Thus, Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2020: 52) note, "for scholars of potential norm decay, contestation is per se a sign of norm weakening." But this reflects a notion of a norm as a thing, rather than as a process in which contestation is a *sine qua non* for normative legitimacy, one in which "contestation all the way" (Tully 2002) is conceptualised as a normative asset to strive for, and "contestation all the way down" becomes an imperative for international politics (Niemann and Schillinger 2017).

The practice of norm contestation generates norm conflict, which is distinguishable according to two distinct takes of how agents interact among each other and vis-à-vis specific norms. The first take considers the challenge–change relationship to occur between a given agent (A) and a given norm (N1), which produces a specific understand of that norm for that agent – this is the A–N1 relationship. While this interaction may be repeated, it is always between one or more agents (A+1) and a given norm and may reflect two types of contestation: one that is deliberate or one that is interpretive. By contrast, the second take considers the challenge–change relation to occur between a variety of agents (A1, A2, and so on) who are part of a conflictive encounter. During that

encounter, norms are challenged and changed. And it is expected that as a norm-generative practice, contestation generates mutually recognised norms or normative meaning, as it were, in addition to normality.

These two takes indicate that the practice of contestation can be either a deliberate or inadvertent process: Stimmer and Wisken (2019: 516–19) have argued that contestation should be understood as including "any differences in the understanding of norms, no matter what the source." Deliberate contestations reflect societal agents knowingly contesting different understandings of a norm's validity, which leads to a norm conflict. But agents can also have *unknowingly* adopted different interpretations of what a given norm means. Societal agents reflect a notion of a corporate actor: they are composed of many individuals, whether in a state, organisation, or other agglomeration. Particularly as a given norm moves downwards through the meso- and micro-levels, it will primarily be subject to contestations by societal agents within the state (or within large organisations). Specific implementation processes, during which formal legal and policy mechanisms are introduced in order to routinise compliance (see Betts and Orchard 2014: 22) will be particularly prone to these forms of contestation. Betts and Orchard note: "the implementation process itself can open up a new arena for interpretation and contestation of the norm by relevant actors, with the result that the adopted norm is understood differently across states and other international actors" (Betts and Orchard 2014: 3).

The key issue here is that this domestic implementation process (as it occurs across the micro-level sites) may incorporate both visible factors – such as formal constitutional functions – and invisible factors – including "expectations of norms and the interpretation of their respective meanings derived from the historical and cultural contingency." These constitutional functions are "crucial for the interpretation of norms" (Wiener 2008: 7, 23) and yet may remain hidden or opaque to actors beyond the state.

Therefore, we can see three distinct types of norm contestation. *Interpretive contestation* reflects that any given agent may have interpretive variance on how they understand a given norm. Such variances may not be readily apparent without direct application of the norm and, in theory, can exist between any agent and any norm. Thus, interpretive contestations have a distinctly different character from other types; they may be inadvertent rather than deliberate and more likely to appear in the form of applicatory contestations[8] rather than validity contestations

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[8] For example, see Matthew Adler's legal essay on the correctness of legal interpretations of the US constitution (2012).

as the agent believes their understanding of the norm is the same as others. This contrasts with two deliberate and distinct practices: *reactive* and *proactive contestation* (Wiener 2017b). As a reactive practice, contestation is indicated primarily as an objection to norms. By contrast, when conceptualised as a proactive practice, contestation is undertaken in order to engage with norms. Through these three practices of contestation, agents create both normality and normative effects.

Constitutive (behaviourally induced) generative practices focus primarily on norm content. Proactive contestations generally seek to improve the norm, while reactive contestations are generally about challenging the standards of behaviour indicated by a norm leading (at the extreme) to norm violation. Reactive contestations, however, can also have constructive effects by leading to norm improvements; hence, they too can be norm generative (Wiener 2020). Interpretive contestations may shade into both forms but will most likely take on the appearance of contested compliance by actors who feel that they are already following the norm's content. Constructive (normatively induced) generative practices focus instead on the legitimacy of a norm and its moral purposes. Proactive contestations more frequently focus on emergent norms, seeking to improve the norm's legitimacy. Reactive contestations will more frequently focus on challenging the legitimacy or moral principles of extant norms. Interpretive contestations focus on hidden understandings that an agent may have of the norm and implicit efforts to bring the wider understanding of the norm's precepts in line.

These three types of contestation can lead to five possible outcomes on how a societal agent interprets a given norm (Figure 1.2). Returning to the A–N1 relationship, these outcomes see N1 potentially split between its domestic understanding (N_d) and the international understanding of the norm (N_i). The *first* outcome is that the societal agent fully endorses the existing international understanding of the norm: N_d and N_i are the same and no contestation occurs. The *second* outcome is that the societal agent does not implement the norm – it may engage in rhetorical support with no follow-through (either as a fair-weather process or due to reputational concerns or pressure): N_d does not exist, and the agent does not support N_i leading to the potential for reactive contestations or even norm violation. The *third* outcome is that the societal agent deliberately endorses a different understanding of the norm: N_d is different from N_i but the societal agent does not engage in a contestation of N_i. This may reflect a localisation process, for example, and the agent may either understand the norm as different at either the discursive or behavioural/facticity levels. With this outcome, the societal agent knows it has a different interpretation of the norm,
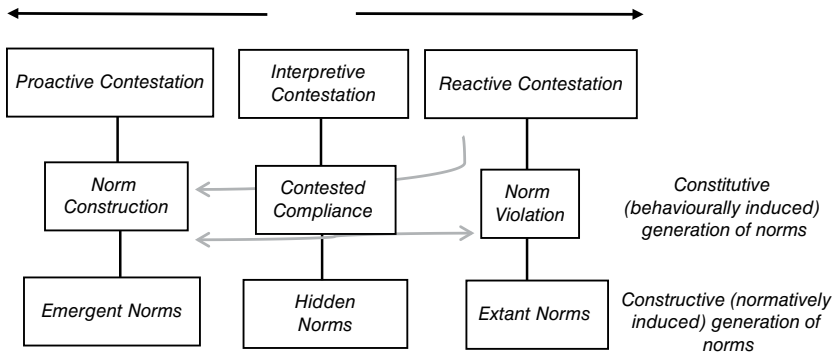
Figure 1.2 Types of contestation

and in effect follows it in parallel to the international norm. Over the longer term, this may not be sustainable and can then lead to reactive or proactive contestations. The *fourth* outcome is that the societal agent deliberately endorses a different understanding of the norm: N_d is different from N_i, and, further, the agent will seek to deliberately either reactively or proactively contest N_i. Finally, there is the *fifth* outcome. In this case, the implementation process has seen understandings of the norm that vary from what exists at the international level. The agent endorses a different understanding of the norm: N_d is different from N_i but the agent does not realise this is the case. This may lead to interpretive contestations. Stimmer (Chapter 10) adds further nuance to these five outcomes in her discussion of how much commitment to a norm different kind of implementation efforts reflect.

The issue with the fifth outcome is that it creates interpretative variation between how this societal agent and others understand the norm. But, as opposed to other types of contestation, the agent 'thinks' that it understands the norm in the same way as other agents within a given community; it 'thinks' a shared understanding exists. And – unless the norm is challenged or violated – these differences in interpretation may be very difficult to detect. In addition, this type of outcome can occur across a series of agents, with the result that the A–N1 challenge–change relationship creates a web of different meanings for a given norm.

As opposed to interpretive contestations, reactive and proactive contestations are also more likely to take on the second form of challenge–change relation, between a specific norm and a variety of agents (A1, A2, and so on). During such encounters, norms are challenged and changed. And it is expected that as a norm-generative practice, contestation generates mutually recognised norms or normative meaning, as

it were, in addition to normality. While a conflict is likely to be ignited through contested universal validity claims of a fundamental norm – such as human rights, the rule of law, or the ban on landmines – it is expected to settle the ground rules or the organising principles according to which these universal validity claims are sensibly implemented. These ground rules, or organising principles, reflect a compromise considering constraints and opportunities of sustainable normativity in a given context. The central research question is the effect on the meaning of the involved norm/s: does the contestation only take effect at the implementing stage (reactive contestation), or does it imply a more substantive impact at the constitutive stage of norm implementation (proactive contestation)?

It is therefore through the practice of contestation that we can see a legitimate and accepted understanding of the norm develop. The practice of contestation itself varies in two ways. The first is that different types of contestations can occur, including interpretive, reactive, and proactive contestations. The second is that different forms of contestation can occur, focusing either on a norm's validity or on the norm's application, or what actions the norm requires in a specific situation (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2020: 56–7).

The Normativity of Norms

The practice of contestation itself is a neutral process, able to alter interpretations of norms in a variety of ways. That is, contestation works both as an indicator of objection to norm compliance as a 'reactive' practice potentially leading to violation and as a means to critically engage in constructing international politics as a 'proactive' practice. As we have shown earlier, the three moves of norm research can be summarised as a *three-layered theoretical advancement* in IR, which included *the identification of norms*, then *working with and applying norms*, and finally bringing in critical questions *of order*, *legitimacy*, and *normativity* in order to address the 'goodness' of norms. In this final section, we wish to discuss this last point, how the practice of contestation also increases the legitimacy and normativity of individual norms. We have already sought to demonstrate how a norm's validity is created, reflecting the hybrid qualities of a norm: both its *normalcy* and its *normativity*. Because of this hybrid quality, validity can be shown on the one hand by 'fitting in' with reference to the number or magnitude of norm-followers in a given contest; but on the other hand, validity is enhanced through public contestation, for only through contestation can a norm gain legitimacy (Havercroft 2018; Brunnée and Toope 2010; Wiener 2020; Staunton

and Ralph 2020). Hence, the axiom "only a contested norm can ever be a good norm" (Wiener 2019; Kurowska 2019).[9]

By focusing solely on validity, we would appear to be going against Deitelhoff and Zimmermann's (2020) work, which argues that either validity or applicatory contestations can occur. This is an important argument. They see validity contestation as attacks against "the very core of a norm, that is, the basis of its normative obligation" while applicatory contestations deal with questions of whether a given norm is appropriate for a given situation, which actions a norm requires in a specific situation, or which norm must be prioritised in a specific situation if several norms apply (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2020: 56–7). These are useful distinctions between the forms that norm conflicts can take. However, we do not view these as distinct and unique 'types' of contestation for two reasons. The first is that by treating these as distinct, they are presuming a fixed and stable understanding of a norm, a specific behavioural rule, that will not be affected by an applicatory contestation. This distinction is untenable however, given the normative structure of meaning-in-use. This is the discourse "within which norms are re-enacted as carriers of meaning. As such, norms reflect validity claims of involved stakeholders, and, at the same time, their meanings change through direct engagement" (Wiener 2018: 13). Applicatory contestations affect meaning; they create new understandings of a norm even if only at the margin. Hence, applicatory contestations are a specific form of validity contestations.

The second reason is that Deitelhoff and Zimmermann's applicatory contestation as a distinct and separate type primarily occurs at the level of implementation and does not provide pathways to norm generation, including access to proactive and reactive contestations. For instance, contestations over the torture taboo could be viewed as applicatory in nature (Price and Sikkink 2017) but also reflected reactive contestations (see Akhrif and Koschut, Chapter 6). In this case, agents did object to the implementation of the norm. The key interaction at the offset for empirical research is therefore the reaction of agent A *to* norm N1, which is most likely to be substantiated by further reactions of agent B (+1) to norm N1; the reactive contestation quickly becomes linked to a validity contestation.

We can see a similar pattern even in contestation conflicts involving multiple agents in international encounters. For example, while a norm such as the right to fish is defined by the statutes of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), it is interpreted

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[9] For a more general international law perspective, see also Brunnee and Toope (2012).

differently by the involved agents who do not share the same national roots. Upon these agents' encounter in international contexts, the contested implementation of the norm comes to the fore. The key interaction, that is, the offset for empirical research, is an inter-national conflict between agents A and B (or more) about which norm (N1 or N2) to refer to, in order to warrant proper implementation, or what is the norms' hierarchical orderings. Here, the key question is whether the contesting agents agree on the authority of one norm N1 (the right to fish according to the rule of law under UNCLOS) or another norm N2 (sustainable fisheries according to regional experience in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean). While this can also be seen as an applicatory contestation (over norm hierarchical ordering), agreement on which norm to follow requires engagement and a struggle over the recognition of a shared ground rule to guide further common action, thus also wrestling with questions of norm validity.

Which types of contestation are used do depend on the normative structure of the environment which can most easily be observed from instances of norm conflict. It is through these conflictive encounters that we can shed light on stakeholder access to distinct practices of norm validation. These encounters therefore help localise empirically where and when *reactive* and *interpretive* contestation is expected to stand in the process of norm implementation. Relatedly, they also point to the sites where facilitative conditions for *proactive* contestation ought to be established. Sociological research on norms has generated manifold data to map distinct patterns of access to contestation on behalf of the variety of stakeholders. They can be distinguished with reference to type of actor (i.e., state vs. non-state), role in the process of norm implementation (i.e., designated norm-setter or designated norm-follower), and socio-cultural background experience (i.e., individual background experience). While the former two have been thoroughly studied by social constructivists over the past two decades, the latter have been predominantly addressed by more recent pragmatist and Bourdieusian research (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014; Kornprobst and Senn 2016; McCourt 2016; Sending 2016). And it is through enhanced access to contestation that we can then see normative robustness emerge as it is based on a given norm's legitimacy in global society. The more access to practices of norm validation, the higher the robustness of a given norm global society.

Contestations, therefore, are critical for understanding the forms norms take, how they gain validity, and whether they achieve widespread legitimacy. As we have shown, when contestations over normative meaning are empirically mapped, the distinct practices of norm

validation generate normative grids. But the expectation is that, in most cases, these grids will reveal an uneven distribution of stakeholder access to the three practices of norm validation and hence also unequal access to the practice of contestation. There will be a power imbalance, tipped in favour of agents who enjoy access to multiple practices of norm validation. This inbuilt condition of injustice, with some agents not having a say in the norms that govern them, will generate a gap between a desirable modicum of norm robustness and the actual observed normative structure. And this condition of injustice increases the likelihood that when these norms are engaged with, it will be either through reactive contestation as agents challenge and undermine the norm, or through interpretive contestations as agents become disconnected from the norm. The empirical challenge therefore consists in both identifying *and* facilitating the institutional means for access to proactive contestation.

Thus exploring the legitimacy of norms in such empirical ways, mapping these practices, matters greatly for real-world politics. Reactive contestation can spiral out of control; they can lead to the undermining and violation of norms and even open political conflict. Interpretive contestation can also undermine the norm if not specifically targeted by political or policy means. Another pattern is possible. By enhancing access to practices of norm validation, by seeking to combat this inbuilt condition of injustice, norm ownership by all affected agents can increase and with this, an increase in proactive contestation becomes possible.

Contents and Organisation of the Book

In light of *Contesting the World*'s aim of assessing the trajectory and impact of norms research as a sub-field in IR, we seek to offer a concise presentation of the field's trajectory, core concepts, and approaches. In addition, we flag future paths of norms research in practice and in theory as the field is benefitting from a rich repertoire of methods, fieldwork, and cutting-edge theorising that has received increasing interdisciplinary appreciation. The contributions are grouped in four parts that focus on the themes of (1) norm strength, collisions, and conflicts, (2) the historical development of norms, (3) meta-theorising about norms, norm theory, linkages, and international law, and (4) different dimensions of norm contestation. In the four parts, thirteen substantive chapters address the changes that advanced the field in programmatic, applicatory, as well as conceptual moves over the past four decades. Each batch of chapters details one of the leading themes of norms research including, first, the importance of the social in global

politics, second, the adaptation of norms in policymaking processes, and third, the renewed focus on politics which is addressed by norm contestation. Notably, the logic of this sequencing is substantial rather than spatiotemporal.

Accordingly, Part I focuses on norm strength, collisions, and conflicts to address core contributions to the field's first move towards the social in world politics. In Chapter 2, Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch and Jennifer M. Dixon begin by arguing that norm content and norm strength need to be understood as distinct and constitutive elements in processes of norm development. Similar to Gholiagha and Sienknecht, this chapter conceives norm content as reflecting the behaviours that are prescribed or proscribed, for whom, and under what conditions, while norm strength is defined as the extent of collective expectations related to a principled idea. Both proactive and reactive contestations most directly affect a norm's strength by affecting its legitimacy, but can also trigger norm content changes including from one norm to another related, yet distinct, norm. In Chapter 3, Anchalee Rüland and Jennifer Welsh examine the nature of norm conflict as affecting both how to immediately respond to the conflict and how to address wider identity problems created by it. They therefore propose a typology of five possible response strategies actors can use to manage the expectations and costs they face associated with either norm compliance or norm violation. They use two sets of cases of norm conflict to examine these response strategies. The first is how Southeast Asian states managed conflicts between the norms of non-interference and protection of human rights in response to ongoing violence in Myanmar. The second is how the United Nations (UN) has addresses conflicts between norm associated with the prevention and response to atrocity crimes and those associated with respect for sovereignty and state consent. In Chapter 4, Andrea Liese concludes the section by focusing on the specific issue of norm collisions during crisis periods. Like Rüland and Welsh, Liese sees collisions as occurring when the behavioural prescriptions of two or more norms are incompatible with each other. But whereas Rüland and Welsh focus on how such conflicts can be responded to, Liese focuses on crises as desterilising an extent balance or hierarchy between norms. She analyses two such cases: the European refugee crisis and the COVID-19 health crisis.

Part II sheds a critical light of the historical development of norm research, thereby laying the ground for the second move. The chapters take account of the historical development of norms and research about norms. In Chapter 5, Audie Klotz leads this discussion by genealogically examining disruptive episodes of interpretative contestations over racial equality and apartheid norms. She argues that IR as a

field – alongside international politics – have treated such norm contestations silently, that there is a norm against noticing, when opposition to apartheid actually played a crucial role in challenging domestic jurisdiction and supporting the development of international human rights norms. In Chapter 6, Halima Akhrif and Simon Koschut examine the relationship between emotions (as moral value judgements) and norms, arguing that emotional resonance – the ability of social norms to evoke and suggest emotional images, memories, and collective feelings – is crucial to the impact and enforcement of norms over time in response to reactive contestations and norm violation. They use the Bush administration's reaction to torture allegations to demonstrate that when there is a lack of emotional resonance, enforcement measures including naming and shaming campaigns are less likely to work. In Chapter 7, Susan Park examines how proactive contestations associated with the World Bank's development of the international accountability norm has shaped not only how the bank understands its responsibilities – with a focus on internal standards rather than legal obligations – but also the efforts of activists to hold the World Bank and other multilateral development banks to account. In Chapter 8, Sassan Gholiagha and Mitja Sienknecht conclude the discussion of this theme by exploring the relation between norms and responsibility. Studying norm-related behaviour, they develop a typology of four ideal types: appropriate, responsible, inappropriate, and irresponsible behaviour. They focus specifically on responsible behaviour and identify three configurations of responsible behaviour, which are then illustrated through instances of responsible behaviour from diverse actors and different norms, including gender equality, anti-personnel landmines and armed non-state actors, and the NATO intervention in Kosovo.

Part III refines the conceptual tools of norms research with a focus on meta-theorising, norm theory, and interdisciplinary linkages with international law. In Chapter 9, Carla Winston sets out the discussion by arguing that norms can be understood through the lens of complex systems theory, which provides a different framework and sets of insights for understanding the process of norm diffusion. Because actors in a system are connected to each other by multiple pathways, different actions can have non-linear effects. Contestations both provide information to actors and can trigger negative feedback loops – which die out – or positive feedback loops – which can undermine a norm. She illustrates these effects through contestations with respect to the rule of law, including the USA's attempts to redefine the use of torture. In Chapter 10, Anette Stimmer argues for a new approach to judge the interaction of international law and politics by exploring the grey zone between empty words and purposive action. She argues that

by examining actions and justifications, the degree of commitment to international law can be identified as can the level of obligation that states feel. This allows for norm implementation to be used to expose the weakness or strength of law and attempts at exceptionalism or norm change. And in Chapter 11, Jakob v. H. Holtermann, Mikael Rask Madsen, and Nora Stappert conclude the section by arguing that IR and international law's approach to norms research can be bridged by empirically examining interpretive contestations of legal validity among groups of legal professionals, drawing on Bourdieusian approaches and the concept of communities of practice. They outline this approach by exploring the construction of, and interpretive contestations in, climate change law.

Finally, Part IV addresses different dimensions of norm contestation as the signature card of the third move with its growing emphasis on politics. Here, chapters focus on the role of distinct practices of norm contestation. In Chapter 12, Jacqui True begins with a contribution that argues that networks play an integral role in processes of norm contestation. Networks are part of the political opportunity structure that gives rise to new norms, and also shape their evolution by creating novel spaces and enabling greater access to contestation and thereby enhancing the validity and legitimacy of norms. In her chapter, she highlights the critical role that network structures can play in affecting the dynamism and diffusion of norms by examining the Women, Peace, and Security norm bundle including with respect to the response to COVID-19. In Chapter 13, Cecilia Jacob addresses the concept of regulatory contestation, which focuses on the decisionmaking process in the design of regulatory mechanisms as opposed to the underlying norm itself. Using a case study of the accountability turn in the implementation of human protection norms, she argues that regulatory contestation illuminates the power dynamics that shape international order at a micro level. And in Chapter 14, Jason Ralph concludes with an exploration of how norm research has generally eschewed a clear commitment to normative theory to its detriment from the perspective of European pragmatism. Such a commitment, he argues, would need a defence of certain norms against contestation. The point is explored based on critical scrutiny of contestation theory making special reference to the concepts of normativity, practice, and pragmatism in order to advance the third move of norms research.

In the concluding Chapter 15, Antje Wiener and Phil Orchard revisit the core themes of the book with an examination of how the three moves mark the progress of norms research over the past three decades from a focus on norm stability to contestedness. The chapter uses as vignettes

the Bush administration's efforts to contest the norm against torture and the contested international politics around the forced landing of Ryanair Flight 4978 by the government of Belarus in May 2021. The chapter then turns to three core themes developed across the book: around norm interpretation and conflict, the process of contestation, and the role of other structures. The chapter concludes the book by reaffirming the centrality of contestation to understand how norms develop and a call to understand even such large questions of contestations of the international liberal order from the bottom-up. It is by establishing and enhancing pathways that enable affected stakeholders to access proactive contestation and interpretation, not through a top-down project, that orders gain legitimacy and can be restored.