

Conceptualizing International Practices

This book brings together the key scholars in the international practice debate to demonstrate its strengths as an innovative research perspective. The contributions show the benefit of practice theories in the study of phenomena in international security, international political economy and international organisation, by directing attention to concrete and observable everyday practices that shape international outcomes. The chapters exemplify the crossovers and relations to other theoretical approaches, and thereby establish practice theories as a distinct IR perspective. Each chapter investigates a key concept that plays an important role in international relations theory, such as power, norms, knowledge, change or cognition. Taken together, the authors make a strong case that practice theories allow to ask new questions, direct attention to uncommon empirical material, and reach different conclusions about international relations phenomena. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in recent international relations theory and the actual practices of doing global politics.

Alena Drieschova is Assistant Professor in International Relations at the University of Cambridge. She is currently working on her book manuscript, which provides a macro-historical analysis of international order stability and change based on changes in material culture.

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Conceptualizing International Practices

*Directions for the Practice Turn
in International Relations*

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Acknowledgements

Practice theorizing is a vibrant mode of analysis in International Relations (IR). Scholars have provided major alternative understandings of order, power and change by paying close attention to mundane activities, relations, tacit forms of knowledge and material objects. Over the years the debates have become richer not only in empirical terms, but also by relying on more diverse theoretical frameworks gathered from social theory and taking inspiration from science studies, psychology and anthropology, among other disciplines. Some practice scholars even develop new innovative approaches that are original to IR and might be exported from IR to other cognate disciplines.

Recognizing that the core strength of practice theorizing is its plurality and diversity was the starting point for this book. If this is the case, how could the debate be productively organized and steered into new directions? How could the conversation among practice theorizers and proponents of other cultural approaches be strengthened?

The answers we develop in this book take concepts as focal points around which conversations between various practice scholars and scholars from cognate approaches can develop. Concepts are major building blocks of any theory. Since many practice theorizers do not aim to work with rigid frameworks or advance general theory that can be tested, the status of concepts is even more important. Concepts provide intellectual anchors and sensitizing frameworks for the empirical work of practice scholars. The focus on concepts also allows us to re-tell the history of the concept of practice in interesting ways, as we show in the Introduction. The other chapters highlight how concepts form the grounds for conversations with practice theory's intellectual neighbours, such as institutionalism, norm constructivism and discourse theory. The concepts discussed moreover lay out new challenges and set a forward-looking course for the practice theorizing agenda.

Like other agenda-setting contributions, this book is the outcome of a collective effort that required many helping hands and support from different sources.

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In September 2017, we also met at the European International Studies Association (EISA) Conference in Barcelona, as part of the section 'international practices'. In the section, the drafts of the book chapters were presented for the first time to a wider audience, and we also held a roundtable on the current challenges and future directions of practice theorizing. The section, co-founded by Christian Bueger and Alena Drieschova, has since been turned into a standing section of the EISA and has become the major annual hub for the discussion of international practice theorizing.

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