

5 Cultural validation

Examining the familiarity deficit of global governance

Antje Wiener

Introduction

This chapter follows up on the editors' leading question of why the world is so difficult to govern. More specifically, and inviting students of international relations (IR) theory to review their tools, Bjola and Kornprobst ask how we may explain the difficulties world society experiences in addressing global problems (see Introduction, p. 1). As *explanans* for the global problem the editors distinguish between "heterogeneity of global identities and interests," the "magnitude and interconnectedness of global issues" and the "lack of imagination required for moving the agenda of global governance beyond familiar situations" (ibid.). With a view to exploring an answer to why the world is so difficult to govern, I engage with the issue of *familiarity*. It is by far the fuzziest of the range of causal explanations suggested by the editors, and has therefore remained relatively unexplored by the governance literature. However, I hold that it offers access to a better understanding of how norms work, especially in cases of norm clash, in international encounters.¹

The etymological background of the term "family" – Latin: *familia* (household), *famulus* (servant) – indicates common reference to a group or household and/or affiliation, either by common descent or otherwise bound together by common religious or political ties.² In this chapter I propose studying familiarity as a concept that expresses expectation based on experience which influences day-to-day individual action, and which does not cause much attention unless a clash of such experiences occurs. Such a clash is most likely to occur when individual experiences are decoupled from their social context of origin. That is, they are most likely to occur in non-iterative international encounters outside the domestic arena in which an individual has gathered most of her experiences. The situation and iteration of social practices are therefore considered to entail key information for this kind of analysis. Given the nature of social practices, individual experiences differ; however, repeated interactions between two or more individuals will establish shared experiences (in IR, this has been stressed by the literature on social learning, for example). Clashes in *international* encounters, understood as encounters between actors of different nationalities, do not necessarily have to result in conflictive situations. If and when they occur, they are most likely in situations where social practices are taken out of one actor's familiar context, which creates a familiarity deficit, and the likelihood increases under conditions of crisis which add the factor of time constraint to that familiarity deficit.

Typically, such situations in international politics require quick and far-reaching decisions on topics ranging from humanitarian intervention, humanitarian relief organization and financial measures to the stipulation of smart sanctions. In such situations, the *invisible link* between legal, political and cultural dimensions of international politics is played out in ways which require further detailed analysis. Overlooking the impact of the process of cultural validation can therefore result in underestimating the potential spanner in the works (Wiener 2008, 2009).

In this chapter I propose an approach to studying such situations based on norms research. To that end, I turn to the structure-agency core of global governance and propose a model of norms research that appreciates the interactive relationship between structure and agency. The model works with the assumption that international actors enact normative structures of *meaning-in-use*. This approach builds on a rigorous re-evaluation of the methodological tools and conceptual assumptions generated in the area of norms research with the “constructivist turn” in IR in the early 1990s. I argue that in order to answer the question of why difficulties of global governance prevail despite the established institutional and normative framework of international society, it is helpful to shift the focus from shared norms toward the way in which norms are enacted. While shared goals may be formally expressed in treaties, agreements and conventions, it is interaction with regard to agreeing on appropriate joint action in relation to these fundamental norms that reveals the potential for global governance. That is, while actors’ behavior might change in reaction to human rights norms when sufficiently pressed to do so by powerful international actors (see the cases demonstrated by Risse *et al.* 1999), their readiness to consider joint strategies in relation to these norms as appropriate will not necessarily match. In other words, difficulties with global governance – especially when considering the dense web of international treaties, agreements and norms – may depend less on a mismatch of *interests* than on diverse *interpretations*. For example, while United Nations (UN) member states are likely to share an interest in peace, non-intervention and the protection of fundamental and human rights and document this shared interest by signing the respective treaties, conventions and agreements, in times of crisis diverse interpretations of these fundamental norms come to the fore.

With regard to the leading question on governance this observation suggests two concerns for students of global governance. Both regard the input of time and place. First, it is important to distinguish between effective and legitimate governance with reference to parameters of time generated by periods of stability vs. crisis. Notably, the condition of crisis adds the dimension of time pressure and therefore cuts down on possibilities of strategic dialogue, for example through diplomatic interaction or based on deliberation (Wiener 2008). Second, it is necessary to consider the interaction that precedes decision-making, because the interactive dimension provides information about the sociocultural context in which possibilities of understanding, i.e. recognition and cultural validation, develop through iterated interaction. This immediate context has an important, if largely invisible, impact on interpreting norms and regulations (Finnemore and Toope 2001).

The literature has assessed the quality and possibilities of governance based on efficiency and legitimacy. The main focus has been on state-centered activity including the desaggregation of state agency (e.g., Slaughter 2004a), and new institutional

behavior beyond state boundaries (Zürn *et al.* 2007). This chapter argues that in addition to efficiency and legitimacy concerns that are developed from concerns about the political steering of global policy processes with respect to democratic principles, global governance needs to acknowledge the diversification of international encounters on a global scale. That is, through enhanced cross-border activity, international encounters paradoxically both lead to the decoupling of contexts of interpretation (i.e. distorting the interface of formal validity of norms and social recognition) and create new possibilities for shared interpretation.

The remainder of the chapter is split into four sections. Section one places the issue of contested norms in the international relations literature on norms. Section two introduces distinctive conditions of contestation and types of norms. Section three details the qualitative methodology and the steps of obtaining and evaluating discursive data. Finally, section four concludes with an outlook for further research based on research assumptions.

Contested norms

To examine the potential impact of diverging interpretations of norms, this chapter proposes a methodological approach to make meaning “accountable.”³ It is designed for single case studies that seek to generate a working hypothesis for follow-up studies and engages discourse analysis to derive a methodological approach to examine the role of norms in the international realm.⁴ In distinction from long-term group constellations and individual input into transnational politics, the empirical focus is on interventions made by individuals who operate on a micro-level in “settings of interaction” which are identified as “locales” of day-to-day practice (Giddens 1984: xxv). By bringing normative contingency to bear empirically, case studies are able to investigate the “constitutive phenomenology of the world of everyday” meanings in order to identify their impact on politics as “background expectancies” which are individually held. While Harold Garfinkel’s studies focused on enhancing “sociological inquiries” by making “commonplace *scenes* visible” (Garfinkel 1967: 37, emphasis added). In adopting this approach it is possible to make the impact of commonplace *meanings* visible for the study of global governance. Following insights from discourse analyses, it is assumed that even when sharing the same language a word in and by itself provides insufficient information about its meaning (Doty 1993; Weldes and Saco 1996; Milliken 1999; Fierke 2004; Diez 2005). To catch the meaning of a word or a phrase it is helpful to examine “the cultural and social day-to-day context in which it has been used” and “marked by indexicality” (Garfinkel 1967; Hauck 1984: 155). Associative connotations allow for an assessment of the degree to which the meanings of norms converge. This assessment provides information about individual dispositions towards these norms. Understanding is never unmediated but subject to interpretation against the background of individual experience. Therefore, individually experienced and enacted expectations about norms hold the key for comparing interpretations in international settings (Weldes and Saco 1996: 369).

The international relations literature offers two types of theoretical frameworks to study the role of norms. Conventional (or modern) constructivists focus on the structuring power of norms and their influence on state behavior in world politics

(Katzenstein 1996a; Risse *et al.* 1999; Checkel 2001). Critical and consistent constructivists focus on the meaning of norms as constituted by and constitutive of specific use.⁵ The former's focus on *reaction to* norms is helpful to indicate the influence of one fundamental norm over another – say, the power of human rights or the diffusion of a specific Weberian administrative culture – or to focus on a specific decision-making situation in which norms guide processes of deliberation. The latter's interest in *relations with* norms enhances the understanding of how intersubjectivity plays out in international relations and identifies avenues toward change based on normative structures as entailing meaning that is actually “in-use.” It is therefore receptive of the interrelation between agent-centered and structural change. As the literature has demonstrated, norms may achieve a degree of appropriateness reflected by changing state behavior on a global scale. However, in the absence of social recognition, norms are likely to be misinterpreted or simply discarded. In any case, contestation is expected. This also holds true for legal norms, which require social institutions to enhance understanding and identify meaning, i.e. normative practice. The documented language about norms indicates no more than the formal validity of a norm, while its social recognition stands to be constructed by social interaction. As social constructs, norms may acquire stability over extended periods of time, yet they remain flexible by definition.

The link between formal validity and social recognition becomes disturbed when contexts of norm-setting and norm-following are decoupled. Subsequently, the interpretation of norms in contexts beyond the state becomes distorted. To address the consequences and discuss ways of remedying this failing link, this chapter suggests examining individual interpretations as an additional dimension that allows for identifying cultural validation based on everyday experience, i.e. enacting meaning-in-use. Structures of meaning-in-use are defined as “intersubjective structures . . . that provide the categories through which we represent and understand the world” (Weldes 1998: 218). They therefore offer a reference frame for empirical studies that seek to reconstruct the respective meaning which has been enacted at a particular point in time by particular actors. They represent meaning-in-use.

Transnationalization, both in its narrow political definition as *type of actor*, including at least one non-state actor, or in its wider social definition as *type of activity*, in which no specific national characteristics are dominant, has produced constitutional quality beyond national state boundaries. Is this quality, however, accepted across the board so that international actors can move along and consult signposts for direction (Kratochwil 2007)? Yet, with reference to European integration for example, the question could be asked whether, as a process, integration has actually produced wholesale *transnationalization* or whether the European Union remains a partially transnationalized *international* organization where the majority of interaction still involves international encounters.⁶ That is, conventions, agreements and treaties may trigger different expectations, even among readers of the same text. To understand the impact of individual experience, it is therefore proposed that we identify the constitutive input of *cultural* practices. Cultural practices play a key role in the project of uncovering hidden meanings of norms which deviate from the texts of legal documents and expected shared recognition stipulated by modern constitutionalism. Accordingly, the comparative research is designed to identify patterns of

interpretation. It follows that the moving back and forth between different contexts enhances the contestation of meanings, as differently socialized individuals – e.g., politicians, civil servants, parliamentarians, lawyers, lobbyists, journalists and so on – who have been trained in a variety of traditions and socialized in different day-to-day circumstances seek to interpret them.

While the potential for misunderstandings and conflict can be kept at bay by adding a deliberative dimension to facilitate arguing and ultimately persuasion so that one meaning can legitimately trump another (Risse 2000; Muller 2004; Deitelhoff and Müller 2005), it is important to keep a key limitation of this approach in mind. That is, arguing takes place within a *limited* context of negotiation, say within one particular committee. It is hence conducive to establishing social recognition of a fundamental norm, say human rights, within that specific and limited context only. To warrant social recognition of human rights in another context, discussion would need to resume anew, and so on. That is, once norm interpretation and implementation happens in various contexts (which is usually the case when researching the role of norms in the international realm), the meaning attached to a norm is likely to differ according to the respective experience with norm use. It is therefore important to recover the crucial interrelation between experience with and enactment of meaning in use. To fill this gap, it is helpful to reconstruct structures of meaning-in-use in different contexts including domestic and transnational political arenas. To identify the more detailed aspect of the research design, the following section first defines conditions for norm contestation as well as generic norm types. The framework comprises norm types, conditions of contestation, types of divergence and opposition-deriving as a specific interview evaluation technique.

Conditions for contestation and types of norms⁷

Reactions to norms have been conceptualized as habitual rather than reasoned (March and Olsen 1989). In other words, in the absence of established and formalized procedures of arguing or, in any case, access to a modicum of contestation, norms are likely to acquire political significance when their meaning is disputed. At that point, they obtain political visibility. Such points of contestation are triggered by contingency, out-of-context application and in situations of crisis. They are a regular occurrence in processes of governance beyond the state, when international encounters occur on a regular basis. And they are particularly visible in situations of “crisis,” “a moment of crucial decision in the context of immense danger” (Griffiths and O’Callaghan 2002: 57). It can therefore be hypothesized that the contested meaning of norms is enhanced under three conditions, with each condition indicating enhanced contestation due to declining social feedback: that is, the possibility to turn to social institutions as frameworks of reference for the interpretation of norms (social recognition). First, the contingency of normative meaning indicates a change of constitutive social practices both cultural and organizational, and hence normative meaning over time. Second, the extension of governance practices beyond modern political and societal boundaries changes the social environment and hence the reference frame provided by social institutions. And, third, a situation of crisis raises the stakes for understanding meanings based on social institutions.

The case study design developed in the following section focuses on empirical research that seeks to explore the impact of changing governance processes, understood as moving social practices beyond the boundaries set by modern nation states. Here it is important to note the selective or out-of-sync movements of organizational and cultural practices, respectively. If norm interpretation is historically contingent, then moving social practices outside the domestic political arena indicates a transfer of normative meanings outside the familiar context of interpretation. While social feedback is high in the domestic arena where organizational and cultural practices overlap, it is expected to decrease with a lack of overlap between these two types of social practices. To understand the potential for conflict such misunderstandings might cause, the social feedback factor is measured with reference to the individually enacted cultural validation of norms. Empirical research will therefore seek to reconstruct the varying relations between formal validity, social recognition and cultural validation of a norm. This is important, since diverging interpretations of meaning may induce a clash of normative meanings and hence potentially present a source of conflict. The aspect which is particularly interesting to explore is the question of whether globalization and transnationalization will contribute to "solve" the problem or whether the reverse is the case and the level of contestation will increase. While we can hypothesize that the more transnational a context of interaction the less likely are clashes over norm interpretation, this hypothesis only works if the process of transnationalization turns out to be all-encompassing. If this is not the case, transnational arenas have to be considered as enhancing rather than reducing diversity in the international realm. That is, as additional political arenas they increase the range of reference frames for social recognition and hence the potential for conflicting interpretations.⁸

In the interest of the transdisciplinary accessibility of the proposed research design, three types of norms are distinguished: fundamental norms, organizing principles and standardized procedures. The types are identified according to the respective degrees of generalization, specification and contestation on ethical grounds. Thus, research conducted in different disciplines may refer to these generic types and engage in meaningful conversation with neighboring disciplines. *Fundamental norms* include core constitutional norms which are commonly applied with reference to modern constitutionalism and basic procedural norms in international relations. They include citizenship, human rights, the rule of law, democracy, sovereignty, non-intervention, abstention from torture and so forth. *Organizing principles* are more closely linked with processes of policy or political processes. They evolve through the practices of politics and policymaking and include, for example, accountability, transparency, gender mainstreaming, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement. They inform political procedures and guide policy practices and include, for example, accountability, transparency, legitimacy and gender mainstreaming. *Standardized procedures* entail specific prescriptions, rules and regulations. This norm type is the least likely to be contested on moral or ethical grounds. It is not contingent and entails directions that are specified as clearly as possible, such as, for example, the instructions to assemble a flatpack piece of furniture (Kratochwil 1989). These involve, for example, electoral rules or assembly regulations which are clearly defined and expected to facilitate unmediated understanding.

It follows logically that the most contested norms are the least specific, i.e. the fundamental norms, while the least contested are the most specific, i.e. the standardized procedures. As organizing principles are subject to contestation, they can also be upgraded to the status of a fundamental norm. For example, the norm of accountability may be understood both as an organizing principle with reference to one particular policy process in one policy, yet it may well be a fundamental norm in another.⁹ For all norms, the three conditions of contestation apply. That is, while they have been identified with reference to a specific context, for example, modern constitutionalism as it evolved through social practices of modern nation-state politics, they may well change in light of ongoing contestation. In addition, the way they work depends on how they are interpreted according to the three conditions of contingency, moving social practices and crisis.

Studying diverging, converging and diffused interpretations of normative meanings may appear a rather elusive exercise. The challenge lies in locating the cultural dimension analytically and in examining it empirically. Therefore, case studies need to compare the input of cultural practices in an *emerging* transnational arena, on the one hand, with those in *enduring* domestic arenas, on the other. To that end, indicators need to be identified at a level of desegregation that allows for the empirical assessment of meaning. When considering that individuals carry normative baggage wherever they go, yet are always exposed to normative structures, interpretations achieve a considerable radius of input, and therefore influence, under conditions of transnationalization. Most importantly, elites who have been socialized in domestic political contexts ("national" elites) will carry the respective domestically constituted normative baggage into international negotiation environments. In these environments conflict is therefore more likely when decisions are taken by elites who have little experience in sustained and continuous transnational interaction and hence are unable to refer to a common reference framework. In the absence of a significant increase of transnationalized politics and policy processes, international politics remain just that, i.e. they are "international" in the literal meaning of the word.

Methodology and method

Following the distinction between visible factors of a treaty or convention such as principles, articles and provisions (indicating formal validity), on the one hand, and invisible factors such as individual interpretations of fundamental norms based on social institutions (social recognition) or individual experience (cultural validation), on the other, research on hidden meanings turns to the latter. While constitutive for political outcomes, interpretations of norms remain largely invisible. They are most likely to entail the hidden meanings which need to be made accountable to offer empirical reference points for a comparative assessment of divergence, convergence or diffusion of the meanings of constitutional norms. The following discussion elaborates on the details of making meanings accountable by applying discourse analysis. Discourse analysis offers a specific perspective on social phenomena which begins with the assumption of discourse as a social practice. It is not an approach or a research technique for the analysis of texts such as qualitative content analysis or reconstructive analysis. The choice of method for a specific text therefore remains to

be made. The method may be used as a cognitive map that will facilitate access to a more detailed understanding of fundamental norms than currently available. The details are located in social practices that reflect experience within specific contexts. To grasp meanings that are attached to social practices, reconstructive analysis is more helpful than content analysis. The latter will reveal constellations and frequency of code noted prior to the evaluation. In turn, the former offers interpretative tools with which meanings that are constituted prior to a discursive intervention can be uncovered. As a reflexive process, reconstructive analysis allows bringing intangible aspects of discourse to the fore.¹⁰

The case studies are conducted according to methodological triangulation, i.e. combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The evaluation period typically involves five empirical phases, each requiring specific decisions with regard to technique and procedure. In the first phase, interviews are conducted; during the second phase, interviews are transcribed and a general text *corpus* is compiled; the third phase involves text analysis using the techniques of excerption, keyword selection and deriving oppositions. In the fourth phase, the normative structure of meaning-in-use is reconstructed with reference to the relevant political arena, elite group and modern constitutional norm. Finally, in phase five, a quantitative evaluation of types of divergence, convergence or diffusion of meanings is carried out based on the set of associative connotations generated by the interviews to indicate a direction for a larger quantitative study as a follow-up. This final step uses the method of "structured, focused comparison" (King *et al.* 1994: 45) based on the systematic collection of information.

Discourse analysts propose to examine "contemporarily produced texts" in order to reconstruct hidden normative meanings (Weldes and Saco 1996: 373; Bublitz 1999; Schneider 2001; Huffs Schmid 2004). Such texts may include a range of data sources, such as parliamentary debates, the media or interview transcriptions. In the latter case, interviews are conducted anonymously to create an environment that encourages spontaneous answers that reveal personal reactions.¹¹ This emphasis follows the distinction between "informative," "expressive" and "directive" uses of language in order to avoid informative or directive uses of language. Instead, it stressed the "expressive" use of language to generate emotional responses.¹² That is, technical or other types of rationalized expert opinions that are likely to reproduce standardized rules and general guidelines rather than revealing "emotive" personal views were not encouraged.¹³ Such views would simply restate the formal validity of norms, and, as such they would not be conducive to the task of making the individually held associative connotations accountable. In sum, the empirical focus on discursive interventions is expected to reveal the intersubjective engagement *with* rather than the discourse *about* a particular issue. The discursive interventions take place within the interviewee's day-to-day context. They set the micro-level for the empirical investigation. Once transcribed, the collection of spontaneous remarks constitutes the text corpus as the main database. Focus on interview transcriptions allows for obtaining indirect references to fundamental norms which are distinguishable by individual, group or other categorical indicators. It is conducive to compiling a database for insights into the individual and contextualized cultural validations of selected norms. The case study's main data source then consists

of interview transcriptions in order to reconstruct the structure of meaning-in-use with regard to selected fundamental norms. The compiled text should include all transcriptions. The keyword selection is inductive, i.e. keywords are derived from the main text corpus. The selection is carried out on the basis of semantic references to specific fundamental norms. The cross-linkage between keywords and norms allow for a comparative distinction of individually held associative connotations. The analysis seeks to reveal hidden meanings ascribed to norms by individuals, who are selected from different contexts such as transnational and domestic political arenas.

This kind of empirical research allows for a shift in perspective from the discursive event at the *macro*-level as the level of high complexity (international politics) toward the discursive event at the *micro*-level (individually held associative connotations) to reduce this complexity (Titscher *et al.* 2000: 27). The individual interview situation provides a setting in which interaction in context generates the text corpus as the empirical database. This database allows for identifying the structure of meaning-in-use. It is of central interest to reduce the complexity created by that situation, for example by reference to theoretical assumptions and by choice of empirical design. The case study seeks to generate a working hypothesis for a follow-up project targeting a larger more representative sample. The interviews are conducted on the basis of a guided questionnaire.

Interview evaluation

Reconstructive analysis refers to a basic text corpus which is generated through discursive interventions at the micro-level. The evaluation of the text is conducted in order to reconstruct the specific structure of meaning-in-use in a selected context. The language of discursive interventions is understood as constitutive in a Wittgensteinian sense; that is, it not only functions to describe facts but also constitutes new meaning.¹⁴ For example, at the meta-theoretical level discourse analysis assumes that "the meaning of a comment rests in its usage in a specific situation" (Titscher *et al.* 2000: 146; cf. Wittgenstein 1984: Para. 7). It follows that individually held associative connotations about meaning are derived from and contribute to the structure of meaning-in-use. The following paragraphs distinguish between the type of data that is to be collected and the approach to evaluating that data. The text analysis engages in the three evaluative steps. First, the text corpus is organized according to policy fields, each of which provides a framework with significant relevance for one of the three constitutional norms that lie at the center of this case study. Second, the interview comments are sorted according to elite group and keyword families that provide patterns of associative connotations for comparison. All data are presented in one case excerpt document. As the script for the following evaluation this document provides direct links between keywords and individual utterances. The text corpus is thus linked directly with the associative connotations and the key norms under investigation. Third, associative connotations are recalled and identified as sets of *oppositions* which derive from the text corpus of interview transcriptions.¹⁵

Milliken (1999) proposes a distinction between core oppositions and derived oppositions. While both types of oppositions are derived from the text corpus through

induction, core oppositions also relate to the academic literature that exists outside the text. The technique involves “abstract[ing] from two particular oppositions to a *core opposition* underlying both” (Milliken 1999: 234). It allows for conducting the opposition-deriving process with regard to one core opposition several times. For example, when examining meanings attached to the fundamental norm of citizenship a meaningful core opposition according to the citizenship literature would be identified as “inside” vs. “outside” interpretations of citizenship. The repetitive process of identifying derived oppositions allows for a larger sample and hence empirically more comprehensive results. In turn, derived oppositions with regard to citizenship may, for example – and depending on the context of the case study – be identified as “travel” vs. “security” or as “civil rights” vs. “external borders.”¹⁶ This exercise is repeated with the same interviewees and with reference to a number of different fundamental norms.

The next step of reconstructing the normative structure of meaning-in-use sheds light on diverging, converging or diffused meanings of norms. It derives oppositions between different groups of interviewees (i.e. from domestic and transnational arenas, respectively) and compares their associative connotations. Here it is of interest whether core oppositions can be identified in each of the compared issue areas and whether these core oppositions do prevail in the transnational political arena as well, or whether they are diffused in the transnational context. The point of research based on interviews is less one of demonstrating how one particular norm is interpreted in a generic sense than of identifying and subsequently comparing patterns of divergence, convergence or diffusion of structures of meaning-in-use that will guide the interpretation of norms in a situation of crisis. The method of deriving oppositions can be applied to the case excerpt, i.e. the reduced text corpus to which discursive interventions of a number of individuals have generated passages when making utterances about different issues, e.g. a specific event, topic or policy area.

In sum, case studies allow for assessing divergence, convergence or diffusion of meanings which individuals associate with fundamental norms in international politics. A finding of divergence of normative meanings rather than convergence to be the dominant pattern would indicate an absence of a significant degree of cultural harmonization among elites. In turn, if converging meanings prevail, Karl Deutsch’s “layer-cake assumption” would be sustained. That is, social groups harmonize differently, with elites displaying more social interaction and hence a higher likelihood of harmonization than other social strata (Deutsch 1953). Should the outcome entail both diverging and converging interpretations – and possibly a third pattern of diffusion as well – the variation remains to be distinguished according to type of divergence (as in Table 5.1). The key question is whether the transnational elites’ respective utterances demonstrate a divergence from their respective national domestic pattern. Three types of variation are considered as indicators of divergence.

Table 5.1 Types of divergence

A: domestic vs. transnational
B: domestic vs. domestic
C: transnational vs. transnational

Choice of indicators

This section turns to the selection of indicators for empirical research, which is the final remaining detail of research operationalization. The indicators include the following generic types: social groups, norms, political arenas and issue areas. The decision to interview elites follows Karl Deutsch's "layer-cake" assumption, which expects that, of all social strata, elites are most likely to generate cultural harmonization as a result of regional integration (Deutsch 1953). Elites are the most likely social group with full access to a political community. It has been demonstrated, for example, that "discourse elites" have "influence for important decisions with regard to the entire society . . . based on particular positions within public discourse" (Fairclough 1992: 212; Gerhards 1992: 307; Schneider 2001: 49; cf. Hoffmann-Lange 1990: 11). Based on these two considerations, the selection of interviewees should include elites who enjoy full membership in the political community in question and who operate either within the transnational arena or in domestic political arenas. That is, each interviewee must – in principle – be able to both make use of and shape the resources of the public sphere. Only thus is the individual's constitutive input on the interrelated dimensions of cultural validation, social recognition and formal validity – i.e. the dimensions which have been singled out as key to norm interpretation – warranted. This would involve, for example, the production of texts such as policy documents, draft legislation, newspaper articles, academic writing, official documents and so forth, in addition to access to information and use of resources. In sum, the interviewed elite samples involve a group of highly flexible, well-informed and boundary-crossing citizens who are able both to influence and access public discourse (Peters 2005). These individual elites carry normative baggage which informs their respective expectations toward the meaning of norms. Unless contested by others, or within an otherwise non-agreeable context, the baggage will prevail, notwithstanding the crossing of societal or political boundaries. The baggage is conceptualized as associative connotations. The case study details its quality, quantity and durability.

To assess associative connotations with fundamental norms by elites of different nationality and operating within different political arenas, case studies would focus on those fundamental norms which have found their way into international treaties, conventions or agreements. This choice follows the "liberal community" hypothesis which assumes that members of a liberal community with a given identity will share respect for the same norms, values and principles (Katzenstein 1996a; Schimmelfennig 2003).

The issue areas will typically refer to a topic which is widely accessible, hence offering a shared reference point for all interviewees. Accordingly, issue areas may involve topics that are dealt with in the media. Such topics are accessible to all interviewees both as users and constructors, and they are meaningful as topics of conversation with regard to a selection of fundamental norms. For example, the fundamental norms of "democracy" and "the rule of law" fit well with a topic such as EU enlargement, the norms of "sovereignty" and "non-intervention" are addressed by the topic of internationally administrated territories and humanitarian intervention, and so forth. The selection of such pairings is based on the assessment of which keywords are most likely to be uttered in structured qualitative interviews that focus on the respective fields.¹⁷ The selection follows the rule-in-practice assumption which

stresses the individual input in the formation of normative structures, i.e. elites will only refer to structures of meaning-in-use that are accessible to them (Puetter and Wiener 2007). The issue areas are considered as reference frames which allow for a structured approach to individual expert interviews.

Case studies will examine the process of enacting of meaning-in-use in both domestic and transnational political arenas. The proposed selection of long-standing member states which enjoy several memberships in supranationally formed communities follows the liberal community assumption that the more community memberships any two countries enjoy, the higher the shared recognition and appropriateness of fundamental norms is likely to be. For example, a choice of Germany, France and UK would imply an overlap in membership of various international organizations including NATO, the United Nations and, last but not least, the European Union, as well as the respective supranational communities which have been forged in their suite. This set of strong community memberships has been considered as generating a normative pull based on a shared identity as "civilized" nations in the larger realm of world politics (Katzenstein 1996a; Risse 2000).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that familiarity, understood as expression of experience and expectations, is an often-overlooked element in international encounters. Yet, situations that generate a familiarity deficit are likely to be a constant threat for global governance. It has therefore been proposed to engage in some more detail with situations in which a familiarity deficit might occur. This discussion has drawn on the literature on norms research in IR theory which has found that under particular conditions, diverse cultural background experiences are likely to clash in international encounters. The likelihood of such clashes is enhanced under conditions of crisis (time) and under conditions of decoupling from domestic arenas of origin. In order to demonstrate how the familiarity deficit is likely to play out, this chapter has suggested the disaggregation of norms into three dimensions of interpretation, which include formal validity, social recognition and cultural validation. It has also suggested the identification of the cultural practices that help to make contested normative meanings accountable for global governance based on empirical research.

Focusing on the methodological details of case studies on this subject, this chapter proposed a qualitative approach that centers on individually enacted meaning-in-use. The framework comprises norm-types, conditions of contestation, types of divergence and opposition-deriving as a specific interview evaluation technique. The proposed methodological approach offers a research design for conducting a comparative study of elite perceptions of fundamental norms in political arenas of two different types (domestic and transnational). By including transnationally operating elites of the same nationality as the domestic elites it offers a cross-check function to empirically demonstrate whether or not, and to what degree, national identity matters for norm interpretation. The database is evaluated with a view to establishing diverging, converging or diffused interpretations of meanings of fundamental norms. Each norm is considered as being predominantly addressed with reference to one issue area. Based on these data the case study aims at identifying individually held associative

connotations which are then coded according to keywords and families of meaning indicating their relation with fundamental norms. Pending on the scope of the respective case study, research will generate a working hypothesis, or be used for a larger, more representative investigation.

Based on the choice of elites and political arenas, the following research assumptions can be summarized. If the choice of elite groups entails, for example, French and British elites in the domestic arenas of Paris and London, respectively, and the transnational elite groups include French and British elites operating in Brussels (over a distinct period of time), the following findings could occur. First, if harmonization between all elite groups in both types of political arena – domestic and transnational – can be identified, the layer-cake assumption and the liberal community assumption trump. That is, this finding would support the assumption that either elite interaction leads to harmonization across national boundaries or membership in a community with a given identity socializes members into recognizing the same group of norms. Second, if divergence among the domestic sample groups can be established, that is, if the French and the British interpretations of fundamental norms are distinct, and if this divergence is maintained among the British and French Brusselites as the two national groups operating in the transnational arena, then assumptions about “national identity options” (Marcussen *et al.* 1999) carry the day. Third, if however, a new pattern of divergence between the domestic samples, on the one hand, and both transnational sample groups, on the other, can be distinguished, i.e. a new pattern of interpretation that does overlap with either national identities or supranational communities, then the constitutive impact of interaction in context on the interpretation of fundamental norms is confirmed. This third finding would raise questions about diversity within international communities, and indicate the need to rethink leading modern constructivist assumptions about membership in a community with a given identity as the basis of shared norms, beliefs and principles.

Notes

- 1 On the issue of how norms “work,” see in particular Friedrich Kratochwil’s work (1989).
- 2 Oxford English Dictionary. Available online at <http://www.oed.com> (accessed October 30, 2009).
- 3 Note that the expression to make meaning “accountable” is derived from Harold Garfinkel’s ethno-methodological approach to capture the indexicality of meanings by making it visible (Garfinkel 1967). It is therefore not to be confounded with research on governance which conceptualizes accountability as an organizing principle of legitimate governance (Bovens 2007; Puntcher-Riekman 2007).
- 4 This type of case study focuses on exploration as opposed to description or the investigation of explanatory theories. For the distinction, see Titscher *et al.* (2000: 44).
- 5 Kratochwil (1989), Weldes and Saco (1996), Reus-Smit (1997, 2003). The difference between critical and consistent constructivists lies in stressing the normative stance taken by critical approaches (small ‘c’ critical theory) which is not shared by the former.
- 6 The italics are used to stress the consideration of relations between different national entities and/or their representatives. This literal application of the term indicates the constitutive role of nations in the United Nations system of civilized nations; see, for example, Habermas (2004a: 117). It stands in contrast with the term “transnational” indicating a situation in which national boundaries are blurred.
- 7 The following draws closely on Wiener (2009: sections 2 and 3).

- 8 Whether or not such *intentional* conflict of meanings must necessarily be considered as a problem that requires solving through harmonization, or, whether it might actually be used to establish routine procedures of contestation so as to enhance legitimacy remains to be addressed from a normative theoretical standpoint. The issue would lead beyond the limited space of this article. It is addressed elsewhere in some detail (Wiener 2008).
- 9 For such a distinct assessment of accountability see, e.g., Bovens (2007) and Puntischer-Riekmann (2007), respectively.
- 10 That is, “[m]eanings produced through a discourse ‘pre-exist their use in any one discursive practice,’ or “... by any one individual. *Discursive practices*, in turn, *are social acts, enabled by a discourse*, through which some relevant aspect of the world is actively defined and constituted” (Weldes and Saco 1996: 343–44, emphasis added).
- 11 Typically, in this type of case study, interviewees will remain anonymous and interview evaluation proceeds on a strict anonymity basis, i.e. providing letter-coded reference only.
- 12 For this distinction of three different uses of language see, e.g., Copi (1998); cf. Kalish (1964: 92). See also the distinction of different types of speech acts as “directive,” “assertive,” “commissive,” “and expressive” as well as a group of “declaratives” in Nastri *et al.* (2006: 1029).
- 13 See Holbrook *et al.* (2000). “[E]motive meaning” indicates attitudes and feelings associated with the use of a word, phrase, or sentence, in contrast with its literal significance. See, for example, Brandt’s definition, “[T]o say a word has ‘blind emotive meaning’ is to say it has a dispositional capacity to arouse emotive effects of substantial order, in certain circumstances, independently of any alteration the hearing of it introduces into the cognitive field (except for the sensory presence of the word itself)” (Brandt 1950: 535).
- 14 For example, as an alternative to the positivist “set of labels which can be compared to the world, Wittgenstein demonstrates that language is constitutive for the world” (Fierke 1998: 3).
- 15 The oppositions are rendered by single documents which are identified as “the language practice of predication – the verbs, adverbs and adjectives that attach to nouns” (Milliken 1999: 232).
- 16 For such findings see, e.g., Wiener (2008).
- 17 Note that this choice is made primarily to provide a structure for the interview and keyword organization. It does not assume to present an exclusive relationship between a particular policy area and a particular norm. The point is rather to demonstrate that, despite their all-pervasiveness, norms do retain different meanings to individuals.