There is a crack in everything: that's how the light gets in,” Leonard Cohen once famously sang. In international relations there are “cracks” in global systems, and that is what Professor Antje Wiener examines in her research: the contestations of norms in international relations before they turn into global conflict. In her recent book, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations*, Wiener challenges earlier generations of constructivist thought by proposing that norms do not have a linear lifecycle but that they are contested at all stages of their existence. She proposes a framework that analyzes the diverse actors and processes that account for norm stability and norm change in global affairs, and illustrates it through three recent cases.

At the core of her work is a norm typology. Norms such as emissions standards, fishing quotas, citizenship, human rights, and democracy all have different levels or scales. At the fundamental level are core constitutional norms, such as rule of law, democracy, human rights, and citizenship. They have a wide moral reach and very few people object to them, however they have high proactive contestation as these norms are reinterpreted in each place that they are implemented. For example, some countries apply the death penalty and others do not, but none argue that human rights are a bad thing. At the other end of Wiener’s typology are standardized procedures: these are norms such as carbon dioxide emissions standards, fishing quotas, and electoral rules. They usually operate on a smaller scale with a narrow moral reach and have much more reactive contestation or objection. They have much less proactive contestation as there is usually only one way to interpret standardized procedures.

At the meso level of Wiener’s typology are organizing principles. Examples of organizing principles are norms such as common but differentiated responsibility as outlined in the Kyoto Protocol or a target reduction in fishing catch. Organizing principles typically involve an agreement on a common threshold, such as the annual amount of fish to be caught, but usually require engagement in the implementation. This could involve standardized procedures, such as the percentage allowable by each fisher. Wiener argues that is often at the level of organizing principles where compromise can be made.

When analyzing the contestation of norms, it is important to analyze not just the scale of the norm, but also the affected stakeholders and how much access they have to norm constitution. Professor Wiener argues that to determine the stakeholders who should have a say in norms, the *quod omnes tangit* principle, or “what concerns all must be approved by all,” should come into play. While ideally all affected should have a say in norm making, norm takers, or the governed, do have agency although they are not creating the norms. Their agency manifests as reactive contestation, or not giving consent, in the form of social movements, non-state actors, and non-compliant states. Norm makers on the other hand have proactive contestation and critical engagement with norm substance. They are not affected by norms, but rather have an effect on norms.
makers set definitions and are state representatives, international organization representatives, or other formal sources of international laws. Analysis of norm makers would focus on their impact on global change, normative issues, and normative substance.

Professor Antje Wiener’s research looks not at whether a norm is “good” or “bad,” or “robust” or “not” but examines instances of contestation about norms. Instead of identifying individual norms and analyzing them, her research asks, “Are there normative issues or global tensions that we need to look into more that are brought about by stakeholders?” Building off of recent international relations theory that norms lie in practice and all practices are normative, Wiener asks, “Whose practices count?” in norm creation and contestation, and, “Whose practices ought to count?” Her research objective is to make all affected stakeholders count through global international relations. The field of global international relations, according to Wiener, is a political project where academics move beyond critique to intervene and counter injustice. Her research aim is to make an academic intervention in order to account for the neglect of diversity and stakeholder plurality in the dominant narrative of international relations.