Norm Adoption by International Organizations, 1980-2015

Jonas Tallberg (Stockholm University)

Magnus Lundgren (Stockholm University)

Thomas Sommerer (Stockholm University)

Theresa Squatrito (University of Liverpool)

Abstract: Recent decades have witnessed the emergence, spread, and adoption of a broad range of new norms in global governance, among them sustainable development, gender equality, and human security. While existing scholarship can tell us a lot about the specific trajectories of these norms, we know little about the broader patterns and sources of norm adoption by international organizations (IOs). This paper offers the first comparative large-N analysis of the spread and adoption of norms among IOs. Based on a unique dataset on IO policies from principal decision-making bodies, the paper maps and explains the spread of eight liberal norms across 18 IOs over the time period 1980 to 2015. The central results are three-fold. First, there is extensive variation in adoption both across norms and IOs. Second, norm adoption is most likely when IO memberships are domestically committed to liberal norms, norms can diffuse across IOs through networks of member states, and institutional rules empower supranational and transnational entrepreneurs. Third, differentiating between shallow and deep norm adoption shows the former to be more common among IOs and less demanding in terms of the conditions that have to be met. These findings suggest that IO memberships have been underestimated in earlier research, and underline the merits of a comparative approach to norm adoption.

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Recent decades have witnessed the emergence, spread, and adoption of a broad range of new norms in global governance. From hardly being recognized as global policy principles in the 1970s, norms such as sustainable development, gender equality, human security, good governance, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have become part and parcel of the policy portfolios of many international organizations (IOs). This development has inspired an impressive literature on norms in global governance.[1]

Existing scholarship can tell us a lot about the specific trajectories of particular norms. But we know much less about the broader patterns and sources of norm adoption in global governance, especially as they are espoused by IOs. How have norms spread across IOs and over time? Are some norms adopted more quickly or broadly than others? Are some IOs generally leaders or laggards in the uptake of new norms? And, perhaps most importantly, what explains variation in norm adoption by IOs?

Establishing and explaining the broader patterns of IO norm adoption can give us traction on some critical questions in the study of world politics. What are fundamental drivers and constraints in the spread of new global norms? Is the liberal international order truly universal or restricted to a specific set of western IOs? How do states, international bureaucracies, and transnational actors interact in global norm development?

In addition, norm adoption by IOs is consequential for states and societies. Norms focus attention on particular problems, prescribe or proscribe certain behavior, and may generate distributional effects across interests. When adopted by IOs, norms become instantiated in law and policies, impose sharp demands on public and private actors, and are further strengthened as prescriptive principles, raising the likelihood of additional norm cascades. Whether, how and

[1] Finnemore 1993; Klotz 1995; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Johnston 2001; Acharya 2004; Gheciu 2005; Reimann 2006; Sandholtz 2007; Kelley 2008; Risse et al. 2009, 2013; Park and Vetterlein 2010; Krook and True 2012; Zwingel 2012; Grigorescu 2015; Zimmermann forthcoming.

why norms spread among IOs therefore matters for real-world concerns such as equality, security, and sustainability.

This paper offers the first comparative large-N analysis of the adoption of norms among IOs. It maps and explains the spread of eight liberal norms across 18 multi-issue IOs from 1980 to 2015. The norms are CSR, democracy promotion, debt relief, gender equality, good governance, human security, responsibility to protect (R2P), and sustainable development. These norms represent a wide range of policy fields in global governance, have emerged and spread since 1980, and are all meso-level regulative norms. We assess the adoption of these norms based on a unique dataset on IO policy decisions. The IOs in the sample all have a multi-issue orientation to ensure comparability in basic organizational openness to new norms, and are distributed across the global level and four world regions. To identify norm adoption, we collected and analyzed all policy decisions taken by the main intergovernmental decision-making bodies of these IOs. The decisions by these bodies represent the collective will of the IO and constitute its strongest possible form of commitment. We measure norm adoption at two levels: *norm recognition* (the first reference to a norm) and *norm adoption* (the first full policy devoted to a norm). This two-fold measure allows us to map and explain both shallow and deep forms of norm adoption by IOs.

Our argument is three-fold. First, there is considerable variation in adoption across norms and IOs. Using the more demanding measure, the norms most adopted are sustainable development, good governance, and gender equality, while the least adopted norms are R2P, democracy promotion, and debt relief. The IOs that have adopted most norms are the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN), and Organization of American States (OAS), while the IOs that have adopted the fewest norms are the Arab-Maghreb Union (AMU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). IOs with democratic memberships have been considerably more open to the adoption of these norms

than authoritarian IOs, whose resistance puts a constraint on norm expansion in global governance.

Second, variation in norm adoption is best explained by three basic conditions of IOs as political environments, related to memberships and institutions: domestic commitments to liberal norms, networks of member states, and institutional rules governing the empowerment of norm entrepreneurs. These factors combine in producing an account where IO memberships are of crucial importance by presenting vertical and horizontal pathways of norm spread. Memberships with domestic commitments to liberal ideals are more likely to promote these norms, sometimes on the basis of national templates. In addition, memberships matter by connecting IOs to each other, thereby providing a channel for the diffusion of norms across IOs. Finally, norm adoption becomes more likely if IOs institutionally empower international bureaucracies and transnational actors (TNAs) through delegation and access.

Third, our two-fold measure suggests several important insights about the process of norm adoption. The patterns indicate that norm uptake is a gradual process, where IO decision-making bodies usually move from first recognition of a new principle before engaging in full-blown adoption. However, some IOs never go beyond simple recognition of a norm, possibly reflecting a strategy of window-dressing. On the explanatory side, norm recognition is largely driven by a different set of factors than norm adoption, among them, the broader prominence of a norm in society. This suggests that the conditions for IOs to endorse norms vary with the depth of commitment. IOs may pay lip service to a wide range of norms broadly considered legitimate, but deeper policy commitments require more demanding conditions.

In the conclusion, we develop the broader implications of these findings for research on norm entrepreneurship, diffusion across IOs, and the liberal international order.

Explaining Norm Adoption by IOs: Theories and Hypotheses

Existing Research: State, Supranational or Transnational Entrepreneurship?

Norms in global governance are the topic of an impressive body of research. The most influential idea in this literature is probably the crucial role of norm entrepreneurs in the emergence, spread, and consolidation of norms, closely associated with the pioneering work of Finnemore and Sikkink.[2] In this view, norm entrepreneurs are actors that actively promote a norm by seeking to persuade other actors of its appropriateness: "Norms do not appear out of thin air; they are actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community."[3] Norm entrepreneurs are considered particularly important at earlier stages of a norm's life cycle. At the stage of norm emergence, "entrepreneurs are critical…because they call attention to issues or even 'create' issues by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them."[4] Once a norm has emerged, persuasion by entrepreneurs plays an important role in moving norms over the tipping point to make them cascade in the population of actors.[5] Finally, at the stage of norm consolidation, norm entrepreneurs are instrumental to the process of international socialization that is necessary for norms to become internalized.[6] Building on these basic insights, a range of studies have identified norm entrepreneurs as pivotal for the diffusion and further evolution of norms such as women's rights, human rights, the laws of war, and transparency.[7]

While agnostic on the identity of norm entrepreneurs, existing literature has tended to focus on three alternative categories of actors: state, supranational, and transnational norm entrepreneurs. Commonly, studies privilege the one or the other type of entrepreneur in

[2] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.
[3] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895.
[4] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 896-897.
[5] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 901.
[6] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902.
[7] Keck and Sikkink 1998; Price 1998; Finnemore 1999; Risse et al. 1999; Lutz and Sikkink 2001; Sandholtz 2007; Gillies 2010; Krook and True 2010.

accounts of the emergence and consolidation of a particular norm. For all three types of entrepreneurs, IOs present attractive platforms through which to promote the further spread and adoption of a norm.

A first strand of literature emphasizes state entrepreneurship. These studies typically highlight the crucial importance of one particular state or group of states in calling attention to an issue and building support for international action. They suggest that states may promote norms for moral as well as strategic reasons, including fulfilling ideational commitments,[8] gaining favor with constituents,[9] locking in policy preferences,[10] or boosting their reputation.[11] They show how state entrepreneurs use their standing in IOs as a platform for placing new norms on the agenda, building support among the likeminded, shaming opponents into submission, and pushing for policy adoption.

Studies invoking state entrepreneurs frequently highlight the important contribution of coalitions of small or medium-sized states. For instance, Ingebritsen argues that Scandinavian states were crucial entrepreneurs behind the norm of sustainable development, and Waltz highlights the role of small states in the construction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[12] Several scholars point to the role of the "Group of Like-minded" states in championing the norm of international criminal accountability, which ultimately lead to the creation of the International Criminal Court.[13] While major powers feature less prominently as norm entrepreneurs in existing accounts, examples include the promotion of the norm of election monitoring in the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as new policy norms in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.[14]

[8] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.
[9] Klotz 1995; Simmons and Danner 2010.
[10] Moravcsik 2000.
[11] Klotz 1995; David-Barrett and Okamura 2016.
[12] Ingebritsen 2002; Waltz 2001.
[13] Glasius 2006; Sikkink 2011.
[14] Kelley 2008, 244-5; Park and Vetterlein 2010.

Another strand of literature suggests that supranational actors are crucial norm entrepreneurs.[15] This literature highlights how "many IO staff have as their stated purpose to shape state action by establishing best practices and by articulating and transmitting norms that define what constitutes acceptable and legitimate states behavior."[16] These accounts typically view IO bureaucrats as autonomous actors capable of exerting power and influence in world politics.[17] Building on issue expertise, moral authority, and process powers, IO bureaucrats act as knowledge brokers, negotiation facilitators, and capacity-builders in the advancement of a new norm.[18] When supranational entrepreneurs are successful, such activities translate into the adoption of a norm as IO policy.

The literature is rich with examples of supranational entrepreneurship. For instance, several scholars highlight the role of the World Bank's internal bureaucracy in promoting the organization's adoption of gender and development policy, social development policy, and sustainable development policy.[19] Research on the EU frequently stresses the pivotal role of the European Commission as a supranational entrepreneur, leveraging ideas and information in the promotion of new norms and policies.[20] Studies from a variety of contexts show that international bureaucracies often are instrumental in getting IOs to adopt institutional designs consistent with appropriate governance norms.[21] In work on IOs as teachers of norms, it is typically the bureaucracy of an organization that is seen as the decisive agent.[22]

A third strand of literature highlights the entrepreneurial activities of TNAs, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and epistemic communities.[23] These

[15] Moravcsik 1999; Barnett and Coleman 2005; Weaver 2008.
[16] Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 33.
[17] Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Hawkins et al. 2006.
[18] Biermann and Siebenhüner 2009.
[19] Park 2005; Bebbington et al. 2006; Weaver 2008, 2010.
[20] Sandholtz and Zysman 1989; Pollack 2003.
[21] Barnett and Coleman 2005; Park 2014; Johnson 2014; Grigorescu 2015.
[22] Finnemore 1993.
[23] Raustiala 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Betsill and Corell 2008; Tallberg et al. 2018.

accounts emphasize how transnational entrepreneurs enjoy particular advantages in terms of information, credibility, and moral authority that allow them to successfully persuade states and influence IO policy. They show how TNAs use a variety of strategies to persuade state and non-state actors to embrace a norm, including rhetorical framing, information and accountability tactics, naming and shaming, mobilization of public opinion, and leveraging of powerful actors.[24]

Examples of transnational entrepreneurship have been documented across a range of policy fields. Clark has traced the influence of Amnesty International on the spread, acceptance, and enforcement of human rights principles.[25] The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, bringing together 1,300 NGOs, is generally credited with a decisive role in developing the international support necessary for this norm to be codified in International Mine Ban Treaty.[26] Along similar lines, a wide range of scholarship has documented the impact of TNAs on norm adoption by states and IOs in areas such as women's rights,[27] environmental protection,[28] social development,[29] election monitoring,[30] and public accountability.[31]

Taken together, this rich literature has greatly improved our understanding of how norms emerge, spread, and consolidate through the input of entrepreneurs. When focusing specifically on IOs, it has shown how entrepreneurship is conducive to the adoption of norms by IOs, and how multiple categories of actors can and have served as norm entrepreneurs. However, this literature also suffers from a number of limitations that have inspired this paper. First, contributions tend to privilege alternative types of entrepreneurs, sometimes pitting these against each other in competitive assessments, without considering the factors that enable and

[24] Keck and Sikkink 1998; Khagram et al. 2002; Joachim 2003; Murdie and Davis 2012; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017.
[25] Clark 2001.
[26] Anderson 2000.
[27] Keck and Sikkink 1998; True and Mintrom 2001.
[28] Keck and Sikkink 1998; Betsill and Corell 2008.
[29] O'Brien et al. 2000.
[30] Kelley 2008.
[31] Kardam 1993; Brown and Fox 1998.

constrain all of them. Second, this literature says fairly little about the underlying political conditions necessary for norm adoption within IOs. Expressed differently, existing research is strong on the mechanisms (entrepreneurs), but weaker on the basic circumstances (conditions) for norm adoption. Third, this literature has tended to focus on the presence of entrepreneurs in those cases where norms have successfully spread and become adopted, raising concerns of selection bias, while comparisons across norms, IOs, and levels of adoption are rare.

The Argument: Domestic Liberal Commitments, Networks of Member States, and Institutional Empowerment of Entrepreneurs

Our argument complements research on norm entrepreneurship by theorizing the underlying political conditions that shape the likelihood of norm adoption by IOs. We argue that the likelihood of norm entrepreneurs succeeding ultimately is dependent on a set of more basic conditions in IOs as social and political environments. We derive these conditions from a simple conceptualization of IOs as intergovernmental organizations constitutively composed of (a) memberships and (b) institutions governing policy-making.

Memberships gather the constituent members of an intergovernmental organization. Memberships link IOs to domestic politics and the formation of state preferences. In addition, memberships link IOs to each other, as many IOs have overlapping member states. This makes memberships potential channels for both vertical diffusion of norms, from the domestic to the international level, and horizontal diffusion, from one IO to another. In our argument, two features of memberships are particularly central to the adoption of new norms. The vertical channel is more likely to lead to adoption when IO memberships are domestically committed to liberal norms. The horizontal channel is more likely to lead to adoption when other IOs to which an organization is connected already have adopted the new norm.

Institutions specify the rules of the game in IO policy-making. They clarify who has standing in policy-making, what type of authority these actors enjoy, and how decisions are made. Independent of the nature of IO memberships, institutional rules shape the likelihood of norm adoption by enabling and constraining norm entrepreneurs and associated processes of socialization. In our argument, three types of rules are especially important. Rules on pooling through majoritarian decision-making determine the thresholds of support that state entrepreneurs have to meet to establish new norms. Rules on delegation to international bureaucracies condition the ability of supranational entrepreneurs to develop authority and independently promote new norms. Rules on access for TNAs shape the possibilities for transnational entrepreneurs to influence norm adoption within IOs. In the following, we develop the logic of these expectations in detail.

Domestic liberal commitments. The first component of our argument emphasizes domestic commitments to liberal ideals in IO memberships. It suggests that the likelihood of IOs adopting new norms is shaped by the domestic normative environments of their member states. It builds on a logic sometimes referred to as "liberal constructivism"[32] or "ideational liberalism,"[33] as it derives the preferences that states promote internationally from their domestic normative commitments. This logic conventionally translates into the expectation that liberal states seek to extend abroad the liberal ideals to which they adhere domestically. These liberal ideals may pertain to institutions and democratic principles such as accountability, participation, and rule of law, or to policy and the realization of liberal ideas such as liberty and equality.

Earlier research points to several examples of this logic. It has shown that liberal states in their international actions are more likely to endorse free trade,[34] commit to human rights,[35]

[32] Risse-Kappen 1996.
[33] Moravcsik 1997.
[34] Mansfield et al. 2000; Kono 2006.
[35] Simmons 2009; Simmons and Danner 2010.

promote democracy,[36] interact with civil society,[37] accept dispute settlement,[38] design transparent and accountable IOs,[39] and more generally cooperate.[40] Consistent with this evidence, students of norms in world politics have observed that international norms often originate with domestic norms. As Finnemore and Sikkink note: "Many international norms began as domestic norms and become international through the efforts of entrepreneurs of various kinds. Women's suffrage, for example, began as a demand for domestic change within a handful of countries and eventually became an international norm."[41]

In our view, domestic liberal commitments may contribute to norm adoption in two ways. First, they feed into the international preferences of liberal democracies, which therefore become more likely to accept new liberal norms, regardless of the identity of the specific entrepreneurs that propose these norms. IO memberships with stronger domestic commitments to liberal ideals thus make more hospitable environments for the adoption of liberal norms. Second, domestic liberal commitments present a vertical pathway for the emergence and spread of new norms, as liberal states are inspired by domestic norms and engage in international entrepreneurship. Since liberal states already adhere to these principles domestically, extending them abroad is not a radical step. IO memberships with stronger domestic commitments to liberal ideals thus present better opportunities for liberal state entrepreneurs to emerge and be successful.

Networks of member states. The second component of our argument highlights diffusion of norms across IOs through networks of member states. It suggests that IOs are more likely to adopt a norm if they through their memberships are connected to other IOs that already have

[36] Pevehouse 2005.
[37] Tallberg et al. 2014, 2016.
[38] Keohane et al. 2000; Davis 2012.
[39] Grigorescu 2007, 2010.
[40] Mansfield and Pevehouse 2008; Bättig and Bernauer 2009.
[41] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 893, citing Dubois 1994.

adopted this norm. Interconnectedness expands the opportunities to pick up norms from other IOs through processes of learning, emulation, and socialization.

This argument builds on diffusion theory and its emphasis on interdependencies in policy-making. Different from independent explanations of adoption, diffusion theory posits that "prior adoption of a trait or practice in a population alters the probability of adoption for remaining non-adopters."[42]. In this vein, extensive research in comparative politics shows that policies and institutions spread across states through processes of diffusion, as decisions in one country are systematically conditioned by prior choices in other countries.[43] Joining a growing literature,[44] we extend this logic to relations between IOs, theorizing that the probability of norm adoption is shaped by patterns of prior adoption among connected IOs.

The expectation that connectivity matters to policy adoption is well-anchored in research on cross-country diffusion of market reforms,[45] social policy,[46] unemployment policy,[47] environmental regulation,[48] and preferential trade agreements.[49] However, the links that connect IOs are slightly different than those connecting countries. Importantly, IOs may be connected through their memberships.[50] Global IOs often have extensive overlaps in membership, as do IOs located in the same world region.

Networks of member states provide a potentially powerful pathway for horizontal diffusion across IOs.[51] Assuming that norm entrepreneurs have been successful in convincing the membership of one IO, such socialization is likely to have dynamic effects.[52] Overlaps in

[42] Strang 1991, 325.
[43] For overviews, see Graham, Shipan and Volden 2013; Gilardi 2012; Solingen 2012.
[44] Grigorescu 2010; Alter 2012; Börzel and Risse 2012; Ovodenko and Keohane 2012; Lenz and Burilkov 2016; Sommerer and Tallberg.
[45] Meseguer 2009.
[46] Weyland 2005.
[47] Gilardi 2010.
[48] Holzinger et al. 2008.
[49] Baccini and Dür 2012.
[50] Hofmann 2009; Böhmelt and Spilker 2016.
[51] Böhmelt and Spilker 2016; Sommerer and Tallberg 2017.
[52] Bearce and Bondanella 2007; Greenhill 2010.

membership therefore create opportunities for diffusion – both across states and IOs.[53] States can function as carriers of norms from one IO to another by bringing attention to relevant norms that already have received support elsewhere. In addition, when IOs share memberships, the adoption of a norm in one IO automatically means that part of the membership of another IO already is committed to the norm in principle, which should facilitate promotion and adoption in this second IO as well. Patterns of interconnectedness therefore generate a powerful prediction of norm adoption: an IO should be more likely to adopt a norm, the higher the rate of prior adoption among IOs with overlapping memberships.

Institutional Conditions for Entrepreneurship. The third component of our argument privileges the institutional conditions for entrepreneurship in an IO. Taking the influences of memberships as given, it suggests that the likelihood of norm adoption is shaped by the institutional conditions confronting prospective state, supranational, and transnational entrepreneurs. We focus on one central institutional condition for each type of entrepreneurship.

First, the scope for state entrepreneurship should be greater when institutional rules provide for a higher degree of pooling in interstate decision-making. Pooling refers to the use of majoritarian decision-making procedures and has implications for the likelihood of state entrepreneurs securing the required level of support.[54] The lower the institutional threshold, and thus the smaller the proportion of member states that have to be brought on board, the easier it is for a state entrepreneur to push through the adoption of a new norm, all else equal. When IO decisions require unanimous support, all member states have to be convinced, making the mission of a state entrepreneur exceedingly difficult. By contrast, when IO decisions only require the support of a (qualified) majority, it becomes easier for the state entrepreneur to build

[53] The role of IOs in facilitating state-to-state diffusion of national-level policies is the topic of a specific literature. Cf., Cao 2010; Greenhill 2010; Holzinger et al. 2008; Simmons and Elkins 2004.
[54] Hooghe et al. 2017.

a winning coalition.[55] IO decision rules should thus matter for the likelihood of a state entrepreneur succeeding in its efforts of securing norm adoption within an IO. The same constraint applies to any supranational or transnational entrepreneur seeking to persuade member states of its cause.

Second, the likelihood of supranational entrepreneurship should be higher when institutional rules delegate more power to international bureaucracies. IOs vary extensively in the extent to which they empower international bureaucracies through delegation of agenda-setting, implementation, and enforcement powers.[56] As suggested by both rationalist and sociological approaches to IOs, this variation in delegated authority should influence the ability of supranational actors to exert influence over outcomes.[57] Delegation, or the "conditional grant of authority by member states to an independent body,"[58] comes with greater opportunities for IO staff to shape agendas and policy in line with their preferences. The degree of delegation to international bureaucracies should therefore influence the likelihood of supranational entrepreneurs being successful at promoting new norms. It may not be a coincidence that some of the most prominent examples of supranational entrepreneurship involve the EU, IMF, and World Bank – all with extraordinarily empowered international bureaucracies.[59]

Third, the scope of transnational entrepreneurship should be higher when institutional rules provide for greater TNA access to IO policy-making. The openness of IOs to TNAs has expanded considerably in recent decades, yet continues to vary extensively across IOs.[60] While some IOs grant TNAs considerable formal and informal access to policy-making, others effectively remain closed. Such variation is likely to be consequential for TNAs' ability to successfully promote new norms. Institutional access is frequently identified as a central

[55] Scharpf 1997; Tsebelis and Yataganas 2002.
[56] Hooghe et al. 2017.
[57] Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Hawkins et al. 2006.
[58] Hooghe and Marks 2015, 307.
[59] See Hooghe and Marks 2015, 311.
[60] Tallberg et al. 2013, 2014.

determinant of TNA influence in IOs and multilateral negotiations.[61] Rather than having to rely primarily on the mobilization of public opinion and informal lobbying, TNAs with access to policymaking can employ a broader, and potentially more effective, portfolio of resources and strategies. With access, TNA get more opportunities to provide information, argue for their positions, shape implementation, and hold states to their commitments. Transnational entrepreneurship is therefore more likely to translate into the adoption of new norms when IOs allow for greater TNA access.

Taken together, the three components of our argument lead to the following expectations:

H1: The more an IO's membership is domestically committed to liberal ideals, the more likely it is to adopt new norms.

H2: The higher the rate of prior norm adoption among IOs with overlapping memberships, the more likely an IO is to adopt new norms.

H3: The more an IO's institutional rules facilitate norm entrepreneurship, the more likely it is to adopt new norms.

H3a: The higher the level of pooling in an IO, the more likely it is to adopt new norms.

H3b: The higher the level of delegation in an IO, the more likely it is to adopt new norms.

H3c: The higher the level of TNA access in an IO, the more likely it is to adopt new norms.

[61] Bouwen 2002; Betsill and Corell 2008; Tallberg et al. 2018.

Descriptive Analysis: Patterns of Norm Adoption

Selection of Norms and IOs

For our analysis, we select eight norms: corporate social responsibility (CSR), debt relief, democracy promotion, gender equality, good governance, human security, responsibility to protect (R2P), and sustainable development.

These principles qualify as norms because they articulate shared standards of appropriate behavior for actors within a given community.[62] Like other norms, they are prescriptive in nature and imply an element of "oughtness." The norm of CSR specifies the responsibilities of companies vis-à-vis society. [63] The norm of debt relief submits that international lenders ought to grant partial or full forgiveness of debt so as to allow heavily indebted countries to develop economically.[64] The norm of democracy promotion suggests that democracy has an intrinsic and instrumental value that should lead states and IOs to extend it around the world.[65] The norm of gender equality stipulates that states and societies ought to ensure that men and women enjoy the same rights and opportunities.[66] The norm of good governance lays down core principles that public administrations should respect, such as impartiality and accountability.[67] The norm of human security prescribes a people-centered approach to security, focusing on the international community's role in ensuring freedom from fear and freedom from want.[68] The norm of R2P submits that the international community has a responsibility to protect people from mass atrocities, even at the expense of sovereignty.[69] Finally, the norm of sustainable

[62] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891. See also Klotz 1995; Finnemore 1996; Park and Vetterlein 2010.
[63] Segerlund 2013; Mühle 2012.
[64] Momani 2010.
[65] Dimitrova and Pridham 2004; Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008.
[66] Krook and True 2012; Zwingel 2012.
[67] Börzel and van Hüllen 2015; Manners 2002.
[68] Acharya 2004.
[69] Tsai 2010; Acharya 2013.

development stipulates a balancing of economic growth, social development, and environmental protection as the organizing principle for states and societies.[70]

Like other norms, these principles have also reached a level of acceptance that make them recognized as shared standards of appropriate behavior. This does not mean that they have not been contested historically or now have reached a stage when all central actors take them for granted. Indeed, as we will show, the acceptance of these norms varies significantly among states and IOs. A significant literature has sought to capture the dynamics of acceptance and contestation in the emergence, spread, and consolidation of norms, introducing models such as the norm life cycle,[71] the norm spiral,[72] and the norm circle.[73] These models emphasize how the acceptance (and thus existence) of norms is a continuous rather than dichotomous issue. This literature also suggests how norms can be empirically observed, emphasizing codifications in guiding documents, justifications by actors diverging from prescribed behavior, and reactions against norm violations.[74]

We have selected these eight norms based on four main considerations. First, they represent a wide range of issue areas in global governance, from development and environmental protection to security and human rights. This variety allows us to go beyond norm-specific explanations and test our argument in a general way. Second, these are all norms that have emerged and spread over the past four decades, reaching a status of some prominence in international political discourse. Figure 1 captures this development by mapping references to these norms in broader societal discourse using the Google Books Ngram tool. Concentrating on norms that have emerged since 1980 facilitates comparative analysis by holding world historical time relatively constant. However, it also entails a focus on norms linked to the liberal

[70] Park 2005; Lightfoot and Burchell 2005.
[71] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.
[72] Risse and Sikkink 1999.
[73] Park and Vetterlein 2010.
[74] Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999; Checkel 2001; Sandholtz 2007; Park and Vetterlein 2010.

international order, and all eight norms can be considered liberal in a broad sense.[75] By contrast, non-liberal norms, such as non-intervention (see Figure 1), precede this period and have been less central as prescriptive standards in recent decades. Third, these eight norms are relatively comparable with regard to their nature and scope. All are regulative norms, which prescribe or proscribe certain behavior, as opposed to constitutive norms, which create new actors, interests, and categories of action.[76] In addition, all are meso-level norms, rather than macro-level principles (e.g., human rights) or micro-level procedures (e.g., majority voting).[77] Fourth, this sample consists of two categories of international norms: those that also exist at the national level and thus have domestic counterparts (CSR, gender equality, good governance, and sustainable development) and those that are exclusively international (democracy promotion, debt relief, human security, and R2P). As we will explain, this will allow us to conduct a more refined assessment of whether and how norms diffuse from the national level based on domestic liberal commitments.

[Figure 1 about here]

Our dependent variable is norm adoption by IOs. Building on earlier research using codification as an indicator of norm acceptance, we measure norm adoption through policies collectively approved in IOs. We focus on policy decisions taken by the main intergovernmental decision-making body of an IO, since such policy decisions (a) represent the collective will of the IO, and (b) constitute the strongest possible form of commitment. In comparison, policies developed in other parts of the IO machinery are less optimal indicators. IO bureaucracies may

[75] The norms of gender equality, human security, and R2P build on the focus on individual rights in classical liberalism. The norms of corporate social responsibility, debt relief, and sustainable development draw on concerns with social justice in social liberalism. The norms of democracy promotion and good governance emphasize principles of rule central to most strands modern political liberalism.
[76] Searl 1995; Katzenstein 1996.
[77] Wiener 2009.

produce reports or guidelines promoting norms, but those documents do not necessarily reflect the collective will of the IO membership. Similarly, intergovernmental bodies at lower levels may develop policy documents invoking norms, but these do not entail the same level of commitment as top-level decisions. In other words, it is precisely because they are taken by the full membership at the pinnacle of the organization that policy decisions by the main intergovernmental decision-making body represent a good approximation of norm adoption by IOs.

We analyze norm adoption in a sample of 18 IOs (Table A.1).[78] This sample is designed to enable comparison and generalizability. First, all 18 IOs have a multi-issue orientation, ensuring that these eight norms are potentially relevant for their activities.[79] These are IOs with broad policy scopes and mandates that permit further policy expansion. By contrast, several of the norms we study would make little sense for specialized single-issue IOs. While some specialized IOs have been important in the development of some of the norms we study (e.g., the IMF on good governance and the United Nations Environmental Programme on sustainable development), their policy scope is not comparable to that of multi-issue IOs in terms of breadth and flexibility. Second, we focus on a balanced selection of IOs that includes both global IOs and regional IOs from all world regions. Global IOs have member states from more than one world region, while regional IOs are anchored in one specific region. The sample includes six global IOs and twelve regional IOs, three from each of the four major world regions (Europe, Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific).

[78] By IOs, we mean formal intergovernmental, multilateral and bureaucratic organizational structures established to further cooperation among states. We select the main interstate decision-making body according to the specification of organizational tasks in the founding treaty. In the case of the UN, which offers a choice on this issue, we use the General Assembly, since it has a broader mandate and more central role in the UN's norm development.

[79] Lenz et al. 2015. According to our definition, an IO is coded as multi-issue if its mandate covers more than three issue areas.

Measuring Norm Adoption

To identify norm adoption, we collected and analyzed all policy decisions taken by the main intergovernmental decision-making bodies of these 18 IOs between 1980 and 2015. The policy decisions were gathered from the electronic and physical archives of the IOs, producing a dataset of about 45,000 documents, such as resolutions, declarations, statements, and decisions. We developed two specific measures of norm adoption, which we subsequently used in searches of the full text corpus.[80] These measures capture two qualitatively different levels of norm adoption, allowing us to map and explain varying depths of norm adoption.

The first measure consists of the first reference to a norm in an official policy document. First references suggest that an IO's main decision-making body recognizes a norm and regards it as sufficiently important to merit a discussion and formal recording at the highest decision-making level. However, they do not amount to a firm commitment to the norm. First references are therefore a measure of shallow norm adoption, or what we will refer to as *norm recognition*. First references have been manually checked to rule out spurious references.

The second measure consists of a full policy devoted to the promotion of a norm. This is our measure of deep *norm adoption* and the principal focus of our analysis. It conforms to a full codification of a norm and is probably closest to what most people think about as norm adoption by an organization. It shows that an IO has mobilized resources and commitments to develop its own policy for the furthering of a particular norm. Full policies are identified through documents where the norm represents the main content. The comparative analysis of the presence and timing of both norm recognition and norm adoption will enable us to identify different patterns of how IOs embrace these norms.

[80] The main search term was the exact wording of the norm, as introduced above. For some norms, we also referred to widely used acronyms (R2P; CSR) and slight reformulations (promotion of democracy; relief of debt).

The UN's adoption of the norm of sustainable development illustrates the two measures. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) made a first reference to the norm in Resolution 75/34 in 1980.[81] This counts as norm recognition. Then, in 1992, the UNGA adopted Resolution 47/190, in which it endorsed the conclusions from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio earlier that year, and called upon its member states to implement Agenda 21.[82] Since this resolution amounts to a collective commitment to the norm of sustainable development, expressed in the form of a full policy, it counts as norm adoption.

We measure first references and full policies on an annual basis for each of the eight norms.[83] In the explanatory analysis, the two measures form two versions of a binary dependent variable.

Patterns of Norm Adoption

Figure 2 presents the adoption pattern for our eight norms in the 18 IOs between 1980 and 2015. It includes both norm recognition (white) and norm adoption (black). The adoption rate varies considerably across the eight norms. For sustainable development (adopted by 15 IOs), gender equality (11 IOs), and good governance (9 IOs), the majority of the IOs in our sample adopted the norm (full policy). Figure 2 also highlights that for these three norms, the EU, UN, and Council of Europe were among the first IOs to adopt a norm. However, norm adoption through a full policy is a much rarer phenomenon for the remaining five norms. In some cases, like human security or the promotion of democracy, only one IO has adopted the norm through a full policy. For sustainable development and gender equality, the pattern allows us to distinguish between an early phase of norm emergence during the early 1990s and the early 1980s, respectively, and a second phase of norm cascade when a critical mass of other IOs join

[81] A/RES/35/74 (1980).
[82] A/RES/47/190 (1992).
[83] In some cases, the first reference and full policy are found in the one and the same document or year.

the early adopters. Between 2000 and, 2004, for instance, the OSCE, OAS, Commonwealth, and African Union (AU) all adopted decisions or declarations with gender equality as the main topic. Only the case of sustainable development provides some indication for internalization as the third stage of a norm life cycle at the international level, since almost all IOs in our sample have both recognized and adopted this norm.

[Figure 2 about here]

The adoption pattern is different if we consider the measure of more shallow adoption – norm recognition through first references to a norm.. In this case, the adoption rates are much higher and exceed 40 percent for seven of the eight norms, with R2P as the only exception. For some norms, the phase of recognition occurred during a short period of time (human security and good governance), whereas first references to sustainable development and gender equality stretch across three decades. We can also observe that some norms continue to spread at the end of the observation period, as illustrated by the UN's resolution on CSR in 2014. For other norms, the process of diffusion seems to have come to an end, as in the case of debt relief, which only has one adoption after 2003 and a recognition rate of less than 40 percent.

Tracing norm evolution through the two measures allows us to identify different trajectories of norm recognition and adoption. Oftentimes, the process starts with norm recognition, followed by the formulation of a policy with the norm as its main focus. The time span between these two levels of norm uptake varies considerably, from one year, as in the case of CSR (OAS and EU) to more than two decades, as in the case of sustainable development (AU, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)). However, some IOs do not go beyond norm recognition, as in the case of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and gender equality (1999), or the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and debt relief (2002). The nature of our data makes it difficult to tell if this pattern reflects a strategy of window dressing , resistance preventing further deepening, or continuation of the process of norm adoption through subsidiary bodies. Finally, we observe instances when the main decision-making bodies of IOs adopt a full policy without previous references to this norm, as in the case of the OAS and democracy promotion, or the Commonwealth and gender equality. In these cases, it is plausible to assume that subsidiary bodies have introduced the norms in the years preceding the adoption of the norm by the main decision-making body.

Finally, a comparison of the IO adoption rates with the prominence of norms in societal discourse (Figure A.1) reveals three patterns. First, the recognition and adoption by IOs sometimes precedes the general rise in popularity of these norms. This means that in cases such as sustainable development, IOs themselves act as norm entrepreneurs. Second, the IO adoption might also lag behind the spread of a particular norm at different levels. In the case of gender equality, the recognition and adoption by IOs after the turn of the millennium can be seen as a response to broader societal norms. Third, we observe some cases with clear parallels between the growing prominence of a norm and the IO adoption pattern (good governance and human security).

Figure 3 presents the pattern of aggregated norm adoption across IOs. Unsurprisingly, the UN, often portrayed as an important entrepreneur and hub for norms, is the only IO with policy references to all eight norms, followed by the AU, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), EU, OECD (all seven), and the Commonwealth (six). The result is slightly different when we look at the level of deeper norm adoptions. Here, the EU leads the ranking with full policies on five norms, followed by the OAS and the UN, both with four norm adoptions. At the other end of the scale, we observe one IO that does not recognize a single norm (AMU) and one IO with only one reference (SCO). Some IOs distinguish themselves by rarely going

beyond first references to a norm. Notably, the OECD has four norm references that are not followed up through more substantive policies by the main decision-making body (good governance, debt relief, CSR, and human security).

[Figure 3 about here]

Multivariate Analysis: Explaining Norm Adoption

The descriptive analysis pointed to considerable variation across IOs in the adoption of norms. As a next step, we engage in a multivariate analysis to identify the main sources of this variation.

Measurements

To assess whether the hypothesized factors condition IO norm adoption, we employ pooled event history analysis (PEHA), a development of event history analysis (EHA) conventionally used in diffusion research.[84] Given that our theoretical interest lies in the broader dynamics of IO norm adoption rather than in the determinants of particular norms, an attractive property of PEHA is that it allows us to study the effects of variables across multiple norms in a single model. Following Kreitzer and Boehmke, we implement PEHA by estimating parameters for average effects of covariates on IO norm adoption using multilevel logit models.[85] The unit of analysis is the IO-norm-year, with IO-years viewed as nested within norm groupings. As per conventions in event history analysis, our dichotomous dependent variable is coded as 1 in the year a norm is adopted; 0 when it is in the risk set of IOs that have not yet adopted the specific

[84] See Kreitzer and Boehmke 2016 for further details on the PEHA approach; see also Shipan and Volden 2006; Boehmke 2009.
[85] Kreitzer and Boehmke 2016.

norm; and missing for years after adoption. We employ two separate formulations of the dependent variable, norm adoption and norm recognition, corresponding to the different depths of norm adoption set out above. We exclude observations prior to norm emergence, as determined by Google Ngram data.[86] To account for heterogeneity and interdependencies inherent to the data, we include random effects for IO, norm, and year.[87]

We operationalize the domestic commitment to liberal ideas (H1) on the basis of two different indicators, designed to exploit the variation across norms in domestic/international orientation. First, we include the variable *Democratic density*, which captures the extent to which the ideal of liberal democracy is achieved across an IO's membership. The measure is the mean liberal democracy index (V-Dem) of an IO's members in the year of observation, calculated based on IO membership data from the COW-IGO dataset.[88] We use this measure as a general indicator of commitment to liberal ideals in a country.

Second, we constructed a specific indicator of *Norm density* for the four norms that have clear domestic parallels, based on the idea that domestic liberal commitments may matter in a more particular sense for norms with domestic counterparts. In the case of these four norms, it may not only be general commitments to liberal ideals that are relevant, but also whether these norms already have been adopted domestically. The variable is operationalized in a similar way to *Democratic density*, averaging the domestic commitment to a particular norm across an IO's members in the year of observation. We identify proxies of norm-specific commitments from four different sources. For sustainable development, we rely on ratification data for 255 global environmental treaties.[89] For gender equality, we use the women's empowerment index (V-Dem), incorporating measures of women's fundamental liberties, participation in civil society

[86] The main purpose of this correction is to minimize the problem for zero-inflation for two norms that were completely unknown before the mid-1990s (democracy promotion and R2P).
[87] We include alternative estimation strategies, including models with fixed effects and clustering of standard errors, as robustness checks in the appendix (TBC).
[88] Coppedge et al. 2017.
[89] Bernauer et al. 2010.

organizations, and representation in formal political positions.[90] For good governance, we rely on the ICRG quality of government indicator, which incorporates measures of corruption, law and order, and bureaucratic quality.[91] For CSR, we use ratification data for a set of eight core ILO conventions on freedom of association (C087, C098), forced labor (C029, C105), discrimination (C100, C111), and child labor (C138, C182).[92] To integrate the IO-year observations on each of the four norms, we scaled and centered them. The resulting variable, *Norm density*, thus measures the average domestic norm commitment vis-à-vis the four norms on a common scale, with higher values representing stronger commitments.

In short, *Democratic density* and *Norm density* follow a similar logic, but whereas the former proxies the extent of liberal commitments in a general way, the latter is more closely tailored to the domestic commitment to a particular norm.

To test the inter-organizational diffusion via networks of member states, we capture membership linkages through overlaps in membership (H2). We construct the variable *MS overlap* based on membership data from the COW-IGO dataset at the country-year level. To get at the actual overlaps, we run pairwise comparisons for each of the 18 IOs in the sample. A score of "1" is assigned to this variable if the share of identical member states between two IOs is higher than 90 percent.[93] We calculate the spatial lags of the cumulated rate of prior adoptions in IOs with a highly similar membership base. [94]

The institutional conditions are tested on the basis of three different indicators. We measure the effect of majoritarian decision rules through aggregated *Pooling* scores taken from the Measuring International Authority dataset (MIA).[95] The conditions for supranational

[90] Coppedge et al. 2017.
[91] Dahlberg et al. 2017.
[92] ILO 2018.
[93] The COW-IGO time-series data on state membership has a number of gaps. Since the within-dyad variation is extremely low (standard deviation of 0.03, compared to 0.35 for cross-sectional variation), we imputed from the closest available year.
[94] The spatial lags are calculated by the help of the spmon command (Neumayer and Plümper 2010).
[95] Hooghe et al. 2017.

entrepreneurship are operationalized with the variable *Delegation*, which captures the conferral of authority to such bodies. The variable is an aggregate annual measure of the allocation of authoritative competences to non-state bodies in an IO's decision-making process, also based on the MIA dataset.[96] We measure the access of transnational entrepreneurs to IOs based on index, *TNA access*, that integrates data on the depth and range of access to an IO's bodies into a measure of the average institutional openness of an IO.[97]

We control for a selection of variables thought to be correlated with both the variables used to test our theoretical argument and with norm adoption. These primarily capture factors related to the general decision-making capability of IOs and to the external norm environment.

The capacity of states to reach decisions might affect IOs' adoption of norms, regardless of the formal rule in place. International cooperation in general is said to be more likely with fewer actors.[98] We operationalize *Membership size* through the number of member states in a given year. We use data on membership from the COW-IGO dataset, updating and adapting this data to our sample.

Likewise, heterogeneous preferences among member states may make decision-making on new norms more cumbersome. Research on the EU, for example, has shown how decision-making capacity declines with growing divergence in state preferences.[99] *Preference homogeneity* is operationalized through the voting pattern of national delegates in the UNGA. The more similarly member states vote in the UNGA, the more homogenous the IO is considered to be. We use updated data on the dyadic affinity scores from Voeten and aggregate the information on the basis of our IO membership data.[100] The variable *Norm heterogeneity* is operationalized equivalently to *Norm density*, but reflects standard deviations rather than

[96] Hooghe et al. 2017.
[97] Sommerer and Tallberg 2016.
[98] Axelrod and Keohane 1985; Koremenos et al. 2001.
[99] König 2007
[100] Voeten 2013.

means. In other words, higher values indicate greater diversity in an IO's membership toward a given norm.

IOs may be more likely to adopt norms if they have resources to commit to new policy principles. The variable *IO resources* combines information on the number of permanent staff and the size of the annual operative budget of an IO. These figures are extracted from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* and complemented with data from IO archives.[101] We transform the data on budget and staff into two variables with five categories, and calculate the mean of both indicators (see Table A.2).[102]

Democracy's effect on norm adoption might not only be explained by the average commitment to democratic norms. Great powers might be able to shape the policy of IOs through informal means that are not available to less powerful states. Park, for instance, argues that powerful member states contributed to the adoption of an accountability mechanism within the Asian Development Bank.[103] We develop an indicator for the presence of a *Democratic major power*, using a measurement that combines information on whether an IO has a major power in its membership with information on the domestic regimes of those powers.[104] The result is a dummy for IOs that have at least one major or regional democratic power, but no major or regional non-democratic power that could veto liberal norms. In a similar vein, the variable *Norm-committed major power* takes the value of 1 if an IO contains a major power that ranks among the top 10 countries on the four norm-specific sub-indices in the year of observation.

[101] UIA 2017.
[102] This procedure facilitates the integration of both components into one common indicator of IO resources, and it allows us to compensate missing data on one of the two dimensions. For instance, NATO provides staff figures, whereas budget figures are not publicly available.
[103] Park 2014.
[104] We follow the operationalization of major power that is used in the COW Database, and add regional powers for the period after 1989 (Cline et al. 2011).

Finally, we include a variable, *Norm prominence*, to capture the general prominence of a norm in public discourse, as a way to control for the broader spread a particular norm. For this purpose, we use data from the Google Books text corpus of scientific and nonscientific English-speaking publications.[105] We construct a 2-gram for each norm and extract time series data for the period from 1985 to 2008.[106]

Results

To assess the conditions under which IOs adopt norms, we estimate pooled multilevel models as reported in Table 1. Models 1 and 2 use norm adoption as the dependent variable. Model 1 is estimated on the entirety of the data, covering all eight norms, whereas Model 2 is estimated on data on the four international norms with domestic counterparts (CSR, gender equality, good governance, and sustainable development). Models 3 and 4 relate to the second dependent variable, norm recognition, which we return to below.

[Table 1 about here]

Our first hypothesis proposed that IOs whose memberships have deeper liberal commitments at the domestic level should be more likely to adopt the selected norms at the international level. Our data are consistent with this expectation. The coefficient for *Democratic density* in Model 1 is positive, suggesting that the democratic development among an IO's membership, our proxy for domestic liberal commitments, is a condition that predicts norm adoption. Figure 4 illustrates this result by plotting the average adoption rates for three categories of IOs, sorted by democratic density.[107] In terms of the number of norms adopted,

[105] Michel et al. 2011.
[106] The data are limited to 2008. We use the average development between 2006 and 2008 to impute data for the years 2009-2015.
[107] For categories of *Democratic density*, see Table A.3.

IOs with the highest share of democratic states (five adopted norms) are slightly behind the medium category of IOs (six norms), and both are well ahead of the IOs with lowest share of democratic states (three norms). The pattern becomes more striking when we consider the speed of adoption. While the IOs with most democratic memberships have not adopted more norms, they have moved much faster on all adopted norms, followed by medium-democratic and least-democratic IOs.

[Figure 4 about here]

Relatedly, we proposed that domestic commitments to specific norms would predict adoption of the equivalent norms at the IO level. The relevant estimate in Model 2, *Norm density*, is positive and significant at the 95 percent confidence level. The substantive effect is non-negligible, in particular in the norm-specific data: A one standard deviation increase in *Norm density* is associated with an increase of the average annual probability of adoption by about 0.5 percentage points.[108] Aggregated over longer periods of time, such differences in the expected annual adoption probability can account for considerable amount of the variation we observe in our sample.[109]

The results for democratic and norm density are consistent with our theoretical proposition (H1) that domestic liberal commitments favor international norm adoption, generally, and that individual liberal norms widely adopted at the domestic level on an IO's membership are particularly more likely to get adopted at the IO level.

An example of how domestic norm commitments condition IO adoption patterns can be

[108] Average marginal effect.
[109] For example, over a decade, all else equal, an IO with a norm density that exceeds the average by one standard deviation has an expected probability of adoption of 15.7 percent, compared with 9.6 percent for an IO with average norm density. In other words, while both have what may seem like low adoption rates, the former is 65 percent more likely to adopt during this time period.

found in the data on the norm of gender equality. Figure 5 provides a longitudinal view of gender equality in the 18 IOs in our sample, together with data on adoption. We observe that early adopters (EU, Nordic Council and Council of Europe) exhibit strong domestic commitments to the norm, with average gender equality scores between 0.8 and 0.9 (where a value of 1 implies that all IO member states have the maximum value). Around the time of their adoption, other IOs have significantly weaker domestic commitments to the norm of gender equality, with scores between 0.4 and 0.6. Over time, however, their domestic commitments strengthen (*norm intensity* increases), leading several of them to adopt the norm in the latter half of the studied period. During that period, several of these IOs reach gender equality scores approaching the levels at which the early adopters adopted. Some IOs, predominantly those with low gender equality scores, remain non-adopters throughout the studied period, but as is visible in Figure 5, their commitments are increasing, favoring norm adoption in the long run. Overall, inspection of these quantitative, longitudinal data reinforces the notion that stronger domestic norm commitments present a favorable condition for norm adoption at the IO level. At the same time, they also show that adoption by some IOs, specifically the UN and the AU, occurs in the absence of favorable conditions, suggesting that domestic norm commitments are one factor among many.

[Figure 5 about here]

We find consistent support for the hypothesis highlighting IO interconnectedness due to overlapping memberships (H2). The coefficient on *overlapping memberships* is positive and significant in both the 8- and 4-norm models, suggesting that such linkages provide conduits for norm diffusion across IOs. In substantive terms, a one standard deviation increase in the value of MS Overlap corresponds to a 1.3 percentage point increase in annual probability of

full policy adoption.

Next to domestic liberal commitments and overlapping memberships, our argument highlighted the role played by institutional conditions (H3). If our theory is correct, IOs with a higher degree of pooled decision-making, more empowered international bureaucracies, and greater openness to TNAs, should exhibit higher adoption rates than comparable IOs lacking these characteristics.

Contrary to the first of these expectations (H3a), the coefficient on *Pooling*, while positive, is not statistically significant at conventional levels. We interpret this as an indication that decision rules do not appear to be a prominent condition affecting the likelihood of success for state norm entrepreneurs (or other entrepreneurs that have to build support among member states).

In line with the second expectation (H3b), the coefficients on *Delegation* are positive and statistically significant in both Model 1 and Model 2. This means that IOs where supranational bureaucrats have been vested with higher agenda-setting, implementation, and enforcement powers present more favorable conditions for norm adoption. The EU represents a typical example of this pattern. The EU exhibits the highest degree of delegation in our sample, reflecting the far-reaching legislative initiative and executive powers of the European Commission, and also has a very high norm adoption rate. Also illustrating the pattern, but in the opposite direction, is the OIC. In contrast to the EU Commission, the powers of the OIC secretariat are severely constrained,[110] leaving it with fewer tools to exercise norm entrepreneurship vis-à-vis the OIC Council, a condition which may have contributed to its low adoption rate. Other IOs fit less well with the pattern. For example, the UN, which has one of the highest adoption rates in our sample, does not have a particularly empowered bureaucracy, indicating that other factors have been more important in shaping the conditions for norm

[110] The mean (non-scaled) delegation score of OIC is 0.08 whereas that of the EU is 0.62.

entrepreneurship at this IO.[111]

Evaluating the last of the three institutional conditions (H3c), we find that *TNA access* has predictive power. As the positive coefficients in Models 1 and 2 suggest, IOs that provide greater opportunities for TNAs to participate in IO policy-making are more likely to experience norm adoption, regardless of whether we analyze the entire data or the subset of data on norms with clear domestic origins. The variation in TNA openness across the IOs in our sample is considerable. Some IOs, such as OAS, which ranks highest on this variable, are likely to have experienced more intense norm entrepreneurship by TNAs, than organizations like ASEAN or SCO, which remain essentially closed to TNA actors.

We interpret these results as broadly consistent with our argument that IOs characterized by high domestic norm adoption, wide-spread links to other adopting IOs, and favorable institutional conditions are more likely to adopt norms, while other IOs tend to adopt norms more slowly or not at all.

Our argument pertains primarily to *norm adoption*, but we also evaluate how well our independent variables predict variation in *norm recognition*, i.e., the first reference to a norm in an IO's policy output. Models 3 and 4 in Table 1 are equivalent to Models 1 and 2, substituting norm recognition for norm adoption as the DV. We observe that many of the variables that predicted norm adoption fail to predict norm recognition, suggesting that the two levels of norm uptake follow different mechanisms. While the coefficient on the variables capturing domestic norm commitments are positive, in line with our finding above, the t-statistics indicate that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no association. A possible interpretation is that the uptake of norms at the level of discourse, which has fewer if any implications for norm compliance, is relatively wide-spread, even among IOs whose memberships exhibit a low degree of domestic norm commitment, whereas norm adoption in

[111] It should be recognized that while the UN ranks relatively low on delegated powers, it ranks very high on staff and economic resources, as captured via the IO resources variable.

the form of policy, which is more likely to generate compliance costs, is widespread only among IOs whose memberships already espouse the norm. Or, in simpler terms, IOs may pay lip service to a wide range of norms, but when it comes to deeper levels of uptake, they are more inclined to stay within the limits set by domestic preferences.

In line with both our theory and the norm adoption results, we find that *overlapping memberships* predict norm recognition. The effect size is large and the result strongly significant, suggesting that membership linkages between IO provide an important condition for norm diffusion. The result is consistent with an interpretation that state entrepreneurship, while important for norm adoption, is particularly important for the spread of the norm discourse that frequently precedes deeper norm uptake.

With regard to the impact of institutional conditions on norm recognition, the results are mixed. As evidenced by the results for *Pooling*, IOs with higher degrees of majoritarian decision-making are more likely to recognize norms, especially if they have domestic counterparts, than other IOs. As an illustration of this result, we observe that two of the IOs with the highest degree of pooling, the UN and AU, rank among the IOs with the widest and earliest norm uptake at this level (see Figure 3 above). *Delegation* is positively correlated with both adoption and recognition, but given the low t-scores, we cannot say with any confidence that this is a systematic effect. The coefficient on *TNA access* shifts signs between the two models, potentially indicating that the role of such actors varies with norm type, but the coefficient is insignificant.

Across the four models in Table 1, our control variables provide some additional insight into the conditions that favor IO norm adoption. While most of the control estimates are below statistical significance, especially in the norm adoption models, we note that *preference homogeneity*, *IO resources*, and *norm prominence* are significant predictors of norm recognition. The null finding for *IO resources* in Model 1 through 3 may indicate that there are

limits to the conventional understanding of supranational entrepreneurship: In the absence of more fundamental conditions favoring norm adoption, huge bureaucracies do not necessarily matter. Likewise, we note that *democratic major power* or its norm-specific equivalent, *norm-supporting major power*, has no consistent effect on adoption, suggestion that superior power capabilities among norm advocates in an IO's membership do not matter for the likelihood of adoption. The sign shifts between the 8- and 4-norm models, suggesting that some of the norms excluded in the former have higher adoption rates among IOs with democratic major powers. Our descriptive data, which shows that adoption of the four excluded norms (debt relief, democracy promotion, human security, and R2P) do not extend beyond the UN and EU, is consistent with such an interpretation.

Taken as a whole, our empirical investigation strengthens our beliefs in four out of five hypotheses (H1, H2, H3b, and H3c) regarding the conditions for effective norm entrepreneurship. Norm adoption at the level of full policy is more likely for IOs whose memberships are committed to liberal ideals; provide linkages to other IOs; have empowered their international bureaucracies; and have opened them up to transnational actors. Norm recognition, in comparison, appears less dependent on these factors, suggesting that the conditions for successful norm entrepreneurship vary across the stages of a norm cycle.

Conclusion

Global governance has witnessed the spread of a broad range of influential norms over recent decades. While earlier research has told us a lot about the individual trajectories of these norms, we have known little about the broader patterns of adoption across IOs and norms. This paper

is an effort to rectify this situation through a comparative, large-N analysis of the adoption of eight liberal norms across 18 IOs during the time period 1980 to 2015.

Our central findings are three-fold. First, there is considerable variation in adoption across IOs and norms. IOs dominated by Western democracies are the fastest, most frequent, and most committed adopters, while IOs composed of autocracies adopt fewer norms with considerable delay and less commitment. Sustainable development, good governance, and gender equality are the most widely adopted norms. Second, variation in norm adoption across IOs is primarily shaped by three conditions: domestic commitments to liberal norms in the membership of IOs; prior adoption of a norm by IOs with overlapping memberships; and institutional rules that empower supranational and transnational entrepreneurs. Third, our two-level measure of norm adoption shows that uptake is a gradual process, where IOs usually move from norm recognition at a first stage to norm adoption at a second stage. While the deeper form of adoption is shaped by the more demanding conditions of memberships and institutions, the shallower form of recognition is largely driven by other factors, such as a norm's broader prominence in society.

Expanding the perspective beyond the immediate findings, this paper suggests implications for three areas of research in IR. The first is the literature on norm entrepreneurship. While existing research is strong on theorizing and documenting norm entrepreneurship by states, international bureaucracies, and TNAs (mechanisms), it is weaker on the basic political circumstances (conditions) that shape the likelihood of norm adoption in a comparative perspective. This paper demonstrates that fundamental conditions shaping the likelihood of successful norm entrepreneurship (by any actor) relate to the political orientation and interconnectedness of IO memberships, as well as the institutional constraints encountered by entrepreneurs at IOs – factors that so far have not been systematically explored in existing research. In addition, the comparative perspective further expands our understanding of the

process of norm adoption by showing how and why IOs vary in the extent, speed, and depth of commitments to new norms.

The second area of research for which this paper carries implications is the literature on IOs as sources of diffusion. While research in comparative politics for long has considered IOs as important channels for diffusion across countries,[112] it is only recently that IR scholars have begun to examine the phenomenon of diffusion across IOs. Until now, this new body of research has focused exclusively on the diffusion of institutional designs, such as accountability, delegation, dispute settlement, and participatory governance.[113] This paper breaks new ground in demonstrating how interconnected memberships help to explain the spread of norms across IOs. Much like domestic policies on market reforms, social benefits, and environmental protection spread across countries through interdependent decisions, international policies on sustainable development, good governance, and gender equality diffuse across IOs through networks of states.

The third area for which this paper has important consequences is research on the liberal world order. This literature conventionally focuses on the fundamental role of the US in establishing and upholding this order, as well as the implications of the ongoing power shift for its long-term sustainability and possible demise.[114] In this perspective, this paper offers two crucial insights. To begin with, it suggests that the liberal order for some time has been much more fragmented than usually assumed. International norms heralded as center-pieces of this order show extensive variability in adoption, some traveling little beyond their origins, such as R2P and human security. IOs outside of the core of Western democracies are considerably less inclined to adopt and advance liberal norms. In addition, this paper suggests that the near-exclusive preoccupation with US power is misguided. For the adoption of liberal norms among

[112] E.g., Simmons and Elkins 2004; Weyland 2007; Holzinger et al. 2008; Meseguer 2009; Gilardi 2010.
[113] E.g., Grigorescu 2010; Alter 2012; Lenz and Burilkov 2016; Sommerer and Tallberg 2017.
[114] E.g., Ikenberry 2011, 2018; Dunne and Flockhart 2013; Acharya 2014; Colgan and Keohane 2017.

IOs, it is the domestic liberal commitments of memberships as a whole that matter – not the status of a lone liberal major power. As expressions of a liberal world order, the international norms that have emerged and spread over the past four decades rest on broader underpinnings than US power.

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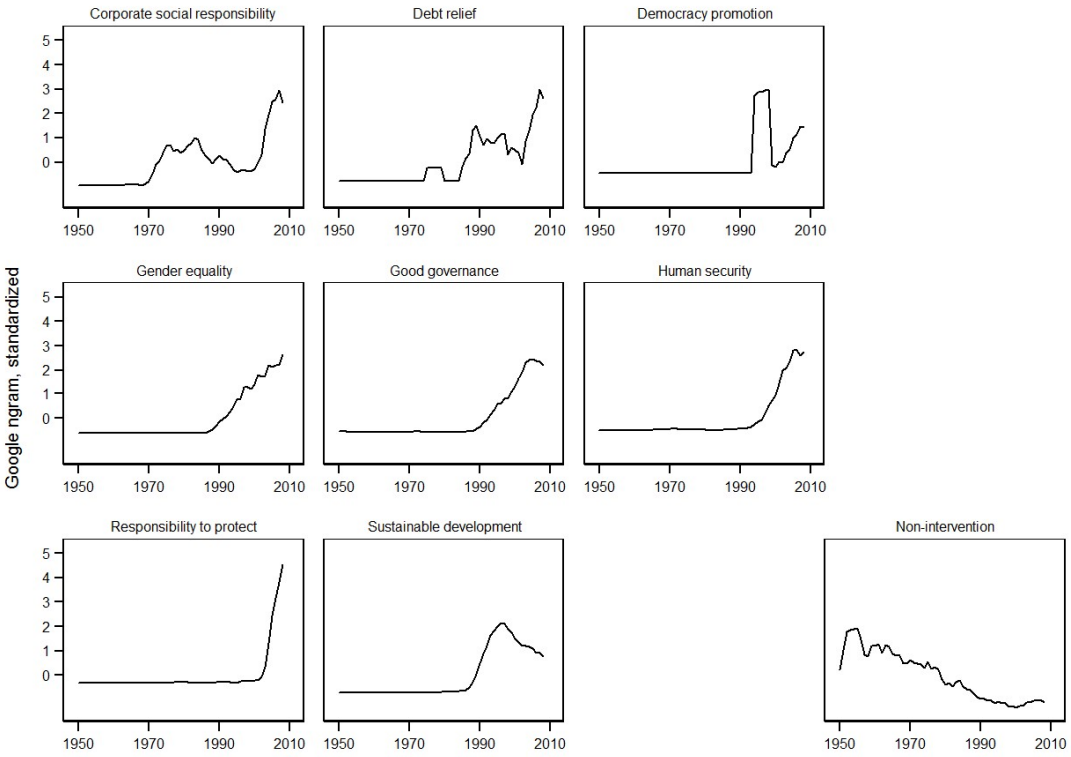
Figures and Tables in Text

Figure 1. *Prominence of norms in societal discourse, 1950-2008*



Notes: Based on references to the eight norms in Google Books Ngram, comprising scientific and non-scientific English books in Google's database. Results are standardized to highlight relative norm prominence.

Figure 2. *IO norm adoption, by norm, 1980-2015*

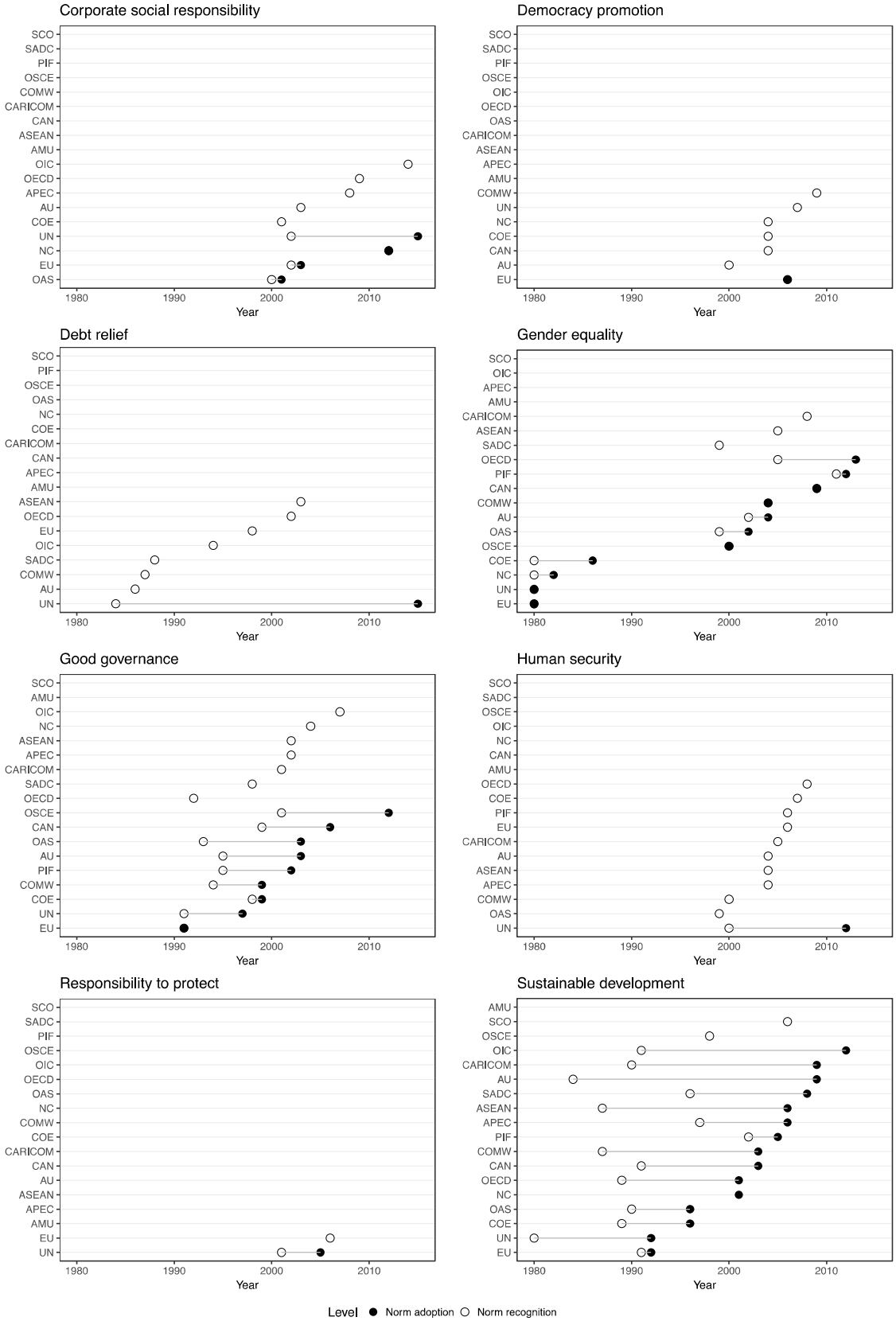


Figure 3. *IO norm adoption, by IO, 1980-2015*

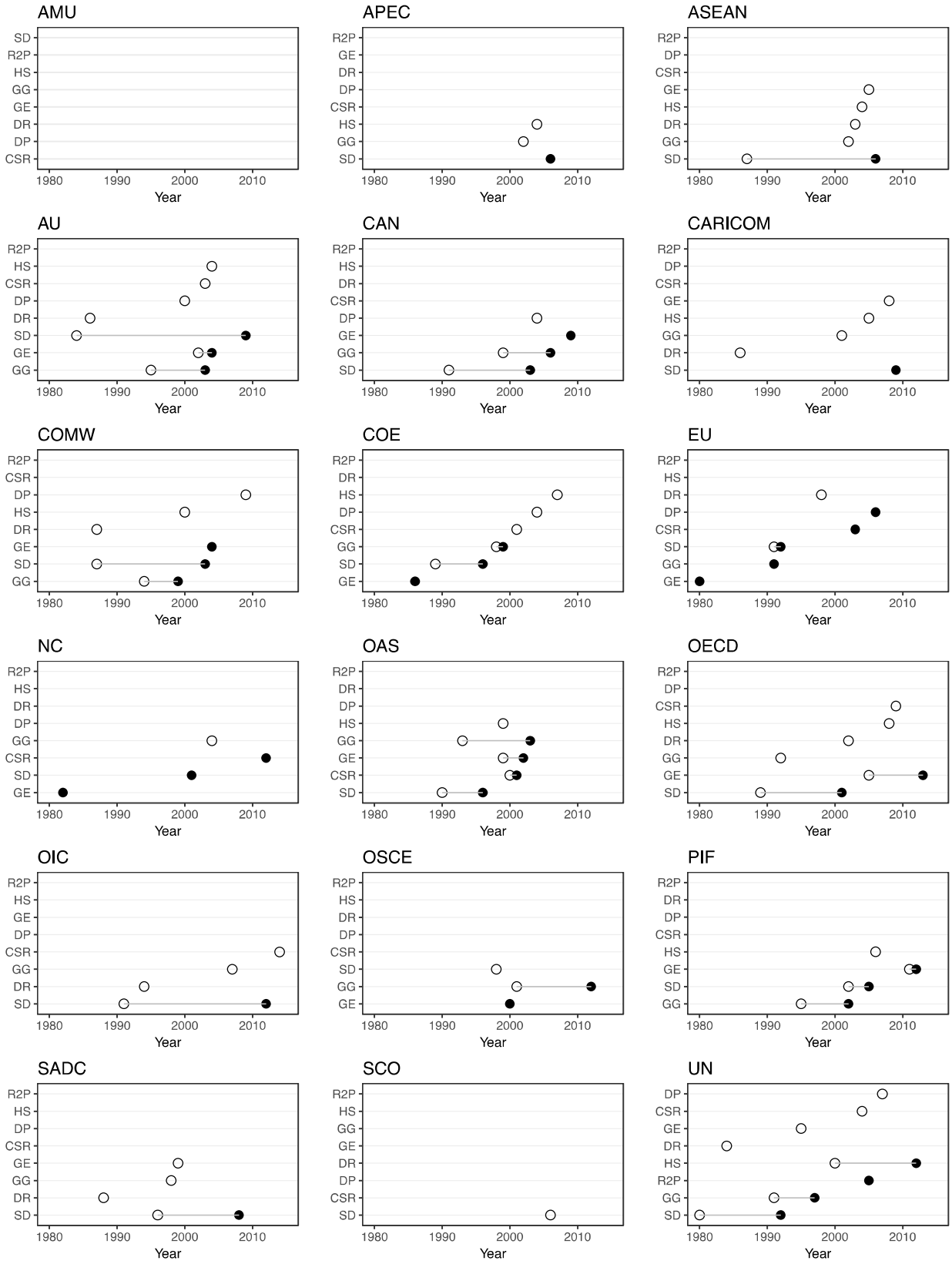
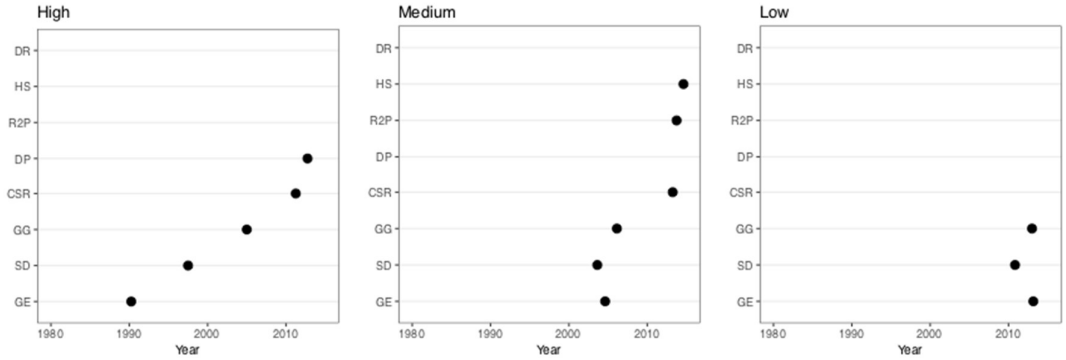
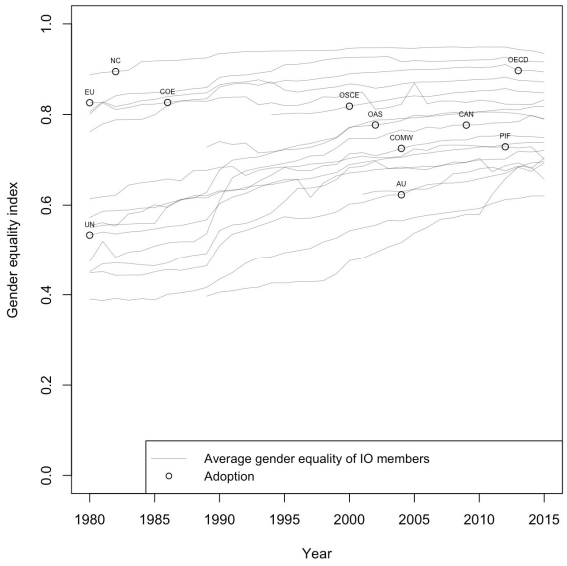


Figure 4. *Average norm adoption by democratic density*[115]



[115] Categorization based on average democratic density scores of IO members. See Table A.3.

Figure 5. *Mean gender equality of IO members and IO norm adoption, 18 IOs, 1980-2015.*



Note: Adoption of gender equality norm in policy marked with circles; non-adopting IOs have no circles. Gender equality indices calculated based on V-dem (2017) and COW-IGO data.

Table 1. *Pooled EHA estimates of norm adoption / recognition among 18 international organizations, 1980-2015*

	Dependent variable:			
	Norm adoption		Norm recognition	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Democratic density	0.961*		0.389	
	(0.527)		(0.300)	
Norm density		0.625**		0.028
		(0.311)		(0.228)
MS overlap	0.594**	0.573**	0.933***	1.194***
	(0.293)	(0.280)	(0.186)	(0.269)
Delegation	0.913***	0.563*	0.333	0.181
	(0.337)	(0.316)	(0.217)	(0.237)
Pooling	0.274	0.275	0.221	0.488**
	(0.239)	(0.259)	(0.200)	(0.220)
TNA access	0.485*	0.638**	−0.075	0.293
	(0.266)	(0.254)	(0.219)	(0.244)
Members	0.927	0.178	0.801	0.183
	(0.784)	(0.703)	(0.528)	(0.496)
Preference homogeneity	−0.100		0.397**	
	(0.244)		(0.192)	
Norm heterogeneity		0.083		−0.280
		(0.224)		(0.199)
Democratic major power	0.743		0.503	
	(0.460)		(0.365)	
Norm-committed major power		−0.968		−0.107
		(0.661)		(0.562)
IO resources	−0.530	0.443	0.195	0.848***
	(0.568)	(0.403)	(0.374)	(0.312)
Norm prominence	0.212	0.189	0.532***	0.544***
	(0.292)	(0.261)	(0.163)	(0.144)
Constant	−7.205***	−4.463***	−3.779***	−3.113***
	(1.140)	(0.547)	(0.358)	(0.269)
Observations	3,274	1,652	2,479	1,207
Norms	8	4	8	4
IOs	18	18	18	18
Years	35	35	35	35
Log Likelihood	−145.545	−134.048	−275.117	−156.538
Akaike Inf. Crit.	319.090	296.095	578.233	341.076
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	404.403	371.832	659.652	412.418

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix

Figure A.1 *IO adoption rates and norm prominence, 1980-2015*

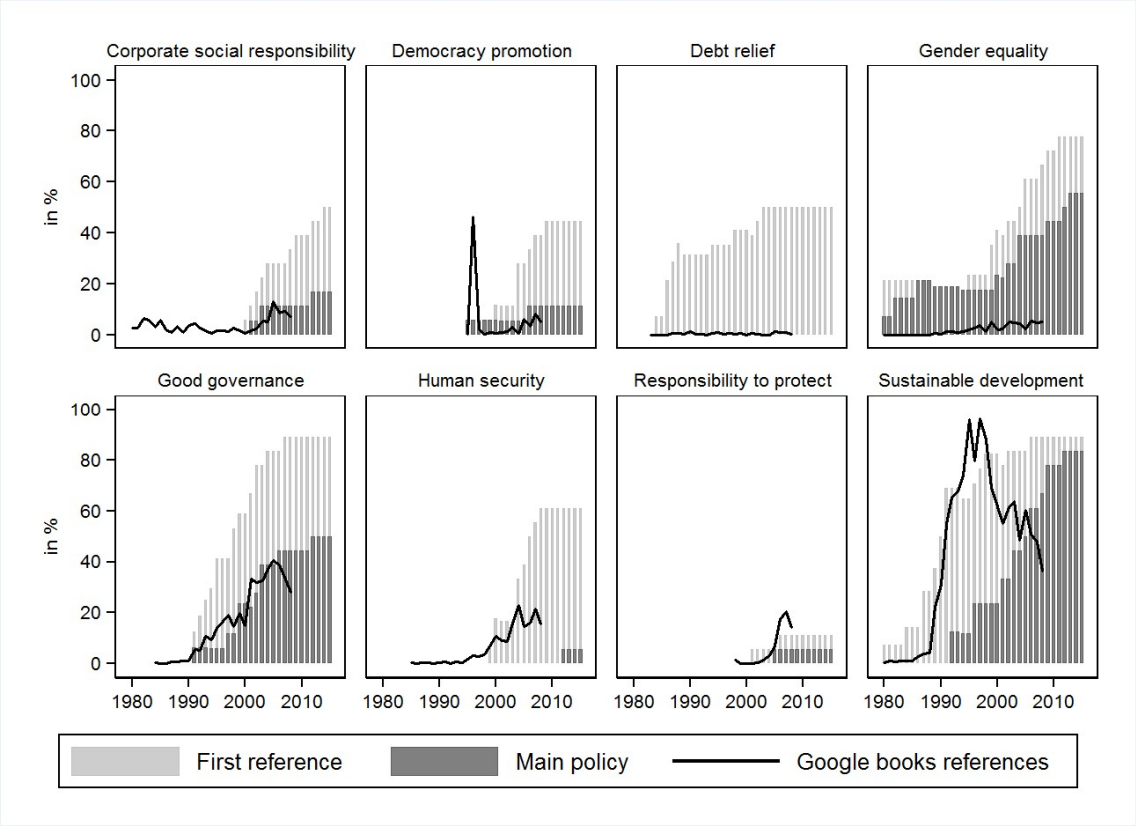


Table A.1. *List of IOs*

Acronym	Name	Region
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union	Africa
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	Global
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	Asia-Pacific
AU	African Union	Africa
CAN	Andean Community	Americas
CARICOM	Caribbean Community	Americas
COMW	Commonwealth of Nations	Global
COE	Council of Europe	Europe
EU	European Union	Europe
NC	Nordic Council of Ministers	Europe
OAS	Organization of American States	Americas
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	Global
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference	Global
OSCE	Organization for Security Cooperation Europe	Global
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum	Asia-Pacific
SADC	Southern African Development Community	Africa
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization	Asia-Pacific
UN	United Nations	Global

Table A.2. *Categories of IO resources*

Category	Staff		Category	Budget (Mio USD)
1	1-50		1	1-10
2	51-200		2	11-100
3	201-2000		3	101-200
4	1001-5000		4	201-1000
5	>5000		5	>1000

Table A.3 *Categories of democratic density, 18 IOs*

IO	Democratic density	Category
NC	.85	1
EU	.80	1
OECD	.79	1
COE	.70	1
OSCE	.59	2
PIF	.54	2
CARICOM	.53	2
APEC	.51	2
OAS	.49	2
COMW	.42	2
CAN	.40	2
UN	.38	2
SADC	.31	2
AU	.25	3
ASEAN	.23	3
OIC	.20	3
AMU	.16	3
SCO	.12	3