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Assessing the Opening of Intergovernmental Organizations: Making sense of Norm Based Explanations

Abstract

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are considered as important actors of the global governance system. Yet, their rise to power has raised questions on the legitimacy of the political order in which they have not only become central actors for coordinating state policies, but also independent players with an agenda of their own. Some critics claim that with more autonomy, IGO's (democratic) legitimacy began to erode. As a remedy, some scholars propose a wide opening of the processes of governance within these IGOs. As they become more transparent and inclusive – so the hopes of their critics – they may eventually gain new forms of legitimacy that are adequate to the impact they have on global governance. Indeed, empirical analyses reveal that a large number of IGOs have begun to open up. However, the reasons why they choose to open their processes are not clear. Contrary to the normative legitimacy argument, one may also claim that opening follows a functional logic. For example, including NGOs lowers costs for gathering information and may create cheap implementation facilities. These resource and norm based explanations have rarely been analyzed systematically. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature on how exactly the principles of both explanations can be translated into plausible causal pathways that lead to organizational opening. This conceptual paper will propose such a translation. In addition, it discusses how the combination of both explanations results in a more balanced description of organizational opening.

1 Introduction

International Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) are considered important actors in global politics (cf. Martin and Simmons 1998: 742ff)[1]. They are more than formal arrangements

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facilitating state cooperation. IGOs have become autonomous actors of global politics with policies of their own (cf. e.g. Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Hawkins et al. 2006; Hurd 2011). While IGOs produce a growing output of formal and informal regulation for a variety of actors, one can also witness changes in their internal processes of policy-making. Especially since the 1990s, IGOs are no longer exclusive locales for state diplomats. Instead, non-state actors like NGOs, scientists and lobbyists are oftentimes participating at official and unofficial IGO meetings and conferences. Furthermore, even when IGOs do not interact with non-state actors directly, there is a trend towards more IGO transparency (cf. e.g. Grigorescu 2003). These trends towards more non-state participation and general transparency in IGO governance, which I will refer to as *organizational opening* in this paper, is welcomed by some as a moment of emerging global democracy. Others are more skeptical, criticizing the growth of opaque and unaccountable governance arrangements (cf. for an overview e.g. Bexell, Tallberg and Uhlin 2010)

IGO opening varies on three dimensions (cf. Staisch 2004: 3). *First*, over time, there have been phases of more intensive IGO opening. As e.g. Steve Charnovitz (1997) notes, IGOs have opened their processes for non-state actors at distinct points in time, followed by periods of constant IGO openness. The 1990s appear to be such a period of extraordinary growth of opened institutions. *Second*, different IGOs open differently. Although one can witness more openness today, there still are some types of IGOs that are less opened. Especially IGOs active in the policy areas of development and human rights appear to be more open than those active in economic and security policy (cf. Kissling 2008: 40f). *Third*, IGOs are not opened equally for all kinds of non-state actors. Northern non-state actors that are rich in resources and expertise are admitted the most (cf. e.g. Hudson 2001).

These empirical findings ask for explanations. First, who decides about opening IGOs? In this paper, I will discuss opening as a deliberate decision of state representatives and IGO administrations. This approach puts actors inside the IGO and their interactions at the center of analysis. Second, why do they decide to increase openness? So far, several explanations are discussed (for an overview, cf. Tallberg 2010; Steffek 2007). In rational institutionalist stories, decision makers adjust IGO processes when they can expect more effective outcomes (cf. e.g. Alter 2006; Mitchell 1998; Raustiala 1997). For example, one would expect to see more opened IGOs when NGOs or experts can provide services in highly complex issue areas. For realists, IGO policies are dependent on the policies of powerful states. Therefore, powerful governments want to open IGOs to push their own political goals in the organization (cf. e.g. Drezner 2007). Thus, they would expect to see open IGOs whenever openness puts powerful states in advantageous positions. Finally, normative accounts identify a changing normative environment as a main reason for institutional change (cf. e.g. Reimann 2006: 58-62). Thus, IGOs are expected to be open when widely shared and little contested norms prescribe values like inclusiveness and transparency.

These explanations can be labeled as resource based and norm based approaches to understanding organizational opening. So far, these approaches have rarely been translated into causal paths explaining opening as emanating from decisions and actions of IGO administrations and state representatives. I will try to provide this kind of translation. Furthermore, I will discuss possible causal pathways that connect explanatory factors of both approaches. By mapping plausible pathways, I *first* try to make sense of so far under-researched norm based explanations, and *second*, I hope to show that both approaches, separately and in combination, provide important insights for the empirical analysis of organizational opening.

My paper is structured in the following way: First, I will explain my concept of organizational opening. Second, I will address the question of who decides about IGO opening and what motivates their decisions. Next, I will discuss resource and norm based explanations, their explanatory variables and ideal-type causal pathways of organizational opening that they propose. In the final step, these pathways will be combined to discuss how the combination of both approaches provides causal paths to opening that neither of the approaches provides alone.

2   WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL OPENING?

When IGOs increasingly cooperate with non-state actors and become more transparent, *organizational opening* has occurred. I understand organizational opening as a special type of institutional change (cf. e.g. for an overview Mahoney and Thelen 2009). I will say that organizations are opening if the elements of organizations are modified by institutional change, so that the organization is more transparent and/or inclusive then before. Institutional opening will be visible in an organization's output. Building on Nils Brunsson's (2002) typology of organizational output, organizational opening can have an effect on three dimensions:

- talk, which is how organizations communicate with their environment,

- decisions, which is rules and norms that organizations decide to follow, and

- action, which is the material activities of organizations, both internally and in interaction with their environment.

This output-centered conception of organizational opening reflects the effects that IGOs have on global politics. Not only do they provide structures for state cooperation, they also constitute actors, power structures, normative values and meanings (cf. e.g. Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 700). These material and ideational effects of IGOs become visible by focusing on how, according to Brunsson (2002: ch. 2), organizations influence their environment with their output. This focus is especially sensitive to the politically relevant impact of these organizations.

Talk is what organizations say about the world and about themselves. Talk structures what organizations do, because it provides norms and rules of appropriate practices that bodies of the organization should follow when acting internally and externally. Organizations also use talk to

address their environment directly. Through talk, organizations frame their own activities and activities of others. Consequently, talk of IGOs constitutes and reflects normative values and meanings in global politics. *Decisions* of organizations are a special form of talk. They are more formalized because they are often conserved as rules and procedures. Rules also structure an organization's action, but because of their formal character, organizational bodies and individuals within an organization may feel bound by them much stronger than by informal talk. Like talk, decisions are used as an instrument to interact with the organization's environment. Decisions of IGOs create new types of actors, e.g. special types of international NGOs, and may have an impact on power structures in world politics. Finally, an organization's *actions* are those activities that lead to the creation of the organization's products. The variety of IGOs' products comprises international law, regulations and standards, but also fact-finding, humanitarian and military missions. Like decisions, actions are reflecting and constituting power structures in world politics and have direct effect on individuals. Consequently, IGOs are often criticized or praised for their actions, e.g. for unfair regulations or effective field missions.

Talk, decision and action are no independent dimensions of organizational output. On all three dimensions, IGOs as political organizations either try to react to ideational and material demands of their environment, or try to change the normative and material structure of this environment. As the environments that organizations face are highly complex, organizations cannot always be consistent in their talk, decisions and actions. This – with the word of Brunsson – *hypocrisy* could be an outcome of organizational weaknesses. However, replying to demands on different dimensions can also be a strategic choice to gain legitimacy and support, or change structures of the environment. Consequently, all three dimensions should be part of this analysis.

Next, in this context of institutional change, by more *open* organizations I mean organizations with

- enhanced participation of state and non-state actors (i.e. inclusive organizations), and

- more transparently organized processes of governance (i.e. transparent organizations).

Participation is a concept often used in debates on global democracy. People that are affected by decisions of IGOs should have the possibility to participate in the decision making process (cf. e.g. Held 1995: 103). Yet, defining appropriate levels of participation is discussed controversially. Jonas Tallberg and Christer Jönsson (2010: 6f) have proposed an analytic scale of participation mechanisms for non-state actors, ranging from no access, via information sharing and consultation to collaboration with IGOs. Leaving aside democracy theory considerations for now, the minimum level of participation that an organization needs to provide in order to have undergone institutional opening is consultation. Providing information sharing capabilities does increase transparency but is not a form of direct interaction where non-state actors have a possibility to voice their own concerns.

Transparency also is an important democratic principle of open organizations. It is a precondition for the participation of non-state actors. Alexandru Grigorescu (2007: 626) conceptualizes transparency as "the ability of B to access information rather than of A offering it." This requires IGOs not only to provide information, but also to assure that this information can be understood. IGOs can make several of their information channels transparent. For an IGO to have opened, it is especially their information flow to NGOs and directly to the public that need to be transparent, less those to governments (cf. *ibid.* 627). Additionally, transparent provision of information increases the chances to assure accountability of global governance actors (cf. Hale 2008). As both participation and transparency are democratic principles, my conceptualization of open organizations is at least minimally normative. Nevertheless, in the remainder of this paper, I will try to put my focus on analytical categories and leave the normative questions of global democracy and IO openness for future analyses.

To illustrate the concept, a fictional organization would be said to have undergone organizational opening if *a*) its decisions, in the form of rules and structures have changed so that e.g. rules now grant access to more actors or are more transparent (e.g. the organization now has an office for community relations), or *b*) if its actions have changed so that in its production, it now indeed includes more actors or is more transparent, or *c*) if in its talk, it commits itself to more participation or transparent processes in general statements and policies.

On the negative pole of the concept (cf. Goertz 2006: 35), one can expect to see organizations that have not changed in talk, decisions or actions or even decreased their transparency and participation on these dimensions. Different degrees of organizational opening are possible: if in an IGO, e.g. only decisions have become more open but actions have not, it can be said to have opened less than an institution where actions and decisions are now more open. Therefore, the concept is built on a structure of family resemblance, i.e. any of the three dimensions alone constitutes organizational opening (cf. *ibid.* 41).

3   Who decides about opening?

Who is responsible for changes in an organization's talk, decision and actions? In IGOs, there are two groups of actors that can bring about institutional opening: state representatives and IGO administrations. Both of these groups have a different set of incentives, goals and constraints when they act in IGOs. Depending on the formal rules of an IGO, each of these groups also has different chances to influence talk, decisions and actions. Of course, these features of the two groups differ from case to case. Still, several characteristics of these groups can be formulated analytically, here.

State representatives, i.e. diplomats or national officials delegated to the organization, are central actors in IGOs. IGOs are created by states and states contribute resources to an organization's budget. Consequently, state representatives are important members in the top-level decision-making

bodies of IGOs. Thus, it is state representatives that can be expected to take major decisions about opening "their" organization, e.g. creating new bodies and developing guidelines for the budgets and organizations' actions. In IGOs, states primarily want to develop government tools that they can apply nationally, but they may also have the goal to solve global problems, like climate change or nuclear proliferation, that may only have indirect effects on their countries. Furthermore, IGOs can be understood as institutions of a globalized community of states, representing shared values and behavioral expectations of state governments. Governments do not only use IGOs as functional tools for coordination, but also build their own reputation as valuable members of the international system by contributing resources to the maintenance of IGOs (cf. e.g. Abbott and Snidal 1998).

Therefore, decisions to open an IGO are carefully weighted: Does an investment in open IGOs improve the production of governance tools? How does supporting open IGOs place state governments in the global community of states? Because the benefits of opened organizations vary from government to government, and because of the set of strict rules on how to make binding decisions in IGOs, decisions-making by state representatives is often slow. Finding a consensus is difficult, implementing this consensus into formal rules is even more demanding. Especially when opening requires changes in the constitutional documents of IGOs, decisions for more opening are less likely because of the high costs involved. The influence of state representatives on the other two dimensions of organizational opening is rather indirect. IGO talk can only indirectly be influenced, e.g. by pressuring an organization to comment on a situation. IGO actions are subject of mixed state influence. IGOs' production strongly relies on the operational support of governments. This is especially true for operational organizations that rely on state's capacities to act in the field. A good example are humanitarian missions legitimized by the UN Security Council. Although the UN may set the mandate, it is states that have to send their national police or military to act on behalf of the organization. Consequently, when looking at how and why IGOs open, explanations of organizational opening need to set a special focus on the direct influences of state representatives on decisions, the indirect influences on talk and mixed influence on actions (see (1)).

$$
\begin{array}{l}
\textbf{\textit{state representatives}} \\
\textit{goals}\text{: governance tools,} \\
\text{solve global problems,} \\
\text{reputation}
\end{array}
\left\{
\begin{array}{lll}
\textit{talk} & \rightarrow & \text{indirect}\{\text{e.g. request statements}\} \\
\textit{decision} & \rightarrow & \text{direct}\{\text{e.g. in top-level decision making bodies}\} \\
\textit{action} & \rightarrow & \text{mixed}\{\text{e.g. financial and material support}\}
\end{array}
\right. \quad (1)
$$

Organizations' administrations are the second, central group that can decide about institutional opening. IGO administrations are usually composed of independent officials that are, despite their nationalities, loyal to their organization. As professional administrators, they have an interest in maintaining and enlarging their organization's resources and functions (cf. e.g. Bauer et al. 2009). Second, they may, like state representatives, also have an interest in contributing to global problem solving and, third, to develop a certain reputation as respected members of an imagined

community of IGOs. Consequently, also from the administrations' perspective, increasing IGO openness is a complex decision.

Administrations are the main producers of talk. In their public communication, e.g. reports and speeches, they present their meanings of the world, yet within the borders that state governments have set in the organization's constitution. On the level of decisions, administrations are usually involved in top-level decision-making, but their main impact is in the creation of low-level rules. Administrations translate general, constitutional rules of IGOs into operational rules. Questions of opening are often subject of such low level decision making. For example, UN Charter Article 71 on an abstract level allows that the "[...] Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with nongovernmental organizations [...]". Thus, it is the task of the administration to develop more detailed regulations. As experts, they can have a strong influence on state representatives that need to agree to changes in operational rules. However, asking whether decisions made by states or administrations are more influential in bringing about organizational opening essentially stays an empirical question. Concerning the action dimension, administrations of operational organizations develop guidelines for their field personnel, directly effecting the action dimensions. In general, actions are strongly influenced by the administrative staff that it is socialized via talk and decisions. Yet, their freedom of behavior is limited by state-made constitutional rules and by the material support of state governments. Therefore, like state representatives, IGO administrations have a direct and mixed influence on the decision and action dimension, but direct influence on IGO talk (see (2)).

$$
\begin{array}{r}
\textbf{\textit{organizations' administrations}} \\
\textit{goals}: \text{secure organizational} \\
\text{resources, solve global} \\
\text{problems, reputation}
\end{array}
\left\{
\begin{array}{lll}
\textit{talk} & \rightarrow & \text{direct}\{\text{e.g. official statements}\} \\
\textit{decision} & \rightarrow & \text{direct}\{\text{mainly on lower levels}\} \\
\textit{action} & \rightarrow & \text{mixed}\{\text{e.g. via guidelines, staff}\}
\end{array}
\right. \tag{2}
$$

4   Explanations of organizational opening

The last section discussed how state representatives and IGO administrations can influence organizational opening on the dimensions of talk, decisions and actions. But *(i)* how and why do organizations change in general, and *(ii)* why do actors want to make their organizations more transparent and inclusive? The first question requires a look into insights of theories of institutional change.

In general, theories of institutional change differentiate between endogenous and exogenous impulses for institutional change (cf. e.g. Rixen and Viola 2009: 20). Endogenous impulses for change emanate from processes within an organization. Exogenous impulses for change are caused by shocks – understood here as sudden, unforeseeable changes, in an organization's environment. Furthermore, organizations can experience two distinct forms of change. Incremental change can be understood as the standard mode of change: talk, decision and action change gradually. In

contrast, radical change is also a possible. In these cases, organizations show very strong changes in their outputs, e.g. fundamental changes in their constitutional rules or very new forms of talk.

Institutional change can be explained by three kinds of *institutionalisms* (Fioretos 2011: 374). *Rational choice institutionalism* assumes that organizations are based on formally organized equilibria of state preferences. Therefore, dynamics of institutional change can be caused by shifts in state preferences and state power relations in an organization's environment. Because IGOs are mainly organized by states, these exogenous changes will also have an impact on IGO's endogenous structures. *Sociological institutionalism* assumes that IGOs are based on a normative consensus on how to govern a distinct issue area. Change in this consensus can be caused by the learning and socialization of new ideas. Radical changes can be caused by a wide-spread emergence of new norms that challenge the consensus an organization is based on. Because state representatives and IGO administrations are also aware of the appropriateness of their actions in IGOs, normative changes in an organization's environment influences organizational output. Finally, *historical institutionalism* understands IGOs as sets of achieved agreements. These agreements represent investments states and administrations have made in an organization. They structure possible paths of future development (path dependency). As a result, change in an organization can be understood as consequences of these agreements. Because new arrangements are often hard to design, there is a tendency to add new layers of rules to existing rules. This layering adds new bodies to organizations that are to deal with new problems. Once a number of these new layers have accumulated, organizations may need more substantial reforms because the layered arrangements have become ineffective or cause conflicts. To sum up, different institutionalisms provide sets of factors that need to be considered when assessing explanations of organizational opening (see (3)).

institutionalism	impulses for endogenous change	impulses for exogenous change
rational choice	changes in organization's balance of power	changes in state preferences and power structures
sociological	learning, socialization	new norms
historical	layering and accumulation of rules	changes in structures of environment

(3)

The second question – why do state-representatives and administrations want open organizations – is partially answered by previous research on how the growing participation of non-state actors in IGOs can be explained. For example, Kal Raustiala (1997) shows how states can benefit from NGO participation because they provide valuable resources during important phases of IGO policy making. By opening, states gain political resources and become more active global regulators. From a top-down perspective, Kim Reimann (2006) sees structural and normative changes in the global governance system that explain rising NGO participation. On the one hand, it is growing opportunities for funding and special programs that have created incentives for the creation and participation of NGOs. On the other hand, Reimann describes the emergence

of a new norm prescribing NGO participation because they are crucial partners in the field and function as enforcers of good, democratic governance. In a rich way, the edited volume by Jönsson and Tallberg (2010) presents a selection of empirical analyses on how NGOs and other actors participate in different IGOs. For example, Andrea Liese (2010) shows that next to improved access to resources, IGO opening also needs to be compatible with the IGOs culture, i.e. with norms that prescribe appropriate behavior within the organization. Finally, concerning transparency, Grigorescu (2007) shows how states, IGO administrations and NGOs influence IGOs to commit to more transparent processes. He also suggests that there appears to be a causal relation between shared democratic norms of IGO member states and the likelihood of the IGO to adopt more transparent processes.

All these approaches can be subsumed under two basic explanations of why IGOs are opened: *resource based* explanations and *norm based* explanations. Both provide different rationals on why states and IGO administrations decide to change IGO output. In their explanations, they make different ontological assumptions, namely whether norms exist and can explain change or not. I will divide the approaches discussed in the literature along these lines for reasons of analytical clarity and to structure the following sections.

4.1 Resource based explanations

A basic assumption of resource based explanations is that actors in international politics follow a logic of consequence (March and Olsen 2004). IGO administrators and state representatives have a more or less fixed list of preferences that assists them in deciding which of the available options they want to realize. Therefore, opening up an organization needs to be understood as a deliberate choice of actors. Opening is not something that just happens automatically over time, it requires purposeful choices. Both state representatives and IGO administrations have incentives to organize IGOs in an effective way. This puts resources at the center of analysis. The general aim of the two actor groups is to secure resources and use them effectively to achieve their goals. Different state governments and actors in an IGO administration have different resources at their disposal. This represents different levels of power that actors have to achieve their goals. Yet in this context, power can be understood as a meta-category. It structures the chances for taking influence, but does not provide a separate set of explanatory factors of organizational opening. Thus, following the resource based path, the following set of mechanisms may explain why choices for opening organizations are made (cf. Tallberg 2010: 47ff).

Information gathering and provision. IGOs act in complex policy areas. To effectively develop tools of governance, IGOs need to gather information. The more complex situations become, the more costly it will be to gather information. Here, including non-state actors that either already posses required information, or are capable of generating information at low costs may be an option. This gathering of information is especially important for IGO administrations that would otherwise have to use their own resources for this task. Furthermore, as gathering

information is delegated to non-state actors, all member states and all subunits of the IGO receive the same information. The provision of information is an important incentive for state representatives to open IGOs, especially for weaker states that do not have the means to gather the required information on their own. Furthermore, an equal distribution of information reduces information asymmetries between both states and states, and states and IGO administrations. Minimal information asymmetries render joint decision making more effective (cf. Raustiala 1997).

Increasing the transparency of IGOs can only partially be explained by resource based explanations (cf. Grigorescu 2007: 629). Both IGO administrations and state representatives understand information as a valuable resource. As such, disclosing it to a wider public is not necessary, especially if one is certain that pieces of IGO information have a good quality. On the other hand, especially weak states may profit from transparency because open processes provide information on other states and on IGO-state interactions thus lowering information asymmetries.

Improving implementation. Both states and IGO administrations have an interest in seeing their policies implemented in the field. For governments, this fulfills the main goal of developing effective tools for governance. For administrations, effective operations additionally mean a good reputation. If IGOs are assumed to do a good job in their action, they will secure resources for future operations. Because IGOs and states often lack funds and know-how on how to best achieve an effective operation (cf. e.g. Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 706), increasing participation may be an option. It allows the inclusion of external actors that may have the capabilities required in the field. For example, outsourcing tasks like humanitarian aid to specialized NGOs saves resources because the IGO need not develop its own operational knowledge for every mission. This saves states and IGO administrations resources while assuring effective implementation of their policies.

Transparency is an important mechanism to improve implementation. This is especially true for states, because transparent IGO processes make controlling IGO agents much easier. Again, states would rather push for IGO-state transparency, not for transparency towards the general public. From this perspective, including the general public only means increasing costs for information provision but no gains in principal-agent control. For IGO administrations, raising the transparency for both the public and states would only be beneficial if they were convinced that their actions create the right products in an effective way. If this is the case, transparency will raise an IGOs reputation as an efficient partner of states, providing an advantage for further allocations on the global governance market.

Monitoring commitments. Finally, one reason why states organize IGOs is to effectively bind themselves and other states to agreed commitments (cf. Tallberg 2002). In complex issue areas, it is not always easy to assess if everyone fulfills its commitments. If it is not clear if a large number of states indeed cooperate, no state would have an incentive to fulfill its commitments and cooperation

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would cease. Here, including actors that engage in monitoring state commitments can be an option. Some non-state actors have special know-how on how to assess state commitments via their local or global networks. Consequently, especially weak states may push for the inclusion for monitoring purposes because they do not possess sufficient resources for monitoring themselves. The same is true for administrations. Opening the IGO for monitoring by third actors saves resources that the administration would have to spend for their own monitoring system. Again, this also improves the reputation of IGOs because cooperation works well, thus securing the future support of the IGO by states.

Transparency is also functional for monitoring state commitments because the results of monitoring, be they executed by non-state actors or IGO administrations, need to be available to states. Again, like under the improving implementation mechanism, transparency needs not necessarily be directed towards the general public. For states, this would mean having to contribute more resources to the IGO. For administrations, public transparency will only be beneficial if the results build a reputation of the IGO as a good coordination facility where states fulfill their commitments.

Consequently, if resource based explanations of organizational opening are valid, one can expect that changes in actions are most likely. Adaption on the actions level costs least and offer valuable benefits for both state representatives and IGO administrations. Changes in decisions are less likely because, creating new rules and consensus is more costly. Finally, changes in talk alone are least likely expected because adapted discursive behavior alone does rarely generate the gains that states and IGO administrations expect from organizational opening.

Figure 1 illustrates typical causal pathways leading to organizational opening that resource based explanations propose. The pathways connect impulses for institutional change, as provided by institutional change theory, with mechanisms of organizational opening, as provided by resource based explanations. For presentation purposes, the outlined pathways are ideal-type examples of how organizational opening can be understood. They do not give a complete picture of all possible pathways and they only represent paths leading to opening, but not to non-opening. In section 5, they will be combined with norm based pathways to illustrate how these two logics of explanations interact.

Under a resource based logic, *exogenous impulses for change* can be understood as either resource shocks or power shocks. A *resource shock* is a sudden change in the supply of IGO resources. Both an increase and decrease in resources causes more competition for these resources amongst IGOs and alternative global governance structures. Resource shocks are often caused by states as the main suppliers of resources to the IGO market. IGO administrations need to react to them. There are two ideal-type responses available that involve organizational opening. A first possible response would be to improve the reputation of the IGO as an efficient market actor (*R1*). To do this, administrations would open to prove that they are good implementors of state
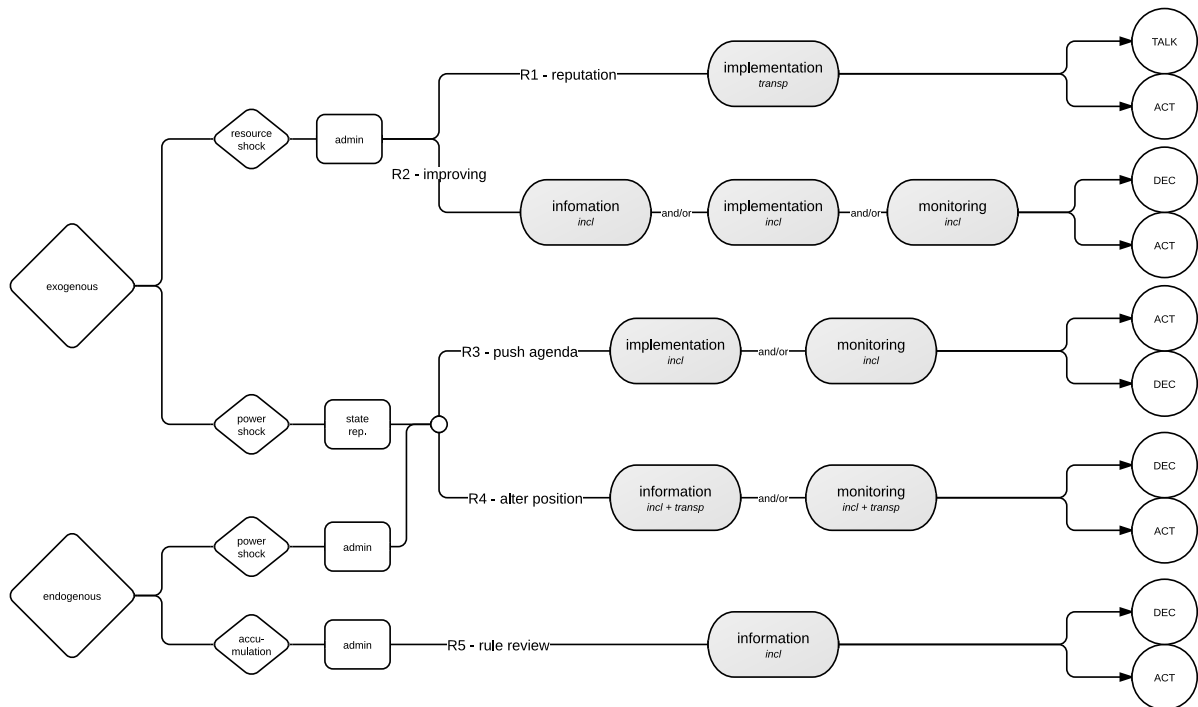
Figure 1: Typical causal pathways of resource based explanations

decisions. To achieve this, increasing transparency under the implementation mechanism would be a good option because it signals to states that the IGO is a good place to develop governance tools. Consequently, one would see organizational opening on the dimensions of talk and actions. Talk is where organizations can communicate with states and tell them that they are effective. In their actions, opening will be visible because IGO production would become more transparent.

A second ideal-type option for IGO administrations under resource shock situations is to actually improve their products to become better competitors (*R2*). Here, administrations will try to open their IGOs following the information, implementation and monitoring mechanisms, because all three will help in producing outputs more effectively. Opening would especially be visible on the decision and action dimensions. As opened talk alone does hardly improve organizations' products, changes are less likely on this dimension.

A second form of exogenous impulses are *power shocks*. In these situations, states suddenly gain or lose power resources. It is state representatives who are most affected and gain new options for opening an IGO. A first option for states would be to push their own agenda and produce the outcomes they want (*R3*). In this path, organizations will be opened to improve implementation and commitment monitoring. Here, states may now have the power to select specific non-state actors for implementation that provide the resources that combine best with their agenda. Furthermore, for monitoring, they can choose to let those non-state actors participate that provide just the right level of monitoring – e.g. not too much critical monitoring of the powerful state. As described, opening would basically mean inclusion of new actors. Increasing transparency is not a main goal of a powerful state government because it is interested in the

efficient provision of governance tools and not in the costly provision of information to the public or to other states. In the push-agenda-path, organizational opening would especially be visible on the actions and decision dimensions, because powerful states are primarily interested in products and may have to engage in decision-making if necessary.

A second option becomes available for a number of weaker states that have the chance to alter their position in the IGO (*R4*). These states try to alter the structures and products of IGOs so that they will be in a better position, especially when considering that a possible next power shock will let other states get stronger. Coalitions of weak states will try to include non-state actors for information provision and to monitor state commitments. These are areas where their resources will be most welcomed as they balance weak-strong-state relations. For the same reasons, weak state coalitions will also work towards greater transparency. Opening will be especially visible on the decision dimensions because creating new rules is the best chance for weak states to gain influence in the future. When these decisions are applied, changes in action follow.

When considering *endogenous impulses of change*, it is also possible to make a distinction between two possible situations. *Power shocks* can also occur inside organizations. Yet, these shocks will often lead to similar pathways as described for state-representatives after an exogenous impulse. Under endogenous power shocks, sub-bodies of the IGO are either trying to push their agendas or to alter their positions inside the organization. Another impulse of endogenous change is the *accumulation* of rules. If these rules become overlapping and contradictory, they may hinder the organization's production. Accumulation often concerns low level and operational rules. Therefore, IGO administrations predominantly need to act when accumulation occurs and review the organization's rules (*R5*). Opening the organization during this critical phase via transparency is not very likely because providing more information on inefficient rules to state governments or the public will not help much in reforming these rules. Yet, including some specialized non-state actors may help administrations in identifying weak and inefficient rules. As these actors would review the organizations products, production mechanisms and decision making procedures, opening would be expected on the level of decisions and actions.

4.2 Norm based explanations

In contrast to resource based explanations, norm based explanations assume that actors follow a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 2004). Actors do not only rationally calculate the gains and losses of their actions, they also decide which option would be appropriate to choose. The standards for measuring appropriateness of options are norms, i.e. "shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors" (Finnemore 1996: 22). A basic assumption of norm based explanations is that there are norms prescribing only those government arrangements as appropriate that are transparent and participative. Therefore, some forms of social sanctioning would be expected for IGOs that remain closed clubs of states. State representatives and IGO officials may follow these norms because of two mechanisms (Tallberg 2010: 50-55).

Individual convictions. To both kinds of decision makers, it may matter personally or collectively how global governance is organized. Individuals may be convinced that participative and transparent forms of governance are the best way to govern. Groups of individuals may have included these values of openness into their collective identity. For administrations, collective identities are represented in an organization's culture, providing scripts for normal and sanctions for deviant behavior. An organization's culture is the immediate frame of reference for individual administrators, because through training, experience and interpersonal exchange, they get socialized to this culture. Furthermore, IGO administrators have also been socialized to more general, local norms of their places of origins. The same is true for state representatives in IGOs. They also follow their local norms, but more importantly, they are socialized to their government's scripts. To state representatives, their home ministries and governments are the primary normative source of reference. Although an IGO official's identity as a good *administrator* and a state representative's identity as a good *governor* are not identical, both reference systems may include transparency and participation as values that should be followed in IGOs.

Strategic reactions. Decision makers may further know that they are held accountable for their actions in IGOs against the standard of widely accepted norms. They may even be sanctioned for norms that are not part of their own reference frames, but of those addressing administrators and state representatives in IGOs. State representatives may fear losing votes and support for their government at home if important groups make claims for opened organizations when the organization's output is in conflict with these norms. The rising number of transnational protest directed against organizations of global governance (cf. e.g. Della Porta and Tarrow 2004) indicates that people indeed appear to address claims directly to IGOs. Yet, they also hold their national representatives accountable for the decisions, talk and actions of the IGOs they support. To react to these claims, state representatives may strategically open institutions, thus avoiding criticism and securing support. As IGO administrations are also addressed directly, they may follow the same strategic logic to avoid protest and secure support. Public support is important for IGO administrations, too, because organizations without public support may be closed down or avoided by state governments.

Under both logics, organizational opening depends on the actual reference to transparency and participation, be it by decision makers or the public. Yet, can one assume that these claims are indeed made? The world culture approach, as e.g. discussed by Meyer, Drori and Hwang (2006), assumes that this is indeed the case. This alternative kind of a norm based explanation argues that we witness the growth of world culture. This global reference frame includes at least three distinct sets of values: "the role of the empowered individual human person, the notion of scientized universality, and the sense of the social authority of rational models" (*ibid.* 37). In this context of globally shared understandings of the world, there is a general trend to accept formal organizations as models for good coordination of human life. The organization as a global template is bound to a set of values prescribing what a good organization is and

how good organizational behavior should look like. These are connected to the values of world society. Consequently, organizations need to take individuals inside and outside the organization serious, they need to formulate and legitimize their goals, need to follow a scientific-managerial approach in accounting for their resources and they also need to address the limits of their range of activities (*ibid.* 44-45). These demands closely correspond with the values of transparency and participation. Transparency is required to successfully legitimize an organization's goals and its use of resources. Participation fulfills claims to take concerns for individuals and their rights serious. Therefore, both values of organizational opening can be expected to be part of a broader set of public understandings and organizational cultures.

If organizations have indeed become this kind of socially defined global templates for appropriate problem solving mechanisms, world culture needs to be understood as an explanatory meta-variable. Given the trend towards global culture and corresponding imaginations of global organizations, one would expect to see a general trend towards more opening in all IGOs. Yet, as the empirics show, this is not exactly the case. Variation in opening can be observed. For this reason, the mechanisms presented above also need to be considered. Whether led by strategical motivations or convictions, one can expect to see changes in an organization's talk first. As states and IGO administrations try to convince their audience that they are willing to invest in better organizations, public communication is a suitable means to show this commitment. If actors are acting on their convictions, changes in decisions and actions will be present, too. If they are acting strategically, adaption in decisions and especially in actions is less expected.

Figure 2 presents an overview of typical causal pathways that can be expected under a norm based logic. Again, the presentation is limited to some ideal-type processes, illustrating how exactly organizational opening comes about under endogenous and exogenous impulses for change and which actors are involved.

Under the norm based approach, there are two kinds of exogenous impulses for change. The first one, which is also quite often discussed in the literature (cf. e.g. Reus-Smit 2007), is *legitimacy crisis*. These are situations where IGOs are heavily criticized in the public. Public critique questions if an IGO is indeed an institution that develops rules that are accepted as legitimate by those affected. Legitimacy crises are based on norms because the public has certain normative evaluations about the legitimacy of IGO rules. When influential groups claim that IGOs do not obey these rules, state representatives and IGO administrators need to develop strategies to appease these claims and try to re-legitimize their organization (*N1*). This response follows the strategic mechanism of norm-based explanations. Decision makers are confronted with demands for more open institutions and need to react to these demands or fear sanctions for not acting according to these norms. In these cases, increasing transparency is more likely than including new actors, at least in early phases of a legitimacy crisis (cf. Grigorescu 2011). Opening will primarily be visible on the talk and action dimensions, because there, re-legitimation will have the best chances for success.
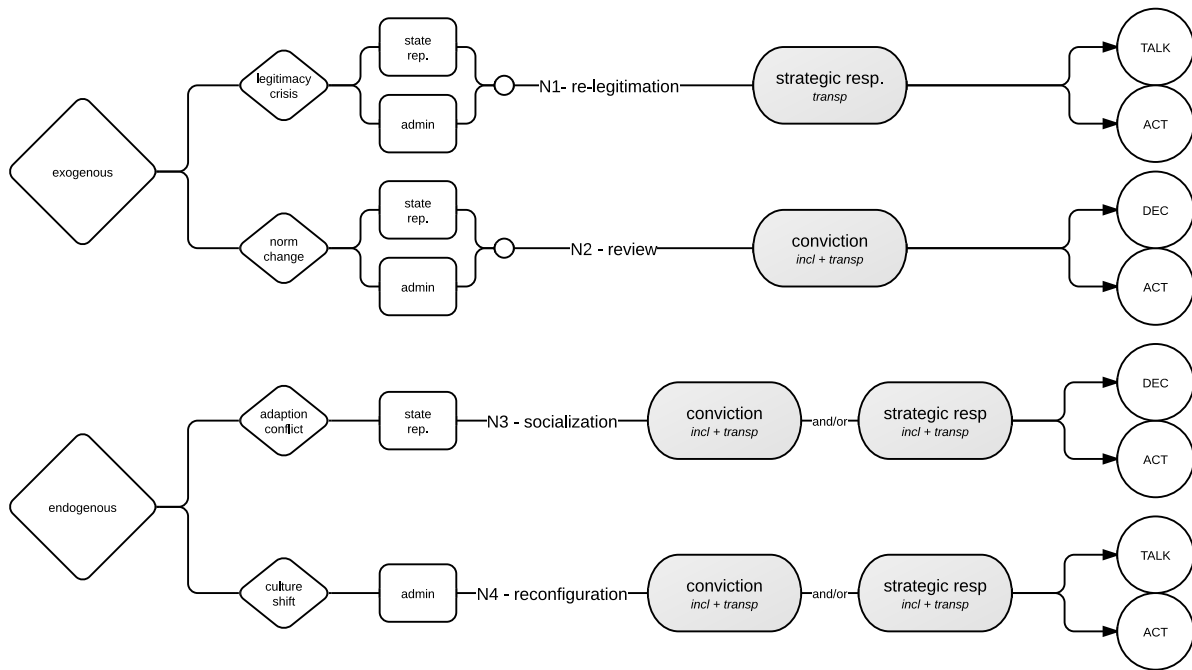
Figure 2: Typical causal pathways of norm based explanations

The second kind of external impulses are *norm changes*. Compared to legitimacy crises, norm changes do not necessarily lead to public critique of IGOs. A reason for this could be the nature of the changing norms, e.g. norms shared by smaller communities that are not shared by the larger public. As during legitimacy crises, both administrators and state representatives are affected by norm changes. If new norms prescribe more opening and there is no external pressure to adapt to these norms, decision makers will review their IGOs to adapt them to the new normative framework (*N2*). This will only happen under the conviction mode, because there are no fears of sanctioning involved. Consequently, opening via increased transparency and via inclusion of new actors are both possible, if prescribed by the changed norms. Opening will most likely be visible on the decision and action dimensions. Talking about these changes is less likely because the changed normative environment is accepted by all decision makers.

Endogenous impulses for change also stimulate two ideal-type pathways towards organizational opening. *Adaption conflicts* are a first impulse. Adaption conflicts are situations where members of an IGO have normative frameworks that are partially incompatible with an organizations collectively shared norms. This situation most likely affects state representatives in IGOs because IGO administrations are comparably more homogenous in their normative frames of reference than IGO administrations. If e.g. new member states join an IGO, they may be socialized with the organizations normative frame (*N3*). If the organizational framework prescribes openness, as assumed by the world culture approach, state representatives may strategically agree to adapt to these norms because they seek reputation as members of the international community. It is also possible that socialization leads to the internalization of the organization's norms and that state representatives agree to opening out of convictions. Socialization may lead to more

organizational opening when an important number of socialized state representatives and their governments agree that opening the IGO is an appropriate thing to do. Opening will then be most visible on the decision and talk dimensions.

Finally, *culture shifts* are a second instance of endogenous impulses for change. Situations of culture shift occur when the normative consensus inside an IGO is contested. Again, these normative frames of reference are basically connected to IGO administrations. Shifts in the organization's culture may e.g. occur when new generations of administrators reach the top decision making levels inside the IGO. These new decision makers may try to insert ideas of participation or transparency into the organization's culture. If they succeed, an internal process of reconfiguration (*N4*) amongst different groups and individuals inside the IGO may materialize. As during socialization, members of the administration may follow the cultural shift for strategic reasons – e.g. to secure the group's standing inside the IGO – or because they are convinced that the shift in the organization's culture is an appropriate step to take. During reconfiguration, opening is most likely to be seen on the talk – because IGOs will communicate to states that decisions need to be made to adapt the IGO – and action dimension.

5 Combining resource and norm based explanations of organizational opening

In this section, I will try to explore how norm and resource based explanations can be combined to see and understand additional paths of organizational opening that are nor visible when looking at norm or resource based explanations only. But how do the described pathways compare? First, both kinds of explanations provide a rich selection of pathways covering both endogenous and exogenous impulses for change. Second, both sets of explanations provide pathways leading to organizational opening on different dimensions of the organization's output. Apparently, neither of the approaches has larger gaps in their explanatory mechanisms. Third, opening on the dimension of action is omnipresent in both approaches. Therefore, I will now look at how combinations of norm and resource based explanations may lead to unexpected outcomes on the talk and decision dimensions, that one approach alone could not explain.

Figure 3 illustrates such combinations. As with the pathways described above, the presentation tries to provide an overview of plausible combinations but not a complete list of possible combinations. The goal is to illustrate when combinations of both explanations may help to understand opening when we see it empirically.

There is an interesting number of combinations of both explanations that may explain why there is a considerable amount of talk produced, where neither norm nor resource based explanations would predict it. A first situation are power shocks that also lead to a discursive re-establishment of the IGOs legitimacy (*RN1*). Changes in the power structure may be occasions where the whole system of global governance is questioned. IGOs will then have to re-establish their
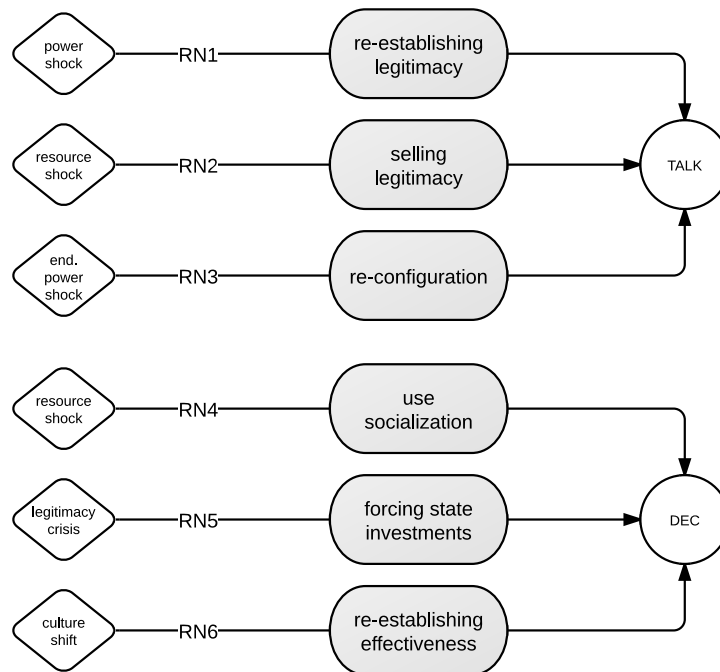
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Figure 3: Combinations of norm and resource based explanations leading to unexpected outcomes on the talk and decision dimensions

legitimacy in the new power arrangement. If openness is an appropriate element to make the IGO more legitimate in the eyes of the public or the state community, the organization will need to produce extensive opening talk in addition to opening in actions and decisions that the power shock paths propose. Second, during situations of resource shock, opening talk may be produced to sell an IGOs legitimacy as a market advantage (*RN2*). If IGOs are faced with new market situations, where they need to position themselves as competitors for resources, marketing legitimacy is also an option for IGO administrations. In such situations, administrations will not only produce decisions and actions to improve their competitive status, but also talk to inform about its legitimacy, even though it is not publicly contested. Finally, talk may be produced during endogenous power crises when they coincide with reconfigurations of the organization's culture (*RN3*). Often, power shifts inside an IGO are also connected to groups with different understandings of the organization's culture. Groups may gain or lose power exactly because they gained or lost legitimacy inside the organization. Talk is then an important instrument to re-establish or stabilize recently gained or lost power inside the institution.

There are also a number of situations where opening on the decision dimension can be explained better when combining both approaches. For example during resource shocks, administrations may use the socialization forces of their organization to bring about state representatives' decisions to raise the IGO's competitiveness and reputation (*RN4*). When IGO administrations want to raise their IGO's reputation, they can use socialized states as a resource. If state governments have successfully been convinced of the IGO's mode of action, they may want to support the reputation of the IGO they feel bound to by issuing symbolic decisions to strengthen the market power of the

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IGO. Further, during legitimacy crises, when administrations need to react strategically to public demands, they can try to push states to further invest in their IGO (*RN5*). State governments have invested a considerable amount of resources into an IGO. If this IGO's legitimacy is publicly contested, state representatives have an interest to protect their investments and support the administration in re-legitimizing the IGO. Again, this can be done via symbolic decisions, e.g. for more transparency. Such state decisions have a high symbolic character and may be more influential for re-legitimizing the IGO than administrations' talk and actions. Finally, in phases of culture shift that norm based approaches primarily understand as an administration centered process, state representatives may have good reasons to participate in the reconfiguration of an organization's culture via decisions (*RN6*). If reconfiguration lasts for a longer period of time, culturally split administrations may cause inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the IGO's production of governance tools. To re-establish effectiveness, state representatives could be inclined to side with one group inside the organization and support their ideas about appropriate norms by making decisions along their lines and formalizing their ideas in IGO rules.

6 Conclusions

This paper has tried to give an overview of norm and resource based explanations of organizational opening. Organizational opening has been understood as a special case of institutional change, driven by exogenous and endogenous impulses and enacted by state representatives and IGO administrations. To make sense of norm based explanations, ideal-type causal pathways derived from both approaches have been presented, compared and combined. This effort allows the following conclusions:

First, both norm and resource based explanations provide causal pathways that can explain organizational opening on various dimensions. This can be interpreted as an indicator for the quality of both theoretical approaches. Furthermore, this also justifies empirical research designs using either of the approaches to look at specific processes inside the organization. If one keeps in mind the different ontological assumptions these approaches have, both results can provide insights into either resource or norm dynamics of organizational opening.

Second, if one is interested in a more complex description of opening and if one accepts the ontological status of norms proposed in norm based explanations, looking at how factors of both approaches interact could be an important step towards a deeper understanding of organizational opening. Here, a combined approach can fruitfully be applied to make sense of opening on dimensions of an organization's output that neither of the approaches alone would predict. This can be especially telling for the talk and decision dimensions.

Third, some of the starting assumptions of this paper appear to have helped to disentangle the complex process of organizational opening. Making a distinction between different dimensions of organizations' outputs where opening can be witnessed helped to illustrate the strengths of

combining norm and resource based approaches. Looking at organizations not as single actors but as places where state representatives and IGO administrations interact has been important to identify detailed ideal-type pathways towards opening. Of course, there are still a number of limitations to the approach presented here. For example, conceptualizing cases of opening, but not of non-opening only captures a small part of reality. Pathways towards non-opening cannot always be understood as failed processes of opening, they may follow a different logic. Furthermore, my approach does not consider different starting levels of organizational opening. Yet, when looking at real cases, the state of openness may be an important scope condition that determines which processes successfully lead to opening and which positions state representatives and IGO administrations take during the processes.

As this paper has primarily been an exercise to map existing explanations and translate those into processes that could be observed in theory, the next necessary step will be to look at real-world processes of organizational opening. A systematic analysis of such processes would illustrate which ideal-type processes are indeed realized, which are not, and which additional processes can be identified. This empirical research would also reveal problems and inconsistencies in the explanatory approaches and should guide the future development of theories of organizational opening.

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