



Supranational cultural norms, domestic value orientations and the diffusion of same-sex union rights in Europe, 1988–2009

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Abstract

The process of policy diffusion is gaining increasing attention among social scientists. Following world society theory, a burgeoning literature reports a positive relationship between national linkages to global cultural norms and the diffusion of public policies. However, previous analyses do not simultaneously control for time-varying domestic cultural orientations. In order to conduct a stricter test of this theory, this article examines the wave of same-sex union (SSU) laws in Europe. While in the mid-1980s, no European country provided explicit recognition to gay and lesbian couples, by 2009, 16 European countries had legalized these unions. Using event history models, the article tests predictions of the world society theory and Inglehart's domestic-cultural theory. Results provide strong support for the world society and domestic-cultural theories. Countries with a higher level of value secularization and stronger links to the global cultural order are more likely to introduce legal protections for SSUs.

Keywords

Europe, policy diffusion, same-sex marriage, same-sex unions, world society theory

In the past two decades, the legal recognition of same-sex couples has been one of the most salient issues in the politics of civil rights. This salience is partly due to the

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heated political and cultural debates triggered by policy proposals that could redefine such central institutions as the family and marriage. But it is also due to the rapid policy change that has occurred in many affluent democracies, particularly in Europe. In the mid-1980s, no European country provided legal recognition to gay and lesbian couples. By 2009 – only 25 years later – 16 European democracies had passed laws establishing same-sex marriages or registered partnerships. In the words of Kollman, this wave of laws ‘represents one of the most dramatic cases of policy convergence in recent history’ (2007: 352). Reflecting the increased prominence of gay and lesbian rights in the political sphere, social scientists have analysed concrete cases of policy change (e.g. Wintemute and Adenaes, 2001), attitudes towards homosexuality and gay marriage (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Brewer, 2003, 2008; Gerhards, 2010) and state-level reforms in the United States (Barclay and Fisher, 2003; McVeigh and Diaz, 2009; Soule, 2004; Wald et al., 1996), a country in which there has been very little absolute policy change. However, there are still no cross-sectional and time-series analyses of these policy events in Europe, a region which has pioneered the implementation of family laws to gay and lesbian couples.

How can we explain cross-national differences in the time that elapses until the enactment of one of these legal reforms in Europe? A better understanding of the conditions that accelerate the legalization of same-sex unions (SSUs) could contribute to the emerging literature regarding the influence of supranational cultural norms on policy-making. Since the politics of gay rights lie in the intersection of morality politics, group identity, international discourses and personal interests, this policy issue represents an adequate setting to examine the relative importance of supranational cultural rules vis-a-vis domestic factors. In this regard, many recent empirical studies provide evidence supporting the view that supranational cultural rules affect domestic policy-making. But these studies generally do not consider theoretically relevant factors, including the partisan structure of government (Frank and McEneaney, 1999: 932; Frank et al., 2010: 886; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005: 1396–1397; Ramirez et al., 1997: 741) and time-changing domestic value orientations (Barrett and Tsui, 1999: 226; Koo and Ramirez, 2009: 1340; Paxton et al., 2006: 912; Schofer and Meyer, 2005: 911). For this reason, stricter tests that consider alternative, domestic-oriented theories may generate more persuasive evidence for sceptical observers (Halliday and Osinsky, 2006: 466).

This article provides this stricter test by conducting an event history analysis of the passage of the first same-sex marriage or registered partnership law in 29 European countries between 1988 and 2009. In particular, it addresses the following question: How can we explain variations in the *timing* of the enactment of SSU laws in Europe? Given the possibility that these legal reforms may have occurred due to global cultural conventions or domestic cultural change, we examine predictions of the world society theory (Meyer, 2000; Meyer et al., 1997) and the domestic-cultural theory (Inglehart, 1997, 2006; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). We consider time-changing national and supranational cultural influences because recent theoretical research argues persuasively that cultural components coexist in a ‘quasi-hierarchical’ (Jepperson and Swidler, 1994: 363–364) or ‘multilevel’ (Erez and Gati, 2004: 584) fashion. This literature suggests taking seriously the evolution of different levels of culture, especially at the global macro level and the domestic or national level. Similarly to the notion of ‘multilevel governance’ (Scharpf,

1997), the argument is that cultural principles can operate differently at various levels and can coexist with or without conflict. By disentangling the different possible effects of the different cultural levels, policy diffusion research can gain a more complex view on the determinants of the diffusion of political reforms.

Our results show that the world society *and* domestic-cultural approaches provide explanatory frameworks for the enactment of SSU laws. Controlling for government partisanship and the strength of the national gay and lesbian movement, the timing of these laws consistently depends on supranational and domestic cultural factors. In relation to domestic-cultural values, a larger degree of value secularization hastens the enactment of an SSU law. This is because the process of secularization undermines the normative resonance of traditional religious moralities that condemn homosexuality. In relation to supranational cultural norms, stronger links to the global cultural order reduces the time until an SSU law is passed. In sum, supranational and domestic-cultural norms are the main forces driving the enactment of SSU laws.

Historical background

Since the end of the Second World War, the gradual expansion of legal rights for gays and lesbians has been one of the most important developments in the area of civil liberties. Representing an accelerated rate of change compared to previous legislative events, in this period, European countries have passed many laws that decriminalize homosexual activity, ban discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and provide legal recognition to SSUs (Adam et al., 1999: 345; Frank and McEneaney, 1999; Waaldijk, 2000: 62–63; 2009). Of all these reforms, those that provide legal recognition to same-sex couples have spurred particularly intense controversy. Since SSU laws involve a symbolic reconsideration of axial institutions such as marriage (Barclay and Fisher, 2003: 333; Rayside, 2007: 342), questioning entrenched interests linked to traditional family roles (McVeigh and Diaz, 2009: 892–893), these bills have produced heated political debates in many European countries. While advocates of SSU laws base their support on principles of human rights and equality under the law, opponents base their position on ‘consequentialist’ arguments (Eskridge, 2001: 115). They contend that SSUs undermine the value of marriage and foster social anomie because they cannot meet the traditional reproductive objective of heterosexual unions.

But despite objections raised by opponents, and in agreement with the equality argument raised by SSU advocates, there has been an ‘explosive growth’ (Wintemute, 2001: 760) in SSU laws in Europe since the 1980s. In this regard, legal scholars and observers distinguish between three main forms of recognition: marriage, registered partnerships and registered or unregistered cohabitation (ILGA, 2009; Wintemute, 2001: 764–765). The model of unregistered cohabitation has been less controversial than the other two, because it establishes fairly limited rights and does not require formal registration. In contrast, same-sex marriage and registered partnership laws extend critical, traditional protections of heterosexual unions to same-sex couples.

Recent European laws that legalize marriage, registered partnership or equivalent contracts for same-sex couples differ in the total number of rights they confer. However these laws recognize a minimum common denominator of economic, political and

symbolic rights. In the only systematic analysis of the legal consequences of SSU laws, Waaldijck (2005) shows that after the reforms passed in all eight analysed countries same-sex partners become next in kin for medical purposes, foreign partners of resident nationals are entitled to residence permits and surviving partners can continue to rent the home. More importantly, these laws establish the right of collective, symbolic recognition. Through marriage, registered partnership or equivalent contracts, same-sex couples can enter into 'state-sanctioned, legally recognized, permanent and exclusive unions between two equal individuals' (Merin, 2002: 7). As in heterosexual marriages, through these unions, gays and lesbians make a formal and symbolic commitment of monogamy and mutual support. In this regard, qualitative research in the Netherlands (Badgett, 2010: 30) and the United States (Warner, 1999: 143) shows that same-sex couples enter into this contract *mainly* because of the symbolic recognition it entails. Given this fundamental similarity we conceptualize SSU laws as those that legalize either same-sex marriages or registered partnerships. Furthermore, this approach is consistent with the predominant use of dichotomous dependent variables in policy diffusion research.

Figure 1 provides the date of enactment of the first SSU law for 29 European countries (see also Table 1A in the Appendices). Denmark pioneered this policy field by enacting a registered partnership law for same-sex couples in 1989. Soon afterwards, in 1993 and 1994, respectively, Norway and Sweden also passed registered partnership laws. Since the mid-1990s, the policy model has spread to the south and west. The Netherlands, Belgium and France passed SSU laws as early as the 1990s. Later on, in the 2000s, 10 other countries legalized SSUs. By the end of 2009, 16 (55.2%) of the 29 European states (all 27 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland) considered in this study had passed laws opening access to marriage or registered partnerships to same-sex couples.¹ How can we then account for cross-national differences in the timing of SSU legalization in Europe? To answer this question, the next two sections review two theories of policy change and policy diffusion.

World society theory

Given the intent of this study to examine the relative influence of global and domestic cultural factors in public policy-making, we will first consider predictions regarding supranational cultural conditions through an analysis of the world society theory. Originating from organizational research, world society theory argues that domestic political debates and policy reforms are decisively influenced by a supranational cultural and discursive order that carries with it normative principles of appropriate political goals and structures. This global order contains numerous social conventions, collective prescriptions and 'policy scripts' that are politically influential at the domestic level. Since many of these informal supranational norms are taken for granted, they tend to become accepted and internalized by domestic actors, shaping policy discourses and the policy-making process (Boli and Thomas, 1997: 172; Meyer et al., 1997: 144–145, 149). Moreover, international cultural connections are particularly strong in Europe, which stands out as 'the most densely integrated region' of the globe (Beckfield, 2010: 1049, 1054; see also Boli and Thomas, 1999: 33). This means that supranational cultural prescriptions should have a particularly strong influence in this region.

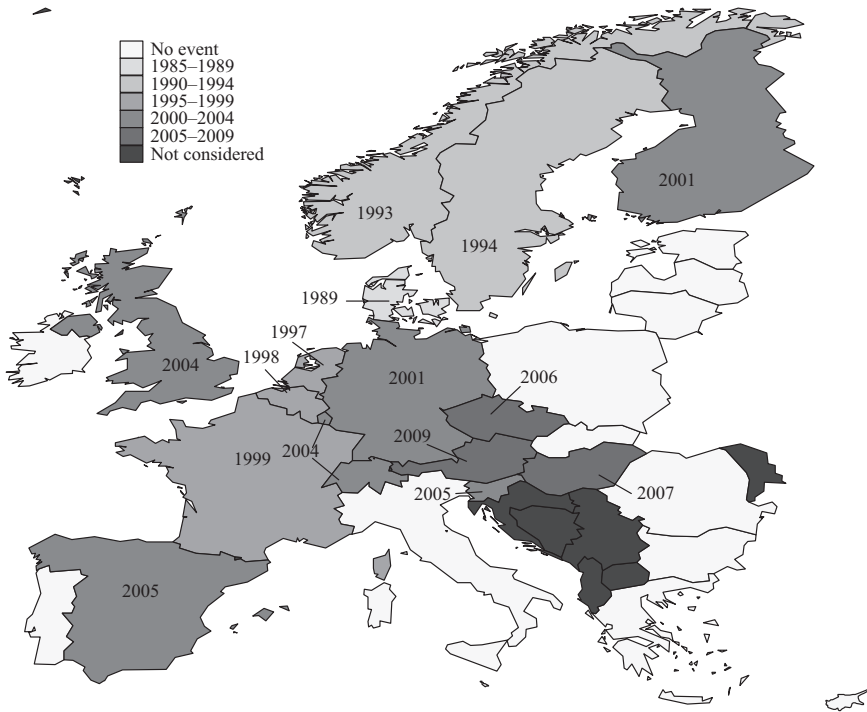


Figure 1. First SSU law in 29 European countries, 1988–2009.

Sources: Festy and Rogers (2006), Waaldijk (2009).

The world society school argues that policies tend to spread more rapidly when they conform to general supranational values (Boli, 1987; Meyer et al., 1997). According to this view, supranational moral notions induce normative pressures for policy diffusion, which contribute to creating transnational isomorphic political structures. The key expectation that follows from this approach is that states better embedded in this international arena of discourse should have a higher likelihood of adjusting their national policies according to these norms.

A particularly critical norm in the arena of SSUs is the principle of human rights (Strang and Meyer, 1993: 491). It establishes that all individuals have a set of rights bestowed upon them solely because of their human nature – including the rights of life, liberty and equal protection under the law regardless of race, sex or other status. This transnational principle that humans have a set of inalienable rights has only grown stronger since the end of the Second World War and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Frank et al., 2010: 884; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005: 1400), with clear potential consequences in the struggle for gay rights. Human rights morality states that human beings cannot be discriminated against based on their sexual preferences, because those preferences are undeniable, expressive elements of our humanity. Hence, according to this principle same-sex couples should be able to enjoy the symbolic and legal recognition that the state provides to heterosexual couples.

World society theory specifies that global cultural norms like the human rights principle become domestically influential through formal organizational connections to this global order. In this regard two critical actors in the diffusion of global norms are international governmental and non-governmental organizations (IOs). IOs foster the diffusion of supranational culture by promoting universal and humanitarian values. They also pursue strategies to implement these principles on the ground by designing clear, ready-to-use templates of policy models (Brunsson and Jacobsson, 2002) and monitoring deviations from global norms. For instance, since the early 1950s, there has been an explosion of non-governmental activity seeking the full integration of human rights into national legal codes and state actions (Lechner and Boli, 2005: 95). As part of this process, since in the 1980s supranational actors like the International Lesbian and Gays Association (ILGA) formulated the notion that banning the legal recognition of same-sex couples constitutes a violation of the right of equality under the law (Kollman, 2007: 338–340), IOs have actively pressed governments to improve the legal rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and legalize SSUs (Kollman and Waites, 2009: 4; Zimmerman, 2000: 379). We therefore hypothesize that countries with stronger links to the global cultural order are more likely to enact SSU laws:

H1: Stronger links to global cultural discourse hasten the enactment of an SSU law.

The domestic-cultural approach

Previous studies of the diffusion of legal rights have not consistently examined the influence of time-changing domestic value orientations. However, the domestic-cultural research of Inglehart and colleagues (Inglehart, 1990: 31; 1997: 325; Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 21, 23–24) has shown that since the early 1980s dominant value systems have changed substantially in many countries, which may have affected the legal protection of minorities. Therefore, in order to ascertain the role of global cultural norms, it is also necessary to consider the role of national value change.

In this regard, Inglehart argues that the dominant value orientation of a society is well reflected in the overall imprint of religious values. This is because religious values have historically regulated the morality of sexual practices and the benefits and duties of the marriage institution. Pre-Christian morality generally considered homosexual practices to be deviant and inappropriate (Merin, 2002: 51–53). Reinforcing this view, traditional Christian moralities dictate that sexual practices must only have reproductive goals, so that those that cannot inherently lead to procreation are sinful and contrary to God's will (Carmody and Carmody, 1993: 136–139). As a result, pre- and early-modern societies have commonly condemned homosexual behaviour, ostracizing and persecuting persons physically oriented towards the same sex (Crompton, 2006). This prevalence of homophobia in traditional morality entails that countries with a traditional or less secularized value orientation display less approval of homosexuality (Inglehart, 1997: 72). For this reason, we hypothesize that societies with more secularized value orientations tend to pass SSU laws sooner than other countries:

H2: A more secularized value orientation hastens the enactment of an SSU law.

Despite the emphasis on cultural factors, Inglehart and his colleagues contend that this influence of value orientation on social tolerance is still related to economic conditions (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 49). This line of thought argues that the level of socio-economic development drives value change. In pre-modern or poorer societies, the fight for basic resources is intense and existential security low. This gives rise to strict religious codes and imposes social conformity to help individuals tolerate personal insecurity (Inglehart, 1997: 35). But with improvements in human development, citizens take survival for granted, which has a profound impact on cultural dispositions. More affluent societies tend to have more secular and flexible value systems because individuals have less need for appeasing pre-rational world views (Norris and Inglehart, 2004: 219–220). In turn, individuals become more tolerant towards strangers and minorities, who are perceived as less of a threat to their personal survival (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 25–26). Thus, according to this approach, economic modernization produces value change, which increases tolerance towards gays and lesbians (Inglehart, 2006: 29). Supporting elements of this theory, recent research shows that richer countries and those with a higher Human Development Index (HDI) show more sexual-ethical permissiveness (Gerhards, 2010: 19). Hence, we hypothesize that the dominant value orientation merely transmits the influence of socioeconomic development:

H3: Higher socioeconomic development hastens the enactment of an SSU law.

Data and methods

In order to test the hypotheses presented above, we use event history methods and a pooled cross-sectional time-series dataset on 29 European countries (including all 27 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland) for the years 1988–2009. The objective of this study is to account for the time elapsed until the enactment of the first national-level law recognizing marriages or registered partnerships among same-sex couples. Hence, for each country-year, the dependent variable is dichotomous and distinguishes a legislative event (1) from its absence (0).

We use the following predictors and statistical controls. Following Frank and McEneaney (1999: 928) the role of links to global cultural norms (*world society ties*) is captured by an index of the log number of national memberships to (a) international governmental organizations (IGOs), (b) non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and (c) the number of ratified human rights treaties (for similar approaches see Bromley et al., 2011: 557; Schofer, 2003: 745; Schofer and Hironaka, 2005: 33). This index has been created using factor scores from principal component analysis. In relation to the value orientation of a society, following Inglehart (1997: 83) we operationalize the level of secularization through the *index of secular-rational values*. Moreover, following Norris and Inglehart (2004: 62), the *Human Development Index* captures the level of existential security and socioeconomic development.

In order to control for other potentially explanatory factors, the models include three other variables. First, *log number of LGBT organizations* addresses the possibility that the timing of the enactment of SSU laws is driven by the sociopolitical power of the domestic LGBT movement. Second, given the fact that domestic

political factors and particularly governmental partisanship may also affect the enactment of SSU laws, the models include the variable *left party cabinet portfolios*. We specifically consider the role of left parties because, contrary to other parties, case studies indicate that they have been particularly likely to fight against discrimination based on sexual preferences (Adam et al., 1999: 366–367; see also Stewart, 2010). Third, due to the fact that the overall population size may also shape the effect of the other independent variables (especially *log number of LGBT organizations*), all models include the control variable *log total population* (for a similar approach, see Henisz et al., 2005: 887).

With regard to the specification of the independent variables, in order to correct for simultaneity bias (Beck et al., 2006: 28), all of these have been lagged one year. All independent variables have been x-standardized to facilitate the interpretation of the coefficients. Appendix B includes the detailed definitions and sources of all variables.

Due to the panel structure of the data and the dichotomous dependent variable, it is appropriate to use event history methods (Beck et al., 1998; Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004). Event history modelling is a common statistical technique among world society scholars (see Frank et al., 2010; Schofer, 2003; Swiss, 2012). Of all possible event history models, we fit Cox proportional hazard models (Cox, 1972) because they have two valuable properties. First, they respond effectively to the focus of this study, which is on cross-national differences in the timing of SSU legislation. Cox models reveal the impact of covariates on the hazard rate, which is the probability that an event took place in one interval, given that it did not occur in a previous interval. They indicate what factors reduce or increase the time elapsed until the event – in this case a policy reform (Blossfeld et al., 2007: 33; Petersen, 1991). Second, Cox models do not require to specify the baseline form of the hazard rate (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004: 49). Therefore, contrary to logit or probit models of policy diffusion that do require covariates to capture time dependence, Cox models cannot lead to biases in the theoretically relevant coefficients due to a misspecification of the baseline form (Jones and Branton, 2005: 424).

In particular, we estimate Cox models clustered by country, with robust standard errors and the Efron method for tied events. Clustering by country and robust standard errors surmounts the violation of the regression assumptions of errors independence and the normal distribution of errors produced by analyses of panel data with dichotomous response variables (Lin and Wei, 1989). Moreover, we rely on the Efron method for tied events because it produces a more precise approximation than other methods do (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004: 59).

Results

Table 1 presents the results of the Cox regressions. Starting with the influence of interested actors, *log number of LGBT organizations* is positive and significant in Models 1, 2 and 4, although it becomes insignificant in Model 5. This finding suggests that countries with more developed LGBT movements are related to the policy event because they display a larger degree of secularization and commitment to global cultural norms. Hence,

Table 1 does not provide robust evidence that the strength of the national LGBT movement has an independent impact on the legalization of SSUs. Moreover, case studies suggest that left-wing governments are more likely to increase the legal recognition of SSUs. The data presented in Table 1 support this expectation. In Models 2–5 *left party cabinet portfolios* is positive and significant. This indicates that the association between left parties and SSU laws noticed in case studies is stable even if we control for the country's global cultural orientation. In addition, *logged population* shows a negative coefficient, probably reflecting the tendency of smaller populations to adapt faster and more flexibly with changing cultural demands. For larger populations, increased organizational inertia slows down processes of transformation (on size and inertia, see Hannan and Freeman, 1984: 158).

With regard to the two main theories examined in this study, the domestic-cultural approach receives supportive evidence. Consistent with H2 and the claim that the value orientation of a society shapes its tolerance towards social minorities, *index of secular-rational values* is positive and significant in Models 4 and 5. In addition, a comparison of Models 3 and 4 allows us to test the thesis of Inglehart and his collaborators that the positive association between tolerance towards social minorities and postmodern value systems mainly reflects the level of economic security. If that is the case, the positive effect of the

Table 1. Cox models with determinants of the first law providing legal recognition to same-sex unions in 29 European countries, 1988–2009.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
<i>Social movement factors</i>					
Log number of LGBT organizations _(t-1)	2.251* (2.352)	2.270* (2.463)	.897 (1.571)	1.003* (1.791)	.642 (1.105)
<i>Political opportunity factors</i>					
Left party cabinet portfolios _(t-1)		.670* (2.412)	.844** (2.590)	.732* (2.071)	.659* (1.822)
<i>Value orientation factors</i>					
Human development index _(t-1)			1.949*** (4.079)	1.976*** (4.335)	1.484* (2.463)
Index of secular-rational values _(t-1)				1.545*** (4.656)	1.405*** (3.908)
<i>Cultural diffusion factors</i>					
World society ties _(t-1)					2.328* (2.349)
Log population _(t-1)	-.830* (-1.854)	-1.160* (-2.313)	-.629 (-1.599)	-.792* (-2.029)	-1.306*** (-3.630)
Wald χ^2	5.681	9.169	29.550	57.154	57.701
N	451	451	451	451	451

Notes: t statistic in parentheses; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (one-sided tests).

level of economic security should become insignificant after controlling for a country's domestic value orientation. However, the evidence is not consistent with this causal argument. While in Model 3 *Human Development Index* is positive and significant, it continues to be so after including *index of self-expression values*. Supporting H3, this suggests in line with the findings of Gerhards (2010) that the cultural heritage of a society has an impact on the legalization of SSUs, independently of the level of socioeconomic development.

The world society approach receives supportive evidence as well. The approach predicts adoption of SSU laws with a reference to institutional factors of normative change. Consistent with the argument that a higher embeddedness in the global cultural order increases the likelihood of SSU laws, *world society ties* is positive and significant. Independently from the strength of the LGBT movement, political opportunity structures and domestic value modernization, exposure to the world cultural order affects the time elapsed until an SSU law. This finding is supportive of H1.²

In sum, the Cox models in Table 1 indicate that political (*left party cabinet portfolios*), domestic-cultural (*secular-rational values*), socioeconomic (*Human Development Index*) and global-cultural (*world society ties*) factors are related to the legalization of SSUs. But what factors have a stronger relationship to the enactment of SSUs? Due to the standardization of the independent variables, Model 5 (Table 1) allows us to answer this question. It reveals that *world society ties* is the most influential predictor, followed by *Human Development Index*, *index of secular-rational values* and *left party cabinet portfolios*. A standard deviation increase in *left party cabinet portfolios*, *secular-rational values*, *Human Development Index* and *world society ties* multiplies the hazard rate by 1.94, 3.88, 3.95 and 6.64 respectively. Therefore, the domestic value orientation and the cultural diffusion approaches fit best with the data.³

Discussion

Most recent comparative studies of policy diffusion have focused on economic policy fields (Brooks, 2007; Cao, 2010; Elkins et al., 2008; Gilardi, 2010; Henisz et al., 2005; Lee and Strang, 2008; Swank, 2006) rather than non-economic ones. This development may be related to the fact that *general* civil rights were the first to be granted by modern states (Marshall, 1950 [1992]: 9, 13), giving the false impression that basic non-political and non-economic rights had crystallized and were not amenable to further reforms. In recent decades, however, this policy arena has remained very active due to numerous reforms affecting the civil rights of *specific* groups. One issue that has remained at the forefront of the reinvigorated politics of civil rights and morality relates to the legal recognition of same-sex couples. After decades of very slow improvements in the rights enjoyed by gays and lesbians, since the late 1980s, Europe has observed an explosive wave of laws giving legal recognition to SSUs. By 2009, only 20 years after the first reform, 16 European countries had passed laws that legalize same-sex marriage or registered partnerships. This article sought to explain this process through an event history analysis of 29 European countries between 1988 and 2009. It tested two general theoretical approaches that emphasize the role of domestic value change and connectedness to the global cultural discourse. Three main findings can be highlighted from the analysis.

First, a country's anchorage in supranational policy conventions reduces the time elapsed until the legalization of SSUs. Supporting the world society argument that policy models gain transcendental meaning, countries with stronger links to the global cultural discourse (measured through membership to IOs and human rights treaty ratification) tend to adopt SSU laws earlier than other countries. The institutionalization of human rights norms in the international arena increases country incentives to signal their commitment to world principles through the expansion of legal rights for gays and lesbians.

Second, domestic cultural conditions also shape the time elapsed until the legalization of SSUs. Consistent with Inglehart and others, countries with more secularized value systems are more likely to legalize SSUs. However, contrary to their materialist account of value change, the influence of the domestic value orientation does not merely reflect the level of economic development and existential security. Domestic and supranational cultural factors consistently shape the likelihood of SSU legalization independently from economic and material conditions of existence. Third, government partisanship also affects the timing of SSU laws. Countries with stronger left-wing parties tend to hasten the enactment of these reforms. This result suggests the need to take into account the partisan structure of government in all analyses of international policy diffusion.

Overall, the contribution of our study is to demonstrate that different levels of cultural factors simultaneously affect the diffusion of domestic political reforms. In this sense, future sociological research would benefit from a conceptualization of policy diffusion not only as an outcome of top-down pressures of the global cultural arena, but more generally as an outcome of multilevel cultural change. Drawing solely on domestic or international, cultural or materialistic approaches does not suffice to account for multidimensional reforms like SSU laws that overlap morality principles, personal interests and global norms. In particular, a case can be made that domestic cultural factors do not only influence political processes regarding highly salient policy issues, but also non-salient ones. To the extent that mores, values and principles continue to guide human action and that there are persistent cross-national differences in domestic value systems, we could expect to find a domestic-cultural basis for variations among a broad range of formal institutions.

In this regard, given the potential shown by comparative analyses of legal reforms affecting the legal rights of the gay and lesbian community and other sex-related policies (Frank et al., 2010), further research could continue the exploration of contemporary reforms in the area of civil rights and, more specifically, morality politics. In this sense, it would be fruitful to improve our understanding regarding the conditions under which affluent and emerging economies have reformed the legal standing of other normatively charged practices such as abortion, pornography, gambling and physician-assisted suicide (e.g. Lutter, 2010; Mooney and Lee, 1995). These policies provide 'extremely potent symbols of what a polity believes and stands for' (Mooney, 1999: 675), which are likely to generate intense debates among experts and citizens. Therefore, following recent research comparing the influence of the *economic outcomes* and *salience* of a policy on its diffusion (Boushey, 2010; Brooks, 2007; Nicholson-Crotty, 2009), future research could examine whether the *normative content* of the policy affects the speed and mechanisms by which it is adopted.

Appendix A

Table IA. Detailed information on the introduction of same-sex union legislation in 29 European countries, 1989–2009.

Country	Year	Law
First law		
Denmark	1989	<i>Lov om registreret partnerskab</i> [Registered Partnership Act]
Norway	1993	<i>Lov nr. 40 av 30. april 1993 nr. Registrert partnerskap</i> [Law No. 40 of 30 April 1993 establishing registered partnerships]
Sweden	1994	<i>Lag 1994:1117 om registrerat partnerskap</i> [Law 1994:1117 about registered partnerships]
Netherlands	1997	<i>Wet van 17 december 1997 tot aanpassing van wetgeving aan de invoering van het geregistreerd partnerschap in Boek I van het Burgerlijk Wetboek</i> [Act of 5 July 1997 providing for the amendment of Book I of the Civil Code]
Belgium	1998	<i>Loi du 23 novembre 1998 instaurant la cohabitation légale</i> [Law of 23 November 1988 establishing legal cohabitation]
France	1999	<i>Loi no 99-944 du 15 novembre 1999 relative au pacte civil de solidarité</i> [Law No. 99-944 of 15 November 1999 regarding the civil solidarity pact]
Finland	2001	<i>Laki rekisteröidystä parisuhteesta</i> [Act on registered partnerships]
Germany	2001	<i>Gesetz zur Beendigung der Diskriminierung gleichgeschlechtlicher Sexualität: Lebenspartnerschaften</i> [Act to end discrimination against same-sex sexuality: civil unions]
Luxembourg	2004	<i>Loi du 9 juillet 2004 relative aux effets légaux de certains partenariats</i> [Law of 9 July 2004 regarding the legal effects of certain partnerships]
Switzerland	2004	<i>Ordonnance sur la mise en oeuvre de la loi du 18 juin 2004 sur le partenariat dans la prévoyance professionnelle vieillesse, survivants et invalidité</i> [Ordinance on the implementation of the Act of 18 June 2004 on partnerships, pensions, survivors and invalidity]
United Kingdom	2004	The Civil Partnership Act 2004
Spain	2005	<i>LEY 13/2005, de 1 de julio, por la que se modifica el Código Civil en materia de derecho a contraer matrimonio</i> [Law 13/2005, of 1 July 2005 that modifies the Civil Code in relation to the right to enter into a marriage]

Table IA. (Continued)

Country	Year	Law
Slovenia	2005	<i>Zakon o registraciji istospolne partnerske skupnosti (ZRIPS) Ur.l. RS, št. 65/2005</i> [Law on registration of same-sex partnerships]
Czech Republic	2006	<i>Zákon ze dne 26. ledna 2006 o registrovaném partnerství a o změně některých souvisejících zákonů</i> [Law of 26 January 2006 on registered partnerships and amending certain related acts]
Hungary	2007	<i>2007. évi CLXXXIV.törvény a bejegyzett élettársi kapcsolatról</i> [Law establishing registered civil partnerships]
Austria	2009	<i>Eingetragene Partnerschaft-Gesetz</i> [Registered partnership act]
Second law Netherlands	2000	<i>Wet Openstelling huwelijk</i> [Act on the opening of a marriage]
Belgium	2003	<i>Loi ouvrant le mariage à des personnes de même sexe et modifiant certaines dispositions du Code civil</i> [Law about the marriage of same-sex persons and the modification of same dispositions of the Civil Code]
Norway	2008	<i>Lov 2008-06-27 om ekteskap</i> [Law-2008-06-27 The Marriage Act]
Sweden	2009	2008/09:80 <i>Äktenskapsfrågor</i> [Marriage issues]

Sources: Festy and Rogers (2006: 419), ILGA (2009), Waaldijk (2009).

Appendix B: Description of variable sources and definition

Enactment of an SSU law: Data from Festy and Rogers (2006) and Waaldijk (2009).

Log number of LGBT associations: Total number of active LGBT organizations. Taken from Gale Group (2010), ILGA (2011) and Union of International Associations (2011), which provide the founding year of the organization.

Log population: Total logged population (World Bank, 2010).

Left party cabinet portfolios: Percentage of cabinet portfolios held by left parties (Armingeon et al., 2010a, 2010b).

Human Development Index: As defined by United Nations (2011). Data only available in a five-year interval. Intermediate values were interpolated.

Index of secular-rational values: Index of traditional vs secular-rational values (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). A higher value indicates more secular-rational values. Data are from World Values Survey (2011). Values for intermediate, missing values were interpolated. Remaining values were extrapolated based on a linear regression.

World society ties: This is an index of the log number of (a) membership to international governmental organizations, (b) membership to international non-governmental organizations and (c) human rights treaty ratifications. The sources for these data are Isik and Zheng (2008) and Union of International Associations (selected years). The variables were first logged because they are right-skewed. Second, we used principal component factor analysis (Rencher, 2002) to calculate the latent variable among the three indicators.

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Notes

1. By 2009, the 13 countries that had not enacted the reform were Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia. Continuing the wave of SSU reforms, in 2010, Ireland and Portugal also legalized SSUs. However, due to data limitations with key independent variables, we restrict the empirical analysis to the period from 1988 to 2009.
2. Our indicators of world society ties seek to address the expectations of world society theory, which addresses mainly the role of normative (and not so much mimetic) isomorphic processes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). However, additional models indicate that the consideration of mimetic processes do not affect the main results of the study. When controlling for non-row standardized spatial lags with the inverted kilometric distance as the weighting factors (Neumayer and Plümpert, 2012), the indices of *secular-rational values* and *world society ties* remain positive and significant.
3. Pearson’s correlations also indicate a positive and significant relationship between, on the one hand, *secular-rational values* and *world society ties* and, on the other hand, a dummy variable for the legal event of the first law providing legal recognition to same-sex unions (respectively .116 and .162, $.05 > p$).

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Résumé

Le processus de diffusion des politiques suscite une attention croissante de la part des spécialistes en sciences sociales. Dans la lignée de la théorie de la société-monde, une littérature scientifique aujourd'hui en plein essor fait état de la relation incontestable entre les liens d'une nation avec les normes culturelles mondiales et la diffusion des politiques publiques. Cependant, les analyses précédentes ne tiennent pas compte de la variabilité dans le temps des orientations culturelles nationales. Afin de tester cette théorie de façon plus rigoureuse, cet article étudie la vague de lois relatives aux unions entre personnes de même sexe en Europe. Tandis qu'au milieu des années 80, aucun pays européen ne reconnaissait explicitement les couples homosexuels, en 2009, 16 pays européens avaient légalisé ces unions. À partir de modèles d'analyse historique des événements, l'article évalue la validité des prédictions de la théorie de la société-monde et de la théorie de la culture nationale de Inglehart. Les résultats obtenus confortent les théories de la société-monde et de la culture nationale. Les pays où le niveau de sécularisation des valeurs est le plus élevé et où les liens avec l'ordre culturel mondial sont les plus solides sont plus susceptibles d'introduire des mesures de protection légale en faveur des unions entre personnes de même sexe.

Mots-clés: diffusion des politiques, Europe, mariage entre personnes du même sexe, théorie de la société-monde, unions entre personnes de même sexe

Resumen

Los procesos de difusión de políticas están recibiendo una atención creciente por parte de los científicos sociales. A partir de la teoría de la sociedad mundial, ha surgido una floreciente literatura que muestra una relación positiva entre los vínculos nacionales con las normas de la cultura global y la difusión de políticas públicas. Sin embargo, los análisis previos no controlan simultáneamente por orientaciones culturales nacionales que cambian a lo largo del tiempo. Con el objetivo de llevar a cabo un test más estricto de esta teoría, este artículo analiza la oleada de legislaciones sobre uniones del mismo sexo en Europa (SSU). Mientras que a mediados de la década de 1980 ningún país europeo daba reconocimiento explícito a las parejas de gays y lesbianas, 16 países europeos habían legalizado estas uniones para 2009. Usando modelos de análisis de eventos, el artículo testa las predicciones de la teoría de la sociedad mundial y la teoría de la cultura nacional de Inglehart. Los resultados dan un fuerte apoyo a las teorías de la sociedad mundial y de la cultura nacional. Es más probable que países con un mayor nivel de secularización y vínculos más intensos con el orden cultural global introduzcan protecciones legales para las uniones del mismo sexo.

Palabras clave: difusión de políticas, Europa, matrimonios del mismo sexo, teoría de la sociedad mundial, uniones del mismo sexo