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**** DRAFT FOR COMMENT****

Building State-Society Synergy through Sandwich Strategies*

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Abstract. The state-society synergy framework transcends classic dichotomies between state and society, in order to identify when pro-change actors can mutually enable one another across the blurred boundaries of the state-society divide. The concept of the sandwich strategy draws from this framework and describes processes in which state actors take actions that tangibly reduce the risks or costs of collective action by the socially and politically excluded. What happens when sandwich strategies are attempted? This study combines process tracing and qualitative comparative analysis to identify patterns and pathways across 19 cases where state actors changed the enabling environment for collective action, in diverse sectors through the global South. Though sandwich strategy attempts are rare and conventional theory would expect little institutional change, approximately half the cases showed evidence of enduring power shifts, associated with more extensive openings from above and stronger collective action in response.

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Introduction

This study seeks to identify patterns of mutually-reinforcing interaction between reformist government actors and socially excluded citizens with a framework first inspired by a least likely case from Mexico. In 1979, under Mexico's then-authoritarian regime, officials concerned with poverty alleviation launched a national network of thousands of village food stores. Unexpectedly, this program convened participatory oversight councils, the first-ever free spaces for autonomous, regional-level community organizing. For some officials leading this opening from above, citizen oversight through these councils was instrumental to block leakage and elite capture by vested interests, while other officials had the more ambitious goal of offsetting local boss rule. One third of these 300 regional consumer councils became an autonomous social movement, leading to both bureaucratic backlash and spillover effects that bolstered a web of smallholder producer organizations. Just over a decade later, the food councils' advocacy networks in congress retained enough clout to block a Finance Ministry proposal to eliminate the rural community food store program. Three decades after the program's founding, the stores still delivered and one third of the councils were still autonomous – in spite of their loss of insider allies. Conventional theories of institutional change could not account for such power shifts. Notably, the participatory councils were not grounded in already-organized constituencies under a democratic regime. A tangible opening from above made possible mutually-reinforcing interaction between reformers and citizens that shifted power – incrementally yet tangibly – to enable greater voice for low-income rural consumers.¹ This outlier case informed this study's comparative analytical framework, designed to identify pathways that follow state actions that tangibly reduce the risks and costs of collective action among the socially and politically excluded.

Historical studies of the drivers of effective, inclusionary governance stress long-term, virtuous circles of state-society interaction, as well as longstanding horizontal social networks (e.g., Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston 2017, Putnam 1993). Analysts find positive feedback loops that can also drive institutional change in the shorter term (e.g., Rothstein 2011). This study addresses a specific genre of openings from above that may enable such virtuous circles. While these windows of opportunity have great potential, at the same time, they may close quickly after elections, be bounded to specific sectors or subnational territories, and unfold below the radar of national politics and policies. Such openings face daunting obstacles, appear to be rare, and are not well-understood.

This study finds that around the world, across different regimes and sectors and for diverse motives, state actors have taken actions that create opportunities for at least semi-autonomous collective action by the socially excluded.² State actors pursue initiatives to create enabling

¹ For specifics on this case, see Fox (1992).

² The focus here on state actions that enable at least semi-autonomous collective action distinguishes such cases from most "state-mobilized movements" (Ekiert, Perry and Xiaojun 2020). Diverse authoritarian state actors prod citizens to mobilize in order to "rule by other means." The rationale for making this distinction is because of this

environments for collective action with widely varying institutional change goals, ranging from anti-corruption, effective service delivery and clean elections to agrarian reform and gender justice.³ These patterns of mutually-reinforcing interaction between agents of change in state and society can be called “sandwich strategies” (Fox 1992, Fox 2015). The “sandwich” metaphor – as both noun and verb - communicates the process of convergence between actions both from above and below that can contain or weaken vested interests.⁴ As with any power-shifting strategy, such dynamics are likely to encounter roadblocks and follow highly uneven, non-linear pathways. This study compares sandwich strategies across a wide range of contexts and sectors, with the goal of identifying when they enable broad-based collective action, how the dynamic they produce can overcome obstacles and when they lead to inclusionary power shifts.

The processes of state-society interaction that drive sandwich strategies do not fit well with conventional social science theories of institutional change, which focus primarily on *either* the state or social actors involved. Some frameworks focus on the interests and organization of the state and/or political systems to explain institutional change, while others emphasize the influence of economic forces or social actors on the state. For example, political scientists focus on laws, official policies and governance institutions, while social movement theorists across disciplines focus on extra-institutional protest. While state- or society-centric theories of change recognize actors on the “other” side, each tends to treat them as external to their frameworks. The governance literature acknowledges that protest or advocacy can motivate policy change but does not focus on interactive dynamics that enable reformers both in state and society. Meanwhile, the social movement literature stresses how perceived political opportunities can trigger cycles of protest.⁵ Yet openings from above can also enable cycles of other forms of collective action – as many of the cases here show. Meanwhile, analysts of non-governmental organizations are increasingly recognizing blurred boundaries between state and society (Brass 2016).

One of the most relevant literatures for understanding sandwich strategies focuses on the origins and institutional design of national participatory institutions in relatively high-capacity

study’s goal of identifying pathways towards pro-citizen power shifts, in contrast to ruling elite use of top-down mobilization to bolster the status quo. In other words, openings from above are distinct from mobilization from above.

³ Historic cases of mutual empowerment between state reformers and mobilized constituencies that drove large scale structural reforms include Mexico’s peak period of agrarian reform in the 1930s, Kerala’s iterative series of social democratic reforms through the last third of the 20th century and the period of most extensive agrarian reform in the Philippines in the 1990s (Borras 1999, Fox 1992, Hamilton 1982, Heller 1996, Heller, Harilal and Chaudhuri 2007).

⁴ In spite of the sandwich term’s Western bias, the idea has been appropriated and transformed into other contexts, notably in the case of the “bibingka strategy” in the Philippines (Borras 1999, Borras 2001).

⁵ Social movement theory defines political opportunities for collective action in terms of “changes in opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies and show where elites and authorities are vulnerable” (Tarrow 1994: 18). For subsequent analyses that seek to further operationalize the definition, see Meyer and Minkoff (2004) and Fox (2020).

states governed by democratic regimes.⁶ These institutions of “empowered participatory governance” involve semi-autonomous state-society interfaces (Fung and Wright 2003). These official channels for public engagement are also known as “invited spaces,” though in many contexts official channels for public engagement are weak, socially exclusionary or politically confined (e.g., Cornwall and Coehlo 2007). Yet sandwich strategies are also found in undemocratic regimes and institutionally fragile settings (as some cases addressed here show).⁷ A very broad meta-analysis of top-down governmental development programs referred to as “community-driven” found widespread patterns of elite capture (Mansuri and Rao 2013). This finding requires nuance when the same state (or aid agency) initiatives involves *both* elite capture and meaningful openings at the same time, in different regions (Fox 1996). In addition to geographic variation, the character of invited spaces can also be contested and therefore also change over time. In other words, *sometimes* invited spaces created from above can be claimed and transformed from below – but when, and how?

To ground these questions in a broader analytical framework, the state-society synergy approach offers an alternative lens to the conventional bifurcated analysis of state and social actors. State-society synergy goes beyond the identification of complementarities and co-production between state, society and market to focus on embeddedness: relationships that bridge the state-society divide.⁸ While such cross-sectoral ties can enable rent-seeking, they can also contribute to more effective development institutions – often at the sectoral and or subnational level (e.g., Tandler 1997). The state-society synergy approach seeks to identify where and how agents of change in state and society mutually enable one another, sometimes with a specific focus on the empowerment of the socially and politically excluded (e.g., Fox 1996). Because of the sandwich strategy’s concern with power shifts, however, it also goes beyond embeddedness to recognize more explicitly that collaborative, pro-reform state-society coalitions may face competing state-society coalitions that seek to block inclusionary institutional change.

The sandwich strategy is a framework for understanding a specific genre of state-society synergy. Frameworks, in contrast to theories or models, identify relevant pieces of a puzzle in

⁶ These national processes are especially well-documented in Brazil (e.g., Abers and Keck 2013, Mayka 2019, Rich 2019, Wampler 2015, Wampler and Goldfrank 2022). This literature on Brazil is also notable for its focus on the mobilization of public servants as advocates of policy reform, notably in the health and environmental sectors.

⁷ For a recent body of research that seeks to identify patterns of empowerment and accountability in fragile and conflict-affected settings, see Anderson et al. (2022).

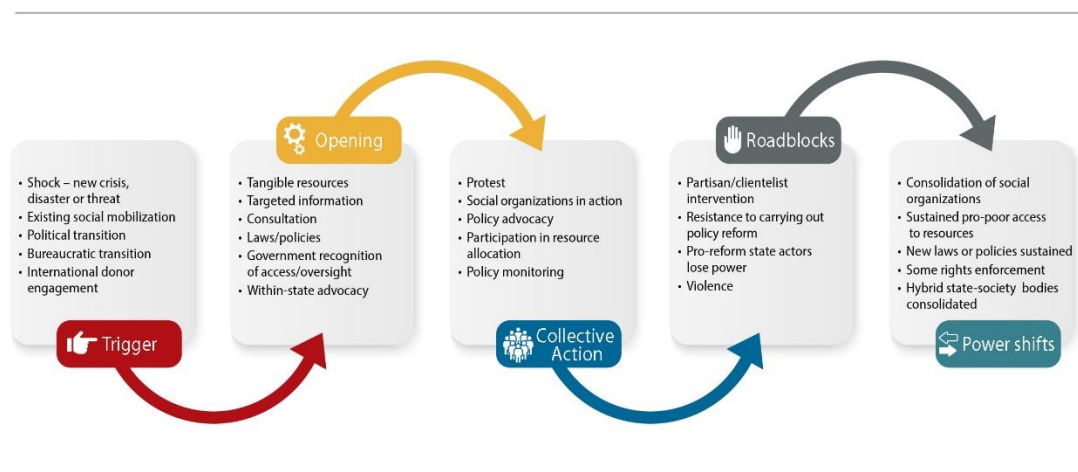
⁸ For foundational work on state-society synergy, see Evans (1996); Houtzager and Moore (2003); Joshi and Moore (2004); Migdal (2001); Migdal, Kohli and Shue (1994) and Ostrom (1996), among others. The focus of the related “polity” approach is on “how societal and state actors are constituted, how they develop a differential capacity to act and form alliances, and how they cooperate and compete across the public-private divide...” (Houtzager 2003: 2). Studies of ultra-local governance institutions find they “straddle” state and society (Read and Pekkanen 2009). This approach is also consistent with both the aid policy evaluation interest in collaborative social accountability (Guerzovich and Poli 2020) and the public administration literature’s interest in collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash 2007, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). The sandwich strategy variant of the state-society synergy approach is distinct in that it recognizes that *both* collaboration *and* conflict can drive institutional reform.

terms of key concepts that can inform further research – including multiple possible configurations (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). The sandwich strategy framework informs the analysis of reform initiatives that attempt to shift power relations by addressing three intersecting yet distinct arenas – within the state, within society and in interfaces between state and society (Fox 1992).

What happens when reformists attempt sandwich strategies? Both conventional frameworks and the state-society synergy perspective would expect that such initiatives would be rare, and that even those outlier efforts would often be blocked or diverted. This study seeks to identify and learn from those outliers by comparing 19 diverse cases of sandwich strategies from throughout the global South, drawing on cases that cut across sectors and scale. Across all these cases, state actors went beyond discursive promises of change or new policies that remain on paper to take measures that tangibly changed the enabling environment for collective action. The specific motives of these state actors varied, but they shared an interest in strengthening their *own* capacity in relation to the *rest* of the state by strengthening the voice and action of excluded stakeholders – often with open-ended outcomes. Although some of these openings from above lasted just a few years, the focus here is on identifying and drawing lessons from their dynamics and the pathways they initiated. The case studies provide the evidence needed to assess whether state-society interaction led to sustained power shifts in favor of the socially and politically excluded, even if those shifts were limited to specific sectors, subnational territories or were eventually contained or rolled back.

The evidence is organized through process tracing to highlight each case’s triggers, the nature and breadth of each opening, the breadth and intensity of the collective action in response, the emergence of roadblocks from within the state, followed by assessments of whether power shifts emerged (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Sandwich Strategy Dynamics



Building on this process tracing with qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), we find that an *intensive* opening from above was a necessary condition for power shifts, almost always also accompanied by intensive collective action. All cases where power shift did *not* occur involved roadblocks, but the combination of intensive openings from above and intensive collective action also managed to overcome roadblocks. Where reforms were blocked at the national level, sometimes reformers were able to protect subnational enclaves of inclusion in hybrid, state-society institutions.

Case Selection & Data

Our approach to case selection is akin to a positive deviance strategy, initially developed in nutrition studies but then expanded across other sectors, in which researchers try to understand positive outcomes in the face of contrary odds. This focus is shared by the more general literature on policy reform and public services, especially in low-income settings. This approach identifies “pockets of effectiveness” or “islands of integrity” within otherwise low-functioning systems of governance (e.g., McDonnell 2020, Roll 2014). Identifying these positive outliers requires getting inside the black box of the state, which is a crucial step towards identifying pathways to institutional change (Andrews 2015, Peiffer and Armytage 2019, Tandler 1997). Yet this literature tends to stress institutional insulation rather than embeddedness and the dynamics of diffusion - how such pockets spread and manage to offset obstacles – is still not well understood, especially in more patrimonial or fragile settings.⁹ In this study, the outlier actions are state initiatives that enabled at least semi-autonomous citizen action.

The first step was to operationalize the sandwich strategy by defining the key case selection criterion – cases where state actors took measures to tangibly reduce the risks or costs of collective action. Since there is no existing data set that gathers such cases, the next step was to identify as many cases of the sandwich strategy as possible through an extensive process of literature review and dialogue with experts across the governance and development fields as well as specific sectors (health, education, agrarian reform, etc.), and through social media crowdsourcing. Cases did not have to be successful, could occur at national or subnational levels, could come from any sector under any kind of regime and could be motivated for any reason. Cases were limited to the global South, from the late 20th century to the present. To maximize diversity of context in the comparative analysis and to prevent the over-

⁹ The literatures on diffusion are emblematic of the classic theoretical assumptions about state-society boundaries mentioned above. The literature on policy diffusion focuses on the replication of state actions, while the social movement literature addresses the horizontal diffusion of protest. Indeed, both can spread in waves. In contrast, the state-society synergy framework would suggest unpacking those waves to identify possible mechanisms of replication of virtuous circles of interaction between pro-reform actors in state and society.

representation of countries with more extensive track records of institutional innovation (e.g., Brazil, India), the number of cases per country was limited to two.¹⁰

Numerous cases were considered that did not meet the case selection criterion. Some openings from above were insufficiently tangible, and other initiatives did not directly enable collective action – such as limited consultations in capital cities. Dominant state-centric and society-centric accounts in the literature may have hidden some cases. It is also possible that because many sandwich strategy efforts were either short-lived or deliberately low-profile, they were not documented. As the universe of cases of sandwich strategy attempts is unknown, the representativeness of this sample is also unknown. The set of cases may over-represent those with aid agency involvement because of their evaluation resources and visibility to scholars.

The final sample includes a total of 19 cases from Latin America (8), South Asia (5), East Asia (4), and sub-Saharan Africa (2). Table 1 summarizes the key elements of each case, including the opening from above and the outcomes. Some cases have a much longer duration than others – ranging from a year or two to decades. Approximately half of the cases involve national-level state actors, while the other half take place at a state or provincial level. Almost all cases had some involvement by international donors or aid agencies. This project commissioned 15 cases by academic and practitioner experts, many of whom had already analyzed them extensively. Four other case analyses drew on secondary sources because they were already well-documented.¹¹

Table 1. Sandwich Strategy Case Descriptions

Case	Details
Bangladesh <i>Anti-domestic violence law</i>	Policymakers passed a gender violence law that recognized new rights for women & the state's obligation to protect them in their homes, but the law was never fully implemented and few cases were filed.
Bolivia <i>Popular participation law</i>	Law granted mainly indigenous rural citizens right to elect municipal authorities & gave grassroots organizations municipal oversight & decision-making powers, consolidating some autonomous indigenous organizations.
Brazil <i>HIV response</i>	HIV policy reformers created hybrid participatory councils and NGO umbrella networks at multiple levels, which sustained rights to non-discrimination & the provision of antiretroviral therapy.

¹⁰ For countries with more than two cases identified, case selection emphasizes those where state action to enable collective action was most robust, where implementation dynamics were most well-documented and where the scale involved national and/or subnational reformers (not purely municipal level openings). The Nigeria cases were identified in collaboration with our partner organization, the Centre for Democracy and Development, as part of a parallel comparative study of five cases in that country.

¹¹ For the 15 commissioned case studies with extensive references, as well as sources for the four cases based on secondary literature, see: [XXXX \[insert URL\]](#). The case studies analyzed based on secondary literature are the two China cases, the Colombia case about the ANUC peasant movement, and the Mexico community food council case.

Brazil (Ceara) MST/rural education	A coalition between the Landless Movement and reformist education officials put national reform into practice, with power-sharing over rural curriculum, hiring, school governance & siting of new schools.
China (Xiamen) Environment	Citywide anti-toxics protests led a proposed industrial plant to be relocated and supported national environmental policymaker efforts to gain full ministry status.
China Disability rights	National leader of the Disability Rights Federation supported local petitions and protests against a ban on tricycles, slowing its implementation and sometimes securing compensation for drivers.
Colombia Afrodescendant land titling	Reformers promoted the formation of Afrodescendant community land councils to gain collective title to territories, including official consultation & unprecedented hybrid power-sharing councils.
Colombia ANUC peasant movement	Government reformers backed the first nationwide peasant association, but the next government repressed & weakened it. Yet organizing legacy survives in some regions via consolidated mass organizations.
India (Chhattisgarh) Mitani community health workers	A hybrid state government agency supported a large-scale community health worker program whose workers defended health rights, activated community oversight of programs, & organized into unions.
India (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana) Social audits	Hybrid state agencies convened tens of thousands of social audits, including public hearings that led to problem-solving, recovered funds and discipline for corrupt officials.
Mexico Community Forestry	Forest policymakers' cycles of support for community rights to resource management led to the consolidation of the largest self-managed community forestry sector in the world.
Mexico Community Food Councils	Policymakers formed regional councils to oversee a large-scale village food store network; one third gained autonomy & survived at least two decades. With congressional allies, they fended off efforts to eliminate the program.
Nigeria (Ogun) Homegrown School Feeding	Independent oversight of the school feeding program by CSOs, parent-teacher associations and school management committees contributed to improved service delivery, until elections disrupted the program.
Nigeria Monitoring of NSIP	Federal reformers convened CSOs to carry out third party, donor-backed monitoring of large-scale flagship social programs. Monitoring occurred until national elections reconfigured program management.
Pakistan National Commission on Status of Women	A coalition between an autonomous governmental national commission and a CSO led to partial reform of anti-women laws, but lack of government support ultimately weakened the commission.
Peru (Puno) Health care monitoring	A district-level partnership between the ombuds agency and indigenous health rights defenders led to health services monitoring and a national commitment to such monitoring, but electoral change prevented implementation.
Philippines Kalahi participatory development program	Government recognized grassroots organizations' involvement in village processes to propose & manage projects. Councils of village representatives made project funding decisions for local public goods.

Philippines Textbook monitoring	Education ministry officials encouraged nation-wide participatory civil society oversight throughout the textbook supply chain, resulting in significant improvements.
Sri Lanka Million Houses Programme	Government reformers bolstered both urban and rural community association involvement in housing improvements, local infrastructure and regularization of tenancy.

NB: CSO = civil society organization; NGO = nongovernmental organization.

Comparative method

The comparative analysis presented below is grounded in the process tracing of the individual cases (Beach and Pedersen 2013). The cases were then analyzed according to factors relevant to the sandwich strategy: context; state actor characteristics and actions; social actor characteristics and actions; opposition; and outcomes. This informed the case coding in terms of five phases in the sandwich strategy framework: the proximate trigger, the nature of the opening, patterns of collective action, possible roadblocks and whether power shifts occurred (see Figure 1). The co-authors coded the cases independently, revisiting the case evidence and consulting with case authors to resolve differences and to ensure consistency.

The comparative analysis involved two key components. The first involved assessing the relative frequency with which particular dimensions within each phase of the sandwich strategy process emerged. The second applied QCA in order to understand the combinations of conditions associated with power shifts.¹²

Specifically, the first component of the analysis involved identifying the presence of four to six possible dimensions (defined below) of: each opening's proximate triggers, the nature of each opening, the character and intensity of collective action in response, and patterns of roadblocks from within government (either resistance or reformists' loss of power). The key question about the outcome of each process involved an assessment of whether these dynamics led to power shifts for the socially and politically excluded *of some kind*. Because most of the cases featured donors or aid agencies, the analysis also considered their roles in the different phases of the sandwich strategy process.

Following this descriptive classification, we then assessed the *intensity* of the actions within each dimension. This judgement of intensity relied on context-specific interpretations of the salience of the dimensions constituting each opening, the pursuant collective action, any roadblock, and any ultimate power shift. The case findings are briefly discussed below in terms of each category and its respective dimensions, followed by assessment of power shifts.

We define power shift as occurring when under-represented social actors gained some degree of increased leverage, related to the opening and sustained over at least several years, even if

¹² To situate QCA in the broader methodological context of different logics of comparison, see della Porta (2008). This comparison across diverse cases is also informed by "abductive analysis" and its recognition of "intersituational variation" (Tavory and Timmermans 2014: 78).

changes were subsequently rolled back. This assessment is qualitative, relational and context-specific, which means that shifts are identified *in relation to power relationships that existed prior to openings* (rather than meeting the same minimum criteria applied across diverse cases). Power shifts can thus be incremental and limited to specific government programs or subnational territories. Power shifts can also be *both* sector-specific and subnational, as in the Brazilian state of Ceará (education) and the Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (rural social programs).

Power shifts identified here can occur in three distinct arenas. First, within society, the consolidation of representative organizations of the excluded and/or sustained pro-poor entitlements to resources constitute evidence of power shift. Second, within the state, power shift may involve the substantive (not pro forma) implementation of institutional changes that favor the excluded, including policy continuity across changes of government and the enforcement of rights (even if uneven and incomplete). Third, the creation and persistence of hybrid government institutions that *bridge* state and society by sharing power over authoritative decisions are also evidence of power shift.

In order to identify patterns and causal pathways leading to power shift (or its absence) across this “medium N” set of cases, we turned to the QCA method. QCA is both an approach and a set of techniques that are especially appropriate for comparative analysis where there is great within-case complexity and where the researcher anticipates “multiple conjunctural causation” (Rihoux and Lobe 2009). This QCA-related concept refers to cases in which: outcomes are the result of interactions between multiple conditions; different combinations of conditions may produce the same outcome; and the same condition may have a different relationship with the outcome in different contexts. In other words, the QCA method uses non-linear mathematics to identify pathways of change that involve multiple moving parts, in contrast to statistical methods that seek to isolate the relative weights of different causes. In addition to its appropriateness for the size of this sample and anticipation of conjunctural causation, QCA also encourages an iterative analytical process, which includes reassessing coding decisions and even case inclusion based on what is learned from the analysis and closely mirrors our overall approach to the analysis described above.

The sandwich strategy framework informed the definition of the conditions included in the QCA, although we ultimately excluded the trigger phase from the analysis because none of its dimensions had sufficient variation to justify inclusion. We used crisp-set techniques, which assess cases in terms of the presence or absence of each condition. We chose this approach, over fuzzy-set QCA, because the diversity of cases and outcomes made it difficult to systematically assign each case to multiple levels of any given condition. Each condition was thus converted into a 0 or 1 for each case, based on its intensity. QCA generates a truth table, which shows all possible combinations of conditions included in the model - there were eight for our model with three conditions and one outcome. It then uses Boolean algebra to produce

“solutions,” or recipes of conditions necessary and/or sufficient to produce the outcome in question.

QCA produces three different solutions to any given truth table. The first is the complex solution, which is based on only those rows in the truth table for which there are cases. The complex solution tends to have high consistency (i.e., the cases with the conditions specified by the solution also tend to have the outcome), but low coverage (i.e., not that many cases have the conditions from the solution) because the solutions are quite specific. The second is the parsimonious solution, which uses all rows in the truth table to find the simplest solution. Because it uses rows that do not contain data, however, it tends to produce solutions with low consistency but high coverage. The third is the intermediate solution, which uses rows in the truth table with data, as well as rows that the researcher identifies as theoretically likely, even if they did not empirically occur. We choose to present the results of the complex solution because they prioritize consistency. As it turns out, for all models presented, these results are the same as the intermediate solution given that the conditions do not vary greatly among cases.¹³

Findings

Unpacking the Sandwich Strategy Process: Phases and Dimensions

1. Triggers

Triggers refer here to events or processes that directly enabled the opening from above, including political transitions, bureaucratic transitions, already mobilized social constituencies and international donor support before the opening.

Bureaucratic or political transitions triggered most of the openings from above. Sixteen cases involved bureaucratic transitions where reformers became senior government managers, not always due to political transitions. Some of those reformist policymakers chose to remain low profile (as with Peru’s provincial level public defender’s office and in Mexico’s national community food councils). Political transitions enabled 13 openings and usually involved the election or assumption of office by government leader(s) promising reform, as in the case of campaign promises in Sri Lanka or a major legal change, such as the provisions of Colombia’s new constitution that made possible collective ethnic land titling. In 11 cases, international development funders (multilateral, bilateral and private) encouraged openings by providing diplomatic and financial support to government reform efforts before the opening.

Fourteen cases have evidence of preexisting mobilization of constituencies relevant to the opening. Yet in contrast to what classic social movement theory would predict, in only one case was protest a clear proximate cause of the opening from above (Brazil’s rural education policy). Just three other openings were iterations of previous cycles of reform, including the cases of

¹³ See Ragin (2008) on the method and Ragin and Deavey (2017) for the software. See also Mello (2021). See Brockmyer (2016) for a helpful discussion of the different solutions produced by QCA.

community forestry in Mexico, India's social audits and housing policy in Sri Lanka. Moreover, few openings were triggered by shocks - whether crises, disasters or perceived direct threats to specific social groups (as in the two China cases). To sum up, most triggers for openings from above were national bureaucratic and/or political transitions.

2. Openings

As defined here, the openings from above involved actions by state actors that tangibly reduced the risks or costs of collective action, especially for the socially excluded. The most intensive openings involved both breadth – with clear reach in terms of people and territory - and depth, meaning more substantive tangible measures by state actors. The dimensions of openings included: government provision of resources that directly enabled collective action; targeted disclosure of government information that was directly relevant to social/civic actors; consultation with social constituencies or civil society organizations (CSOs); laws or policies that enabled action with new rights; government recognition of citizen access to decision-making and/oversight of official programs; and within-state advocacy to encourage reform implementation.

In 13 cases, government agencies directly contributed to grassroots collective action with tangible resources, including field organizers, direct support for membership organizations, training of grassroots leadership or relevant service provision. For example, in five cases government agencies directly formed or reinforced representative mass membership organizations of the excluded (e.g., HIV advocacy organizations in Brazil, Afro-Colombian community land councils, Colombia's National Association of Peasant Service Users, Mexico's community forestry enterprises and Mexico's food councils).¹⁴ In Indian states, hybrid state-society agencies fielded frontline organizers who convened safe spaces for public hearings where the excluded could give testimony about government performance (activist community health workers in one state and social auditors in two other states). In the Philippines, the national social welfare department deployed field organizers nation-wide to convene village leaders to lead participatory project decision-making and provided training for mass membership civic organizations to oversee textbook distribution to the last mile. In Bangladesh, financial support to CSOs enabled them to broaden access to stakeholder consultations around the country. In Brazil, the education ministry provided intensive trainings to rural schoolteachers and convened local and state officials to encourage co-governance of schools with organized agrarian reform communities. In these cases where the opening from above involved tangible resources that reached the grassroots, national or state agencies enabled either the consolidation of mass organizations or the creation of safe public spaces for citizen voice.

Twelve cases involved either co-governance of programs or recognition of the right to oversight via participatory policy monitoring. Official participatory programs shared targeted information

¹⁴ On the contributions of mass membership organizations of the poor to development, see Chen, Jhabvala, Kanbur and Richards (2007) and Esman and Uphoff (1984), among others.

about the services that agencies were supposed to provide, which allowed social actors to make informed claims and hold specific government actors accountable for their commitments. In Bolivia, rural municipalities co-governed with so-called territorial base organizations and public oversight committees. In Brazil, in states where the landless movement was strong enough and politicians agreed, their organizations co-governed rural schools in agrarian reform settlements. In Colombia, hybrid state-society regional councils managed, monitored and enabled a wave of collective titling of ethnic territories. In Mexico, the food distribution agency created the first nationwide social accountability program, allowing regional councils of community representatives to oversee staple food deliveries from warehouses to stores. In Nigeria, reform-minded federal and state policymakers gave official permission to donor-funded CSOs to do independent monitoring of national social programs. In Pakistan, the government created a commission to monitor and promote compliance with international and constitutional women's rights commitments. In Peru, the regional office of the public ombuds agency provided community health rights defenders with credentials and legal support to validate their right to oversee public clinics and advocate for patients. In the Philippines, the education ministry recognized and supported CSO oversight of procurement of textbooks and trained large national civic organizations to be field monitors of textbook distribution to the districts.

In approximately half of cases (10), government created or recognized spaces for active consultation with CSOs. These consultative bodies operated at different levels in different contexts, with some more focused on policy implementation and others more involved in policy/law design. For example, in Bangladesh senior government reformers convened CSOs to design and advocate for domestic violence legislative proposals. Brazil's pioneering HIV policy created numerous hybrid consultative bodies. Colombia's brief but large-scale wave of ethnic collective land titling included regional multistakeholder councils to encourage policy implementation and address conflicting land claims. In Mexico, government consultations with community forestry organizations informed legal reforms. Nigerian state officials engaged with CSOs to listen to their findings from monitoring social programs. In Pakistan, the government created an autonomous commission to mediate the relationship with civil society on women's rights.

Another dimension of openings involved changes in laws or policies that established new rights or entitlements that enabled social action. These changes varied widely, both in terms of their degree of formal institutionalization and in terms of the degree to which official commitments were carried out in practice. Openings were mandated by law in six cases. Bolivia's Popular Participation law recognized and empowered territorial base organizations and municipal oversight committees. Brazil's HIV law guaranteed AIDS treatment, which legitimated claims. Implementing legislation for Colombia's new constitution enabled Afrodescendant land councils to solicit collective titles to ancestral domain. India's rural employment guarantee law mandated state governments to carry out social audits and put the law into practice. Mexico's

forest law recognized and supported self-managed peasant and indigenous community forest enterprises. The Philippines' law on public procurement enabled CSOs to monitor bidding and contracting. In seven other cases, national policies or programs created openings. In the community-driven development program in the Philippines, projects were selected by municipal forums of elected village leaders. In Sri Lanka, then-innovative housing policy allowed urban and rural community development councils to co-manage local planning, including entitlements to self-built improvements and recognition of addresses.

To sum up, openings from above were diverse, varying in their intensity and institutionalization. The most intense openings included multiple dimensions and were likely to include resources targeted towards the support of frontline field staff and mass membership organizations, in contrast to weaker openings limited to consultations.

3. Collective action

Openings from above led to varied patterns of collective action among the socially and political excluded. One of the most widespread responses to openings involved the reinforcement of social organizations, especially those with grassroots membership (16 cases). In Bangladesh, government resources allowed the citizen's initiative against domestic violence sustained advocacy for legal reform. In Bolivia, the decentralization law gave grassroots territorial organizations standing to engage with local governments. In Brazil, resources from the National AIDS Program sustained existing civic associations, helped create new ones and enabled a national alliance. In Colombia, government support launched 300 municipal level peasant organizations, which formed a nationwide organization. In India, the state government's community health workers monitored health programs, supported other rights struggles, and tried to bargain collectively. In Mexico, forest policy provided resources and technical support for agrarian communities to form self-managed timber enterprises. Also in Mexico, the village food store program formed local and regional oversight committees, some of which gained autonomy. In Pakistan, the national commission brought together women's organizations in a national conference and provided cover that allowed them to petition, protest, and advocate. In the Philippines, the community-driven development program encouraged formation of new grassroots rural social organizations. Finally, Sri Lanka's participatory housing policy strengthened urban community councils and associations of village organizations.

Many of the social organizations supported by the opening from above also monitored policy implementation, making it one of the most widespread dimensions of collective action (14 cases). In Bangladesh, the coalition against gender violence monitored implementation of the anti-domestic violence law. In Bolivia, oversight committees created under the decentralization law monitored municipal governments. Brazil's AIDS movement monitored policy implementation by state and municipal health services. Community health workers in India were active in official local committees to monitor government social programs. In India's states, citizens participated in thousands of public hearings to debate the findings of government-supported, independent validation of social program implementation. In Mexico's

rural food program, regional councils met in the warehouses to monitor operations and deliveries to village stores. In Nigeria, school management committees and parent-teacher associations as well as CSOs organized to monitor the school feeding program. In the Philippines, a broad national civic coalition monitored the textbook supply chain and reached 80% of school districts at peak.

Collective action involving civil society policy advocacy also occurred quite frequently – referring to campaigns that addressed government policy rather than one-off problems, potentially targeting different levels of government (13 cases). In Bangladesh, gender violence campaigners advocated for legal reforms, including broadening the legal definition of the household. In Brazil, the AIDS movement called for funding for medications, organized legislative caucuses and engaged in participatory policy consultation bodies. Also in Brazil, the landless movement advocated for a national rural education policy and engaged with state governments to carry it out. In China, the national leader of the disabled people’s federation advocated to allow continued use of three-wheeled vehicles by disabled drivers, which had been banned. In Colombia, the national peasant organization advocated for stronger land reform laws, first within the system and then from the opposition after the government changed. In Mexico, community councils mobilized congressional allies to defend the national rural food store program from threatened elimination. In the Nigerian state of Ogun, CSOs engaged with state officials in multistakeholder meetings, calling for increased portions for meager school lunches. In Pakistan, the national commission worked with CSOs to advocate for reforms to gender-biased laws. In Peru, the national health rights coalition allied with community defenders to advocate for health ministry guidelines to recognize citizen monitoring nationwide. In the Philippines, the textbook monitoring coalition advocated for dedicated budgets to fund last-mile delivery to schools.

Protest was less common across the cases and was concentrated in a handful of countries (Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Mexico, and Pakistan). In Brazil, after an allied political party won the presidency, the landless movement organized a large march to push the government to begin implementation of the rural education policy. In China, once insiders leaked information about government plans, a sizeable citywide street protest challenged the threat of construction of a toxic industrial plant. Also in China, disabled drivers protested government efforts to ban their vehicles, including direct action and ‘hidden resistance.’ In Colombia, after a change in government ended the hope for land reform, one wing of the new national peasant association radicalized and led a wave of militant land invasions. In Mexico, when regional food council concerns about poor service delivery went unheeded, they carried out warehouse takeovers. In Pakistan, a women’s rights coalition petitioned and protested against traditional men-only councils and impunity for sexual violence.

Direct CSO or citizen participation in resource allocation was relatively infrequent, found in only four cases. In Bolivia’s decentralization, territorial social organizations gained the right to participate in allocating municipal funds. In Brazil, federal backing encouraged the states most

open to collaboration with the landless movement to share decision-making over the siting of new schools. In the Philippines, elected village leaders met in municipal forums to choose among local project proposals. In Sri Lanka, government-backed community associations allocated loans for housing improvements, coordinated community infrastructure investments and oversaw community contractors building local public works.

In sum, patterns of collective action primarily involved the formation or reinforcement of social organizations, coalitions or spinoffs, CSO or citizen monitoring of policy implementation, or policy advocacy.

4. Roadblocks

Roadblocks occurred in almost all (18) of the cases, to varying degrees. Sometimes these responses limited the opening in the first place and other times they affected the collective action that emerged. The most common form of roadblock involved active resistance by other actors within government to carrying out sandwich strategy policy reforms (13 cases).

In Bangladesh, law ministry officials, male parliamentarians and Islamist groups tried to block or stall the passage of anti-domestic violence laws. In Brazil, conservative religious legislators resisted reform to support a stigmatized disease (HIV), the health minister resisted increasing the national budget for HIV medication, and subnational politicians/bureaucrats did not support the policy. Also in Brazil, officials in half the states - where the landless movement lacked clout - ignored the federal government's rural education policy reform. In China, national economic growth policies incentivized local governments to ignore concerns about polluting industries raised by citizens, scientists and environmental policymakers. In India, even where state agencies effectively carried out social audits, anti-corruption agencies took few followup actions in response to findings of malfeasance. In Mexico, even though the government food distribution agency created the food councils, much of the agency staff resisted their autonomy, rejected their claims and purged pro-participation field staff. Nigerian education officials, food vendors and head teachers in Ogun State were initially suspicious of monitoring of the school feeding program, fearing it would imperil their jobs. Within Nigeria, federal cabinet ministers resisted third party monitoring of anti-poverty programs. In Pakistan, the national government resisted funding its own commission on the state of women. In Peru, local health professionals initially resisted citizen monitoring of service delivery, out of concern that citizens lacked medical training.

Another common roadblock to both openings from above and ensuing collective action occurred when pro-reform policymakers lost power (12 cases), often because of electoral change (seven cases). In Brazil, national elections displaced federal allies of the rural education policy – though it survived in two states. In China, the main national environmental ministry ally of the anti-toxics movements lost power to senior rivals, reducing responsiveness to citizen concerns. In Colombia, a national election brought in pro-landowner elites who opposed agrarian reform and the national peasant organization. Later on, another election brought in

conservative elites, ending most new Afro-Colombian community land titling. In Mexico, after the food program's first decade and a half, new policymakers weakened government agency support for food councils. In Nigeria, national elections changed the balance of power within the presidency, leading to the reassignment of social programs to another ministry and the end of government support for CSO-led monitoring. After the same election, change in the party controlling the Ogun state government led to the suspension of monitoring by parent-teacher associations and school management committees. In Pakistan, lack of governmental support for its commission on the status of women blocked the naming of a new director. In Peru, electoral change ended incipient health ministry support for citizen monitoring. In the Philippines, a high-level corruption scandal led senior allies in the education ministry to leave the government, blocking the CSO textbook monitoring campaign. In Sri Lanka, after electoral change the new government moved housing policy away from a sites and services approach and ended support for community councils.

Partisan or clientelistic political intervention diverted elements of reform efforts to enable collective action in almost half of cases (nine). In some Bolivian municipalities, radical decentralization created openings for partisan clientelism. In some Colombian communities, local political operatives rather than autonomous social movements led the collective land titling processes. In some regions of rural Mexico, government food agency officials and local elites controlled the oversight councils. In Nigeria's Ogun State, a newly-elected government purged the school cooks to create patronage opportunities, disrupting the school feeding program monitored by CSOs. In some areas of the Philippines, local elites captured the community-driven development program. In Sri Lanka's housing program, local elected officials influenced the rural councils.

Finally, in a relatively small number of cases (five), roadblocks took the form of threats or acts of violence enabled or tolerated by government actors. In China, disabled tricycle drivers who defied or protested the ban faced police violence. In Colombia's ethnic territories, attacks by paramilitaries backed by the government displaced newly-titled communities. In Pakistan, the head of the national commission on the status of women received threats because of her work.

In response to roadblocks, reformists frequently had to carry out direct advocacy with other agencies or levels of government (12 cases). For example, in Brazil, the director of the HIV program advocated for provision of HIV medication with the skeptical health minister. In China, a member of the political elite who also led the federation of disabled persons lobbied local officials and local branches of the federation to allow disabled people to preserve livelihoods threatened by a ban on three-wheeled vehicles, and to defend those who protested. In the Indian state that led the process of launching a hybrid social audit agency to limit corruption in the rural employment program, the chief minister told local politicians to seek rents elsewhere, and to leave the rural employment program alone. In Nigeria, the vice president had to convince a skeptical cabinet to allow CSO monitoring of social programs for the first time.

Overall, roadblocks came primarily from vested interests within government, but also from religious, political, or economic elites who felt they stood to lose from reforms. Political and bureaucratic transitions also closed windows of opportunity for enabling collective action.

5. Power shifts

Twelve of the 19 cases led to substantial relative power shifts. Some involved greater capacity of inclusionary state institutions, others involved more consolidated social organizations. Eight of these legacies were embedded in some kind of state-society power-sharing institution.

In Bolivia, the decentralization law granted mainly indigenous rural citizens the right to elect their own municipal authorities for the first time and gave diverse grassroots territorial organizations and oversight committees substantial formal municipal decision-making powers. The national policy was one-size-fits-all, leading to the consolidation of autonomous indigenous organizations in some regions but local elite capture in others.

Brazil's HIV policy reformers created hybrid participatory councils and nongovernmental organization umbrella networks at multiple levels. With unconventional World Bank funding, the state-society coalitions sustained policy implementation, including rights to non-discrimination and provision of antiretroviral therapy to Brazilians living with HIV. In Brazil's state of Ceará, a coalition between the Landless Movement and reformist education officials achieved power-sharing over rural curriculum, hiring, school governance and siting of new schools.

In Colombia, government reformers backed the first nationwide peasant association, but the next government turned against agrarian reform, splitting, radicalizing, repressing and weakening the mass organization. Yet decades later, that organizing legacy survives in some regions via consolidated mass organizations. A later generation of Colombian reformers put a new constitutional provision into practice with a legal framework for large-scale collective ethnic land titling that promoted the formation of Afrodescendant community councils to claim ancestral domain, including official consultation and unprecedented hybrid power-sharing councils. Yet armed conflict also displaced some titled communities.

In India, a hybrid state government agency in Chhattisgarh supported a large-scale activist community health worker program whose workers defended health rights for the socially excluded, activated official community oversight of social programs, challenged gender-based violence and organized themselves into unions. In the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, hybrid agencies convened tens of thousands of social audits, including public hearings that led to problem-solving, recovered funds and discipline for corrupt officials.

Mexican forest policymakers' cycles of support for community rights to resource management led to the consolidation of the largest self-managed community forestry sector in the world. Mexican food policymakers' launch of a large-scale village food store network in which one third of regional councils managed to exercise autonomous oversight for at least two decades.

Though sustained resistance from bureaucratic interests weakened the councils over time, with congressional allies they managed to fend off efforts to eliminate the program.

In the Philippines, a large-scale, donor-funded community-driven development program recognized grassroots organizations' representation in village processes to propose and manage local projects. Councils of village representatives made project funding decisions for local public goods, though broader governance reform did not follow and, in some areas the program was subject to elite capture. Also in the Philippines, education ministry officials sought to improve the contracting, production and distribution of textbooks by encouraging participatory civil society oversight throughout the supply chain. Significant improvements inspired transparency and accountability efforts in other sectors but ended when a corruption crisis drove reformers from the government.

In Sri Lanka, government reformers promoted a large-scale, participatory approach to housing that bolstered both urban and rural association involvement in housing improvements, local infrastructure and regularization of tenancy. Community associations allocated loans for housing upgrades, enabled by donor funding. Civil war, economic policy and electoral changes later ended participatory approaches.

To sum up patterns of power shifts, they unfolded across a wide range of contexts and sectors. Although the possibility existed of spillover effects of collective action into other issue areas, or triggering of broader social mobilization, participation within 'proper channels' tended to stay there. The sandwich strategy opening itself contributed directly to protest in a few cases – as when Chinese policymakers leaked warnings about toxic threats. More often, the openings contributed to the consolidation of broad-based, representative social organizations – such as Afro-colombian community land councils - as well as to institutional channels for the excluded to exercise voice, as with social audits' public hearings in India. Not surprisingly, the openings from above that did not lead to power shifts also tended to be relatively brief. Plus, elected and politically appointed reformers had to spend much of their first term in office just to begin to open the window a crack (as in Nigerian cases), leaving little time for openings to generate collective action. That said, some of the openings did manage to sink institutional roots and survive for more than a decade, in spite of changes in the party in power – especially where they were grounded in large subnational governments (as in India and Brazil). The QCA analysis that follows identifies the combinations of conditions associated with power shift, and lack thereof.

QCA Results Reveal a Primary Pathway

The QCA model directly reflects the sandwich strategy framework (see Figure 1), incorporating as conditions each of the three main phases of the sandwich strategy process (opening from above, collective action, and roadblock).¹⁵ Table 2 presents the case by case assessments that

¹⁵ As mentioned above, there was insufficient variation in the trigger condition across cases to include in the QCA analysis.

went into the truth table analysis for the QCA. The table makes visible findings that were confirmed by the formal analysis, which show that all pathways that led to power shifts had intensive openings. All but two cases with power shifts also involved intensive collective action. Not surprisingly, all cases without power shift featured substantial roadblocks. Yet Table 2 also shows that in five cases, intensive openings from above – usually together with intensive collective action – managed to leverage power shifts *in spite of* substantial roadblocks.

The QCA confirms the findings visible in Table 2. As the results in Table 3 show, an intensive opening is a necessary condition for power shift; regardless of the nature of the collective action and roadblock conditions that followed. In most cases, intensive collective action also followed, and the roadblocks were either insufficiently large to prevent power shift, or were overcome through collaborative efforts of state and society actors. In parallel to the findings for power shift, the *absence* of an intensive opening is a necessary condition for the absence of power shift. There is one pathway to a lack of power shift: lack of intensive opening, lack of intensive collective action, and roadblock.

Table 2. Conditions Used in QCA of Sandwich Strategy Cases

CASENAME	INTENSIVE OPENING	INTENSIVE COLLECTIVE ACTION	ROADBLOCK	POWER SHIFT
CASES WITH POWER SHIFT (12)				
BOLIVIA	1	1	0	1
BRAZIL – HIV	1	1	0	1
BRAZIL – MST	1	1	0	1
COLOMBIA – LAND	1	1	1	1
COLOMBIA – ANUC	1	1	1	1
INDIA – MITANIN	1	0	0	1
INDIA – SOCIAL AUDITS	1	1	0	1
MEXICO – FORESTRY	1	1	0	1
MEXICO – FOOD	1	1	1	1
PHILIPPINES – KALAHI	1	1	0	1
PHILIPPINES – TEXTBOOKS	1	1	1	1
SRI LANKA	1	0	1	1
CASES WITHOUT POWER SHIFT (7)				
BANGLADESH	0	0	1	0
CHINA – ENVIRONMENT	0	0	1	0
CHINA – DISABILITY	0	0	1	0
NIGERIA – OGUN	0	0	1	0
NIGERIA – TPM	0	0	1	0
PAKISTAN	0	0	1	0
PERU	0	0	1	0

Table 3. Pathways to Power Shift among Sandwich Strategy Cases

Outcome	Solution	Cases	Consistency	Coverage
Power shift	Intensive opening	12	1	1
~Power shift	~Intensive opening*~Intensive collective action*Roadblock	7	1	1

Notes: Conditions include intensive opening, intensive collective action, roadblock

~ indicates the absence of a condition

Both models have values of 1 for both solution consistency and solution coverage

Consistency refers to the proportion of cases with those conditions that experience the outcome

Coverage refers to the proportion of cases with the outcome that experience those conditions

Role of International Aid Agencies

Most openings from above involved some support from international aid agencies, though they were not primary drivers in any of the cases. Specifically, aid agencies were involved in 12 out of 19 sandwich strategy cases, contributing either to the trigger or to the opening from above – often as convenors and brokers as well as funders – sometimes of advocacy coalitions as well as government agencies. In eight of these cases, aid agencies played some role throughout the sandwich process. Aid agencies were not, however, a necessary condition for the occurrence or absence of power shift: they were involved in eight out of 12 cases with power shifts (Brazil-HIV, Colombia-Afrodescendant land titling, both India cases, both Philippines cases, and Sri Lanka), and in four out of seven cases without power shifts (Bangladesh, both Nigeria cases, and Peru). The two cases with an intensive opening but without intensive collective action (India-Mitanin and Sri Lanka) both had aid agency involvement, suggesting that aid agencies could perhaps bolster some stages of the sandwich strategy process sufficiently to overcome gaps in others. Aid agencies showed a capacity to play modest but quite catalytic roles (as in the Indian cases) or to provide national policymakers with additional room for maneuver in the face of either inertia or opposition from elsewhere within the state (as in Brazil, Mexico and Pakistan).¹⁶ These roles played by international aid agencies were very consistent with the bolder wing of the community of practice known as “Thinking and Working Politically,” which encourages aid agencies to respond to national windows of opportunity with nimble support for reform coalitions that include excluded groups (e.g., Teskey 2022: 7).

Conclusion

When windows of opportunity allow state actors to attempt to enable collective action by the socially and politically excluded – what pathways do they follow and how far do they get? This comparative analysis identified a substantial number of sandwich strategy cases that led to shifts towards greater power for either citizens or reformist actors within public institutions, in spite of both structural obstacles and governmental roadblocks. These power shifts are both

¹⁶ For a comparative analysis of outlier cases of aid agency projects that attempted to strengthen the countervailing power of the excluded, see Fox (2020).

effects and causes of the difficult construction of countervailing power – defined as “a variety of mechanisms that reduce... the power advantages of ordinarily powerful actors” (Fung and Wright 2003: 260).

This comparative analysis of a diverse array of cases found that more intensive government enabling measures are associated with more intensive patterns of collective action.¹⁷ Together, in spite of unfavorable contexts, the combination of intensive openings and collective action can drive power shifts and can sometimes partly overcome roadblocks. Yet in contrast to most cases of official channels for participation, these cases of openings can be considered outliers because tangible measures to enable collective action are rare, and the cases involving more intensive measures are outliers within outliers.

These findings suggest that conventional dichotomy in the development and governance literatures between *either* collaborative *or* adversarial state-society relationships misses a key pathway towards inclusionary institutional change. When state reformers take tangible actions that enable the socially excluded to exercise collective voice, those social actors may *both* collaborate with and confront the same state, just as the reformers themselves may need to challenge unresponsive counterparts within the same state. This three-dimensional dynamic of collaboration *plus* conflict can drive virtuous circles of reciprocal interaction that in turn enable insiders to pursue further reforms. More often, however, those windows of opportunity are open only briefly, until elite reformers lose power. Though insider allies may be fickle, their main constraint is their political weakness vis-à-vis the rest of the state – which is one reason they needed to enable collective action from below in the first place. That leaves open the question: what is left after openings close? Because of the vulnerability of insider allies to shifting political winds at the national level, the findings here suggest that the survival of openings is enhanced by hybrid, state-society institutions, grounded in large subnational governments (as in India and Brazil).

While this analysis underscored the relevance of the sandwich metaphor as both noun and verb – it also revealed two important limitations. First, the often quiet but very political role of international actors shows that the drivers of openings from above operate on *multiple* levels, transcending the image of a single slice of bread at the top of the sandwich (though the idea of the triple-decker club sandwich has traveled internationally). The metaphor’s second limitation involves its *target*. It emerged from the case of community food councils introduced at the beginning, where middle layers of the bureaucracy were the key actors resisting inclusionary institutional change. While the sandwich image captures convergence between action from both above and below, the main forces that resist change are often *not* in the middle – in the sense of intermediate layers within the state apparatus. The opposition to the recognition of the socially excluded may be entrenched in other *national* agencies or branches of government.

¹⁷ This finding is consistent with Mansuri and Rao’s comprehensive meta-analysis of official efforts to induce participation, which concludes that successful community-led development at scale requires robust, sandwiching support from governmental accountability institutions (2013: 287).

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**** DRAFT FOR COMMENT****

Yet even if side-by-side contention between different government agencies does not fit the layered approach of a sandwich, the state-society synergy framework can still capture an underlying driver of inclusionary institutional change: the mutual empowerment between insiders and outsiders as a weapon of the weak.

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