Building State-Society Synergy through Sandwich Strategies

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Abstract

Policy reformers often make bold promises to improve government responsiveness to citizen demands. Yet such proclaimed openings from above often fall short, get diverted, or are blocked. This article analyzes exceptional cases – called 'sandwich strategies' - when reformers within the state managed to deliver tangible openings for citizen action that empowered otherwise excluded or marginalized groups. What happens when such sandwich strategies are attempted? This study combines process tracing with qualitative comparative analysis to identify patterns across 19 cases in the global South where state actors created a more enabling environment for citizens' collective action. The study compares the triggers and scope of enabling state actions, the breadth and intensity of collective action, roadblocks within the state, and whether or not these interactive processes led to substantive power shifts in favor of the excluded. We find that half of sandwich strategy cases led to shifts towards greater power for either citizens or reformist actors within public institutions, in spite of both structural obstacles and governmental roadblocks. Notably, power shift occurred where efforts to enable collective action were themselves most intensive. The power shifts identified were all incremental and uneven, and many were limited to subnational arenas. Though some later stalled or were partly rolled back, from the point of view of socially and politically excluded groups they represented tangible improvements in the balance of power. The dynamics of successful 'sandwich strategies' turned out to combine collaborative and adversarial relationships, but windows of opportunity were often open only briefly, until reformers lost power. The survival of openings was enhanced by hybrid, state-society institutions. Sandwich strategy attempts are rare and conventional theory would expect little institutional change, but our analysis demonstrates that they are a strategy worth pursuing.

Keywords

State-society synergy; collective action; power; QCA; medium-N.

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Introduction

Both national and international policy reformers often make bold promises to improve government responsiveness to citizen voice. Time and again, such proclaimed openings from above fall short, get diverted or blocked – as most theories of bureaucracy, political parties, collective action and protest would lead one to expect. Yet in exceptional cases reformers within the state manage to deliver tangible openings for citizen action, which sometimes do lead to power shifts for the socially excluded. Such 'cracks in the system' may look small from afar - but may loom large when seen from below, in context. Lessons from these outlier cases are relevant for informing both more nuanced theories and practical reform strategies. This study asks: when and how do openings from above enable the socially excluded to engage in collective action? When does such collective action in turn manage to lead to power shifts?

This study seeks to identify patterns of mutually-reinforcing interaction between reformist government actors and socially excluded citizens with an analytical 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 citizen councils to co-manage and oversee food delivery, the first-ever free spaces for autonomous, regional-level community organizing under a harsh regime of boss rule. 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 encouraging participatory development. One third of these 300 regional oversight 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 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.

In this case, a tangible opening from above made possible mutually-reinforcing interaction between reformers and citizens that shifted power – incrementally yet tangibly – to enable greater collective voice and representation for low-income rural consumers.[1] Conventional theories of institutional change could not account for such power shifts. Authoritarian regimes are not expected to create civic space except in response to confrontational pressure from below. The participatory councils in Mexico's food store program were not grounded in already-organized constituencies under a democratic regime. 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.

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-

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

autonomous collective action by the socially excluded.[2] State actors pursue initiatives to create enabling 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).[4] 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.[5] As with any power-shifting strategy, such dynamics are likely to encounter resistance and follow highly uneven, non-linear pathways. This study compares 19 cases of 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 comparative analysis finds that more intensive enabling state actions are associated with more intensive collective action, which in turn can drive power shifts.

Analytical Frameworks

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 those actors as external to their frameworks. Indeed, 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, while the social movement literature stresses how perceived political

[2] The focus here on state actions that enable at least semi-autonomous collective action distinguishes such cases from authoritarian "state-mobilized movements" (Ekiert, Perry and Xiaojun 2020). Diverse state actors combine carrots and sticks to prod citizens to mobilize in order to "rule by other means." This study's case selection excludes coercive approaches to induce mobilization because its goal is to identify pathways towards pro-citizen power shifts.

[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, Chile's brief radical reform government (1970-1973) 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] Many other analytical frameworks emphasize strategic interaction, including analysis of transitions from authoritarian regimes in the 1980s (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986) and a recent turn in the study of social movements (Jasper et al. 2022), though their approaches do not address the 'sandwiching' dynamic.

[5] 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).

opportunities can trigger cycles of protest.[6] 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).

Historical studies of the drivers of effective, inclusionary governance stress long-term, virtuous circles of state-society interaction (e.g., Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston 2017, Putnam 1993). Analysts also find positive feedback loops that can 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 for reform have great potential, at the same time they may close quickly after elections, be bounded to specific sectors or subnational territories, and may unfold below the radar of national politics and policies. Such openings face daunting obstacles, appear to be rare, and are not well-understood.

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 states governed by democratic regimes.[7] 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). In practice, national participatory institutions are also likely to vary widely across subnational territories and sectors. Yet sandwich strategies are also found in undemocratic regimes and institutionally fragile settings (as some cases addressed here show).[8] Moreover, the character of invited spaces can also be contested and 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.[9] State-society synergy goes beyond the identification of complementarities and co-production between state, society and market to focus on embeddedness: relationships that

[6] 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). Scholars subsequently called for more precise operationalization of this broad umbrella concept (e.g., Goodwin and Jasper 2012, Meyer and Minkoff 2004). The analytical framework here emphasizes and operationalizes just one dimension of "political opportunity" as specific state actions that tangibly enable collective action of the excluded. In contrast to the social movement literature, this agenda for identifying potentially power-shifting repertoires of collective action is not limited exclusively to contentious mass protest.

[7] 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, particularly in the health and environmental sectors.

[8] 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).

[9] Frameworks, in contrast to theories or models, identify relevant pieces of a puzzle in terms of key concepts that can inform further research – including multiple possible configurations (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015).

bridge the state-society divide.[10] 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., Tendler 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). The sandwich strategy is a framework for understanding a specific genre of state-society synergy. Because of the sandwich strategy's concern with power shifts, 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 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). This framework takes into account *both* collaboration and conflict across the state-society divide – in contrast to literatures that address one *or* the other.[11]

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. Research strategies that seek to identify outlier cases are relevant here. The literature on policy reform and public services, especially in low-income settings, has identified "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, Tendler 1997). Yet this literature tends to stress institutional insulation rather than embeddedness, to protect insider reformers from capture or diversion. Moreover, the dynamics of *diffusion* - how such pockets spread and manage to offset obstacles – are still not well understood, especially in more patrimonial or fragile settings.[12]

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

[10] 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). Applied policy analysis also addresses exclusively collaborative approaches to state-society synergy, though without focusing on power shifts for the excluded. See, for example, Guerzovich and Poli (2020) on collaborative social accountability, Ansell and Gash (2007) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) on collaborative governance, and Sidel and Faustino (2019) on "coalitions for change" among policy insiders in both state and society.

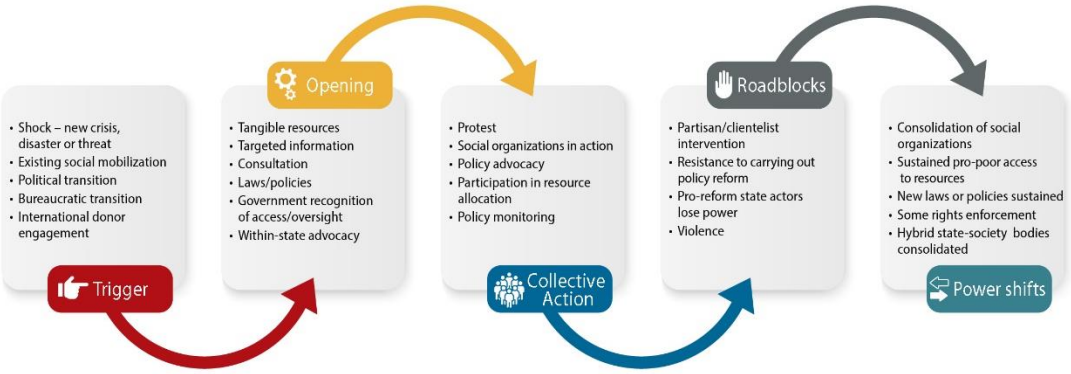
[11] The literature on participatory governance and social accountability addresses state-society collaboration, while the literature on social movements focuses on conflict. Yet in practice, social actors and strategic policy reformers may draw on *both* repertoires of action – as many of the cases in this study show.

[12] The literatures on diffusion reflect the classic theoretical assumptions about state-society boundaries mentioned above. The study of 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.

sectors and scale. Across all these cases, state actors went beyond discursive promises of change or new policies only 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 case-by-case 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 and Data

This study's 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. Explanations of anomalies can shed light on pathways towards change. Our approach differs from positive deviance analysis in

that case selection did not rest on a positive outcome (the dependent variable), but instead on evidence that state actors took measures to tangibly reduce the risks or costs of collective action.[13] Since there is no existing data set that gathers such cases, we identified 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. We asked experts if they knew of tangible initiatives by state actors to create space for societal action for pro-accountability or institutional change, and combed both academic and practitioner literature that addressed state-society interaction. To maximize the number of potential cases, we set few inclusion boundaries. These cases of openings may or may not have led to substantial collective action, could occur at national or subnational levels, could come from any sector under any kind of regime and could be motivated for any reason.[14] Cases were limited to the global South in large part to avoid potential North-South differences explaining observed outcomes. We drew from recent history (the late 20th century to the present) in an effort to reach a comparable threshold of amount of information available on each case. To maximize diversity of context in the comparative analysis and to prevent the over-representation of countries with more extensive track records of institutional and civic innovation (e.g., Brazil, India), the number of cases per country was limited to two.[15]

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 with civil society organizations (CSOs) 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 of cases is also unknown. The cases analyzed may over-represent those with aid agency involvement because of their greater 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. The state-society interactions in some cases have a much longer duration than others – ranging from a year or two to decades.

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[13] Note that this very bounded case selection criterion does *not* include key features of the social movement literature's approach to political opportunities, which emphasize promises from sympathetic elites or protestors' perceptions that elites will respond favorably to their claims (e.g., Goodwin 2012:292, 99).

[14] In contrast to studies of social movements that focus on explaining mass protest, this case selection process was driven by the presence of the *independent* variable – the tangible opening. Openings were coded in terms of whether or not they were considered intensive (a context-dependent assessment). Collective action here is a possible intermediate outcome of varying intensity – and can take forms other than protest – with power shifts as the ultimate outcome.

[15] For countries with more than two cases identified, case selection emphasized 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.

Approximately half of the cases involve national-level government 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, although in no cases were donors or aid agencies the primary drivers. 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. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Sandwich Strategy Cases and Outcomes

Cases with power shift	
Bolivia *Popular participation law*	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 *HIV response*	HIV policy reformers created hybrid participatory councils & CSO umbrella networks at multiple levels, which sustained rights to non-discrimination & the provision of antiretroviral therapy.
Brazil (Ceará) *Rural education*	A coalition between the Landless Movement and federal education officials designed & implemented a national rural education reform, opening state level power-sharing over curriculum, hiring, school governance & siting of new schools.
Colombia *Peasant movement*	Government reformers supported the launch of the first nationwide peasant association, though the next government weakened it. A legacy of consolidated mass organizations survives in some regions.
Colombia *Collective land titling*	Reformers supported large-scale collective titling of Afrodescendant community land councils, including hybrid power-sharing Regional Councils that promoted policy implementation.
India (Chhattisgarh) *Mitanin 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 & discipline for corrupt officials.
Mexico *Community food councils*	Policymakers formed regional councils to oversee a large-scale village food store network; some councils gained autonomy & survived at least two decades, helping to fend off program elimination.
Mexico *Community forestry*	Forest policymakers' support for community rights to resource management led to the consolidation of the largest self-managed community forestry sector in the world.
Philippines *Participatory development program*	Government recognized grassroots organizations' involvement in village processes to propose & manage projects through Kalahi program. 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, reducing leakage and increasing efficiency.
Sri Lanka *Million Houses Program*	Government reformers bolstered both urban & rural community associations, resulting in improvements to housing quality and local infrastructure & regularization of tenancy.
Cases without power shift	
Bangladesh *Anti-domestic violence law*	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 & few cases were filed.
China (Xiamen) *Environment*	Environmental policymakers leaked information about planned toxic plant to press. One citywide protest led to relocation of plant, but others did not and senior policy ally lost power.
China *Disability rights*	National leader of the Disability Rights Federation supported local petitions & protest against a ban on tricycles that slowed its implementation, but local government support for ban persisted and police repressed protestors.

Nigeria (Ogun) *Homegrown School Feeding*	Independent oversight of the school feeding program by CSOs, parent-teacher associations & school management committees contributed to improved service delivery, but elections disrupted the program.
Nigeria *Social program monitoring*	Federal reformers convened CSOs to carry out third party, donor-backed monitoring of large-scale National Social Investment programs, but national elections reconfigured program management and undermined monitoring.
Pakistan *National Commission on Status of Women*	A coalition between an autonomous governmental national commission & 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 health services monitoring partnership between the government ombuds agency & indigenous health rights defenders led to a national commitment to expand monitoring, but electoral change prevented implementation.

Sources: Bangladesh (Nazneen 2022); Bolivia (Albro 2022); Brazil-HIV (Rich 2022); Brazil-Ceará (Tarlau 2022); China-environment (Zhang 2018); China-disability rights (Chen and Xu 2011); Colombia-land titling (Quiñones Mendoza, Rosen and Fox 2022); Colombia-peasant movement (Pearce 1990, Rudqvist 1983, Zamosc 1986); India-Mitanin (Pande 2022a); India-social audits (Pande 2022b); Mexico-community forestry (Bray 2022); Mexico-community food councils (Fox 1992, Fox 2007); Nigeria-Ogun (Olaore 2022b); Nigeria-NSIP monitoring (Olaore 2022a); Pakistan (Khan 2021); Peru (Samuel and Frisancho 2022); Philippines-Kalahi (Aceron 2022b); Philippines-textbook count (Aceron 2022a); Sri Lanka (Abeyasekera and Gunasekara 2022).

NB: CSO = civil society 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; roadblocks; 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.[16]

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 *of some kind* for the socially and politically excluded. Because

[16] 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).

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 that leverage was subsequently rolled back. This assessment is qualitative, relational and context-specific, which means that power 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 confirm 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.[17]

Findings: Unpacking the Sandwich Strategy Process into Phases and Dimensions

1. Triggers

Triggers refer here to events or processes that directly enabled the opening from above. Triggers include political transitions (changes in government leadership or regime), bureaucratic transitions (changes in leaders of government agencies), already mobilized social constituencies (collective voice and action), crises or shocks to the system, and international donor support before the opening. This proximate enabling effect is not intended to suggest that any one of these factors was a primary underlying cause.

Bureaucratic transitions triggered most of the openings from above. In 16 cases, reformers became senior managers of government agencies, not always due to political transitions. Some of those reformist officials chose to remain low profile, to avoid provoking backlash (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 Colombia's new constitution, which 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.

In contrast to what classic social movement theory would predict, in only one case was protest a clear *proximate* cause of the policy change that constituted the opening from above (Brazil's rural education policy). Yet 14 cases involved preexisting mobilization of constituencies that indirectly *contributed* to the opening. Also contrary to expectations, just three other openings were iterations of previous cycles of reform, including the cases of community forestry in Mexico, India's official social audits and participatory housing policy in Sri Lanka. Moreover, few openings were triggered by shocks - whether crises, disasters or perceived

[17] We choose to present the results of the complex solution because they prioritize consistency (i.e., the cases with the conditions specified by the solution also tend to have the outcome). As it turns out, for all models presented, these results are the same as 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) given that the conditions do not vary greatly among cases. See Ragin (2008) on the method and Ragin and Deavey (2017) for the software, as well as Mello (2021). See Brockmyer (2016) for a helpful discussion of the different solutions produced by QCA.

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 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).[18] 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.

In 12 cases, reforms either promoted co-governance of programs or recognized citizens' right to oversight via participatory policy monitoring. Official participatory programs shared targeted information 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 Brazilian states where the landless movement was strong enough and politicians agreed, their organizations co-governed rural schools in agrarian reform settlements. Hybrid state-society regional councils in Colombia

[18] 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.

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. Reform-minded federal and state policymakers in Nigeria 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. A regional office of the Peruvian 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. The education ministry in the Philippines 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 its relationship with civil society on women's rights.

In 13 cases, changes in laws or policies 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. Laws mandated openings for public action 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. 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. Brazil's rural education policy – itself a response to movement advocacy – created spaces for collaborative implementation. In the community-driven development program in the Philippines, municipal forums of elected village leaders selected projects. 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 provided resources and/or recognition, leading 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. The decentralization law in Bolivia gave grassroots territorial organizations standing to engage with local governments. Resources from the Brazilian 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. The state government's community health workers in Chhattisgarh, India monitored health programs, supported other rights struggles, and tried to bargain collectively. Forest policy provided resources and technical support for agrarian communities in Mexico 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. Pakistan's national commission brought together women's organizations in a national conference and provided cover that allowed them to petition, protest, and advocate. The community-driven development program in the Philippines 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, 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, 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.' After a change in the Colombian 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, council members carried out warehouse takeovers. In Pakistan, a women's rights coalition petitioned and protested against traditional men-only councils and impunity for sexual violence. Most of these cases of protest were enabled, directly or indirectly, by insider support from government officials (albeit often transitory).

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. And 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

This category, which combines resistance from within the state with reformists' loss of power, includes almost all (18) of the cases. Sometimes these responses limited the opening in the first place and other times they attempted to block 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. Conservative religious legislators in Brazil resisted reform to support a stigmatized disease (HIV), the health minister resisted increasing the national budget for HIV medication, and subnational politicians/bureaucrats failed to 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 overlook 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. Even though Mexico's 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. Also in Nigeria, federal cabinet ministers resisted third party monitoring of anti-poverty programs. In Pakistan, the national government resisted funding its own commission on the status of women. Local Peruvian 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 loss of a key state champion and turnover in local education officials, thus limiting the capacity of parent-teacher associations and school management committees to monitor the school feeding program. 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. Local political operatives, rather than autonomous social movements, led the collective land titling processes in some Colombian communities. In some regions of rural Mexico, government food agency officials and local elites controlled the oversight councils. A newly-elected government in Nigeria's Ogun State 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. And local elected officials influenced the rural councils managing Sri Lanka's housing program.

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 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 politicos 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 of the sandwich strategy led to substantial relative power shifts. Power shifts unfolded in multiple arenas – some more within society, others more within the state. Table 2 synthesizes this conceptual framework for mapping the nature of power shifts in each case. Specifically, power shifts took the form of greater capacity of state institutions to include and respond to the socially excluded in some cases, more consolidated social organizations and capacity for representation in other cases, and sometimes a combination of these three arenas of change. Power shifts in all but one of the cases involved a strengthening of voice and entitlements, either through the consolidation and recognition of representative social organizations and networks, or through sustained pro-poor access to resources. In 10 of the 12

cases, power shifted as reforms were implemented and institutionalized, either through new laws or policies that lasted, or through the enforcement, at least to some degree, of rights promised by new laws or policies. Eight of these legacies of sandwich strategy reforms were embedded in some kind of state-society power-sharing institution that consolidated and survived changes in national political context.

Table 2. Types of Power Shifts Resulting from Sandwich Strategy Processes

	Society		State		Society AND State
Type of power shift	**Consolidation of social organizations**	**Sustained pro-poor access to resources**	**New laws or policies sustained**	**Some rights enforcement**	**Hybrid state-society bodies consolidated**
Bolivia *Popular participation law*	■		■	■	■
Brazil *HIV response*	■	■	■	■	■
Brazil (Ceará) *Rural education*	■	■	■		■
Colombia *Peasant movement*	■				
Colombia *Collective land titling*	■		■	■	■
India (Chhattisgarh) *Mitanin health workers*				■	■
India (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana) *Social audits*		■	■	■	■
Mexico *Community food councils*	■	■	■		
Mexico *Community forestry*	■	■	■		
Philippines *Participatory development*	■	■	■	■	■
Philippines *Textbook monitoring*	■	■	■		■
Sri Lanka *Million Houses program*	■	■		■	

Notes: Shaded cells indicate the presence of power shifts, and unshaded cells their absence

The power shifts identified were all incremental and uneven, and many were limited to subnational arenas. Though some later stalled or were partly rolled back, from the point of view of socially and politically excluded groups they represented tangible improvements in the balance of power. As Table 2 shows, power shift was multi-dimensional in all but one case, involving changes to both elements of the state-society dynamic.

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. In many of these cases, 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 confirms the combinations of conditions associated with power shift, and lack thereof.

QCA Results Confirm a Primary Pathway to Power Shift

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.[19] Table 3 presents the case by case assessments that went into the truth table analysis for the QCA. All of the cases with intensive collective action involved intensive openings – and all led to power shifts. In only two cases did power shift occur without intensive collective action. Furthermore, in five cases, intensive openings from above – usually together with intensive collective action – led to power shifts *in spite of* substantial roadblocks, suggesting that collaborative efforts of state and society actors can overcome roadblocks. In contrast, all cases *without* power shift lacked an intensive opening and intensive collective action. All cases without power shift also featured substantial roadblocks.

The results of the formal QCA analysis in Table 4 confirm the finding visible in Table 3, showing mathematically that an intensive opening is a necessary condition for power shift; regardless of the nature of the collective action and roadblock conditions that followed. In parallel, there is no way to overcome a lack of an intensive opening, since each case with this condition also lacked collective action, experienced roadblock, and ultimately did not result in power shift.

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

Table 3. Conditions Used in QCA of Sandwich Strategy Cases

Case	Intensive opening	Intensive collective action	Roadblock	Power shift
Cases with power shift (12)				
Bolivia *Popular participation law*	■	■		■
Brazil *HIV response*	■	■		■
Brazil (Ceará) *Rural education*	■	■		■
Colombia *Peasant movement*	■	■	■	■
Colombia *Collective land titling*	■	■	■	■
India (Chhattisgarh) *Mitanin health workers*	■			■
India (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana) *Social audits*	■	■		■
Mexico *Community forestry*	■	■		■
Mexico *Community food councils*	■	■	■	■
Philippines *Participatory development*	■	■		■
Philippines *Textbook monitoring*	■	■	■	■
Sri Lanka *Million Houses program*	■		■	■
Cases without power shift (7)				
Bangladesh *Anti-domestic violence law*			■	
China (Xiamen) *Environment*			■	
China *Disability rights*			■	
Nigeria (Ogun) *Homegrown school feeding*			■	
Nigeria *Social program monitoring*			■	
Pakistan *National Commission*			■	
Peru (Puno) *Health care monitoring*			■	

Notes: Shaded cells indicate the presence of the condition, and unshaded cells its absence.

Table 4. 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: ~ 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 while 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).[20] 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 may 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 effects and causes of the difficult construction of countervailing power – defined as "a variety

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

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.[21] 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 experiences with official channels for participation, these cases of openings can be considered outliers because tangible state measures to enable collective action are rare. The cases involving more intensive measures are outliers within outliers.

When it comes to recognizing and explaining the trajectories of state-society coalitions for change, academic theory still lags behind the actual practices of advocates of inclusionary reform. This study finds that the 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 their own government. 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 reformers lose power. Though policymaker intentions may vary widely, their main constraint is their political weakness vis-à-vis the rest of the state – which is one reason why they needed to enable collective action from below to pursue their goals 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, which may be 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 enablers 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 sandwich metaphor's second limitation involves its *target*. The term 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. Roadblocks within the state are not limited to intermediate layers within the state apparatus. The opposition to the recognition of the socially excluded may be

[21] 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). These distinctions underscore the relevance of strategic approaches to governance reform to enable citizen action, in contrast to the much less intensive, tactical interventions that are the main focus of field experiments (Fox 2015).

entrenched in other *national* agencies or branches of government. Yet even if side-by-side contention between different national government agencies does not fit the layered metaphor 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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