

From Evidence to Action: Coalitions 4 Reform & State-Society Synergy

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State-society synergy – takeaways for C4R

- The C4R approach is closely aligned with the concept of state-society synergy
- That concept is not new – it simply names strategies of mutual support that are common sense for change agents in the real world
- Specific points of convergence between C4R and recent ARC research include:
 - *Focus on multistakeholder coalitions for change & mutual empowerment*
 - *Focus on understanding pathways of change*
 - *Application of analytical methods that are fit for purpose*



Propositions that inform state-society synergy:

- Reformers need active stakeholder coalitions to overcome obstacles
- Distinguish between *strategic* and *tactical* approaches to change
- Recognize that *pro-poor* governance reforms involve power shifts
- Outsider constituencies can bolster insider reformers' capacity to deliver
- This convergence can drive power shifts... which need virtuous circles to grow
- Dilemma: *Power is needed to shift power*
- ***This study identified patterns among diverse pathways to power shifts***



Questions about one set of multistakeholder coalitions

What happens when reformist policymakers deliver openings that tangibly enable collective action by the socially excluded?

Propositions tested included:

- Openings may be triggered by a variety of factors
- Openings are rare
- Light touch consultation is not enough
- Collective action can take diverse forms
- Resistance from vested interests is likely (not merely possible...)
- Power shifts will be uneven, incremental, context-specific – and hard to measure



Research design & evidence

- Compare pathways of change following openings from above where reformers took actions that **tangibly reduced the risks or costs of collective action**
- That opening from above was the constant (not sampling on dependent variable)
- Variation across global South, sectors, and scale, with and without aid role
- Methods: Process tracing (within case) plus qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)
- **Power shift:** When under-represented social actors gained some degree of increased leverage, related to the opening and sustained over at least several years (even if progress was subsequently rolled back)



Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) primer

- QCA is grounded in Boolean algebra, to identify relationships (vs causal weights)
- QCA is both an approach *and* a set of techniques best suited for:
 - Medium-N set of cases (e.g., 10-30)
 - Within-case complexity
 - “Multiple conjunctural causation” → different possible combinations (“recipes”) of conditions (contributing factors) can lead to similar outcomes...
 - Identifies interdependence and path dependence → pathways
- QCA uses a truth table to identify combinations of conditions
- QCA software produces “solutions” – recipes of conditions necessary and/or sufficient to produce outcome



Pathways to power shifts



State-society synergy cases & outcomes

Cases with power shift

| | |
|--|---|
| 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 & CSO umbrella networks at multiple levels, which sustained rights to non-discrimination & the provision of antiretroviral therapy. |
| Brazil (Ceará) <i>Rural education</i> | 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 <i>Peasant movement</i> | 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 <i>Collective land titling</i> | Reformers supported large-scale collective titling of Afrodescendant community land councils, including hybrid power-sharing Regional Councils that promoted policy implementation. |
| India (Chhattisgarh) <i>Mitanin community health workers</i> | 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) <i>Social audits</i> | 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 <i>Community food councils</i> | 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 <i>Community forestry</i> | 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 <i>Participatory development program</i> | 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 <i>Textbook monitoring</i> | Education ministry officials encouraged nation-wide participatory civil society oversight throughout the textbook supply chain, reducing leakage and increasing efficiency. |
| Sri Lanka <i>Million Houses Program</i> | Government reformers bolstered both urban & rural community associations, resulting in improvements to housing quality and local infrastructure & regularization of tenancy. |

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



Patterns in pathways to power shifts

- All the cases with intensive openings led to power shifts (12 of 19)
- Most of those cases involved intensive collective action (10)
- Almost half of those cases encountered roadblocks (5)
- All of the cases *without* power shifts faced roadblocks (7)

Key takeaway from QCA:

Power shifts need intensive openings to enable broad-based collective action and overcome roadblocks

Three distinct types of power shifts

| 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 <i>Popular participation law</i> | | | | | |
| Brazil <i>HIV response</i> | | | | | |
| Brazil (Ceará) <i>Rural education</i> | | | | | |
| Colombia <i>Peasant movement</i> | | | | | |
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| Sri Lanka <i>Million Houses program</i> | | | | | |



Patterns of aid agency involvement

- Aid agency support *can* bolster national reform actors and processes, vs project bubbles that lack multiplier effects
- Aid's contribution was often catalytic (multi-stakeholder convenor, seed funds) – even in non-aid-dependent states (Brazil, Mexico, India)
- Development agencies contributed in 8 of 12 cases with power shift (5 with WB), 4 of 7 of cases without shifts
- Some agencies both enabled openings *and* funded implementation (Colombia, Nigeria, Philippines), others were involved with one or the other (India, Mexico)
- Multiple aid agencies can support the same opening, though coordination is uncommon (Nigeria, Philippines, Sri La/nka)
- How can large aid agencies respond more nimbly to windows of opportunity?



Key lessons for the role of aid agencies

- Invest in multistakeholder engagement that is both broad and deep—do not count on a few consultations to drive power shifts
- Ensure funds reach government units controlled by reformers, to build capacity to respond to informed, broad-based citizen engagement
- To reduce risks/costs of stakeholder collective action, invest in reformers' intensive field presence at scale
- Support hybrid public institutions that can survive national political shifts (e.g., subnational power sharing bodies)
- Support broad-based membership organizations that can advocate for their constituencies



For more details:



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Pathways towards power shifts: State-society synergy

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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 study uses the state-society synergy approach to analyze exceptional cases when reformers within the state managed to deliver openings for citizen action that tangibly empowered otherwise excluded or marginalized groups. What happens when these reform strategies are attempted? We used process tracing, combined 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 these openings 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 shifts occurred where reformers' initiatives to enable collective action were themselves most intensive (often but not always backed by political change). Windows of opportunity were often open only briefly, until reformers lost power, and the pathways that led to power shifts combined collaborative and adversarial relationships. 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. While tangible openings from above are rare and conventional theory would expect little institutional change, the state-society synergy framework shows how state actions to reduce the risks or costs of collective action can enable pathways to power shifts.



Takeaways for C4R evidence

- The distinction between strategical & tactical approaches is relevant for evidence, as well as for C4R action
- Cautionary note: For C4R, don't let the tail wag the dog (where methodological demands of evaluation drive the design of the intervention)
- Inspired by reading your new Toolkit, here follow propositions for discussion for:
 - *C4R Program design*
 - *C4R Implementation*
 - *C4R M&E...*

Strategy or tactics? C4R program design

| | Strategic approach | Tactical approach |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lead actors: | Reform champions + allies | External + national recruits |
| Goal driving design: | Institutional change | Measurability, causal inference |
| Drivers of change: | Multiple actors/campaign | Intervention |
| Moving parts: | Many | Few |
| Role of interaction effects | Key driver | Not relevant |

Strategy or tactics? C4R Implementation

| | Strategic approach | Tactical approach |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Variability of actions: | Yes - adaptive management | No - fixed set of actions |
| Scale/scope of action: | Multi-level/meso/national | Micro/locally-bounded |
| Resistance expected | Substantial | Not considered |
| Implementation process: | Uneven/contested | Homogeneity assumed |

M&E for C4R: Inform impact now or what to fund next?

| Primary M&E audience | National agents of change | Donors, policymakers |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| M&E goal: | Problem-solving | What to fund next |
| M&E priorities: | Real time, monitoring focus | Ex post, treatment vs control |
| Minimum N for validity | Small/medium N | Large N |
| Methodological eval focus: | Contribution | Attribution |



In conclusion... Trust matters for multistakeholder engagement

- How to sustain substantive, inclusive multistakeholder engagement?
- Trust can mitigate both power imbalances & diverse interests
- Yet trust is not some innate or fixed characteristic
- Trust can be *earned*...
- But how?



To sum up... What does this all mean for C4R?

- Why should coalition partners engage? Consider their incentives
- Beyond consultation: Co-create agendas with stakeholders
- Address imbalance: Bolster the leverage & legitimacy of under-represented stakeholders
- Deliver tangible results to under-represented stakeholder constituencies
- **To sum up: *Try to put yourself in their shoes***



To follow up...

- “Pathways towards power shifts: State-society synergy” in *World Development*: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X2300164X>
- Case studies: <https://accountabilityresearch.org/sandwich-strategy-research/>
- MacArthur Foundation Blog: <https://www.macfound.org/press/perspectives/sandwich-strategies-explained-expanding-citizen-action>
- UN World Public Sector Report on institutional resilience: [https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/18 %20WPSR%202023%20Jonathan%20Fox.pdf](https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/18%20WPSR%202023%20Jonathan%20Fox.pdf)
- “Contested terrain: International development projects and countervailing power for the excluded” in *World Development*: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20301042?via%3Dihub>
- “International aid actions for accountability: Identifying interaction effects between programme” in *Development Policy Review*: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dpr.12680>



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Summing up: Strategy before tactics

| Conceptual frame: | Strategy | Tactics |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lead actors: | Reform champions + allies | External + recruits |
| Goal driving design: | Institutional change | Measurability, causal inference |
| Drivers of change: | Multiple actors/campaign | Intervention |
| Moving parts: | Many | Few |
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