

African Cities and Incumbent Hostility:

Explaining Opposition Success in Urban Areas

In the initial decades of Sub-Saharan Africa's post-independence period, the *modus operandi* of many incumbent parties interested in perpetuating their rule was to keep urban populations satisfied and ruling populations docile. Distributional policies tended to benefit urban populations—whose proximity to sites of power and greater capacity for collective action made them potential threats to rulers' tenure—while undermining most rural dwellers' ability to accumulate wealth or organize.¹ Today, however, this tendency of buying quiescence in urban areas and practicing divide-and-rule tactics in rural ones has been largely turned on its head. The majority of parties currently in power have overwhelmingly rural bases of support, while urban areas are disproportionately opposition leaning. Recent elections in most Sub-Saharan African (hereby, "African") countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, demonstrate a pattern in which voters in urban areas are significantly less likely than their counterparts in rural areas to support incumbent parties and candidates. This phenomenon has been largely unexplored in the literature on African political behavior. And while there have been tremendous strides in the development of sophisticated measurement and analysis of Africans' political attitudes and orientations,² there has been little work on the urban/rural variable's effects on electoral outcomes.

African elections are certainly not alone in demonstrating differences between urban and rural populations' median political preferences. Recent elections in the United States, Thailand, Venezuela, and elsewhere have been marked by significant differences in rural and urban results. In some of these places the divergence can be explained, at least partly, by differences in urban and rural voters' median ideological positions. Such an explanation would be insufficient for the African context, since most parties with significant followings are not distinguishable from one another on ideological bases. Additionally, in Africa, unlike in the United States, the rural/urban divide seems to be less driven by divergences in preferences for particular parties *per se*, but divergences in preferences for incumbent versus opposition choices. *What, then, are the contributing factors to incumbent underperformance in urban areas in recent African elections?*

This paper represents an attempt to highlight this phenomenon of incumbents' general underperformance—and, conversely, oppositions' general overperformance—in Africa's urban areas, and to introduce a number of possible explanations for this pattern. First, voter dissatisfaction is likely to be higher in urban areas, primarily because of so-called structural adjustment reforms that have generally resulted in particularly large declines in quality of life, real wages, public services, and formal employment opportunities there. Second, resource-strapped opposition parties can more effectively challenge governors in urban areas, where larger numbers of voters can be communicated with and mobilized at relatively lower cost. And third, a strategy that has been particularly important in ruling parties' repertoires—the widespread distribution of relatively low-value goods in an attempt to influence voters, and often outright buy electoral participation or non-participation—is less efficient in urban areas. These three potential explanations are not intended to be exhaustive, nor should they be understood as competing. Finally, although the arguments are intended to be generalizable to a range of

African cases, and examples from various cases are used throughout, much of the supportive data and original intuitions come from Senegal and Uganda, where fieldwork for the project was conducted.

Urban Opposition and Rural Government Strongholds

As growing percentages of Africans live in large cities and towns, the urban vote is increasingly crucial in political competition. However, incumbents are, more often than not, finding urban populations to be the most problematic. In recent elections across Africa, incumbent parties have typically performed better with rural populations than with urban ones. In many cases, they have even lost outright to opposition parties in urban areas. Conversely, although they may also enjoy significant levels of support in particular rural regions, opposition groups' urban performance tends to surpass their overall national performance, in most countries. In order to document this pattern, Table 1 presents results from twenty-two African countries for which I was able to obtain sub-national breakdowns of the most recent polity-wide elections.³ Column A presents the share of the vote for the then incumbent (for presidential systems, the president's party; for parliamentary systems, the governing party or coalition) in the electoral unit(s) of the most populous urban area in the country, while Column B presents the incumbent's share of the vote nationally. Three exceptions are Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, and Djibouti, which are presidential systems for which I report legislative results. For the first two, I do not currently possess regional breakdowns of presidential vote totals, yet such results for legislative races were available. For the latter, the incumbent, President Ismail Omar Guellah, was unopposed in his 2005 re-election bid. In the seven cases where legislative results are presented, I report the ruling party's or coalition's shares of votes, not seats won.

[Table One Goes Around Here]

In nineteen of the twenty-two cases, incumbent parties' performance was lower—by an average 10.9 points—in the largest urban area than it was nationally. Only in Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique did the incumbent perform better than the national average in the largest urban area. The pattern of incumbent underperformance in urban areas holds regardless of constitutional arrangement (i.e., presidential or parliamentary). Also, while the largest urban areas in twenty of the twenty-two cases listed are also capitals—the exceptions being the Gambia and Malawi—a closer look at some of the cases should increase our confidence that the important variable here is urban/rural, and not capital/non-capital.

Before looking at several cases in greater depth, three caveats are necessary. First, while this pattern holds in 86% of the cases listed here, and in many—Ethiopia (36.4 points difference), Zimbabwe (27.4), DR Congo (25.2), and Uganda (20.4)—the difference in urban and national performance rates is quite substantial, in several others—such as Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Mauritius, and Namibia—the differential is negligible. Second, while incumbents typically performed worse in urban areas than they did nationally, they often still enjoyed large margins of victory in important cities. In Rwanda, President Paul Kagame won a crushing 87.9% of the vote in Kigali Province, yet that region represented the nadir of his performance. Incumbents also won substantial victories (i.e., over 60%) in large urban centers in the Gambia, Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania, even though they actually underperformed in

these areas. Survey data tell a similar tale of incumbents sometimes enjoying majority support in urban areas, but still performing *comparatively* poorly there. In the second round of the Afrobarometer survey, a significant majority of urbanites—61.4%—said that they approved of their respective president’s performance. However, a larger majority—72.4%—of rural dwellers expressed similar sentiments.⁴

Finally, while oppositions tend to overperform in urban areas, their support is not limited to such areas, and many enjoy substantial followings in particular rural zones. In Rwanda, only 21.6% of opposition votes came from Kigali Province; in Zimbabwe, less than a third (30.7%) of the opposition’s votes came from the urban areas of Harare and Bulawayo; in the DR Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba drew just over a quarter (27.5%) of his total votes in the first round of the presidential elections from Kinshasa; and in Ethiopia, only 8.5% of opposition votes came from the two *astedaderoch* (urban, self-governing regions) of Āddīs Ābēba and Dirē Dawa. Still, in all these cases, the opposition did significantly better in the selected urban areas than it did nationally.⁵

With these caveats in mind, it is still possible to conclude that the urban/rural variable is a highly salient one in African electoral politics. While one cannot argue that urban-ness is a necessary condition for opposition success—as the performances of Bemba in Équateur Province, Kizza Besigye in almost all of the Northern Region of Uganda, and various opposition parties in the more rural Northern and Southern Provinces of Zambia demonstrate—it does appear that, save for a few non-conforming cases, urban-ness is a useful predictor of opposition overperformance, if not outright dominance. Conversely, urban-ness seems to be a good predictor of incumbent underperformance, albeit with a few exceptional cases. Closer attention to a few cases will help flesh out this general pattern of incumbent underperformance and opposition overperformance in urban areas.

First, the urban/rural schism has been salient in recent Ugandan elections. In 2001, incumbent President Yoweri Museveni won majorities in all but nine of fifty-three districts in the country; seven of these nine districts—the exceptions being Kampala and Kumi—are in the Northern Region, where long-standing ethnic animosities and frustration over the government’s performance in the local war against the Lord Resistance Army have made Museveni incredibly unpopular. Outside of the North, Museveni’s poor performance in Kampala was notable. There, the president won a majority at only 309 of the 827 (37.4%) polling sites for which complete results are available; nation-wide, he won majorities at 12,156 of the 16,330 sites (74.4%) with data available. He won more than two-thirds of the vote at only 40 (4.8%) of the Kampala sites, compared with 9,328 (57.1%) nationally. In total, Museveni won 47.2% of the vote in Kampala, but 67.6% nationally. Although the president ran particularly badly, at least comparatively speaking, in Kampala, he also underperformed in mid-sized population centers throughout the country. In municipalities (counties)⁶ and town councils (sub-counties),⁷ he won only 55.2% of the vote,⁸ while in all rural areas—all those other than Kampala, municipalities, or town councils—he carried 70.3%. All told, there was a significant and negative correlation between the proportion of a district’s population that is urban and the share of the total vote that Museveni received there (-.298 Pearson coefficient).⁹ Five years later, Museveni performed even worse in Kampala, winning only 39.5%,¹⁰ compared with his national total of 59.9%. In municipalities, he performed even worse, claiming only 38.0% of the vote.

Like in Uganda, widespread urban opposition support was not enough to unseat the incumbent in the 2006 presidential election in Zambia. Then, supporters of Patriotic Front (PF) candidate Michael Sata celebrated as early returns showed him significantly ahead in his bid to unseat President Levy Mwanawasa. After two days of counting, Sata led with over 50% of the vote, to Mwanawasa's 28% and United Democratic Alliance candidate Hakainde Hichilema's 20%. However, Lusaka and the densely populated Copperbelt were among the earliest to report their tallies, and Sata's fortunes plummeted—and Mwanawasa's rose—as results from rural areas finally became available.¹¹ In the end, Sata won only 29.4% of the total vote to Mwanawasa's 43.0%, although the PF did sweep parliamentary seats in the Copperbelt and Lusaka, and many in urban areas of the Northern and Luapala provinces.¹² As in Uganda, ethnic and regional (other than urban/rural) factors also played a significant part in determining party support, with Hichilema doing extremely well with Tonga co-ethnics in the Southern Province and Mwanawasa's MMD performing comparatively well in heavily Bemba areas of the Copperbelt and Northern Provinces.

Unlike Uganda and Zambia, Senegal has not seen a significant politicization of ethnicity in recent national electoral contests. However, urbanites have tended to vote differently than their rural counterparts, and overwhelming urban frustration with the record of the long-ruling *Parti Socialiste* was largely responsible for, although not solely determinative of, the historic party turnover of 2000. In the second round of that year's presidential elections, opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade defeated the incumbent, Abdou Diouf, at every one of Dakar's 562 polling sites. In fact, Wade's victory was so overwhelming in the *département* that his vote total was at least twice that of Diouf's at all but 19 (3.4%) of the polling sites. He won 76.1% of the total vote in Dakar, which was his strongest *département*, after the Dakar suburb of Pikine (76.4%). Wade also performed comparatively well in other *départements* with major urban areas, winning Ziguinchor (67.5%), Rufisque (65.6%), Thiès (65.5%), Kaolack (63.8%), Mbacké (63.3%), and Saint-Louis (60.8%). Meanwhile, President Diouf typically performed best in more inland, less urbanized *départements* such as Linguère (74.4%), Podor (70.8%), Matam (70.0%), Dagana (57.8%), Kaffrine (55.4%), and Bakel (54.5%). Again, urban-ness was not a necessary condition for opposition overperformance, as Wade claimed Kédougou (56.2%), in the extreme southeastern corner of the country, and Vélingara (52.1%), in the Haute Casamance.¹³ However, urban-ness was almost a sufficient condition, since the *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* candidate won every *département* home to one or more cities with a population greater than 25,000 with at least 60% of the vote, save one—Tambacounda—where he won only 47.8%.¹⁴ Seven years later, when Wade ran for re-election, he fared much better in Dakar as an incumbent than Diouf had. However, rather than being one of his strongest *départements*, as it had been in 2000, it was now one of his weakest. Of the 34 *départements* in existence at the time of the 2007 election, only eight had lower levels of support for Wade than Dakar did. This reversal of fortune for Wade in Dakar is particularly telling.

Party turnover would not have been possible in Senegal in 2000 without significant opposition support in rural areas, as well, but a large opposition margin in urban centers was certainly a necessary ingredient for change. The Ghanaian presidential elections of that same year are strikingly similar, in that they marked historic party turnover, with results driven largely by urban hostility toward the incumbent party. In the second round of those elections, opposition

candidate John Kufuor won 60.4% of the vote in the Greater Accra Region and carried 18 of 22 constituencies there. Although the vast majority of Kufuor's support came from the regions directly to the north and west of Accra, nearly a quarter (24.0%) of his votes from outside his home region of Ashanti were from Greater Accra. The results of Kufuor's re-election bid four years later highlight the ongoing problems incumbents in most parts of Africa face with urban populations and are somewhat similar to Wade's decline of support in Dakar. Although the Ghanaian president managed to win a majority in Greater Accra, his opponents' share of the vote there totaled 48.3%, meaning that Kufuor had fared nearly ten points better there as a challenger than he did as an incumbent. And his share in Greater Accra (51.7%) fit (albeit barely) the general pattern of incumbent under-performance in urban areas, since his national share was 53.3%.

Finally, in recent elections, the urban-rural discrepancy was perhaps largest in Ethiopia. Like Senegal, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and a number of other African countries, Ethiopia has seen urban violence after perceived government mistreatment of the opposition. In May 2005 elections to the federal Council of People's Representatives (*Yehizbtewekayoch Mekir Bet*), the main opposition group, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), performed extremely well in the capital, Addis Ababa, winning all 23 constituencies and 80.0% of the vote, according to official results from the National Election Board. In the second-largest city, Dire Dawa, the CUD won 40.3% of the vote and took one of the unit's two seats, while the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won only 15.7%; other non-EPRDF aligned parties won the remaining 56.0%. As mentioned earlier, it would be inaccurate to characterize the CUD as a solely urban group; less than one in five (17.7%) of its votes came from the two urban *astedadero*ch. However, the two urban centers were the only regions where the CUD was the top vote-getter.¹⁵ Other ethnic-based opposition parties not in the EPRDF coalition—the Afar National Democratic Party and the Somali People's Democratic Party—dominated heavily rural *kililoch* (provinces) (Afar and Somali, respectively), so it cannot be argued that urban-ness was a necessary condition for opposition success in Ethiopia, but it does appear to have been a sufficient one, given the ruling coalition's overwhelming defeats in the *astedadero*ch.

These are just several examples of a fairly consistent pattern of incumbent underperformance in urban areas. Given what we know about intra-state African migration, seasonal employment practices, and diversification of risk, the significance of the urban/rural variable in African electoral politics may be somewhat surprising. Experts on African settlement and migration patterns, urban culture, and social networks have long pointed out that urban dwellers more often than not maintain strong relationships with rural communities. Migrants to urban areas are often thought of as “living in a dual system,” as most do not cut ties with their villages after relocation.¹⁶ Rather, they often leave immediate families behind to maintain landholdings, use income earned in cities to support rural-dwelling relatives or village development projects,¹⁷ and generally sustain relationships that will allow them to retire to or be buried in a home village.¹⁸ In sum, given these mutual dependencies,¹⁹ we might not expect that the political interests of urbanites would diverge substantially from those of rural dwellers.²⁰

So what explains this apparent pattern of incumbent under- and opposition over-performance in urban areas? Why does the urban/rural variable appear to be so consistently salient across a range of African elections? Of course, understanding the outcome in a single election in a particular country requires attention to context-specific variables, and any

framework that tries to explain this general pattern is likely to face problems when applied to particular cases. For example, the high anti-incumbent sentiment in Kinshasa might be as much an artifact of the east-west split in Congolese voters' political preferences as it is indicative of particularly high salience of urban-ness as a variable in the DRC's electoral politics. And the urban/rural variable does not follow the observed general pattern at all in a number of African countries, including Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique. Therefore, the arguments outlined below are merely an attempt to address the observed general pattern and not to explain outcomes universally.

In this essay, I focus on three possible explanations for the general pattern of incumbent underperformance in urban areas. First, while the *modus operandi* of ruling parties in the initial decades of the post-independence period in many African countries was to implement fiscal and monetary policies that privileged urban areas while overtaxing rural ones, those biases have been eliminated, and in some cases nearly reversed, in many states, particularly with structural adjustment and a concomitant *retour à la terre*. Urban populations have reacted angrily to these distributive shifts and, in many cases, the resultant dismantling of urban-favoring bureaucracies and infrastructures.

Second, the urban landscape, with its better-developed media environment, infrastructure, and higher population density, is simply a cheaper location in which to campaign. A political party, I argue, can reach a larger number of people with fewer resources in an urban environment. This is an added incentive for resource-strapped opposition groups to focus their campaign activities in urban areas. In the meantime, campaigning in rural areas might be prohibitively expensive for all but a few opposition groups; therefore, ruling parties' performance there, with the absence of many viable opponents, will be stronger.

Finally, the distribution of relatively low-value items by parties to voters around election periods has emerged as a ubiquitous strategy in many emerging democracies of the developing world, including Africa. Although this distribution can serve a number of functions, it is often construed as an attempt to buy loyalty, votes, or, in some cases, non-votes. Contrary to the examples of urban-based political machines in the United States and Latin America, outright vote buying might be less feasible in the cities of Africa than in its rural areas, due to higher urban standards of living, and, thus, higher prices for votes, and greater difficulties in buyers' abilities to monitor recipients' behavior. And since such strategies are more common to African incumbents, due to their favorable access to distributable resources, they are more likely to see their vote totals lag in areas where vote buying is an inefficient strategy, and to benefit in areas where its feasibility is greater. Combined, these three broad explanations take into account factors such as voters' retrospective evaluations of government performance and distributional policy, party organization and resources, and tools for political communication and mobilization.

The End of Urban Bias, The Rise of Rural Bias?

Distributional politics have shifted remarkably in Africa in recent decades, and these changes have brought with them realignments of political loyalties. In the decades immediately following independence, states' fiscal and monetary policies in Africa, like in many other parts of the developing world, could be characterized as having a distinct "urban bias." Stripped to its

essentials, urban-bias theory holds that rural areas are systematically victimized by development policies and that the source of these discrepancies is primarily political, not economic.²¹ As Michael Lipton, whose *Why Poor People Stay Poor* served as a foundation of the urban-bias school, wrote:

...the most important class conflict in the poor countries of the world today is not between labor and capital. Nor is it between foreign and national interests. It is between rural classes and urban classes. The rural sector contains most of the poverty and most of the low-cost sources of potential advance; but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organisation and power. So the urban classes have been able to win most of the rounds of the struggle with the countryside.²²

Indeed, in his seminal *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*, Robert Bates noted that many African governments during this period tended to squeeze rural interests—particularly small-holder farmers—through institutions such as state marketing boards, which bought agricultural products at prices substantially below those set by the world market. Extracted rents were then diverted toward so-called modernization projects, which typically favored urban dwellers via the development of urban-centered manufacturing sectors and bureaucracies. Over-valued currencies facilitated the import of consumer goods and industrial inputs, which again benefited an urban-based “development coalition.”²³

Such strategies contributed to serious economic problems, including non-competitive industries, resource-sapping bureaucracies, and incentives for economic informalization. Many of the increasingly debt-ridden African countries began implementing Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), particularly in the 1980s, as mandated by the Bretton Woods institutions. The reforms involved with the SAPs, including currency devaluation, elimination of food subsidies, phasing out of wage protections, reduced spending on bureaucracies and social programs, and privatization of many state-owned industries and resource-extraction endeavors tended to reduce the advantages of the so-called urban “labor aristocracy” in Africa.²⁴ In sum, urban populations tended to experience declines in real income, as wages stagnated and prices of imports and formerly subsidized goods increased; decreased opportunities to reap benefits from industry, as once-protected firms were increasingly unable to compete in a liberalized environment;²⁵ and generally declining living standards, as spending cuts and increased user fees reduced the quality and accessibility of education and health programs.²⁶

The primary impetus for the dismantling of developmental policies so heavily skewed in favor of urban interests may have been externally imposed conditionalities, but the political liberalizations of the early 1990s also provided added incentives for African rulers to adjust their distributional coalitions. With the shift toward competitive multipartyism, electoral competitors began increasingly jostling for the votes of rural dwellers, who, at the beginning of the 1990s, made up the majority of the population in every African country except the Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, and South Africa.²⁷ Appealing to rural voters was, therefore, increasingly necessary for incumbents interested in maintaining power in newly competitive systems. The coincidence of the re-introduction of multiparty electoral competition and an increased emphasis on rural development in Ghana in the 1990s highlights this point. In 1983, former Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, leader of Ghana’s ruling Provisional National Defense

Council (PNDC), largely abandoned his previously populist economic policies and embraced a neoliberal reform package sponsored by international donors. As he cut price controls, food subsidies, bureaucratic spending, and spending on higher education, all of which disproportionately harmed urban interests and sparked sometimes violent anti-reform mobilization by university students and the Trades Union Congress, Rawlings poured resources into rural areas. Rural dwellers benefited from a massive electrification program, spending on mechanically operated water pumps and bore holes, road rehabilitation and construction, and the spreading of telephone services. Cocoa farmers in particular benefited from higher prices; the creation of *mobi-squads*, which mobilized young men to work in the agricultural sector; and a revitalized Cocoa Services Division, providing farmers with disease-resistant seedlings, spraying machines, and various essential commodities.²⁸ This “rural strategy” was instrumental in Rawlings’ large margins of victory in most rural areas in the 1992²⁹ and 1996 elections.³⁰

Similar changes in development policy and electoral strategy have occurred in myriad African countries, leading some to conclude that “rural bias” has replaced “urban bias.”³¹ Opposition to neoliberal reforms in Africa has not been limited to urban dwellers, but cities have been the sites of major protests, and sometimes violence, in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, and elsewhere. Urban populations are likely to be particularly enraged by these changes for two reasons. First, these populations have experienced what has often been a dramatic reversal of fortune since the days of “urban bias,” and they are likely to be disgruntled not only by an absolute decline in real wages and living standards, but also the weakening of their comparative standards *vis-à-vis* rural counterparts. Second, owing to their often relatively high levels of education and likely belief that cities offer remarkable opportunities for social and economic advancement, many urban dwellers are likely to be especially disheartened by the diminished capacity of cities as sites for dramatic upward mobility. Many of the parties, and sometimes rulers, who made initial decisions to launch neoliberal reform policies remain in power, while few incumbents who were not involved in early SAPs have done much to reverse apparent rural biases. In sum, urban dwellers are relatively more likely to have grievances about emergent distributional politics, and demand for change in urban constituencies is consequently relatively high. These factors make urban areas particularly propitious for opposition candidates and parties.

Urban Efficiency: Geographic Variation in Campaign Costs

The disproportionately high rate of voter anger is not the only reason why urban areas are especially favorable for opposition competitiveness. Communicating with and mobilizing voters is an expensive endeavor, but these costs are not constant across a country’s territory.³² Of course, many parties are especially strong in certain geographic areas, often due to ties to a resident ethnic group that make it cheap to mobilize there, but are not competitive across the entire polity; certain parties in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Zambia fit this description. However, parties tailor their strategies geographically for reasons other than regional ethnic makeup.

Generally speaking, parties recognize that campaign costs per voter are inversely proportional to the population density of a contested area, since more potential voters can be reached through common mobilizational strategies (e.g., rallies, parades) with greater efficiency in more populated centers. Therefore, opposition parties, which typically have fewer resources

than incumbent parties, should—and do—choose to focus their resources in urban areas, where they will yield the greatest returns. Incumbent parties then face more challengers in urban areas, and their electoral performance suffers accordingly. On the other hand, campaigning is usually more expensive in rural areas, meaning that most resource-strapped opposition parties cannot afford to establish a strong presence there. Rural voters are therefore less likely to receive communications from opposition parties, and opposition parties are less capable of making a case that they are a viable alternative to the *status quo*. Therefore, the playing field is tilted in the direction of those comparatively resource-rich (read, incumbent) parties in rural areas.

The material benefits of incumbency are well known and pervasive across a wide range of political systems. In the 2006 U.S. Congressional elections, for example, the average incumbent representative raised \$1.2 million, while the average challenger raised about one sixth that amount.³³ In Africa, where economic success is often highly determined by access to state institutions, these incumbent advantages are particularly substantial. Even those ruling individuals and parties who do not outright steal from state treasuries enjoy the enhanced ability to extract resources from the private sector, the loyalty and labor of those dependent upon the incumbent for employment, and, often, favorable coverage in state-owned media. Relatively few currently extant opposition parties have been able to build up significant caches, and although many opposition figures might have accrued significant personal resource bases due to their own past ties to the ruling party, few, if any, are able to come close to rivaling incumbents' access to material resources.

Victory-minded opposition parties must therefore be very selective about how and where they spend their limited resources. Many likely conclude that urban areas are the most desirable spots in which to concentrate campaign efforts. Not only is the average urban voter more accepting of anti-incumbent messages, for the reasons outlined above, but it is simply more efficient to campaign in areas with higher population densities. A single loudspeaker-equipped truck, exhortative poster, or lively rally will reach more people in the urban Kampala District of Uganda, where population density is 6,134.7 people per square kilometer, than somewhere in, say, the northeastern Moroto District, where population density is only 20.2 people per square kilometer.³⁴

Another factor that makes urban areas cheaper sites in which to campaign is their generally higher level of media development. Political liberalization and privatization have facilitated tremendous investment in mass media in the region, and there has been significant growth in the number of private newspapers and FM radio stations. Many of these new media outlets are allied outright with oppositionists, while others either provide favorable, or at least non-biased, coverage of opposition activities and messages. The importance of these media outlets in informing voters of opposition alternatives is quite significant.

However, within countries this media development—and, therefore, oppositionists' abilities to communicate relatively cheaply with large numbers of voters—has been geographically uneven. Of course, radio penetration into even the most isolated rural areas has become nearly complete in many countries, and rural-dwelling travelers often return from visits to urban centers with newspapers and magazines. But, generally speaking, access to all forms of media—print and broadcast, public and private—is higher in urban than in rural areas. For example, in the Senegalese commune of Ndioum (*Département de Podor*, near the northern

border with Mauritania), where I conducted fieldwork during the 2007 legislative campaigns, no private or communal radio signals are currently available. Only one store in the town, which had a population of about 15,500 in 2005,³⁵ seemed to sell any newspapers, and only a handful of issues, often several days old, were usually available. And only a few households owned televisions that could access private stations, such as Walf TV, Canal Info, Dunyaa, or 2STV. In such an environment—which is actually a trading and transportation center along a major national highway and has comparatively more access to information than many other parts of Senegal—opposition parties’ abilities to communicate to voters efficiently via mass media are severely limited. In Dakar, on the other hand, over a dozen independent periodicals, available from all sorts of shops, sidewalk vendors, and street hawkers, compete for readers’ attention, while forty-two public, private, and communal radio stations have licenses, and televisions are ubiquitous.

Results from the second round of the Afrobarometer highlight such gaps between urban and rural dwellers’ access to mass media. Radio was, not surprisingly, reported as the most commonly accessed medium, with over four-fifths (81.5%) of all respondents saying that they listened to it at least several times a week. In terms of those who listened to the radio for news everyday, the gap between rural (58.2%) and urban (70.6%) behavior was substantial, but smaller than for other media, such as television. 52.7% of urban respondents reported that they watch the news on television every day, while only 13.3% of rural respondents did. In fact, over three-fifths (61.1%) of rural dwellers reported that they never watch the television news. Finally, newspaper readership was less common than television viewing among both groups: 46.8% of urban dwellers reported reading a newspaper at least once a week, while only 19.4% of rural dwellers did so.

This urban-rural variation is attributable to at least three different factors. First, as will be discussed in greater detail below, rural dwellers tend to have less disposable income than urbanites. Therefore, they are less likely to purchase newspapers, own radios and televisions, or have the power sources necessary for the latter. For example, in the most recent census in Uganda (2002), 73.1% of households in Kampala District reported owning a radio, while only 47.0% of those elsewhere did. Television ownership was rare in Kampala (29.8%), but nearly unheard of in the rest of the country (2.9%). Second, rural dwellers tend to have lower levels of education, and they will be less likely to be able to read. In Uganda, which has literacy rates higher than many other African countries, over nine in ten (93.7%) Kampala residents can read, while only about two thirds (66.7%) of residents elsewhere are literate. Also, while television and radio broadcasts are increasingly produced in local vernaculars, many prominent stations are still only available in European languages, which rural dwellers are much less likely to understand. Finally, partly due to the potential audience’s greater purchasing power and language abilities, and partly due to the larger concentration of potential consumers, there are strong incentives for investors to center print and broadcast ventures at urban sites.

In areas where the population’s access to mass media is relatively low, oppositionists will face significant challenges communicating with voters. Electoral hopefuls will therefore have to rely to a greater extent on direct contact with voters. These strategies are, of course, less efficient for reaching large numbers of voters than those involving mass media. In such circumstances of relative information scarcity about electoral competitors, risk-averse voters—

and poor, rural voters will likely be especially risk averse—might be deterred then from supporting political unknowns.³⁶ In a sense, such voters often conclude that it is better to stick with “the devil they know” than to take a chance and risk alienating an incumbent by supporting a party about which they know relatively little. Information scarcity, then, harms opposition parties and tends to benefit incumbents.

Participation Buying in Urban and Rural Areas

Finally, much of incumbents’ advantage derives from their ability to deliver particularistic benefits, as diverse as sinecures, university slots, fertilizers, and T-shirts, directly to citizens. Resource-strapped opposition parties have significantly lower abilities to play this game. However, while incumbents typically have a rather substantial advantage *vis-à-vis* challengers in terms of access to material resources, their ability to convert these resources into votes is greater in rural areas than it is in urban ones. Rural dwellers, I contend, are more easily mobilized and influenced by such distribution than their urban counterparts, for reasons I will enumerate below. And while incumbent parties tend to have larger resource bases than their opponents, their funds are not unlimited, and they likely choose to spend them in the most efficient way possible. Therefore, distributional strategies, which tend to favor incumbents, will be most common in rural areas, while the relatively disutility of these strategies in urban areas will level the playing field somewhat between incumbents and non-incumbents there.

Material exchange can be an efficient way to establish elite-voter linkages;³⁷ such strategies can be observed in all systems, although they are particularly ubiquitous in the developing world.³⁸ Much of our attention has tended to focus on relatively high-value exchange, such as prebends,³⁹ university admissions slots, or even large amounts of cash. However, for the typical voter, any benefit received directly from an electoral competitor is likely to be of considerably lower value. Around election time, competitors commonly distribute goods such as articles of clothing, comestibles, household goods, phone cards, and small amounts of cash. For example, during campaigning for the first round of the historic 2006 presidential election in the DR Congo, there were widespread reports that competitors, particularly those associated with President Kabila, were handing out bars of soap.⁴⁰

Certain instances of such distribution are attempts at “participation buying,” in which goods or cash is offered in return for a vote for a particular candidate—or, in cases in which the target is a member of a group deemed unlikely to support the distributor’s candidate, an abstention.⁴¹ The effectiveness of these participation-buying strategies is likely to be highly dependent on a number of contextual factors that tend to vary across geographical space. Assume that an electoral competitor distributes an item of value x to all residents of a particular polity. In some areas, items of this value will be sufficient to establish at least short-term linkages between the competitor and most recipients; the distributor will likely see its number of votes increase in these areas as a direct result of its largesse. In other areas, the x -value item will not be sufficient to establish linkages with most recipients; the impact of distribution in these areas in terms of the distributor’s vote count might end up being negligible. In other words, for an electoral competitor, the marginal utility of one unit of distribution will not be constant across a polity, if we conceptualize utility in terms of votes received.

Spatially, the effectiveness of these strategies is likely to vary tremendously depending on whether the area in question is rural or urban. Generally speaking, participation-buying strategies in Africa are likely to be less effective in urban areas than in rural ones due to at least two factors: 1) median incomes are higher among urbanites, thereby reducing the marginal utility that most recipients there derive from a unit of largesse; and 2) there is greater difficulty in monitoring voting behavior in urban areas to ensure compliance with *quid pro quo* arrangements.⁴²

First, a number of studies have found that the poorest are disproportionately targets of participation-buying schemes.⁴³ Such a strategy is quite intuitive; as income declines, the marginal utility that a person will derive from any extra “income” provided by an electoral competitor increases.⁴⁴ Let us assume for a moment that each member of a population has a price at which he will sell his vote (or non-vote),⁴⁵ and that, generally speaking, the individual’s income will be positively correlated with this price. A destitute person would be more likely to “sell” his vote for a bar of soap than a middle- or upper-class person would. Therefore, an electoral competitor can buy more votes with a specific amount of resources by targeting individuals whose prices are likely to be the lowest. Participation-buying strategies are more efficient when poorer populations are targets.

Rather than being randomly distributed, individuals with similar vote-selling prices are likely to be clustered geographically. In much of the developing world, wealthier populations tend to be located in cities and towns, while average income levels will be significantly lower in rural areas. Despite appalling conditions in many densely populated urban areas, living conditions are, by many measures, better in urban areas than in rural ones, at least on average. Urban-dwelling respondents to surveys conducted in the second round of the Afrobarometer reported far more frequently than their rural counterparts that they never went without food (58.7% urban to 40.1% rural), water (60.6% vs. 50.6%), medical care (55.0% vs. 32.9%), electricity (38.7% vs. 16.4%), cooking fuel (58.5% vs. 55.4%), and cash income (34.5% vs. 17.3%). The most recent household census in Uganda (2002) suggests that urban dwellers there had above average ability to obtain goods—both necessities and more luxury items. Households in Kampala were more likely to own a mobile phone (30.4% vs. 5.0%), automobile (8.5% vs. 1.6%), pair of shoes (94.9% vs. 43.5%), or two or more sets of clothing (97.1% vs. 77.8%).⁴⁶ Since urban dwellers across Africa have, on average, higher incomes and standards of living than their rural counterparts, their vote-selling prices will tend to be higher.

Another of the major challenges that electoral competitors face with such strategies is in *monitoring*. As Frederic Schaffer and Andreas Schedler have pointed out, in most market transactions, it is a fairly straightforward task for the payer to see if the payee has fulfilled his or her end of the bargain.⁴⁷ However, an electoral competitor will be hesitant to pay an individual for her vote if it cannot be sure that the individual voted in the way that she promised. In essence, the buyer has a significant monitoring problem.⁴⁸

Historically, electoral competitors have devised a number of strategies to facilitate monitoring of “bought” individuals’ voting behavior. In Senegal, for example, a Supreme Court decision prior to the 1983 election made it only optional that voters cast their ballots behind a screen. Most eschewed the screens and cast ballots in full view of party observers; to do

otherwise might have signified that the voter had something to hide. In response to post-election violence in 1988, the newly formed National Commission on the Reform of the Electoral Code enacted a number of changes, including obligatory use of voting screens. The process still allowed parties to monitor voting in the 1993 elections, however. Citizens received eight ballots, one for each of the presidential candidates, and voted by placing the ballot for their preferred candidate in the plywood box. A voter could demonstrate for whom he voted by simply showing unused ballots to a party worker.⁴⁹ Such practices remain common in Senegalese elections. However, with the increased use of Australian (publicly produced, with all candidates listed) ballots and strategies to make voting less of a transparent act, competitors pursuing vote-buying strategies have found it increasingly difficult to monitor whether payees are fulfilling their end of the “bargain” and actually voting in the way that the payer expects.

Some observers of vote-buying practices have argued that many electoral competitors have been able to monitor individuals’ electoral behavior by mobilizing networks of grassroots supporters, who are often either local elites or simply community members with dense interpersonal networks. The intuition here is that these people are particularly knowledgeable about their neighbors’ personalities and preferences, and their proximity allows them to make fairly accurate deductions about actual behavior.⁵⁰ Consider for example that an activist for Party A has distributed patronage to 100 voters in her precinct, which consists of 150 eligible voters. The electoral tallies are as follows: Party A—65 votes, Party B—20 votes. Because she can identify her neighbors by sight, she can easily determine by standing outside of the polling station on the day of the election that, of the 100 voters she “bought,” only 75 actually voted. Of the 50 people whose votes she did not buy, only 10 voted. Therefore, she can determine that at least 10, and possibly as many as 20, of the people whose votes she bought actually ended up voting for Party B. In essence, she has wasted largesse on at least 35, and possibly as many as 45, people. Again, determining the identities of those 25 who reneged by not voting is quite straightforward, but she also has a number of strategies she can employ to identify, with a fair amount of confidence, those 10-20 other people. She may have long suspected that some have secret pro-B sympathies. Others might not have looked her in the eye as they left the polling site. Some might reveal their true votes to drinking buddies, co-workers, or relatives, and this information might find its way to the activist through her gossip networks. In short, there is a good chance that she can make highly educated determinations of who the 35-45 renegers were and punish them accordingly, either by refusing them aid in the future or through social opprobrium.

Such monitoring activities are more difficult in urban areas, where the number of voters at each polling site is larger, and where immigration to the area covered by the site is generally more common.⁵¹ First, the number of votes cast per polling station is generally lower in rural areas than in urban ones. At the time of the 2001 presidential elections in Uganda, for example, the average number of votes per polling station was 548.1 in Kampala. This average is 32.8% higher than that of the rest of the country (412.6 votes/polling station).⁵² The lowest average ratios could be found in the island district of Kalangala (227.94), and primarily rural districts of Kapchorwa (302.35), Adjumani (329.25), and Moroto (342.15).⁵³ Over one in five (21.1%) of the country’s 16,330 polling stations for which valid totals were available had 300 or fewer registered voters per station.

Next, settlement patterns are likely to be more stable in rural areas than in urban ones, thus facilitating monitoring there. A large proportion of urbanites were born elsewhere. For example, according to the 2002 Uganda census, 52.8% of Kampala residents were born outside of the District; the average across all districts was only 21.3%.⁵⁴ Party activists in electoral areas characterized by high rates of migration will, on average, be less familiar with the voters with whom they interact. Greater personal unfamiliarity and the fact that many new migrants are insufficiently integrated into strong social networks make the activist's attempts to deal with the ecological inference problem—determining how an individual voted with only aggregate data available—more difficult.⁵⁵ This monitoring problem is mitigated somewhat by the phenomenon of “chain migration,” in which particular ethnic groups migrate to a certain area in disproportionate numbers, usually following predecessors who have “made good.”⁵⁶ This results in settlement patterns and social networks based on ethnic and “homeland” similarities,⁵⁷ and may improve a party activist's ability to garner information about a particular individual's behavior. Even taking this into consideration, however, it is unlikely that parties have the same ability to make inferences about individual behavior in more fluid urban situations than in more stable rural ones. In Uganda, 29 of 56 districts (51.8%) had populations in which fewer than 10% of residents were born outside of the district. Although rural areas are sometimes marked by high degrees of migration as well—the Afar Province of Ethiopia and, historically, the Kigumba sub-county in what is now Uganda's Masindi District⁵⁸—we can expect that most will have generally low levels of relatively non-integrated newcomers.

High voter-to-site ratios and local mobility are both more common in urban than in rural areas, and both complicate our hypothetical party activist's monitoring tasks. As electoral area population size and mobility increase, it becomes decreasingly likely that the party activist has significantly proximate ties with a large proportion of resident voters. In a community of, say, just a few hundred voters, where mobility in and out of the area is low, it would be quite feasible for an activist to know something about almost every individual's preferences and personality. She could also more easily construct a gossip network that would provide her with information about her peers' actual behavior. Additionally, if the local party activist is a “traditional” leader, such as a village elder, hereditary noble, or religious figure, who enjoys special legitimacy, followers might be especially hesitant to renege; the influence of such leaders, while certainly not non-existent in urban areas, is usually stronger in rural communities.⁵⁹ For these reasons, participation-buying is a more effective strategy in rural areas, and those parties—typically incumbents—that can afford such endeavors are likely to reap larger benefits there.

Additional Factors and Conclusions

The factors discussed here—shifting developmental “biases,” geographic variation in costs of political communication and campaigning, and variable efficiency in participation-buying strategies—are likely not the only contributors to the observed tendency for incumbents to underperform in urban areas in Africa. The explanation for this phenomenon is likely to be multicausal, and the arguments outlined above are not meant to be mutually exclusive. Two additional possible factors worthy of attention here are variations in opportunities for fraud and levels of education.

One possibility is that rulers practice various electoral dirty tricks—such as the outright stuffing of ballot boxes to the intimidation of suspected opposition supporters—with greater frequency in rural areas, thus inflating their vote totals there. Such tactics are less feasible in urban areas, where observers from international organizations, foreign governments, domestic rights groups, and media watchdogs have greater monitoring capacity. These observers certainly make an effort to conduct activities in rural areas, but the likelihood that their coverage will be anything approaching total is quite low. Fraud is, of course, notoriously difficult to measure, and while I concede that it is likely to skew electoral results in rural areas more than in urban centers, it alone cannot explain rulers' comparative rural strength.

Another obvious differentiator between urban and rural populations in Africa is access to formal education. As mentioned previously, urban dwellers have, on average, significantly higher levels of education than do their rural counterparts. And, generally speaking, an individual's number of years of education is positively correlated with his or her likelihood of supporting oppositionists in Africa. However, it remains unclear exactly why more-educated individuals seem to be more likely to oppose the incumbent, although a number of highly plausible explanations exist. The educated unemployed might be particularly grievous and blame the current administration for their economic difficulties, they may have more access to political information that might be harmful to the incumbent's image and a greater capacity to analyze that information, or, as political sophisticates, they may simply believe that turnover is a requisite of democratic development and a general facilitator of citizen accountability over the state. Thus, while we should not reject the education variable as potentially quite important in explaining the difference between urban and rural dwellers' attitudes towards African incumbents, more research and theorizing needs to identify and test possible mechanisms.

The general phenomenon of an urban problem for incumbents in Africa is striking, not just for the strong consistency of the pattern across diverse countries in the region, but also for the possible significance it might have for competitive democracy and citizenship there. At first glance, it seems to suggest that, despite frequent intra-state migration and strong inter-ethnic connections across geographic space, there may be something to the arguments that there are, in fact, significant cleavages in urban and rural populations' political preferences. As Sub-Saharan Africa becomes increasingly urban—there are now about three dozen cities there with over one million people—opposition parties might see their fortunes rise, assuming that the general pattern in incumbents' under-performance in urban areas holds. The effects of these demographic changes, while by no means foreordained, could be quite significant for democratic development on the continent.

Table 1 Incumbent Performance, in Urban Areas and Nationally, in Selected African Countries

Country Election (largest urban area)	Vote Share in Largest Urban Area (A)	Vote Share Nationally (B)	(B-A)
Botswana 2004 National Assembly (Gaborone constituencies)	36.6%	51.7%	15.1
Burkina Faso 2007 <i>Assemblée Nationale</i> (Kadiogo Province)	47.8%	58.9%	11.1
Cape Verde 2006 presidential (<i>círculo de Praia</i>)	50.6%	51.0%	0.4
Democratic Republic of the Congo 2006 presidential, second round (Kinshasa Province)	32.8%	58.0%	25.2
Djibouti 2003 <i>Assemblée Nationale</i> (Djibouti District)	55.1%	62.7%	7.6
Ethiopia 2005 Council of People's Reps. (Āddīs Ābēba <i>astedadero</i>)	14.6%	51.0%	36.4
The Gambia 2006 presidential (Kanifing District)	63.8%	67.3%	3.5
Ghana 2004 presidential (Greater Accra Region)	51.7%	53.3%	1.6
Kenya 2002 presidential (Nairobi Province)	20.7%	30.6%	9.9
Madagascar 2006 presidential (Antananarivo Province)	75.4%	54.8%	-20.6
Malawi 2004 presidential (Blantyre District)	37.7%	34.8%	-2.9
Mauritius 2005 National Assembly (Port Louis constituencies)	41.0%	42.6%	1.6
Mozambique 2004 presidential (<i>Cidade de Maputo</i>)	85.3%	65.0%	-20.3
Namibia 2004 presidential (Khomas Region)	64.7%	68.1%	3.4
Rwanda 2003 presidential (Kigali Province)	87.9%	95.0%	7.1
Senegal 2007 presidential (<i>Département de Dakar</i>)	52.0%	55.7%	3.7
Seychelles 2007 National Assembly (8 districts of Greater Victoria)	50.4%	56.2%	5.8
South Africa 2004 National Assembly (Guateng Province)	68.7%	69.7%	1.0
Tanzania 2005 presidential (Dar es Salaam District)	70.6%	80.3%	9.7
Uganda 2006 presidential (Kampala District)	39.5%	59.9%	20.4
Zambia 2006 presidential (Lusaka Province)	27.7%	43.0%	15.3
Zimbabwe 2005 House of Assembly (Harare constituencies)	32.2%	59.6%	27.4

NOTES

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¹ Robert H. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981).

² Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³ All data obtained from Adam Carr's Election Archive (<http://psephos.adam-carr.net/>), unless otherwise noted. Gambia: Independent Electoral Commission; Ghana: www.ghanaweb.com; Madagascar: *Haut-Cour Constitutionnelle*; Malawi: Electoral Commission; Senegal: *Conseil Constitutionnel*; Seychelles: Seychelles People's Progressive Front; Tanzania: National Electoral Commission; Uganda: *The New Vision* (Kampala); Zambia: Electoral Commission

⁴ Data and details of the surveys, which were conducted between 2002 and 2004, are available at www.afrobarometer.org. The surveys were conducted in 16 countries, including Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, with a sample size of 23,149.

⁵ In all four, the opposition share that came from the selected urban area(s) was substantially higher than the share of the vote nationally that came from those areas, indicating that opposition parties in these cases tended to overperform in urban areas. In Rwanda, only 11.3% of all votes came from Kigali Province, only 17.1% of Zimbabwean votes came from Bulawayo and Harare, 10.8% of Congolese votes were cast in Kinshasa Province, and 5.3% of Ethiopian votes were cast in the *astedaderoch*.

⁶ Municipalities include Arua, Entebbe, Fort Portal, Gulu, Jinja, Kabale, Lira, Masaka, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto, Soroti, and Tororo.

⁷ 7.4% of voters came from these municipalities or town councils. Taking Kampala into consideration, 14.2% of Ugandan voters came from urban centers.

⁸ Grouping Kampala District with municipalities and town councils, Museveni won 51.3%.

⁹ Correlation statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed test). Data from Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. *Uganda Districts Information Handbook, Expanded Edition 2005-2006* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2005).

¹⁰ The results are not the only evidence of opposition support in Kampala. After Besigye was arrested in November 2005, his supporters in the capital rioted and battled with security forces.

¹¹ Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), "Zambia: Election Violence as Opposition Leader's Early Gains Fade" (Oct. 2, 2006).

¹² IRIN, "Zambia: Sata Denies Plans to Set Up 'Parallel Government'" (Oct. 5, 2006).

¹³ The six Casamançais *départements* proved typically hostile to the PS, as Diouf won none of them in the second round.

¹⁴ Although Tambacounda is one of Senegal's largest urban centers, with a population of about 75,000, the *département* itself is relatively rural and isolated.

¹⁵ The group did perform quite well in the *kilil* (province) of Amhara, where it won 42.9% of the vote and took 55 of 138 seats. The Amhara people have long been one of most important bases of opposition to the EPRDF government, which some see as Tigrayan-based.

¹⁶ Joseph Gugler, "Life in a Dual System," *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 11 (1971), pp. 400-21; Gugler, "'Life in a Dual System' Revisited," in Gugler, ed., *Cities in the Developing World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 62-73.

¹⁷ Audrey C. Smock, *Igbo Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Dwayne Woods, "Elites, Ethnicity, and 'Home Town' Associations in the Côte d'Ivoire," *Africa*, 64 (1994), pp. 465-83; Carola Lentz, "Home, Death and Leadership," *Social Anthropology*, 2 (1994), pp. 149-69.

¹⁸ In social scientist Francis B. Nyamnjoh's novel, *A Nose for Money*, the main character, Prospère, is chided by an elderly diviner from his village, who tells him, "I have known big city dwellers whose corpses were rejected for burial by people here in the village angered by their failure to visit the village when they were alive and well in the city." (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 2006), p. 83. On issues of burial, see Lentz.

¹⁹ Of course, the strength and significance of these relationships certainly varies across countries, cultures, and time. Peter Geschiere and Gugler, "The Urban-Rural Connection," *Africa*, 68 (Summer 1998), pp. 309-19.

²⁰ See Dan R. Aronson, *The City is Our Farm* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1978); Anthony M. O'Connor, *The African City* (London: Hutchinson, 1983); Jennifer Widner, "The Origins of Agricultural Policy in Ivory Coast, 1960-86", *Journal of Development Studies*, 29 (July 1993), pp. 25-59; Harri Englund, "The Village in the City, the City in the Village," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28 (March 2002), pp. 137-54.

²¹ Ashutosh Varshney, "Urban Bias in Perspective," *Journal of Development Studies*, 29 (July 1993), p. 4.

²² (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 13.

²³ It should be noted that developers of "urban bias" theory highlighted a set of stylized facts; they have readily admitted that pro-urban, anti-rural biases are not universal, even across similar regime types. Bates, "Agricultural Policy and the Study of Politics in Post-Independence Africa," in Douglas Rimmer, ed., *Africa 30 Years On* (London: James Currey, 1991), pp. 115-29; Bates, "'Urban Bias': A Fresh Look," *Journal of Development Studies*, 29 (July 1993), pp. 219-28; Lipton, "Urban Bias: Of Consequences, Classes and Causality," *Journal of Development Studies*, 29 (July 1993), pp. 229-58.

²⁴ Some have argued that the anti-urban emphasis of SAPs was misplaced, since by the time of their implementation, many of urban dwellers' supposed privileges had already vanished. Philip Amis, "African Development and Urban Change," *Development Policy Review*, 7 (December 1989), pp. 375-91; Vali Jamal and John Weeks, *Africa Misunderstood: Or Whatever Happened to the Rural-Urban Gap?* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

²⁵ David Simon, *Cities, Capital and Development* (London: Belhaven, 1992); Roger Riddell, "The Future of the Manufacturing Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa," in Thomas M. Callaghy and John Ravenhill, eds., *Hemmed In* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 215-47.

²⁶ World Bank, *Urban Policy and Economic Development*, World Bank Policy Paper (Washington, 1991).

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- ²⁷ World Development Indicators (1991). In 2005, urbanites comprised the majority of the populations of eleven African countries, including Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, the Gambia, Liberia, Seychelles, and South Africa.
- ²⁸ Gwendolyn Mikell, "Peasant Politicisation and Economic Recuperation in Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 27 (September 1989), pp. 455-78.
- ²⁹ Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982-1991* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Richard Jeffries and Clare Thomas, "The Ghanaian Elections of 1992," *African Affairs*, 92 (July 1993), pp. 331-66.
- ³⁰ See Daniel Green, "Ghana: Structural Adjustment and State (Re)Formation," in Leonardo A. Villalón and Phillip A. Huxtable, eds., *The African State at a Critical Juncture* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), pp. 185-212; Kwamina Panford, "Elections and Democratic Transition in Ghana: 1991-96," in Jean-Germain Gros, ed., *Democratization in Late Twentieth-Century Africa* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), pp. 113-27.
- ³¹ Varshney, pp. 3-22.
- ³² Herbst argues that states' capacities for establishing authority vary according to the population density and geography of territory. *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- ³³ Figures reported by the Center for Responsive Politics. Data at <http://crp.org/overview/incumbs.asp?cycle=2006>.
- ³⁴ Data drawn from the *Uganda Districts Information Handbook*.
- ³⁵ Data obtained from the *Ministre de l'Economie et des Finances; Direction de la Prevision et de la Statistique, Service Regional de Saint-Louis*.
- ³⁶ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 40, 46, 107; Randall L. Calvert, *Models of Imperfect Information in Politics* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1986), p. 23.
- ³⁷ Charles E. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
- ³⁸ Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 10 (July 1968), pp. 377-400; John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 64 (June 1970), pp. 411-25; Christopher Clapham, "Clientelism and the State," in Christopher Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power* (London: Frances Pinter, 1982), pp. 1-36.
- ³⁹ Richard Joseph, "Class, State and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Studies*, 21 (Nov. 1983), pp. 21-8.
- ⁴⁰ IRIN, "A Vote For a Piece of Soap" (June 19, 2006).
- ⁴¹ See Frederic Charles Schaffer and Andreas Schedler, "What is Vote Buying?," in Schaffer, ed., *Elections For Sale* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007).
- ⁴² Numerous interviews, conducted with party militants and academics, in urban and rural areas in Senegal during the 2007 legislative campaign, supported these assertions.
- ⁴³ James Wilson and Edward Banfield, *City Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Judith Chubb, *Patronage, Power, and Poverty in Southern Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); James Robinson and Thierry Verdier, "Political Economy of Clientelism," Working Paper, University of California-Berkeley (2001).
- ⁴⁴ Avinash Dixit and John Londregan, "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics," *Journal of Politics*, 58 (Nov. 1996), pp. 1132-55; and Ernesto Calvo and

Maria Victoria Murillo, "Who Delivers? Partisan Clients in the Argentine Electoral Market," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 98 (Oct. 2004), pp. 742-57.

⁴⁵ Such an assumption is, of course, highly unrealistic. Some voters, no matter how poor, will never sell their vote, either because they subscribe to norms against the practice, or because they fear the legal repercussions should they be caught.

⁴⁶ Data obtained from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

⁴⁷ Schaffer and Schedler.

⁴⁸ It is, perhaps, simpler to buy non-participation than participation. Parties have been known to pay individuals from groups they deem to be unsympathetic to dip their finger in indelible ink, surrender voter identification cards, and be on excursions away from polling stations on election days. Schaffer, "Might Cleaning Up Elections Keep People Away From the Polls?" *International Political Science Review*, 23 (January 2002), pp. 69-84. The purchase of identification cards has been particularly common in Senegal (personal communication with Babacar Gueye, Dakar, July 12, 2006). All party militants I spoke with in Senegal told me that participation, and non-participation, buying have been common in past elections (although all blamed other parties for the practice).

⁴⁹ For an excellent overview of changes in Senegalese voting rules, see Villalón, "Democratizing a (Quasi) Democracy," *African Affairs*, vol. 93 (April 1994), pp. 163-93.

⁵⁰ Valeria Brusco, Marcelo Nazareno, and Susan C. Stokes, "Vote Buying in Argentina," *Latin American Research Review*, 39 (2004), p. 84; Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 139; Stokes, "Perverse Accountability," *American Political Science Review*, 99 (August 2005), pp. 315-25. According to Ismaël Medior Fall, such monitoring activities are more feasible in rural areas in Senegal because of voters' relative proximity to *chefs de village* and *marabouts* (personal communication, Dakar, July 13, 2006).

⁵¹ In their study of vote buying in Argentina, Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes found that such practices were more prevalent in smaller communities (p. 79).

⁵² Kampala had the second-highest vote-to-station ratio of any district in the country. The largest ratio was in Kamwenge (571.0), a primarily rural area the west of the country.

⁵³ These districts are all heavily rural: Kalangala (91.7% rural), Kapchorwa (95.4%), Adjumani (89.6%), and Moroto (95.6%). Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (*Uganda Districts Information Handbook*).

⁵⁴ The only other districts where more than one-third of the population was born elsewhere were Kiboga (37.7%), Wakiso (39.8%), and Kalangala (72.2%).

⁵⁵ William S. Robinson, "Ecological Correlation and the Behavior of Individuals," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (June 1950), pp. 351-57.

⁵⁶ Charles Archibald Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1963); John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighbourhood Formation and Social Networks," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, vol. 42 (1964), pp. 82-97.

⁵⁷ David J. Parkin, *Neighbours and Nationals in an African City Ward* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). For an excellent treatment of such networks, see Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

⁵⁸ Simon Robert Charsley, "The Formation of Ethnic Groups," in Cohen, ed., *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974), pp. 337-68.

⁵⁹ I thank Jonathan Howard for reminding me of this important point.