ONE

Urbanization, Voting Behavior, and Party Politics in African Democracies

"No power, no votes!" was the chant hurled at politicians from Zambia's former ruling party, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), when they toured the shanty compound of Kanyama in the capital of Lusaka during the 2008 electoral campaign.[1] Kanyama is one of Lusaka's poorest and most populous neighborhoods and, like most other urban neighborhoods across sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, suffered from frequent electricity outages.[2] Frustrated residents were determined to leverage their one source of currency, their votes, until the problem was rectified. Ultimately, the MMD suffered a crushing electoral defeat by the opposition in both Kanyama and the rest of Lusaka. Kanyama residents therefore illustrated on a micro scale the importance of the urban poor to electoral politics and democratic consolidation in Africa.

Given that Africa is now the fastest-urbanizing region of the world, the relevance of the urban poor to the region's electoral dynamics is growing. Within the next twenty years, a majority of Africa's population will reside in urban areas (Kessides 2006). Undoubtedly then, Africa's future will be increasingly shaped by dynamics in urban areas. However, this demographic shift to the cities has been accompanied by a growing concentration of poverty, disproportionately young and unemployed populations, and a host of service delivery gaps in areas such as housing, sanitation, water, and electricity (Haddad, Ruel, and Garrett 1999; Mitlin 2004; Ravallion, Chen, and Sangraula 2007; Satterthwaite 2003). Such circumstances contribute to widespread disillusionment that should be advantageous to opposition parties. Yet, why have opposition parties in some countries benefited at the ballot box from these conditions whereas others have not?

[1] This vignette draws on Chilemba (2008).
[2] Hereafter, "Africa" refers to sub-Saharan Africa.

Understanding when and why the urban poor vote for opposition parties lies at the heart of this study. Viable opposition parties are pivotal to achieving democratic consolidation, including Huntington's (1991) benchmark of having at least two turnovers of political leadership following a democratic transition. Yet, many scholars have lamented that since the region's wave of democratic transitions, few countries have witnessed the ousting of the party that was victorious during the transition (e.g., Bratton 1998; Doorenspleet 2003; Nohlen, Krennerich, and Thibaut 1999; van de Walle 2003). In fact, Posner and Young (2007) note that incumbent presidents in Africa still win reelection more than 85 percent of the time. By contrast, incumbents in Latin America and the Caribbean have lost elections about 68 percent of the time in the postwar period (Molina 2001). In India, evidence also suggests that incumbents face a distinct disadvantage in elections (see Uppal 2009). Consequently, instances of both opposition success and failure in Africa are especially deserving of further attention.

I argue that the types of strategies used by political parties to incorporate the urban poor into the political arena help explain when and why this constituency votes for an opposition party in some African democracies but not in others, despite suffering equally abysmal living and working conditions. In particular, populist strategies are more likely than alternative approaches to attract the urban poor. As defined in more detail in Chapter 2, a populist strategy represents a mode of mobilization that involves an antielitist discourse, a policy message oriented around social inclusion, and a charismatic leader who professes an affinity with the underclass. Its advantage in mobilizing the urban poor is twofold. First, a populist strategy offers voters greater *differentiation* from the multitude of parties within the region that are defined solely by a party leader's personality. Secondly, it provides greater policy *congruence* with those issues most relevant to the urban poor's living and working conditions. Where an opposition party employs a populist strategy, that particular party is more likely than its competitors to garner the support of the urban poor.

A secondary concern of this study is to examine how the approach used by opposition parties to mobilize the urban poor affects the mobilization of rural voters, whose support still remains necessary to win national elections. African opposition parties traditionally are disadvantaged vis-à-vis the incumbent when trying to mobilize voters outside the city. Opposition parties reliant on populist strategies with the urban poor face the additional challenge of retaining their base in urban areas without alienating rural voters. I argue that parties that use populist strategies with the urban poor simultaneously mobilize a sizable share of rural voters through clientelistic linkages based

on appeals to a politically salient identity cleavage such as ethnicity, religion, language, or race. This allows opposition parties to target only enough rural voters who, in tandem with the urban poor, help them win national office without requiring extensive campaigning in remote rural areas.

To illustrate the arguments, I focus on two countries, Senegal and Zambia, and their respective capital cities of Dakar and Lusaka. Qualitative evidence on party strategies, based on interviews with political elites and local experts, is complemented by a quantitative analysis of survey data collected from the urban poor within each city. The latter data represent a unique and novel set of information on both the voting decisions of the urban poor and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of their country's respective political parties. This comparative case study analysis is also embedded within a broader examination of differences in urban and rural mobilization across the continent, including in countries such as Botswana, Kenya, and South Africa.

URBANIZATION, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND CONSOLIDATION

Underlying much of this study is a concern with how demographic shifts, such as urbanization, alter party competition and voting behavior. Scholars have long believed that urbanization fostered democratization through a number of mechanisms. First, urbanization signifies the existence of a host of other factors deemed relevant to democratic sustainability. Modernization theorists such as Lerner (1968) and Lipset (1959) argued that urbanization was associated with higher education and literacy, greater media participation, and increased industrialization. Similarly, Dahl (1989) believed that high levels of urbanization were accompanied by wealth, literacy, and occupational diversity, which in turn facilitated the emergence of "polyarchy." Secondly, Huntington (1991) stressed that the expansion of the urban middle classes was one of the main contributing factors to the "third wave" of democracy, particularly because this sector of society brought with it a set of values and attitudes supportive of greater liberalization. Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens (1993, 1997) placed more emphasis on a third mechanism, namely that urbanization accompanied by capitalist development increases the ability of the working and middle classes to organize and therefore to reduce the power of a controlling narrow group of elites. Finally, Bates (1991) argued that more agrarian countries are exposed to more excessive taxation and expropriation, both of which help authoritarianism to thrive. By extension, then, less agrarian countries contribute to greater democratization.

In Africa, urban centers frequently have represented the locus of political contention and change. Between the 1930s and 1950s, African cities were the source of anticolonial strikes throughout the region, ranging from railway workers in Senegal to dockworkers in Kenya. A few decades later, in the struggle for political liberalization from authoritarian and one-party regimes, cities were once again where citizens and state authorities clashed. From the *villes mortes* campaign in Cameroon to the Soweto uprising in South Africa, the inability to govern the city placed political regimes in highly vulnerable positions.[3] During much of Africa's political liberalization in the 1990s, pro-democracy protests tended to occur first in the most urbanized countries in the region (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). The middle classes, including students, teachers, nurses, and civil servants, typically initiated and sustained these protests (Bratton and van de Walle 1992).

However, much of the scholarship linking urbanization with democratization assumes that urbanization accompanies industrialization and therefore proxies for economic development. Yet, urbanization in Africa increasingly is driven by "push" factors in rural areas rather than by large-scale industrial growth in urban centers (Annez, Buckley, and Kalarickal 2010; Myers and Murray 2007). Although urban areas do generate approximately 60 percent of Africa's economic growth, employment opportunities remain scarce, and incomes are either stagnant or falling (Sisk 2004).[4] For instance, the informal sector is believed to account for 61 percent of urban employment in Africa (Kessides 2006) and is estimated to be the source of more than 90 percent of additional jobs that will be created in Africa's urban areas within the next decade (UN-Habitat 2003). Moreover, approximately 72 percent of Africa's urban population lives in slum housing (UNFPA 2007), and the region's total slum population increased from 103 million to 200 million people over the last decade (UN-Habitat 2010a). This is often because most African countries have retained colonial, legal frameworks for urban development that are aimed at containing settlement instead of confronting rapid growth (Hansen and Vaa 2004).

[3] The *villes mortes* campaign was a general strike in the towns and cities of Cameroon during the early 1990s as a protest against President Paul Biya's opposition to constitutional reform and multiparty elections. The impetus for the 1976 Soweto uprising was opposition by South African youth to being forced by the apartheid regime to learn Afrikaans in school.

[4] This is largely because capital investment in these cities is oriented toward commercial businesses, finance, and tourism instead of industrial and manufacturing enterprises where more jobs are usually created (Myers and Murray 2007).

Recent estimates also suggest that the number of Africans in urban areas living below the dollar-a-day poverty line increased from 66 million in 1993 to 99 million by 2002 (Ravallion et al. 2007). Even based on national poverty lines, the number of the urban poor generally has increased across many African countries since the 1990s. Although comparing poverty over time is an imperfect exercise, especially because of changes in countries' measurement methodologies and poverty lines, Table 1.1 nonetheless provides suggestive evidence that urban poverty remains a very real challenge for the region.[5]

THE URBAN POOR AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Conventional perceptions of the urban poor traditionally have spanned two extremes. On the one hand, "culture of poverty" studies in other regions of the world speculated that the urban poor were excessively quiescent and politically apathetic as a result of feelings of marginality and a lack of solidarity (see Lewis 1959, 1966; Moynihan 1965).[6] On the other hand lie claims that the relative deprivation experienced by the urban poor makes them especially prone to violence (e.g., Buvinić and Morrison 2000; Davis 2006; Gutkind 1973). This view was largely echoed by the United Kingdom's Commission for Africa (2005: 29) when it warned that "Africa's cities are becoming a powder keg of potential instability and discontent" as a result of the concentration of the unemployed and disaffected in the region's growing slums.

However, research suggests that rather than complete disengagement or violence, voting represents the most common form of political participation by the urban poor within developing world democracies. According to Huntington and Nelson (1976: 75), voting provides a powerful tool for eliciting responsiveness by elites: "By and large, the evidence from recent studies reinforces that from earlier ones: political participation via the ballot is a potent weapon of the urban poor in achieving higher levels of certain material benefits and thus in helping to reduce economic inequality." This in turn may explain why the urban poor are often more active in elections than their compatriots. For instance, Thornton (2000) found that workers

[5] Satterthwaite (2003, 2004) further suggests that urban poverty not only is growing but also has been severely underestimated in the past because urban poverty lines are usually based on food expenditures, ignoring that non-food expenditures, such as rent, transport, and fuel, are a large source of expenditure in urban areas. In addition, even though access to certain services is greater in urban areas, few indicators measure the quality of the services, which can be lower in urban areas because of higher population densities.

[6] Based on her work in Brazil's *favelas*, Perlman (1976) challenged this view.

Table 1.1. *Trends in the Number of the Urban Poor for Selected African Countries*

Country	1990s	2000s
Benin	602,402	829,787
Botswana	171,718	197,687
Burkina Faso	428,465	1,107,827
Burundi	151,052	244,685
Ethiopia	2,717,199	4,092,459
Gambia	275,290	320,323
Ghana	1,535,863	1,158,856
Kenya	1,387,668	2,601,458
Lesotho	76,336	184,862
Madagascar	2,318,912	2,679,905
Malawi	821,307	474,111
Mali	865,404	1,099,834
Mozambique	2,861,634	3,386,762
Namibia	146,085	119,873
Nigeria	11,779,176	26,495,940
Tanzania	1,568,541	2,240,615
Uganda	270,478	435,224

Note: Poverty data are available for countries during only specific years. The years selected for this table were as follows: Benin (1995, 2003), Botswana (1993, 2003), Burkina Faso (1998, 2009), Burundi (1990, 2006), Ethiopia (1996, 2005), Gambia (1998, 2010), Ghana (1999, 2006), Kenya (1994, 2005), Lesotho (1993, 2003), Madagascar (1997, 2005), Malawi (1998, 2004), Mali (1998, 2006), Mozambique (1997, 2008), Namibia (1994, 2004), Niger (1993, 2007), Tanzania (1991, 2004), and Uganda (1999, 2009).
Source: Calculated from urban poverty and urban population data in the World Bank's World Development Indicators (2012).

in Mexico City's small-scale informal sector were more likely to vote in elections than formal workers. In India, Yadav (1996: 96) has described a "second democratic upsurge" in which electoral participation rates are increasingly higher among low-caste, poorer, and less-well-educated citizens. Based on two rounds of Afrobarometer data, Bratton (2006) noted that by 2005, Africa's urban poor were turning out to vote more often than

they had in the late 1990s and that the poor generally were more likely to vote than their wealthier compatriots. Moreover, survey research in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire revealed that voter turnout among shantytown dwellers exceeded the national average (Kersting and Sperberg 2003).

Nevertheless, studies on the urban poor, and on class more broadly, have been largely absent in contemporary scholarship on African parties, elections, and democratization. Baker's (1974) study on the impact of urbanization on political change in Lagos provides an in-depth, historical view over fifty years, but the study ends in 1967, only shortly after Nigeria received independence from Britain. Theoretically rich and broad-sweeping analyses of political participation and party responses to the urban poor in developing regions, such as the ones by Cooper (1983), Nelson (1970, 1979), and Huntington and Nelson (1976), were conducted at the height of one-party regimes in Africa. They also preceded much of the region's adoption of structural adjustment programs, which are believed to have exacerbated the extent of urban poverty (White 1996). In Tripp's (1997) study of Tanzania, the urban poor, represented by Dar es Salaam's informal sector, are placed at the forefront of analysis. Yet, the focus is on their role in lobbying for economic and political liberalization over the course of the mid-1980s and early 1990s rather than their preferences and behavior in the country's post-transition period.

The reason for this research gap is twofold. First, the urban bias literature of the 1970s and 1980s, popularized by Bates (1981) and Lipton (1977), emphasized that African policy makers kowtowed to the wishes of urban dwellers at the expense of exploiting the agricultural sector. The belief that an urban bias in government practices still persists, and that Africa's urban dwellers remain privileged over their rural counterparts, traditionally has caused urban poverty in Africa to be sidelined as an area of study (Maxwell et al. 2000). Secondly, Africa historically has been predominantly agrarian, and therefore the urban poor have until recently comprised a relatively small sector of society.

Yet, given that they now comprise the majority of residents in African cities, and their numbers continue to grow, the urban poor can have a potentially significant impact on the region's political landscape. Consequently, the urban poor represent what Kitschelt (2000: 849) terms "vote-rich but resource-poor constituencies." In fact, despite laments of incumbent dominance at the national level, opposition parties fare better in major urban areas.[7] Table 1.2 shows the results for the most recent executive elections

[7] This is a major contrast from the early period of democratic transition when most African incumbents lacked a strong attachment to rural constituents (see Bienen and Herbst 1996).

in fourteen of Africa's electoral democracies.[8] Following Lindberg (2007), those countries considered electoral democracies have held at least two elections, not endured an electoral breakdown caused by a coup or other military intervention, and obtained an average rating of 4 or better on "political rights" by Freedom House over the last five years.[9] If, at the time of elections, a party belonged to the opposition and received a plurality of votes in the largest city, then the respective country is classified as "opposition party dominant." Similarly, if the incumbent party at the time of elections received a plurality of votes in the largest city, the country is categorized as "ruling party dominant." As seen, the opposition was victorious in the largest urban area for more than half of these countries.[10]

THE ARGUMENT: POPULIST STRATEGIES AND THE URBAN POOR

Table 1.2 emphasizes that there are disparities across African countries regarding whether opposition parties are favored in major urban areas. As already noted, these urban areas are predominantly comprised of low-income residents who labor in the informal sector and often reside in slum housing. Consequently, the primary research question that this study addresses is the following: when and why do the urban poor support opposition parties in some countries, and in some elections, but not in others?

Given the dearth of literature on Africa's urban poor, addressing this question requires relying on explanations of the urban poor in other areas of the world or evaluating whether common claims about general voting behavior in Africa are easily applicable to the region's urban poor. There are at least four schools of thought in this respect, which are presented in further detail in Chapter 2. First, the literature on vote-buying claims that

[8] Parliamentary results are provided for non-presidential regimes, which include Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa.

[9] Notwithstanding some criticisms of this measure (Munck and Verkuilen 2002), it offers a comparative measure of political rights that is available for a broad time period across a wide range of countries. The Freedom House scale assigns a 1 to countries that best fulfill the political rights category and a 7 to those that are the worst performers in this dimension.

[10] As a result of using these criteria, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, and Mali were excluded because of recent democratic reversals Moreover, disaggregated election data were not available for four countries that fit these criteria – Cape Verde, Niger, São Tome e Principe, and Seychelles – and therefore urban preferences could not be discerned. In Mauritius, the national assembly and the prime minister are elected from multimember constituencies, with each voter having three votes, and thus it is not possible to determine the exact percentage of voters who supported each party.

Table 1.2. *Patterns of Political Party Support in Africa's Largest Cities*

Ruling Party Dominance, Country, *City* (Year)	Opposition Party Dominance, Country, *City* (Year)
Botswana, *Gaborone* (2009)	Benin, *Cotonou* (2011)
Ghana, *Accra* (2012)	Kenya, *Nairobi* (2007)
Malawi, *Lilongwe* (2009)	Lesotho, *Maseru* (2012)
Mozambique, *Maputo* (2009)	Liberia, *Monrovia* (2011)
Namibia, *Windhoek* (2009)	Senegal, *Dakar* (2012)
South Africa, *Johannesburg* (2009)	Sierra Leone, *Freetown* (2007)
Tanzania, *Dar es Salaam* (2010)	Zambia, *Lusaka* (2011)

Sources: Please see text for criteria on the countries included and Appendix A for details on specific election results.

political parties encourage loyalty among the urban poor by disbursing money, T-shirts, food, and other selective benefits during electoral campaigns. Voters see such handouts as an indicator of future benefits they may receive if that particular party came into office. Thus, by extension, voting disparities across Africa would be attributed to how much largesse ruling and opposition parties accordingly provided to poor communities before elections.

A second school of thought posits that ethnicity plays a powerful role in shaping electoral preferences in Africa. In a context of low education levels and indistinguishable party platforms, ethnicity can serve as an "information shortcut" for voters as to which candidate is most likely to be sympathetic to their needs. This may be particularly true in urban areas. Indeed, contrary to the claims of modernization theorists, some scholars have argued that urbanization only exacerbates the salience of ethnicity in the political, social, and economic domains of African city life (e.g., Bates 1983; Melson and Wolpe 1970). As such, this school of thought implies that the urban poor are more likely to support a particular opposition party when the ethnicity of that party's leader corresponds to their own.

Retrospective, economic voting represents a third strand of scholarship. In this view, constituents decide whether to support the incumbent based on the performance of the overall macroeconomy (e.g., Lewis-Beck 1988). The urban poor are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns because they are more dependent than their rural counterparts on monetized goods and services (Fay 2005; Kessides 2006), but they have fewer resources than the urban elite to withstand such downturns. Economic voting would

therefore imply that the urban poor support the opposition in countries where macroeconomic conditions deteriorate prior to elections.

Finally, the degree of participation in associational life represents another factor that can influence voting behavior. Among Africa's urban poor, associational life is increasingly vibrant, whether in the form of self-help groups or organizations for slum dwellers and informal-sector workers. From a social capital perspective, membership in such associations may increase political activism (e.g., Putnam 1993; Woolcock and Narayan 2000). From a corporatist perspective (e.g., Schmitter 1974), political parties that cater to the demands of, or are formally aligned with, such organizations are more likely to garner the votes of those organizations' members.

For either empirical or theoretical reasons detailed in Chapter 2, all four of these explanations are incomplete on their own for explaining the disparate voting patterns among Africa's urban poor. Instead, this study focuses on the interactive relationships between political parties, the urban poor, and other groups of citizens. Specifically, the initial assumption of this study is that the urban poor want improvements to their welfare and parties want to win votes. Compared with both rural dwellers and higher-income urbanites, the urban poor face distinct challenges toward securing improved welfare. Most critically, prices tend to be higher in urban areas and access to goods and services is highly monetized, whereas in rural areas, basic goods such as shelter, fuel, and food may not be marketed but rather are self-provisioned (Bratton 2006; Mitlin 2004; Satterthwaite 2004). Most taxes are paid in cities and used to subsidize service provision in rural areas, where taxes on income are extremely rare (UN-Habitat 2003). At the same time, the urban poor enjoy fewer informal safety nets in the form of kinship and community networks than do their rural counterparts, making poor economic circumstances particularly difficult to handle (Maxwell et al. 2000). Compared to other urbanites, the urban poor are viewed as a threat to state authority by circumventing property laws and building homes on land for which they lack an official title (e.g., Centeno and Portes 2006). They also lack the resources of other urbanites to secure certain services privately, such as electricity generators and private security guards, when the state is under-providing such goods. Compared to urban professionals, such as teachers and nurses, the urban poor lack the leverage to engage in strike activity to obtain concessions from the state. Overall then, the urban poor are uniquely dependent on the state for their well-being, and therefore, choosing which party to elect to national office can hold particularly important implications for them.

Opposition parties intent on winning votes are most likely to gain the support of the urban poor by tapping into the latter's disgruntlement and