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Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition

Two aspects of contemporary urban life in Africa are often described as sources of political change: the emergence of a large urban middle class, and high levels of ethnic diversity and interethnic social contact. Many expected that these factors would help spark a transition away from ethnic competition and clientelism toward more programmatic elections. Focusing on urban Ghana, this book shows that the growing middle class and high levels of ethnic diversity are not having the anticipated political effects. Instead, urban Ghana is stuck in a trap: clientelism and ethnic voting persist in many urban neighborhoods despite changes to the socioeconomic characteristics and policy preferences of voters. Through a unique examination of intra-urban variation in patterns of electoral competition, Nathan explains why this trap exists, demonstrates its effects on political behavior, and explores how new democracies such as Ghana can move past it.

Noah L. Nathan is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan.

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Class and Ethnicity in Ghana

NOAH L. NATHAN

University of Michigan



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