Money for Votes: The Causes and Consequences of Electoral Clientelism in Africa, by Eric Kramon
doi:10.1017/S0022278X18000216

Campaigns in Africa are often referred to as ‘harvesting season’, with candidates distributing everything from cash and rice to T-shirts and calendars. These handouts are often characterised as vote buying, suggesting Africans value democracy so little that they are willing, as one headline from the DR Congo put it, to trade their ‘Vote for a Piece of Soap’. Eric Kramon’s work presents a different story, with rational voters seeking to improve accountability and politicians’ performance.

There are, according to Kramon, at least two reasons to be sceptical of pandemics of vote selling in Africa. First, individuals frequently report taking handouts and not voting for the distributor, since secret, Australian ballots shield the content of their choice. Second, parties make little effort to monitor who gets what, with goodies often distributed en masse. An especially memorable story involves a politician dropping cash from a helicopter at a rally. These distributions don’t match the quid pro quos we have in mind when we think of vote buying.

Kramon’s innovation is his theoretical explanation for this behaviour. Electoral clientelism, according to the book’s logic, represents attempts to bolster candidates’ credibility as future distributors of potentially more-valuable largess. In addition, candidates who are able to incur handouts’ expenses will seem more electorally viable, and thus more deserving of strategic voters’ consideration.

The author finds support for this theory through experiments in central and western Kenya, with hypothetical distributors winning broader support from subjects and enjoying higher viability ratings. Further, Kramon finds that electoral clientelism is more effective among poorer voters (who presumably care more about distributions) and that it benefits challengers and backbenchers more than powerful incumbents (who presumably have already established their ‘type’ and viability). Finally, the data also suggest that distributions are more impactful when voters face an ethnically homogenous candidate pool, and thus cannot differentiate between candidates on the basis of ascriptive identity.

Kramon’s work presents myriad opportunities to explore other topics related to electoral clientelism, particularly from the perspective of politicians’ decision-making. First, like most literature on distributional politics, the book attempts to explain politicians’ behaviours solely with data on voters’ responses; the rich quotes here contain few, if any, perspectives from candidates.
themselves. Next, while much electoral clientelism in Africa is distributed *en masse*, a not insignificant subset is distributed in personalized ways, which would suggest attempts at vote-, turnout-, or abstention-buying. We therefore need a better understanding of how and why candidates mix different distributional strategies. Finally, the book closes with an optimistic—but somewhat tentative—finding, connecting electoral clientelism with higher post-election investment in local public goods. This suggests that electoral clientelism effectively conveys important information to voters. However, it is unclear why candidates who might not prefer to spend heavily on local public goods after victory would still not engage in the distribution of relatively cheap handouts during a campaign. In other words, it remains a bit of a puzzle as to why electoral clientelism might separate the redistributionists from the predators.

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**Taken for a Ride:** *Grounding Neoliberalism, Precarious Labour, and Public Transport in an African Metropolis*, by Matteo Rizzo.  
doi:10.1017/S0022278X18000228

After many years of neglect, the interdisciplinary scholarship on motor transportation in Africa seems to be booming. Matteo Rizzo’s text is one of the latest in a series of releases over the last two years, which looks at the practice of African workers in the motor transport sector. Rizzo uses the complex labour arrangements of the *daladala* system in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as a case study in the politics of labour mobilisation and class formation within the extensive informal economy of cities across the African continent. As Rizzo notes, throughout the 1970s, private vehicle owners operated unregulated and technically illicit services in the interstices of the government-owned UDA (*Shirika la Usafi Dar es Salaam*). When transport services were officially opened to private competition in 1983, African vehicle owners quickly took advantage of the opportunity. The number of daladala in operation expanded quickly—from 178 in 1983 to 355 in 1991 (33). The general public and government officials alike have been quick to condemn the ubiquitous, risky practices employed by daladala drivers as a threat to public safety at multiple levels. Rizzo argues that risky behaviours are rooted not only in a failure of government regulation, but also in the realities of narrow profit margins and limited job prospects among workers within the *daladala* system.

Throughout seven concise chapters, Rizzo explores the labour relations that structure the *daladala* system, as well as ongoing efforts to mobilise that diverse labour force into a more coherent class movement that could agitate for better structural and employment conditions. At the core of this analysis is an argument about the way that academics and policymakers have defined the ‘informal economy’. By tracing labour relations within the *daladala* system, Rizzo demonstrates quite clearly that the dominant narrative of the ‘entrepreneurial’ informal sector obscures a complex labour system, with overlapping systems of wage labour, paid labour and entrepreneurialism. As he argues, local efforts to