Conveyor-Belts of Information

The Role of Political Parties in Basic Service Delivery in Africa

Submitted by:

Matthias Werner Krönke

Thesis presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of Political Studies,

University of Cape Town

February 2023

I, Matthias Werner Krönke, hereby declare that all work included in this thesis represents my own work, both in concept and execution, unless otherwise indicated through references.

Signed by candidate

London, 13 February 2023

Abstract

Despite a growing interest, African political parties have received relatively little attention beyond their role as providers of clientelistic goods and services. Yet, they also regularly transmit large amounts of information about government performance between the state and its citizens. In this dissertation, I aim to fill this gap in the literature by asking whether political parties matter for how citizens view the delivery of basic government services?

I argue that where political parties collect, process, and share information about government service delivery between citizens and bureaucrats, citizens are more satisfied with said services, even where the provision is objectively the same. To illustrate political parties' role as *Conveyor-Belts of Information*, I focus specifically on two types of actors in these organisations – local party activists and elected representatives.

First, using a panel survey of Zambian citizens I demonstrate that party activists and elected officials operate as ambassadors, advocates, and problem solvers, continuously exchanging information with citizens about service delivery during and between elections. Second, I use surveys of Malawian party elites and bureaucrats to show the inner workings of political parties as conveyor-belts of information that seek to improve citizen experience with service delivery. Third, I employ public opinion data from over 30 African countries, and surveys of more than 800 elected representatives from 17 countries to demonstrate under which conditions political parties increase citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. Ultimately, I find that African parties play an important role for citizens' satisfaction with basic services in general, and particularly for education, and health care. Further, I show that this mechanism not only applies to ruling, but occasionally also to opposition parties.

The findings of this study have important implications for our understanding of how political parties contribute to democratic accountability in Africa. For example, the findings suggest that African political parties may be far more important for the transmission of information between the state and its citizens than we have previously believed.

Table of contents

Table of Figures

Table of Tables

To

Tawela, Werner,

Renate, and Felix

for inspiring me to do better,

and for showing me how to enjoy life

every day.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support, advice, and patience of many individuals and organisations. I would like to thank my supervisors Robert (Bob) Mattes and Vinothan (Vino) Naidoo. Over the years, Bob has not only become my Doktorvater in the best sense of the word, but he has also shown me what it means to make a difference and contribute to the greater good through academia. Vino has been a great co-supervisor. In addition to providing valuable feedback at all stages of the process, he has also taught me a great deal about public service both in government and as an academic at a university.

A special thanks also goes to Sarah Lockwood (now at Cambridge University). This dissertation has benefited from her guidance and advice from the very beginning. Without her generosity, I also would not even be half the scholar I am today. Robert Nyenhuis (now at Cal Poly Pomona) has not only been a trusted source of advice for my dissertation, but also a never-ending well of optimism.

I am also grateful to everyone at the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa (IDCPPA) at UCT. In particular, I would like to thank Thomas Isbell, Sikhanyiso Masuku, Hangala Siachiwena, and Sishuwa Sishuwa for their friendship and moral support.

I would not have been able to finish my dissertation without the generous financial support from the IDCPPA, Afrobarometer, and the Democratic Governance and Rights Unit at UCT. In particular, I would like to thank Jamy Felton, Vanja Karth, Carolyn Logan, Zikhona Ndlebe, Chris Oxtoby, and Jeremy Seekings for their patience with me while I was getting lost in my work.

The Governance and Local Development programme (University of Gothenburg) as well as the IDCPPA provided the bulk of the funding for the original surveys in Malawi and Zambia. In Malawi, I am grateful to everyone at IPOR, and especially Mphatso Chinsinga for his patience and flexibility throughout the entire data collection process. The Zambia Election Panel Survey would not have been possible without Michael Wahman, Ellen Lust, Jeremy Seekings, and Nicole Beardsworth, as well as the team at Ubuntu Research and Rural Development. The remaining data I use in

my dissertation was generously provided by Afrobarometer, and the African Legislatures Project (via Bob). Thanks to the two projects, I was able to 'speak' to almost 300 000 Africans, and over 800 elected representatives from the continent about my ideas. Their answers have changed this project for the better.

Thank you also to my friends – Doug Coltart, Arjun Dürr, Alex Löffler, Banele Nxumalo, Simon Obrst, and Martin Sprenger – who have been there for the ups and downs from start to finish. It has been a true privilege to share this journey with you.

My deepest gratitude is to my family - Werner, Dick and Evelyn Ng'ambi, Felix, Tase, Mwake, and Temwa - for their warmth and unwavering support. Your reminders of what is important in life have helped me to get through the tough days and eventually cross the finish line. Finally, I would like to thank my wife and best friend, Tawela. I do not have the words to describe all the ways, big and small, in which you have made this journey better. Your encouragement, patience and sense of humour is what got us here, and I can't wait to start our next adventure together.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Education, health care, electricity, water, and sanitation are essential services for human development around the world. Their importance has been acknowledged by the scholarly, policy and donor communities alike, as well as reiterated in both the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals. Yet too often these services are unavailable, inaccessible or of low quality, especially in the Global South.

The explanations for this variation in service delivery differ. However, a normatively attractive and common point of departure for scholarly work in this area points to the importance of democracy. Indeed, proponents of the democracy advantage often point to several sources of accountability such as competitive elections, the role of political parties, a strong civil society, and a free media as determinants of better service delivery (Blair, 2000; Halperin et al., 2010; Harding, 2020b; Hiskey, 2003; Keefer, 2015; Lieberman, 2015; Trotter, 2016).

And while there is a large empirical literature demonstrating that democracies often outperform autocratic regimes in the delivery of basic services, scholarly attention to how these attributes of democracy actually operate remains uneven. Among the different explanations, the connection between political parties that participate in competitive elections and service delivery is probably the most well-established relationship. For example, scholars have shown that electoral incentives shape parties' efforts to distribute electricity both within countries and around the world (Min, 2015; Trotter, 2016), while others have demonstrated that, when faced with sufficient electoral competition, even authoritarian ruling parties are more inclined to improve social welfare (Cassani & Carbone, 2016).

In contrast, the positive impact of political parties outside of their role in competitive elections has received much less attention (e.g., Hicken et al. (2016), Keefer (2015), Thachil (2016)). In fact, a related literature on clientelism and distributive politics in the Global South often paints a negative picture of parties' role in the provision of basic services, suggesting that political support is traded for excludable benefits and

services.[1] For example, Ejdemyr (2018) and colleagues find that elected representatives prioritise the provision of local public goods to their co-ethnics in electoral districts where ethnic groups are geographically segregated,[2] while others have argued that the misallocation, or undersupply of public goods is not necessarily supply-, but demand-driven. That is, because citizens are more interested in personalised assistance, or initiate relational clientelism it is less likely that Members of Parliament (MPs) provide constituency service on a more programmatic basis (Lindberg, 2010; Nichter, 2018).

Several authors have also suggested that the value of clientelism vis-à-vis public goods provision varies depending on several contextual factors such as the level of poverty, political competition, and access to services (Calvo & Murillo, 2013; Magaloni et al., 2007; Nathan, 2019; Stokes et al., 2013).[3] Whether political parties want to reward their supporters, or because they respond to citizens' particularistic demands, parties are often seen as the reason for the skewed distribution or under-supply of basic government services.

When viewed side by side, then, these two literatures describe seemingly contradictory trends. On the one hand, political parties are said to improve service delivery where they participate in intense electoral competition. On the other hand, they are often seen to worsen service delivery in the Global South, and in Africa in particular. This paradox underpins the central puzzle which this thesis aims to investigate:

To what extent do political parties in Africa affect basic service delivery?

In the pages that follow, I argue that closer attention to how African parties transmit information between citizens and the state helps to explain both cross-country and subnational variation in service delivery. Specifically, I argue that where political parties build effective ***Conveyor-belts of Information***, they contribute to citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery. In addition to facilitating material improvements of government services, they also play a crucial role in three related processes: 1) the aggregation of citizen demands, 2) the transmission of these

[1] The conventional wisdom notwithstanding, Harris and Posner (2019) as well as Jablonski and Seim (2023)challenge the centrality of clientelistic transfers in Africa by providing detailed evidence about allocation patterns from Kenya and Malawi respectively.

[2] For earlier versions of this argument, see Bates (1983)and Joseph (1987).

[3] Relatedly, others highlight the potential for clientelistic intra-party networks (esp. during primary elections) that negatively affect citizens ability to exercise democratic accountability (Acheampong, 2021; Ichino & Nathan, 2022).

demands to the relevant bureaucrats, and 3) the dissemination of information about improvements in service delivery to citizens. Because political parties have limited resources, I argue further that they are more likely to influence citizen satisfaction for some services over others.[4].Taken together, I contend that African political parties are far more important to service delivery than previously thought.

1.2 (Mis)conceptions about African political parties

If African parties are not merely networks for clientelist distribution, how do they improve service delivery? What are the contextual factors necessary for them to make a positive impact? In its focus on understanding how political parties improve citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery, this project addresses a series of commonly held understandings about African parties. The conventional view is that these parties are organizationally weak, with little grass roots presence, and thus limited capacity to engage citizens or represent their views (Erdmann, 2004; Rakner & van de Walle, 2009; Randall & Svåsand, 2002; Storm, 2013; van de Walle & Butler, 1999).

There are at least two problems with this characterization of Africa's political parties. First, while scholars describe these parties as fragmented and organizationally weak, they often simultaneously assert their ability to distribute patronage effectively (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). One is left wondering how the latter is possible, if the former is true. Second, most of these accounts rely solely on illustrative evidence, or provide detailed empirical and comparative data, only for a small number of parties in a small number of countries (Arriola, 2013; Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Elischer, 2013; Giliomee & Simkins, 1999; Kalua, 2011; LeBas, 2011; Mac Giollabhuí, 2013; Riedl, 2014; Southall, 2016; Wahman, 2017). This limits our ability to test the effects of party organizational strength and presence on the provision of basic government services in a rigorous way.[5]

A key contribution of my dissertation is to map the sub-national variation of party networks across 33 African countries and their effect on citizen satisfaction with service delivery. To preview analyses in later chapters, consider the hitherto underappreciated variation of local party presence across the continent. As can be

4 Specifically, I argue that political parties prioritise those services that are delivered at the community level (e.g., education and health care), rather than those that are ideally delivered at the household level (e.g., electricity, water, and sanitation). See below for more detail on this.
5 This paragraph was previously published in Krönke et al. (2022).

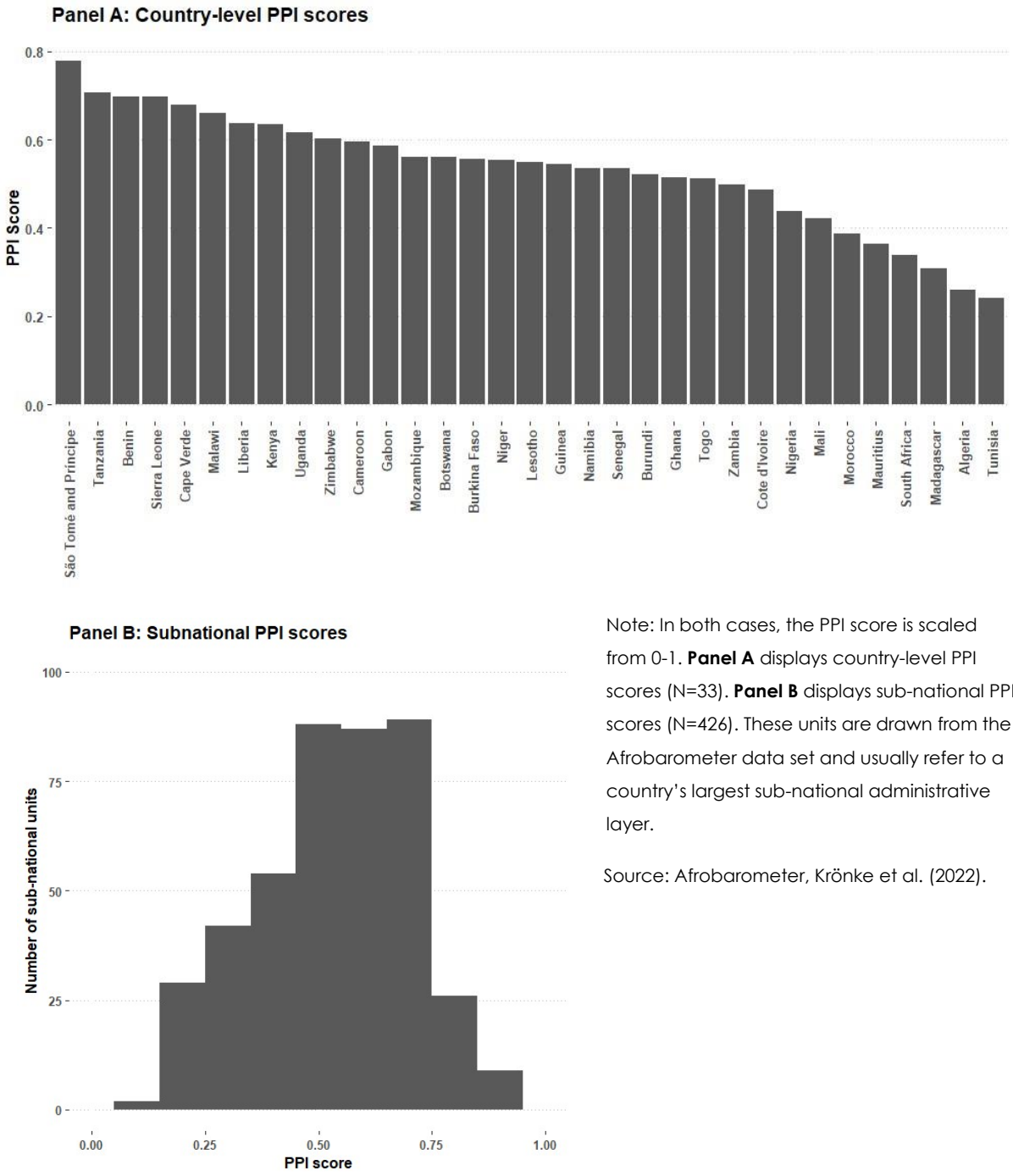
seen in **Figure 1.1Error! Reference source not found.**, the Party Presence Index (PPI), a n ovel measure I co-developed elsewhere, allows us to map both cross-national (**Panel A**, N=33) and sub-national variation (**Panels B**, N=426) of parties' ability to engage with citizens at the grassroots level (Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022).[6] I employ this and other measures when testing the relationship between political parties and service delivery in later chapters, and to challenge several conventional wisdoms about African political parties presumed inability, or unwillingness to engage with citizens.

Another commonly held assumption in the literature on African parties (and the Global South more broadly) is that when parties and citizens engage with each other, it is primarily regarding the exchange of private and club goods (those that are excludable), rather than local public goods and services (Lindberg, 2010). Yet, the empirical evidence to support this claim remains restricted to a small number of countries. A related body of work has argued that the distribution of handouts in the runup to elections is widespread on the continent (Bratton, 2008; Conroy-Krutz & Logan, 2012; Kramon, 2017; Lindberg, 2003). What remains less clear, however, is *how often* ordinary Africans engage with political parties for reasons other than individual benefits or electoral handouts. Therefore, another contribution of my work is to improve our understanding of when, how often, and why citizens and party representatives engage with each other over community-level service delivery and more programmatic constituency service.[7]

6 To calculate the Party Presence Index (PPI), we combine the responses to four survey questions to create a composite variable that estimates party presence as the proportion of citizens engaged by a political party in any one of the four ways. The four questions are: 1) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you attend a campaign rally?; 2) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff?; 3) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you work for a candidate or party?; 4) During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views – A political party official?

7 On this point, I add to recent work focusing on India (Auerbach, 2019; Auerbach & Thachil, 2018, 2020; Bussell, 2019; Kruks-Wisner, 2018; Thachil, 2016).

Figure 1.1: Party Presence Index (PPI) | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Note: In both cases, the PPI score is scaled from 0-1. **Panel A** displays country-level PPI scores (N=33). **Panel B** displays sub-national PPI scores (N=426). These units are drawn from the Afrobarometer data set and usually refer to a country's largest sub-national administrative layer.

Source: Afrobarometer, Krönke et al. (2022).

1.3 Dimensions of basic service delivery

When studying the effect of democracy on basic service delivery, scholars often focus on one or two types of services (e.g., education), and within these on specific stages of the service delivery process. In some cases, this is because studies have different variables of interest, in others, it is due to limitations in data availability (see **Table 1.1**). For example, Stasavage (2005) shows that African democracies spend

more on primary education, while Brown (1999) finds that democracies have higher levels of school enrolment, and Lake and Baum (2001) find, among other things, that citizens living in democracies have higher levels of literacy. However, if we think about service delivery as a sequence of steps, budget allocation/spending would be a necessary *input*, while the teacher-student ratio could be considered the *output* of the budget spent. And literacy is the outcome of the budget, and the student teacher ratio. Many scholars and policy makers, care most about what the first two categories produce. They are interested in the *outcome* (e.g., literacy rate).

Table 1.1: Studies confirming a Democracy Advantage for basic service delivery

	Input	**Output**	**Outcome**	**Satisfaction**
Education	Hecock (2006) Stasavage (2005)	Lake & Baum (2001) Brown (1999) Harding & Stasavage (2014)	Lake & Baum (2001)	
Health care		Lake & Baum (2001)	Besley & Kudamatsu (2006) Gerring et al. (2012) Halperin et al. (2010) Przeworski et al. (2000)	
Electricity		Hiskey (2003) Trotter (2016)	Min (2015) Ahlborg (2015)	
Water		Hiskey (2003) McGuire (2010)	Lake & Baum (2001)	
Sanitation				

Note: This is merely an illustrative representation of studies in this area. For more information also see Lieberman's (2015) review.

Studies testing the connection between democratic accountability and improvements across these three stages of service delivery assume that political parties inform technocrats about citizens' needs and where to allocate budget more effectively in democracies than autocratic regimes. Yet, they rarely test the flow of information across all three actors – citizens, political parties and bureaucrats (Grossman & Slough, 2022). Further, they expect that building more schools or increasing the country's literacy rate makes citizens more *satisfied.* Consequently, citizens would reward well performing governments at the ballot box and make electoral accountability work. However, it is not obvious why citizens would be more

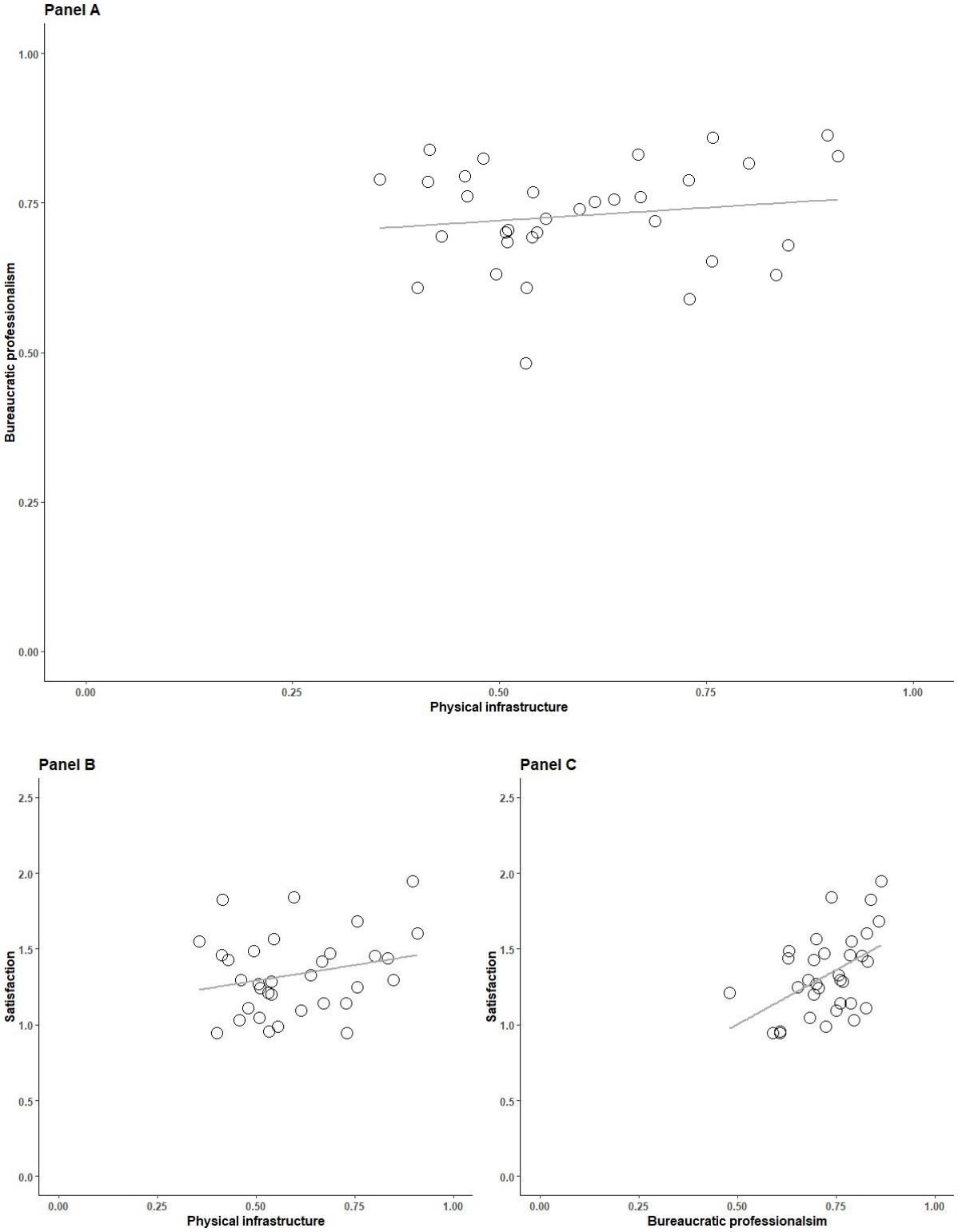
satisfied with the provision of education, if the newly built school has no teachers, a local clinic is continuously out of medical supplies, or the infant mortality rate decreases only marginally year over year. Indeed, elsewhere Krönke et al. (2022) show that the provision of service infrastructure has no effect on citizens' satisfaction with a bundle of government services (also, see **Figure 1.2, Panel B**). Thus, by disentangling the different stages of service delivery, I also help to connect the findings of the democracy advantage literature to the insights of the performance-based voting literature (e.g., Harris (2018): Lindberg & Morrison (2008); Mattes & Piombo (2001)).

To further illustrate the point, consider the three scatter plots in **Figure 1.2**. In **Panel A**, I compare the physical presence of service infrastructure built by African states (e.g., clinics) with states' ability to deliver such services in a professional and ethical manner (e.g., lack of corruption) for five types of basic services.[8]. Surprisingly, we do not see any correlation between the two dimensions. That is, just because a state is able to build schools and clinics across the entire country, it does not follow that they are well staffed and provide high quality service. Similarly, **Panel B** only shows a very weak correlation between the presence of service infrastructure and citizens' satisfaction with service delivery across 33 African countries. And while **Panel C** shows a much stronger correlation between bureaucratic professionalism and citizens' satisfaction with government services, a considerable amount of variation remains unexplained.

Conceptually, then, it is unclear how citizens would hold elected representatives to account at the ballot box and make democracy work, as long as we do not have a clear understanding of how different stages of service delivery – inputs, outputs, outcomes, and satisfaction – affect each other, and are impacted by other factors such as political parties. Therefore, I focus on the role political parties play in improving citizens' experience with and information about basic service delivery.

8 The services included in this analysis are education, health care, electricity, water, and sanitation. The data is drawn from the Afrobarometer. For a detailed description of how these concepts are measured, please consult Appendix A and Krönke et al. (2022).

Figure 1.2 Relationship between state infrastructure, bureaucratic professionalism, and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer; Krönke, Mattes and Naidoo (2022).

Throughout the dissertation, I do not take a normative position on whether citizens should or should not be satisfied with the services they have access to. While higher levels of service satisfaction can increase citizens' support for democracy (Bratton, 2009), dissatisfaction can increase different forms of political participation, and democratic accountability (A. S. Harris & Hern, 2019; Hern, 2019). What is more, even though many Africans lack access to basic services (Krönke, Mattes, et al., 2022; Mattes, 2020), and thus, have ample reason to be dissatisfied, the government of the day might have made substantive improvements to several basic services in recent years(Kroth et al., 2016; Trotter, 2016). Therefore, citizens might also have good reasons to be satisfied with how government handles service provision at a given point in time. Consequently, I sidestep the question of whether citizens *should* be (dis-)satisfied, and instead, focus on the con*ditions under which democratic accountability affects citizens' satisfaction* with government service delivery.

1.3.1 Community and household-level services

To understand how and under what circumstances political parties contribute to citizens' satisfaction with government service delivery, it is important to make a second distinction. In addition to the different stages of basic service delivery, services also differ in the ways in which they are delivered. Here, I distinguish between community and household-level services.[9] On the one hand, health care and education are generally provided by professionals such as teachers, nurses and doctors who are usually trained at higher education facilities. These professionals stay in or close to the communities in which they work and need a continued supply of material (e.g., medicine and textbooks) to provide quality service to the entire community. On the other hand, electricity, water, and sanitation, are services which are typically desired at the household level. Once the pipes, electric grids and household hook-ups are installed, the functioning of these services depends more on how individual households maintain the infrastructure, as well as the know-how of more remotely positioned experts. Relatedly, the upfront cost per household is likely to be higher for household-level services (e.g., installing a reticulated sewerage system in a community) than it is for community-level services (e.g., building a school).

[9] *For a similar distinction between village, neighbourhood and household-level services see Kruks-Wisner (2018, p. 188).*

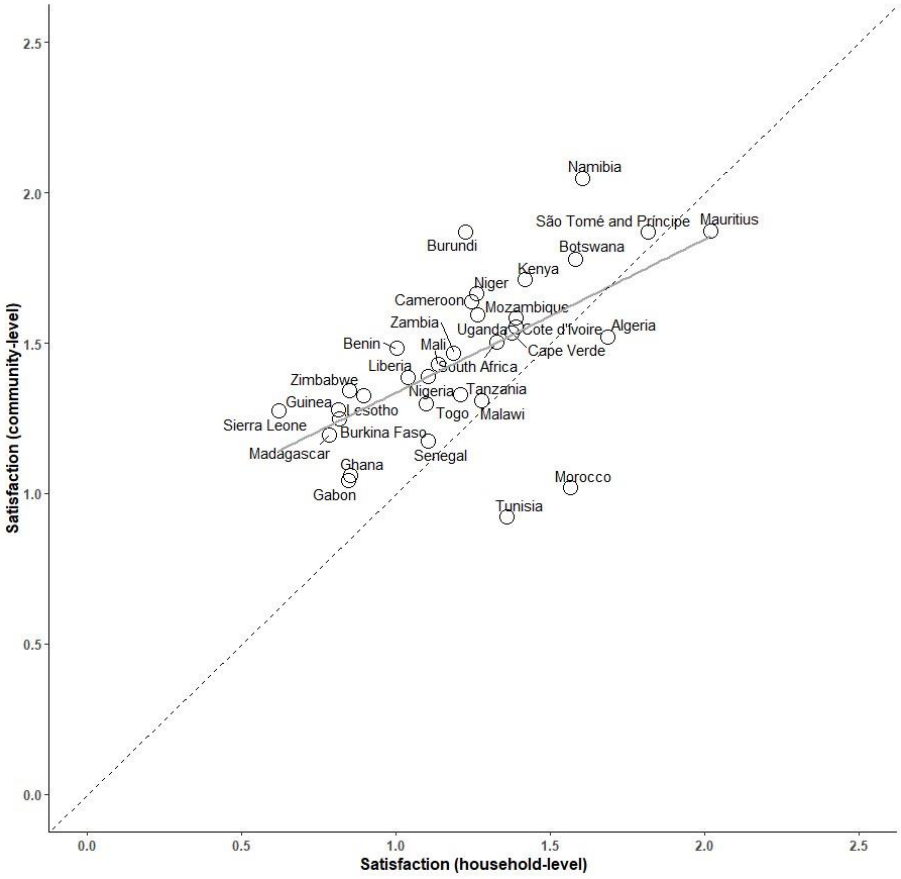
A second important difference between services that are delivered at the community vs. the household-level is the ease by which consumers can opt out of government provided services. For example, it might be feasible for an individual household to buy a diesel generator, or a solar panel to ensure more reliable electricity provision; or for a community to pool resources to drill and maintain a borehole that can provide water for several households. In contrast, securing private education or health care would require a much higher level of input (infrastructure) and ongoing professional servicing costs to maintain. The higher barrier to opting out of community-level services such as health care and education also makes it more likely that citizens will mobilise each other and demand improvements in service delivery from government. This, in turn, increases the possibility that parties will play a more important role in the delivery of these services.

A related third point speaks to why political parties might prioritize one type of service over another. If parties are more likely to face a mobilised community demanding better health care provision, and if the upfront investment per household is lower for community level services, ruling parties will probably prioritise the allocation of limited state resources to community resources, rather than household-level services. The prospects of getting more "bang for their buck" when allocating government money to education and health care are simply higher. Similarly, opposition parties might be more inclined to campaign around issues of education and health care services given the more visible public demand for them.

These differences have tangible implications. As **Figure 1.3** demonstrates, although there is a general correlation between the satisfaction with community and household-level services, on average, citizens are more satisfied with how their government addresses educational needs and health care issues, compared to how it handles the provision of electricity, water and sanitation. This is true for all countries above the dotted line (e.g., Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia). By contrast citizens who live in countries that are below the dotted line (e.g., Morocco and Tunisia) are, on average, more satisfied with the delivery of household- rather than community level services. This suggests that citizen satisfaction varies systematically based on the level at which a service is provided, and the incentives and constraints associated with these two types. Other research has revealed similar differences when looking at the provision of service infrastructure (output) across Africa (Krönke,

Mattes, et al., 2022), and India (Kruks-Wisner, 2018). The next section outlines the proposed causal mechanism behind these patterns.

Figure 1.3: Citizen satisfaction with community and household level services | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Solid line represents the country-level correlation trendline.

1.4 The argument in brief

The central argument that is advanced in this dissertation is that citizens' satisfaction with service delivery is shaped by political parties who act as ***Conveyor-belts of Information*** between citizens and the state. Two types of party representatives are particularly important for the conveyor-belt to function effectively and efficiently: elected representatives (MPs) who usually operate at the constituency-level, and local party activists, members who regularly represent their party at the community-, or neighbourhood-level.[10]

[10] *For stylistic purposes, I use the terms 'community' and 'neighbourhood' interchangeably.*

According to my theory, these actors take on at least one of three roles: *problem solver*, *ambassador*, or *advocate*. Although these roles can and do overlap, and party representatives often take on more than one role in practice, I treat them as distinct analytical categories to better describe the Conveyor-belt mechanism. In terms of the first role, MPs and party activists act as ***problem solvers*** whenever they help citizens to navigate the bureaucracy. Problem solvers employ their knowledge and skill when responding to citizens' everyday demands for the delivery of goods and services, and in turn, can affect how satisfied citizens are with government services. While both MPs and party activists might help citizens directly by tangibly improving the provision of a given service, MPs might also supervise, or delegate such issues to party activists.

MPs and party activists act as ***ambassadors*** whenever they advertise their and the party's recent achievements or new plans regarding service delivery to citizens. Thus, whether they engage in personalised credit claiming and position taking (Mayhew, 1987), or intend to increase the party brand's value as a whole when talking about their achievements on a local radio station or at a community meeting, many of these actions increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

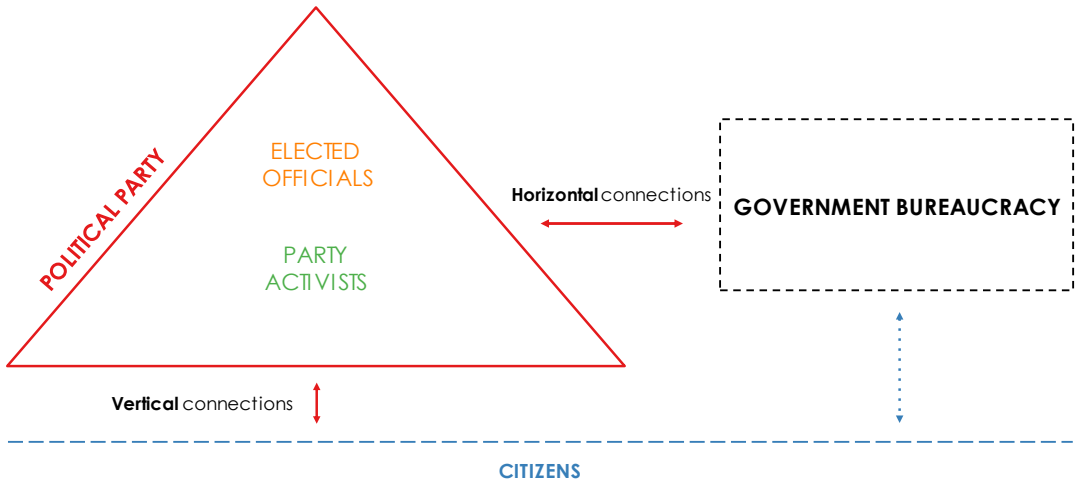
The third role party representatives often take on is that of an ***advocate***. As advocates they develop a set of issue priorities based on their engagement with citizens, for which they then lobby whenever they engage with other party representatives as well as bureaucrats. For example, a party activist might aggregate citizens' grievances about teacher absenteeism and raise the issue at a campaign strategy meeting. Alternatively, an MP will take on the same role if they discuss the issue in meetings with other party members.

The strength of the internal vertical linkages between party activists, elected officials, and other party members are crucial for the functioning of the Conveyor-belt mechanism. The stronger such formal and informal linkages are, the better parties can develop practical solutions as well as expertise of issues of service delivery, and communicate these to citizens coherently across the various levels.

Where parties' ***vertical*** *connections* with citizens, or ***horizontal*** *connections* with government bureaucracies are tenuous, however, citizens' satisfaction with service delivery will decrease (**Figure 1.4**). A broken conveyor-belt means that the transmission of citizen demands and grievances, the broadcasting of parties' efforts

to improve service delivery (e.g., opposition parties), and the dissemination of government's achievements (e.g., ruling parties) will remain incomplete, or inefficient.

Figure 1.4: The Conveyor-belt of Information Mechanism



Note: Elected officials=MPs; Party activists= party members who form the most grassroots extensions of political parties.

As outlined above, the effectiveness of this mechanism also varies depending on the type of public service – education, health care, electricity, water, and sanitation. The community-level nature of delivering education and health care means that, on average, the mechanism works better for these kinds of services than for household-level services.

Finally, I argue that in addition to the density of party activist networks, it also matters whether citizens have access to ruling or opposition party activists. Ruling parties frequently remain better resourced and more institutionalised than most of their competitors. Compared to opposition parties, ruling parties also have more opportunities to effectively oversee bureaucrats, which puts them in a better position to exchange information with citizens and address their requests. Thus, ruling parties are generally more likely to increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

Meanwhile, opposition parties face several contextual limitations shaping their ability to increase satisfaction levels. On the one hand, the level of political and bureaucratic control at the sub-national level can decrease the effectiveness of the Conveyor-belt mechanism. Where opposition parties have control over parts of the country, they are likely to pursue a strategy akin to ruling parties and try their best to

improve the (perception of) service delivery. On the other hand, where opposition parties do not have stronghold regions, they are likely to limit themselves to negative campaigning. A separate set of constraints is linked to the configuration of the party system (number of viable parties and stability of party system), which alter parties' incentives to increase citizens' satisfaction with service delivery or engage in negative campaigning. In short, I argue that this mechanism not only applies to ruling, but occasionally also to opposition parties.

Beyond Africa, the scope conditions of the conveyor-belt mechanism outlined in this dissertation are few, giving it broad geographic reach across the Global South – countries with substantive party networks, an electoral system with a meaningful single member district component, and more than one viable opposition party. These conditions describe countries as diverse as, India, Malaysia, Mexico, and Thailand.

1.4.1 Main hypotheses

To empirically test the importance of political parties as Conveyor-belts of Information, I design and test several falsifiable hypotheses. The proposed mechanism can be separated into two main parts linked to party activists (**H 1**) and elected representatives (**H 2**) respectively (**Table 1.2**). To begin with, I test several conditions under which local party activist networks are associated with citizens' satisfaction with service delivery.

First, in **H 1a** I test the expectation that denser party activist networks are associated with higher levels of citizen satisfaction regarding the delivery of government provided education and health care services.

Similarly, **H 1b** tests for the same relationship, but for three types of household-level services – electricity, water, and sanitation. Although I expect to find positive relationships in both cases, I anticipate that the relationship is stronger in **H1a** due to the dynamics described in the previous section. Importantly, at this stage I test for the aggregate level of party activist networks. That is, the exact composition of ruling and opposition party networks that maintain the linkages to citizens at the neighbourhood level may not matter if citizens are part of an effective and efficient Conveyor-belt mechanism.

In **H 1c** I build on the previous hypotheses to test the extent to which the proposed mechanism explains the behaviour of both ruling and opposition parties. While it is

reasonable to assume that ruling party activists remain committed to increasing citizen satisfaction through their roles as problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors regardless of how many opposition parties they compete with, there is good reason to believe that this dynamic is different for opposition parties.

For example, for new or small opposition parties that lack a positive track record, focusing on the shortcomings of the ruling party is arguably a more rewarding electoral strategy. Similarly, in two-party systems like Ghana the opposition has stronger incentives to engage in negative campaigning than in cases like Malawi or Liberia where negative campaigning has a lower pay-off if two or more opposition parties engage in it.

Table 1.2: Summary of Hypotheses

H 1	*Testing under what conditions the* density *of* ***party activist networks*** *matters for citizens' satisfaction with basic services.*	1a) Citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of education and health-care services in countries where parties have denser networks of party activists.
		1b) Grassroots organisational presence of political parties is more consequential for the satisfactory delivery of community-level services, compared to household-level services.
		1c) The effect of opposition party networks is likely to vary depending on the composition of the party system and level of local political control.
H 2	*Testing under what conditions the responsiveness and engagement of* **elected representatives** *matters for citizens' satisfaction with basic services.*	2a) Citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of education and health-care services in countries where MPs are more responsive to constituent needs.
		2b) MPs engagement with citizens in their constituencies is more consequential for the satisfactory delivery of community-level services, compared to household-level services.
		2c) The positive effect of MPs is more likely occur in electoral systems with single-member-districts.

For example, for new or small opposition parties that lack a positive track record, focusing on the shortcomings of the ruling party is arguably a more rewarding electoral strategy. Similarly, in two-party systems like Ghana the opposition has stronger incentives to engage in negative campaigning than in cases like Malawi or Liberia where negative campaigning has a lower pay-off if two or more opposition parties engage in it. Once multiple viable opposition parties compete with each other and the ruling party, they are incentivised to focus their messaging on their

own unique profile to better differentiate themselves from others. Opposition parties' incentives and ability to build effective conveyor-belts might also be influenced by the level of local political control. Opposition parties that are competitive at the sub-national level could take advantage of local bureaucratic power in ways that are not possible for opposition parties that do not have local strongholds and access to state resources.

To test this hypothesis, I first disaggregate party activist networks into ruling and opposition networks for over 30 countries at the subnational level and correlate them with citizens' satisfaction of community and household-level services. In a second step, I then group the patterns I find according to the party system in each country. Finally, I revisit the Malawian case study to investigate how party strongholds, independent candidates and bureaucratic decentralisation can affect citizen satisfaction with service delivery. Due to data limitations, this analysis remains largely exploratory in scope, however.

For the relationships tested in **H 2** I shift the analytical focus to elected representatives, the second key actor in my argument. If the Conveyor-belt mechanism works as anticipated, we would expect that citizens are more satisfied with the delivery of community-level services (**H 2a**), and to a lesser extent with household-level services (**H 2b**). There is an important limitation to this connection, however. Because the link between citizens and representatives in single-member district (SMD) electoral systems is more immediate and responsive, providing an efficient connection for citizens whenever they want to hold their government accountable(Lockwood & Krönke, 2022), MPs are more likely to improve satisfaction levels in these types of systems. The weaker connection between citizens and their MPs in other electoral systems, in contrast, makes it unlikely that the Conveyor-belt operates similarly (**H 2c**).

Of course, it is theoretically possible that the data only allow us to confirm a sub-set of hypotheses. Thus, we can describe four plausible broad scenarios depending on whether the data provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypotheses specified in **H 1** and **H 2** (**Table 1.3**). In **Scenario One**, the density of party activist networks and the MP-citizen linkages are not correlated with citizens' satisfaction with service delivery, African parties do not function as Conveyor-belts of Information. In **Scenario Two**, MPs build independent conveyor-belts. That is, they develop local

structures that are closely tied to them as individuals, but do not connect to a larger party organisation. In these cases, independent MPs and those linked to a party would be equally likely to increase citizen satisfaction. Moreover, this scenario is most likely to occur in SMD systems where MPs have strong incentives to develop a personal vote and build their own organisational structures in the constituency. Taken together, these two scenarios resemble most closely the dominant view in the literature on African parties.

In **Scenario Three** networks of local party activists increase citizens satisfaction with service delivery without connecting or coordinating their efforts with elected representatives and other party elites. Such community-level Conveyor-belts are necessarily weaker and depend heavily on active party branches. Therefore, this scenario is more likely to occur in countries with proportional representation electoral systems where the pressures for MPs to connect with their constituents is much weaker.[11]

Finally, in **Scenario Four** we expect a strong Conveyor-belt in which party activists and elected representatives not only engage with citizens and bureaucrats, but also enhance each other's effect through the vertical integration of their efforts. In short, the effect of a well-co-ordinated party on service delivery is greater than the sum of its parts. Given this virtuous cycle, this scenario is also most likely to reveal substantive differences between ruling and opposition parties in their capacity to build effective conveyor-belts of information.

Ultimately, I demonstrate that African parties are significantly more likely to operate as described in Scenario Four than we have previously believed. Across more than 30 countries, I show that party activists (especially those from ruling parties) help to improve citizen satisfaction with service delivery. Similarly, I provide empirical evidence that whenever MPs take on the roles of problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors, citizens are more satisfied with service delivery across a sample of 17 African countries. Furthermore, I use case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia to show that these party representatives are not only well-known in their communities, but that they also develop strong intra-party connections through

[11] *For example, in South Africa local party branches of the ruling African National Congress might make considerable efforts to engage with citizens at the neighbourhood level to launch their political career (also because branches are important for the candidate selection process), but there is next to no benefit for MPs to develop a personal vote through constituency service. Consequently, their time in local constituencies might be more focused on internal party work.*

regular interactions which allows them to engage with both citizens and local bureaucrats. While there are important limitations to my empirical findings, a key implication of this dissertation is that political parties are far more important to service delivery than previously thought.

Table 1.3: Implications of Hypotheses

Scenario	Fail to reject null hypothesis for:	Implication
One *Parties do not function as Conveyor-belts*	H 1 & H 2	The density of party activist networks and MP-citizen linkages have no effect on citizens' perceptions of basic service delivery.
Two *MPs function as independent Conveyor-belts.*	H 1	Elected representatives change citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery through responsive MP-centred local structures. However, grassroots connections between parties and citizens are inconsequential due to weak intra-party linkages. Reach and efficacy of Conveyor-belt is limited.
Three *Parties function as community-level Conveyor-belts*	H 2	Political parties influence citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of basic services through dense networks of party activists. However, the mechanism remains constrained due to a lack of intra-party connections between party activists and elected representatives. Impact of Conveyor-belt is limited.
Four *Parties function as strong Conveyor-belts*	None	Political parties affect citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery through a fully functioning conveyor-belt mechanism. That is a combination of institutionalised local and national level linkages between citizens, political parties, and state bureaucracy.

1.5 Broader implications

This dissertation makes a number of contributions to the scholarly literature and has several practical implications.

By highlighting the role of political parties in the *exchange of information* between citizens and the state, I depart from the traditional view which has emphasized clientelistic relationships between parties and citizens in Africa. This finding has at least two practical implications. First, viewing parties as conveyor-belts of information provides us with a more complete picture of why some parties succeed and survive at the ballot box, while others do not. In turn, this also helps us understand the broader dynamics of multiparty competition on the continent, the strength of opposition parties, and why some party systems remain in flux while others stabilize.

Second, because citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery has significant electoral implications, understanding the determinants of this constitutes valuable information to political parties as they develop campaign strategies, as well as civil

society organisations as they decide how best to hold government and the ruling party accountable.

In addition to practical relevance, this dissertation also aims to fill significant gaps in the academic literature. First, this dissertation adds to the nascent scholarly work that focuses explicitly on the subnational variation of parties' organisational structures in the Global South (e.g., Auerbach (2019); Choi (2018); Thachil (2016)). By focusing on the consequences of parties' capacity to engage with both citizens and the state, this work challenges the conventional wisdom that African parties are organisationally weak. It also sheds new light on the extent to which intra-party communication takes place between elections – helping us to understand how parties transmit information between different external stakeholders.

Second, and building on the previous point, this study adds to a growing literature on the local organisational presence of parties in Africa (e.g., Brierley & Nathan (2021b) ; Krönke et al., (2022); Paget (2022)) by challenging two underlying assumptions in the literature. On the one hand, I show that citizen-initiated engagement with party representatives is far more consistent across the electoral cycle than previously thought. On the other hand, I provide evidence that the incumbency advantage might be less pervasive than common wisdom would suggest. Together, this contributes to our knowledge of party building on the continent.

Third, this dissertation helps us to recalibrate our perception of clientelism in Africa by providing systematic evidence on the work of party representatives as advocates, ambassadors, and problem solvers. Party activists and MPs spend most of their time serving their communities or constituencies, rather than responding to individuals' demands for patronage, or clientelist goods and services.

Finally, this dissertation also advances the literature on the relationship between democracy and basic service delivery (Bratton, 2009; Brinkerhoff et al., 2018; Harding, 2020a). By highlighting how political parties continuously transmit information between citizens and the state, this dissertation adds more nuance to how democratic accountability functions between elections in Africa. And by distinguishing between satisfaction with community and household level services, moreover, it introduces important new variation, expanding our understanding of

why democratic accountability works better for the provision of some services than others.

1.6 Roadmap

How and under what circumstances do African political parties contribute to citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery? In the remainder of this dissertation, I answer this question by focusing on the activities of party activists (Part I) and elected representatives (Part II).

In **Part I** (**Chapters 2-4**) I begin by contextualizing party activists within the broader broker literature (**Chapter 2**). I then describe how these party activists operate as *local-level advocates, ambassadors, and problem solvers*, before mapping out their incentives for contributing to citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery. The chapter closes by addressing some of the commonly held (mis)conceptions about local party representatives and their encounters with citizens in Africa.

In **Chapter 3** I introduce the case studies of Malawi and Zambia to investigate more closely the connections between local party activists and various other actors that form part of the conveyor-belt mechanism (**H 1a**). Using original survey data of bureaucrats, citizens, and party elites, I provide empirical evidence that party activists do indeed take on the roles of local level advocates, ambassadors, and problem solvers.

In **Chapter 4,** I then demonstrate the varying relationships between local party presence and citizens' satisfaction with government services through a large-N cross-country analysis of 34 countries in Africa (**H 1a** & **b**). This chapter also explores how the Conveyor-belt mechanism works depending on party type and party system composition (**H 1c**).

Part II (**Chapters 5-8**) focuses on the role of elected representatives. **Chapter 5** begins by outlining the three roles MPs fulfil as part of the conveyor-belt mechanism - *high-level problem solvers, ambassadors, and advocates.* In these roles they regularly complement, oversee, and support the efforts of party activists to increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

Chapter 6 returns to the case studies in Malawi and Zambia illustrating how MPs participate in the intra-party communication about service delivery, as well as regularly engage with citizens and bureaucrats about these issues (**H 2a**).

In **Chapter 7** I introduce MP survey data from 17 African countries (Barkan et al., 2010), showing that MPs' conveyor-belt related activities shape citizen satisfaction with service delivery (**H 2a** & **b**). The analysis confirms the expectations outlined in Hypothesis 2c, as the relationship between MP activities and citizen satisfaction is mediated by the electoral system type of a country. I build on these findings in the subsequent chapter.

The final empirical chapter (**Chapter 8**) also looks at the MP-citizen relationship, but this time from the citizens' perspective. Drawing on public opinion survey data from the same 17 countries, I describe which aspects of the MP-citizen connection matter most for citizens' satisfaction with service delivery, and how a country's electoral system shapes the incentives of both actors (**H 2a, b** & **c**).

Finally, **Chapter 9** concludes by summarising the main findings, discussing their scope conditions and implications to the academic literature as well as the policy world for understanding the role of political parties in government service delivery in Africa. It ends by suggesting some directions for future research.

1.7 Data sources

Studying the role of political parties as Conveyor-belts of Information between citizens and the state across Africa is challenging. The available data about the continent's political parties is very uneven. While some parties publish regular reports (e.g., African National Congress in South Africa), many others hesitate to share basic information such as their party membership count with outsiders. It is even more difficult to find comparable data about party-citizen engagement or party representatives at the sub-national level across several countries. For example, data on the behaviour and attitudes of African elected representatives is very rare. Where scholars have tried to map these, they usually focused on one or two countries due to the significant financial costs and time commitment necessary to collect this information. Data about local-level party activists is even more difficult to collect due to their comparatively lower profile.

One way in which the discipline has tried to overcome these issues is through expert surveys. Several projects have tried to make the relationships between citizens, parties, and bureaucrats visible and quantifiable (e.g., V-Dem, V-Party, QoG, DALP). While commendable, these cross-country data collection efforts have significant shortcomings. For example, expert survey datasets that cover African countries often

rely on a handful of experts, have very broad response categories for the concepts of interest, and generally do not map sub-national variation of said concepts. This begs the question of how much weight one should attach to the scores of, for example, local party-citizen engagement. Taken together, these issues represent formidable challenges to testing the proposed theory.

In this dissertation, I therefore use a combination of novel data and innovative measures based on existing data sets to document the presence of political parties across the electoral cycle, as well as their relationships with citizens and bureaucrats across up to 34 countries. I do so by drawing on surveys of citizens, MPs, elected party elites (not in public office), and bureaucrats. I also draw on transcripts of several focus group discussions. These different data sources offer a unique and broad view of how political parties contribute to citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery across the continent.

1.7.1 Datasets

For ease of reference in later chapters, I describe the data sources for the main analyses in the paragraphs that follow, and summarise their relevance for the different hypotheses in **Table 1.4**.

The **Party Elite Survey** and the **Bureaucratic Elite Survey** were conducted telephonically in Malawi. The partner organisation, the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR), conducted the interviews with district-level party officials and bureaucrats across 28 districts. In Malawi, Districts refer to the second subnational administrative layer and represent an important arena for the implementation of service delivery in the country. Moreover, each district encompasses several constituencies from which MPs are elected.

Party Elite Survey: The primary purpose of this survey is to ask party elites about their "top-down" perspective regarding intra-party communication with party activists and elected representatives. Specifically, I use several questionnaire modules to map 1) how often different party actors exchange information with each other, and 2) how much time they spend dealing with basic service delivery issues. A separate set of questions allows me to measure 1) the density of different party networks, and 2) the extent to which these networks of party activists communicate with citizens across the electoral cycle. The sample is comprised of 336 respondents from all four

major Malawian parties (MCP, DDP, UTM, UDF). The fieldwork took place between April and July 2021 (H 1 & 2).

Bureaucratic Elite Survey: The survey was conducted between January and March 2021, and includes bureaucrats from three different departments: Education, Health Care, and Planning & Development (N=347). The primary objective for this survey is to measure the horizontal linkages between party-representatives and bureaucrats. Second, it captures the relative importance of party representatives compared to other stakeholders (e.g., traditional leaders and civil society organisations) (H 1 & 2).

MP Survey-ALP: Robert Mattes and Shaheen Mozaffar generously granted me access to their unique data set on the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours of African legislators from 17 countries. They, together with the rest of the African Legislatures Project (ALP) team surveyed 823 legislators through random representative surveys conducted between 2009 and 2012 (see Barkan, Mattes, Mozaffar, & Smiddy (2010)).

The MP survey data is unique for at least two reasons. First, the 17-country sample is the largest and most comprehensive dataset of its kind for Africa. The countries represent important geographical distinctions of the continent by including countries from east, west and southern Africa. The countries also provide a rich range of institutional variation, including differing experiences with multi-party elections, differing electoral and party systems, as well as varying levels of legislative strength. The structure of this dataset allows me to capture individual-level and country-level variation of MP behaviour as it relates to the Conveyor-belt Mechanism.

Second, it is possible to match the MP data with questions from the Afrobarometer public opinion surveys collected between 2008 and 2013 (Rounds 4 and 5) for the same 17 countries. By combining information on how African MPs view their jobs, and how they engage with citizens with data on citizens' satisfaction scores, I develop new insights into how MPs approach constituency service and representation (H 2).

MP Survey-GLD: The telephone survey of 137 out of 193 sitting MPs in Malawi was administered by IPOR and in collaboration with the GLD between November 2021 and January 2022. While the survey covered several topics ranging from the candidacy process (e.g., pre-candidacy consultations, party nomination), to MPs'

personal background, I draw on several questions about their constituency work to provide insights into how MPs fill out their roles as advocates and problem solvers in their home districts.

Citizen Panel Survey: The Zambia Election Panel Survey (ZEPS) is one of a handful of studies that employ a panel survey design to measure party-citizen engagement before and after an election in Africa.[12] The collaborative research project was spearheaded by Ellen Lust (University of Gothenburg), Jeremy Seekings (University of Cape Town), Michael Wahman (Michigan State University), Nicole Beardsworth (University of the Witwatersrand), and myself.

I employ the data to measure citizens' engagement with party activists and MPs over service delivery issues across the electoral cycle. Although the sample of approximately 1300 respondents is not nationally representative, it includes approximately 32% urban, 29% peri-urban, and 39% rural respondents. This is in line with Zambia's current population distribution of 45% urbanites and 55% rural dwellers (World Bank 2022). The sample is also skewed towards areas in which the PF, the incumbent party prior to the 2021 election, had historically outperformed other parties with large margins. This makes the three-wave panel particularly suitable to explore the relevance of opposition parties as Conveyor-belts of Information in the face of an assumed ruling party advantage (H 1). Further, the survey includes specific question modules for party activists and MPs which allow me to measure the level of citizen engagement for each of these actors across the electoral cycle (H 1 & 2).

Citizen Surveys: At the time of writing, the Afrobarometer has provided eight rounds of publicly available nationally representative citizen surveys. In this dissertation I make extensive use of this wealth of data through cross-sectional analysis at the macro- (country), meso- (province/state) and individual-level. Although the data is not panel data in the strict sense (i.e., each round a new sample of citizens is surveyed in each country), the inclusion of many countries across several rounds also allows me to conduct some longitudinal comparisons. I use the survey data primarily to test the relationship between party representatives (activists and MPs) and citizens from a citizen perspective (H 1 & 2).

[12] *The three waves of the panel were implemented by phone between 8 June and 3 October 2021: Round 1 (early campaign: June –July); Round 2 (late campaign: July -August); Round 3 (post-election: August – October)*

Table 1.4: Data sources for main analyses

Study (Source)	Description	N	Use of Data/Test of Argument
Party Elite Survey (Author/IPOR)	Telephone interviews with district-level elites from each of the following parties: DPP, MCP, UDF, and UTM across all 28 districts	336 respondents (Malawi)	• Assess prevalence and type of engagement between district-level party elites and MPs, party activists as well as other actors (Chapters 3 & 6) (H 1)
Bureaucratic Elite Survey (Author/IPOR)	Telephone interviews with district-level elites from different government departments across all 28 districts	347 respondents (Malawi)	• Assess prevalence and type of engagement between district-level bureaucrats and MPs, party activists, party elites and other actors (Chapters 3 & 6) (H 1 & 2)
Citizen Focus Groups (Author/IPOR)	4 focus groups with 5-7 people each. 2 in Zomba, 2 in a rural area. These will take place in the same areas as the BLS/BIS and the shadowing of branch leaders	20-28 respondents (Malawi)	• Explore to what extent citizens engage with party activists and elected representatives (Chapters 3 & 6). • Validate findings from the quantitative survey analysis of whether and why citizens are satisfied with basic services (education, health care, water, sanitation, and electricity) (Chapters 3 & 6). (H 1 & 2)
MP Survey-ALP (African Legislatures Project, ALP)	Face-to-face interviews with 50 randomly selected MPs in each country	823 MPs (17 countries)	• Estimation of how responsive MPs are; • how much MPs engage with the constituency; • how much development they bring to constituency; • link to policy development within party(?) (H 2)
MP Survey-GLD (Governance and Local Development Institute, GLD)	Telephone interviews with sample of 5-10 MPs from DPP, MCP and UDF (Malawi)	45 respondents (Malawi)	• Assess prevalence and type of engagement between MPs and citizens (Chapters 6) (H 2)
Citizen Panel Survey (Zambian Election Panel Survey, ZEPS)	Telephone interviews with citizens. Two waves were conducted prior to the 2021 election, the third wave was fielded after the election	W1: 1692 respondents W2: 1536 respondents W3: 1299 respondents (Zambia)	• Assess prevalence and type of engagement between citizens and party activists across the electoral cycle (Chapters 3) • Assess the type of engagement between citizens and MPs (Chapter 6) (H 1 & 2)
Citizen Surveys	Face-to-face interviews with citizens.		• Assess citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery • Measure citizen-initiated contact with party representatives.

(Afrobarometer)	Multiple rounds:		(H 1 & 2)
	Round 2 (2002/2003)	16 countries	
	Round 3 (2005/2006)	18 countries	
	Round 4 (2008/2009)	20 countries	
	Round 5 (2011/2013)	34 countries	
	Round 6 (2014/2015)	36 countries	
	Round 7 (2016/2018)	34 countries	
	Round 8 (2019/2021)	34 countries	----------
	Indicators for key concepts:	----------	Main control variable for analyses in Ch 3
	• Party Presence Index[1]	36 countries	Main control variables for analyses in Ch 3
	• State Reach & Professionalism Indices[2]	36 countries	

Note: [1] Krönke, Lockwood and Mattes (2022): [2] Krönke, Mattes and Naidoo (2022). IPOR=Institute for Public Opinion Research in Malawi.

As alluded to earlier, I also collaborated with two teams of co-authors to develop novel indicators for political parties' local presence (Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022), as well as two dimensions of state capacity that are relevant for this study – state reach and bureaucratic professionalism(Krönke, Mattes, et al., 2022).[13] I employ these indices, rather than alternative expert-based measures that are commonly used in the literature due to their unique ability to generate sub-national scores for each of the concepts.

Citizen Focus Group Discussions: In addition to the Party and Bureaucratic Elite Surveys, the IPOR team also conducted 4 focus groups with 5-7 people each. Two in an urban centre (Zomba), and two in a rural area. The aim of these discussions is to explore 1) the extent to which citizens engage with party activists and elected representatives, and 2) help to validate the findings from the quantitative survey analysis I conducted using the Afrobarometer data.

1.7.2 A note on fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic and unexplored data sources

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions on citizens' movements as well as academic fieldwork meant that I was unable to conduct the fieldwork I had initially planned for April-June 2020 in Malawi. In the original research design, I had intended to collect three types of data for the four major parties in Malawi. First, I wanted to interview staff at the party headquarters to measure vertical intra-party communication, as well as party brand development. Second, I planned to survey party branch leaders to assess vertical and horizontal intra-party communication. This survey was meant to take place across 20 locations in Malawi that were also surveyed by the Afrobarometer to match citizen and party activist attitudes and behaviour. Additionally, the survey was meant to gage connections between party representatives and bureaucrats. The third type of data I intended to collect was information of parties' branch infrastructure in the same 20 locations. Here, the idea was to capture variation of available resources within and across party organisations. Combining these data sources would have provided new insight into variation of intra-party processes among Malawian parties. Even more importantly, I would have been able to *directly* capture the attitudes and behaviours of one of the two key actors in my theory - party activists.

[13] *For a more detailed account of the construction of these indices, as well as their validity, reliability, and accuracy, please see Krönke, Lockwood and Mattes (2022), and Krönke, Mattes and Naidoo (2022).*

However, the health risks associated with in-person fieldwork meant that these surveys could not be implemented. Therefore, I amended the research design so data collection could be completed remotely via telephone interviews. Because it is very difficult to systematically survey local party activists directly through in-person fieldwork, let alone remotely via telephone interviews, I decided to survey their behaviour indirectly instead. I identified stakeholders who, according to my theory, had meaningful albeit varying contact with party activists.

Each stakeholder had to fulfil three conditions: 1) it is possible to systematically identify them; 2) they have direct contact with party activists; and 3) they are part of the conveyor-belt mechanism. Due to additional constraints on funding, I eventually surveyed two groups: sub-national party elites (Party Elite Survey) and bureaucrats (Bureaucratic Elite Survey). Put simply, I wanted to survey the proverbial blind people describing different parts of the elephant.

As part of the initial research design, I also planned to conduct a substantial number of focus group discussions (FDGs) with citizens in the same 20 locations where I intended to implement the survey. The insights from these discussions were meant to improve the questionnaires and validate public opinion survey findings. Although I initially discarded FDGs in the revised research design, the in-country research team was able to conduct four in-person FDGs once it was possible to minimise the Covid-19 related health risks by conducting the discussions between infection waves, outside, and with the necessary personal protective equipment for all participants. These discussions provided useful, albeit limited qualitative illustrations of how the conveyor-belt mechanism works.

Because I could not conduct in-person fieldwork with citizens, party activists, elected representatives, or bureaucrats, I was also unable to explore several additional sources of information that have proven to be very insightful in other contexts. For example, Bussell (2020) used "shadowing" of elected representatives' daily routines as a data collection and analytical tool. By systematically recording and interpreting legislators' movements and engagements with citizens, Bussell has shown that unlike more in-depth qualitative methods, such as ethnography, shadowing is a scalable technique that allows for larger sample sizes and the potential for medium-N inference. With some additional funding, this technique could have been

implemented following the party activist (or party elite) survey and compensated for some of the inherent weaknesses of survey research.

Similarly, analysing how the introduction of government services has changed citizens' satisfaction with service delivery over time is difficult to do, especially in informal settlements, which often lack historical data. One aim of my scheduled fieldwork trip was to locate "informal archives - unmapped, non-systematized collections of materials kept by individuals and groups" such as party workers (Auerbach, 2018, p. 345). In the Indian context, Auerbach found that "slum leaders preserved troves of historical materials that often stretched back to the earliest years of their settlements, including notes from community meetings, photographs of public events, newspaper clippings covering local politics, petitions for public services, and political ephemera like party manifestos, posters, and pamphlets" (Auerbach, 2018, p. 345). Such information would have provided invaluable contextual information complementing data collected via the party branch infrastructure survey.

The revisions to the data collection efforts limit the empirical analysis in this dissertation in three ways. First, I am unable to measure the actions of party activists directly. Second, I cannot capture variation of the conveyor-belt mechanism at a very granular level (e.g., below the constituency level). Third, I am unable to tap into more qualitative accounts that would have allowed me to explore several aspects of the mechanism in more detail. Nevertheless, I hope that the alternative data I marshalled paints a convincing picture of how and why political parties matter for service delivery in Africa.

PART ONE: PARTY ACTIVISTS

Chapter 2: Party activists and local party presence in Africa

2.1 Introduction

Despite a growing interest, party activists have received relatively little attention in the African context.[14] Scholars have considered the importance of MPs as patrons in their constituencies (see **Part II**), or the relevance of other intermediaries such as traditional and religious leaders as vote and development brokers. Yet, these actors are members of the party elite, or outside the party organization itself. This lacuna also becomes evident, when comparing the African literature to that of other parts of the Global South (e.g., Argentina, or India) where party brokers' role in service delivery has received substantially more attention from political scientists. And while scholars of African parties often acknowledge variation in partisan activist networks between ruling and opposition parties, or the legacy effects of former liberation movements on their ability to engage with citizens at the local level, these party-citizen relationships are mostly described as top-down clientelist exchanges of material goods for votes.

Across the Global South the rich literature on political brokers – grass-roots intermediaries between party elites and voters – has substantially improved our understanding of how parties connect to voters. While most of the literature is unified by the assumption that these intermediaries do not control the resources or services they distribute, but rather give citizens access to them via a patron, some scholars have also included other functions such as persuasion, representation, and campaigning as core activities of political brokers (Rizzo, 2020).

Conceptually, scholars have identified several sub-types. Some are directly related to political parties such as party workers (Auerbach, 2019; Auerbach & Thachil, 2020), and vote brokers (Stokes et al., 2013); while development (Baldwin, 2015), organizational and hybrid brokers (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015), as well as state

[14] *Notable recent exceptions are: Brierley and Nathan (2021b, 2021a), Brierley and Kramon (2020), Paget (2019), and Paller (2019), as well as a recent special issue edited by Lockwood, Krönke and Mattes (2021), with contributions from Kwayu (2022), Paget (2022),Sulley(2022), and Warren (2022).*

brokers (Berenschot, 2019) are generally part of different organizational structures. Finally, scholars have also identified comparatively more independent community brokers (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Krishna, 2011) and protest brokers (Lockwood, 2019, 2022). The empirical literature has developed a long list of actors who fit the various descriptions: local level elected representatives, leaders of trade-unions, neighbourhood-level party leaders, party foot-soldiers (Bob-Milliar, 2012), non-partisan community members, local bureaucrats, traditional leaders and chiefs, and even employers (Auerbach, 2016; Auerbach & Thachil, 2020; Baldwin, 2013; Bob-Milliar, 2012; Camp, 2015; Frye et al., 2014; Koter, 2013; Novaes, 2018; Szwarcberg, 2015).

Regarding party brokers, scholars have focused on the power these intermediaries exercise within their communities, and the influence they have on voting behaviour as part of a broader patron-client arrangement (Rizzo, 2020; Stokes, 2005; Stokes et al., 2013; Szwarcberg, 2015). Several studies have shown, however, that the predominant form of broker-voter interactions is actually citizen initiated and takes place between elections (Auerbach & Thachil, 2020; Auyero, 2000; Nichter & Peress, 2017). Therefore, an important question is: What do party activists - a sub-set of party brokers - do when they engage with citizens outside the campaign period?

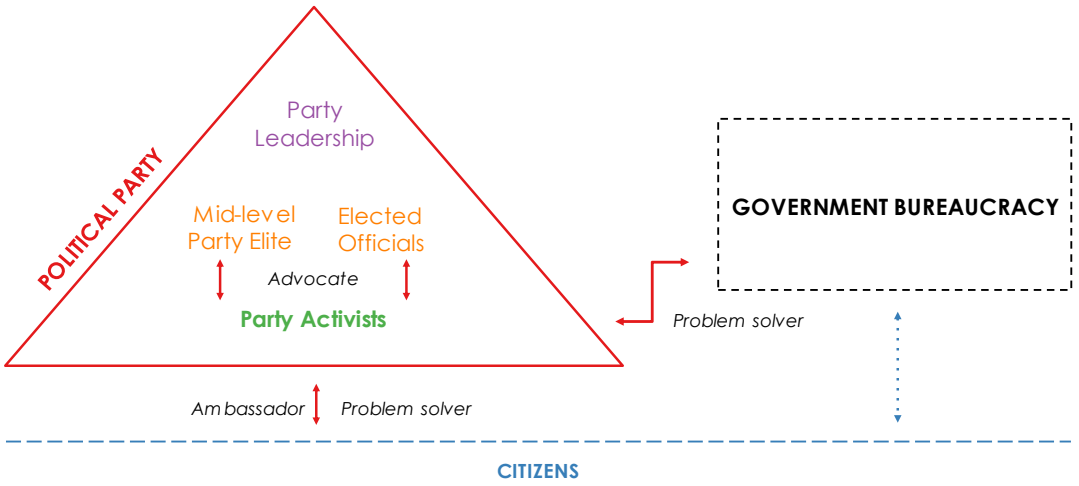
Throughout **Part I**, I shed light on the variation of party activist networks, and their consequences for citizen satisfaction with basic services. In this chapter, I begin by contextualizing party activists within the broader broker literature and define how these local party representatives can operate as problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors. Next, I outline their incentives to contribute to citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. In the second half of the chapter, I then address some of the commonly held (mis)conceptions about local party representatives as well as their encounters with citizens in Africa and consider whether the available data supports them. Here, I focus on three questions in particular: Are opposition parties organizationally weak on the ground? Do parties rarely engage with citizens between elections? To what extent do parties focus on addressing group demands, or citizens' individual problems? Rather than aiming to confirm, or dismiss these claims completely, I aim to highlight the variation across the continent and suggest that evidence provides more support for some claims than for others.

2.2 Party activists and the conveyor-belt mechanism

Party members represent the party in the communities that they live in (Scarrow, 1994). Although some are passive sympathizers who do little more than vote for the party on election day, others help campaigning in the run-up to an election, while yet others engage in even more time consuming activities such as broadcasting party policies on local radio stations, or help community members to solve concrete service delivery problems in the hope of building a positive reputation for the party and themselves (Bob-Milliar, 2012, 2019; Rizzo, 2015).

In this study, I define *party activists* as party members who form the most grassroots extensions of political parties. In the communities that they operate in, party activists take on a range of tasks. On the one hand, they often play the role of *fixers* or *problems solvers* who help individual citizens as well as communities to navigate state bureaucracies by solving concrete service delivery issues (vertical and horizontal connections). On the other hand, they frequently act as *advocates* between citizens and party elites (mid-level party elites, and elected representatives) by, for example, aggregating and sharing community concerns with co-partisan MPs (upward connection), or by advertising the party's recent achievements at neighbourhood meetings (downward connection) as *ambassadors*. Unpacking the relationships introduced in **Chapter 1, Figure 2.1** depicts the connections from the point of view of party activists.

Figure 2.1: Conveyor-belt mechanism: connections and activities of party activist



Note: Mid-level party elites=party members who hold an elected position within the party structure, but are not elected to public office; elected officials=MPs; Party activists= party members who form the most grassroots extensions of political parties.

This definition highlights the bottom-up responsiveness to citizens' quotidian requests for assistance, rather than the top-down targeting of party resources to voters during elections (Auerbach & Thachil, 2020; Brierley & Nathan, 2021b; Nichter & Peress, 2017). As Tasalia Rizzo (2020, p. 62) reminds us "*most of the time* is non electoral time". Thus, while party activists can, and often do engage in the distribution of handouts (Stokes, 2005)and the mobilizing of voters during the campaign period (Brierley & Kramon, 2020), these are not integral features of party activists as defined here. I add to the nascent literature on party activists in Africa, and the broader literature on party brokers, by focusing on the roles of party activists as fixers, advocates, and ambassadors in the delivery of basic government services, rather than a narrower focus on elections (e.g., voter turnout and choice). I unpack each role in more detail below.

2.2.1 Party activists as problem solvers

Party activists spend most of their time in a fixed geographic space where they both live and carry out their political activities. This embeddedness allows them to be easily approachable by community members and listen to their problems.[15] Citizens frequently request the provision of local public goods such as repairing streetlights, organizing visits of mobile clinics, or school transport for children, installing water taps and sewer connections, or building bus shelters and the improvement of municipal trash removal. Though not all party activists are equally capable of fulfilling these requests, or indeed, interested in providing these services to the entire community, they are often a convenient port of call for residents (Auerbach, 2019; Auerbach & Thachil, 2020). How party activists help citizens to address these demands varies. Studying urban slums in India, Adam Auerbach (2019) observed how slum residents with the involvement of party workers combined three types of activities to secure public goods and services: internal self-provision (without the resources and technical assistance of the state), group claim-making on the state by petitioning politicians and government officials, and settlement protest.

Speaking about the Argentinian context, Zarazaga similarly observed that party activists' usefulness to citizens, depends on their access to politicians and bureaucrats who can grant them resources. A party agent in Argentina cited in Zarazaga (2014,

[15] *My definition of party activists does not require individuals to hold a local elected public office (e.g., councillor, or village representative).*

p. 26) summarised this aspect of his work like this: "90 percent of my problem is to keep connections in the municipality. If you have friends there, then doors will open when you knock. It is not easy; you need to be here in the streets of the neighbourhood listening to people's needs, but also at the municipality getting resources". Although this type of party broker-citizen engagement between elections is well documented in India (Auerbach & Thachil, 2020; Berenschot, 2019), and Latin America (Auyero, 2000; Levitsky, 2003; Zarazaga, 2014), with the exception of some recent studies in the Ghanaian context (Bob-Milliar, 2019; Brierley & Nathan, 2021b; Nathan, 2019; Paller, 2019), it remains relatively under-studied in Africa.

Why do citizens approach party activists? Governments' capacity to provide basic services to all its citizens vary widely across the globe. And this is particularly true in the African context (Krönke, Mattes, et al., 2022). Un- or under-served citizens often face significant bureaucratic hurdles when trying to access basic government services. However, even when citizens do get access to services, they might be dissatisfied with the quality of the medical care they receive, or the teaching at the school their children go to. Acquiring knowledge about where and how to apply for certain services, or whom to approach in case problems arise takes time and effort. Yet, both is often in short supply, especially where people need to balance many pressing demands daily. Where bureaucratic professionalism and service quality are frequently inadequate, individuals are likely to seek assistance from, or delegate these time-consuming tasks to intermediaries who can solve their problems. If successful, these intermediaries are likely to increase citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. While party activists are but one type of broker, they are arguably a practical choice as they represent the most grassroots representation of political parties – organizations that are often connected to the local bureaucracy. They help ordinary people to articulate their demands vis-à-vis the state at the local level or follow up with the government bureaucracy to ensure that these requests are fulfilled in a satisfactory manner.

Do citizens prefer some brokers over others? In the academic literature, citizens are often described as passive recipients of goods and services. Scholars regularly describe citizens as being stuck in a clientelist relationship where the delivery of goods is conditioned on citizens' political participation – often in the form of rally attendance, or votes on election day. However, more recent work has highlighted

the considerable agency that citizens possess (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018; Nichter & Peress, 2017; Rizzo, 2015). The latter often emphasize the variation in broker and local party networks as a key determining factor for citizen preference of some brokers over others.

These networks vary across countries, as well as at the subnational level. In rural India, Krishna (2011) identifies Naya Netas (independent village leaders)[16], Panchayat (village council) leaders, as well as caste leaders and local party activists as prominent intermediaries who help citizens access public schools and hospitals. What is more, he illustrates how the importance of these actors varies for different groups (e.g., level of poverty). Similarly, slum residents in urban India have a real choice between local party workers - they are not passive takers of what they are offered. Instead, they tend to choose brokers who have connections to actors who control government resources, and intermediaries who can effectively execute claims on the state (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018).

While partisanship and ethnicity are frequently listed as variables that determine the distribution and demand for public goods and services between brokers and clients, the empirical literature is less clear on this (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018; Bussell, 2019; Nichter & Peress, 2017; Stokes et al., 2013).[17]

In sum, citizens frequently rely on partisan activists as problem solvers to navigate the local bureaucracy. Party activists, who constitute one of a range of intermediaries, employ their knowledge and skill to respond to citizens' quotidian demands for the delivery of goods and services, and in turn, can affect how satisfied citizens are with government services. Before providing a more detailed discussion about their underlying motivations to do so, I now turn to the other two important tasks they frequently engage in as part of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

[16] *Krishna describes Naya Netas (or new leaders) as "newly emerged village leaders who 'are usually between 25 and 40 years of age…[and] educated to about middle school [level]. They read newspapers… and are experienced [in dealing] with the government bureaucracy, with banks, insurance companies, and the like… These new leaders can be of any caste, but they must have knowledge perseverance and ability'"(Krishna, 2011, pp. 105–106)*

[17] *I return to the importance of partisanship and the strength of ruling and opposition party networks in my analysis below.*

2.2.2 Party activists as advocates

Political parties value party activists for a range of intra-party and community related activities. In addition to operating as problem solvers or fixers, party activists also transmit *information* between community members and other party representatives. This information is often gathered through their experiences as fixers. However, it can also be collected at community meetings, neighbourhood get-togethers, or local branch meetings. In either case, they aggregate citizens' moods, needs and issues they care about, and channel them upwards to party elites such as district-level party representatives or MPs (Brierley & Nathan, 2021b; Calvo & Murillo, 2013).[18] These upward connections are depicted graphically in **Figure 2.1** above.

That local party networks help to aggregate citizen views is not new. In fact, it has been described as a key function of western parties for decades (Scarrow, 1994). However, it has remained a relatively underappreciated function of African parties. The frequent notion that parties lack a credible local presence between elections, and have only low levels of institutionalisation, combined with the focus on top-down distributive linkages between intermediaries and citizens likely account for this omission. As I will show in a subsequent chapter, however, this upward flow of information, is far from negligeable in the African context. Rather, party activists play a crucial role in putting African parties in touch with conditions on the ground (Brierley & Nathan, 2021b).

2.2.3 Party activists as ambassadors

Party workers play another important role in their neighbourhoods and villages, they act as 'ambassadors to the community' (Scarrow, 1994). Views about politics and government are often formed through interactions with family, neighbours, friends, and colleagues. In these contexts, party activists can act as translators of policy goals and party activities through private conversations or at community meetings (Bilstein, 1970; Calvo & Murillo, 2013; Ponce & Scarrow, 2016; Scarrow, 1994). By communicating the party's past achievements, or future plans to improve basic service delivery, parties can sharpen their brand recognition. At the same time, citizens gain valuable information about how government used to operate, what it is currently doing, and how it could operate in future. Crucially, this information is combined with citizens'

[18] *For an empirical investigation of the connection between party activists and other party members, please see Chapter 3 and Chapter 8.*

personal experiences and those recounted by others to update the assessment of how well or poorly services are delivered.

Taken together, I argue that whenever party activists transmit information upwards from citizens to party elites (ambassador), as well as downward from other party members to citizens (ambassador), or solve concrete service delivery issues for community members, they increase citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of basic government services.

2.3 Material incentives, reputation building, and ideological affinity

Aside from the question of what party activists do, an important related question is *why they spend time engaging with community members, bureaucrats, MPs and other party elites?* The literature identifies four sets of motivating factors that underpin party activists' work - short-term material incentives, career ambitions, ideological affiliation with the party, and personal predisposition. Rather than attempting to assess which of these is more likely to move party activists to engage in the three types of activities outlined above, I limit myself here to describing the mechanisms, assuming that they are not mutually exclusive, but that their relevance varies depending on contextual and individual level factors. Specifically, I highlight that there are ample reasons for party activists to not only engage in electioneering, but to also fill out their conveyor-belt related roles between elections in ways that change citizens perceptions of government service delivery.

First, party brokers are frequently described as deriving short-term material benefits when helping citizens with their day-to-day problems, or organizing rallies during an election (Auerbach, 2019; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Szwarcberg, 2015). In some instances, rent seeking takes the form of extracting a fee from citizens for helping with access to government services. During the campaign season, party workers can also divert party resources for their personal gain or get paid for canvassing voters or organizing large scale rallies.

A related motivation for party activists to develop their upward and downward connections is their longer-term career ambition (Berenschot, 2019). Many party activists aspire to secure "big ticket" rewards such as a candidacy for elected office or a government job (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015). Although some party activists

might already hold lower-level elected office in government (e.g. local councillor), their ambitions are often to rise up the ranks further in the hope of gaining more secure employment, or increase their political power base to launch a provincial or national career (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015).

To become a viable candidate for elected office, party activists need to increase their social standing in the community(Stokes et al., 2013; Szwarcberg, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014). Indeed, several studies have shown that party workers often have more long-term goals in mind when they help citizens (Auerbach & Thachil, 2020; Berenschot, 2019; Camp, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014). Although several contextual factors such as the institutionalisation of party structures(Berenschot, 2019), or the inclusiveness of selection criteria for candidates are likely to shape party activists' prospects of upward mobility (Berenschot, 2019; Krönke & Lockwood, 2021), they are unlikely to thwart long-term ambitions completely, and thus, encourage party activists to help citizens.

Yet another motivating factor for party activists to act as fixers and information brokers is based on their ideological affiliation and attitudes towards political engagement (Camp, 2015; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Larreguy et al., 2017; D. J. Samuels & Zucco, 2016). Party workers and leaders often share more than the objective of maximizing their party's vote share. For example, the PT in Brazil distinguished itself from other parties through its leftist discourse in the late 1990s, while it shifted its emphasis later, encouraging average citizens to engage in politics. By developing a demanding membership acquisition process, the party was able to recruit people who would actively engage in their communities (D. J. Samuels & Zucco, 2016; D. Samuels & Zucco, 2015).

Lastly, party activists might operate as problem solvers and advocates because they want to improve the condition of the very localities that they live in. Thus, they might happen to be party activists, but their motivation to improve the water supply, or the quality of teachers would, at least in part, be driven by the fact that they themselves are likely to use the same facilities (Auerbach, 2019). Though this might apply less to their function as ambassadors, this motivation should not be underestimated.

2.4 (Mis)conceptions about local party presence and party activists in Africa

In Africa party members are often seen as clients in search of material benefits, rather than activists that contribute to larger political organisations and who regularly engage with citizens. Although several studies mention party activists in passing (e.g. (Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2010; Osei, 2016; Paget, 2019; Stroh, 2014)), few studies explicitly focus on this group of actors more fully considering both the campaign season and electoral off-season (Bob-Milliar, 2012, 2019; Brierley & Nathan, 2021b; Paget, 2022). Moreover, both sets of studies analyse local party presence – the grassroots networks connecting party activists - mostly through single country case studies. Taken together, this provides for only a limited understanding of how parties operate at the local level across the continent.

Although scholars of African parties often acknowledge variation in partisan activist networks between ruling and opposition parties, or the legacy effects of former liberation movements on parties' ability to engage with citizens at the local level, these party-citizen relationships are mostly described as top-down clientelist exchanges of material goods for votes. As Hicken and Nathan (2020)have pointed out, however, the exchanges described in many studies do not fit the narrow definition of clientelism – contingent and iterated exchanges between a patron and clients that ought to persuade and/or mobilize citizens (i.e., buy votes or turnout). Moreover, a growing literature emphasizes the importance of bottom-up demands that citizens make either as individuals, or as groups (Hicken & Nathan, 2020; Lindberg, 2010; Nathan, 2019). Therefore, this section provides some empirical grounding of what local party presence in Africa looks like, given the limited attention to date from political scientists. I take a series of common (mis)conceptions about local party networks and party activists in Africa and consider whether the available data supports the claims. *Should we think of African party activists as actors who are mostly engaged in top-down clientelist relationships with citizens? Are parties largely unavailable to ordinary citizens between elections? How strong are opposition parties at the grassroots?* Here the goal is not to completely dismiss any claims. Instead, I have the more modest objective of demonstrating that there is considerable cross-country variation and that some of the stereotypes about African parties are less likely to hold in some countries than others. These results will be helpful when assessing how

important party activist networks are for citizens' experiences and satisfaction with government service delivery.

2.4.1 Irrelevance of bottom-up linkages?

Deviating from the narrow definition of clientelism (contingent, iterative and monitored exchanges), scholars have placed clientelism-adjacent practices on a continuum from relational to single-shot exchanges that often do not explicitly require any monitoring(Hicken & Nathan, 2020; Yıldırım & Kitschelt, 2020). Thus, clientelist exchanges "may involve the distribution of excludable private goods to individual recipients, or target club goods to communities" (Hicken & Nathan, 2020, p. 279). Focusing on Africa, scholars have found that vote buying – the distribution of electoral handouts – is widespread (Bratton, 2008; Conroy-Krutz & Logan, 2012; Kramon, 2017; Lindberg, 2003). In fact, a recent study has shown that this one-shot form of party-citizen exchange is more frequent in Africa than in Latin American and post-communist countries (Yıldırım & Kitschelt, 2020). What remains less clear, however, is how often *ordinary Africans approach political parties* at the local level, and why they do so. Knowing the answers to these questions provides valuable insight to a related question: Is there a market for party activists to act as problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors?

In the following discussion I limit myself to considering the extent to which face-to-face party-citizen engagement is driven by considerations that go beyond the exchange of consumer goods (e.g., food or liquor, clothes, medicines etc.), preferential access to job opportunities or other material advantages. I begin this exploration by comparing how frequently Africans receive election time handouts versus how often they approach party representatives and government officials in their communities. These questions can be probed using data from the fifth and sixth round of the Afrobarometer. In 2011/2013, Afrobarometer asked respondents two types of questions that allow us to gage whether the contact was initiated by a party/candidate, or by citizens:

> *"During the last national election in [20xx], how often, if ever did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?"*

> *"During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views?".*

The actors for the second question can be divided into *party representatives* (member of parliament (MP), local government councillor, political party official), and *government representative* (official of a government agency).[19] As can be seen from **Table 2.1**, parties approached 15% of respondents through direct vote-buying efforts.[20] This type of party-initiated contact is frequently analysed by scholars who focus on clientelism. What is perhaps more surprising, given the focus on top-down engagement in the literature, is that respondents are also frequently the ones initiating contact with various party representatives – 11% contacted an MP, 13% contacted a party official, and 24% contacted a local councillor at least once in the 12 months preceding the interview. These rates are comparable to, or higher than contact with government officials (13%). To make the point more clearly, citizens contact local party officials in any given year at rates that are similar to party-initiated contacts during the campaign season. At a minimum, the data show that local party activists are an important fixture in Africans' lives as they not only approach citizens during the campaign season, but also regularly act as a point of contact for citizens.

Why do citizens contact party representatives? Is it purely to demand material benefits or enquire about job opportunities that benefit only those who contact party workers? To probe this question, I use Afrobarometer data from Round 6 (2014/2015). In this round, Afrobarometer repeated the questions about citizen-initiated contact with party representatives, but also asked about local notables such as religious and traditional leaders. The first take away from the data is that more citizens engage with religious (38%) and traditional (29%) leaders than with any other type of actor. This is not very surprising as these local notables often play an important role in several domains of citizens' lives (Logan, 2013). However, the bottom-up contact with various party representatives remains consistent – 11% contacted an MP, 15% contacted a

[19] *Importantly, the survey does not randomise the order of these representatives. That is, respondents are always asked about these individuals in the following order: Local councillors, MPs, official of a government agency, party official, traditional leader, religious leader. This increases the likelihood that a respondent would think of a local party activist when answering the question about a party official.*

[20] *Given the phrasing of the question, there are some concerns regarding social desirability biases. Therefore, this is likely to be a conservative estimate.*

party official, and 23% contacted a local councillor at least once in the 12 months preceding the interview.

Table 2.1: Citizen and party-initiated contact | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Direction	Actor	Once†	A few times	Often	Total
Party initiated	Election incentive offered	8%	4%	3%	**15%**
Citizen initiated	Party official	5%	5%	3%	**13%**
	Local Councillor	10%	9%	5%	**24%**
	MP	5%	4%	2%	**11%**
	Gov. official	5%	5%	3%	**13%**

Note: †= In the case of "election incentives offered", this category read "Once or twice". Data is weighted. Afrobarometer Round 5.

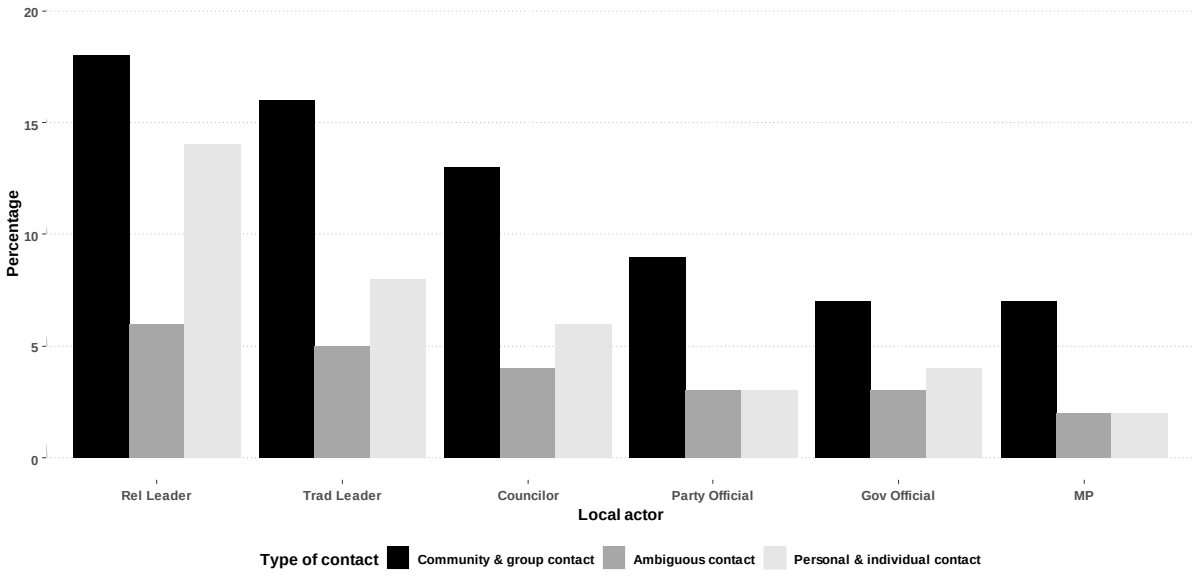
Because the phrasing of this survey question is sufficiently ambiguous to capture citizens' requests for consumer goods (e.g., food, or medicine), or a job opportunity, as well as their expression of a communal grievance (e.g. improving the state of a local clinic, water quality, or electricity supply), I use the two follow-up questions in Round 6 to distinguish between the different types of requests.

> *"Thinking of the last time you contacted any of these leaders.*
>
> *A: Did you go alone or with a group?*
>
> *B: Did you go to discuss a community problem or a personal problem?*

I assume that respondents who contact any of the actors alone and regarding a personal problem would be more likely to ask for a consumer good or favour, while those who approach an actor in a group and regarding a community problem would be less likely to ask for this kind of particularistic exchange. This allows us to gage how often citizens make clientelist or non-clientelist requests. Those who contacted an actor in a group, but for a personal problem, and those who contacted an actor alone, but claimed to have done so regarding a community problem are grouped together in a residual category (ambiguous contact). While this measure is far from

perfect, it nevertheless provides a rough estimate of what type of citizen-initiated contact is more frequent across the continent.

Figure 2.2: Citizen initiated contact with local actors | by type of contact | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer Round 6. Note: Data not weighted.

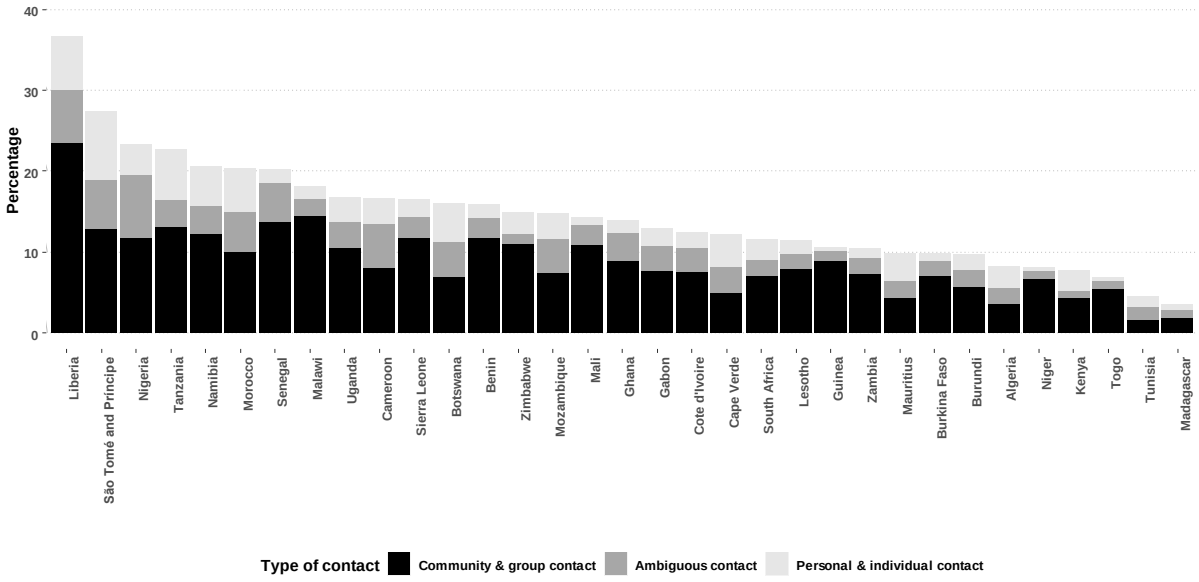
Across the board, citizens are more likely to contact any of the actors as part of a group and to discuss a community problem, rather than alone and regarding a personal problem (**Figure 2.2**).[21] Setting contact with local notables and government officials aside for a moment and focusing on party representatives, we can see that MPs, Councillors and party officials are being contacted by groups regarding community complaints at a ratio of 2:1 or higher compared to personalistic or ambiguous type of request. Even after considering that this measure is rather coarse, the data suggests that citizens primarily engage with party activists over community issues.

There are, of course, substantial cross-country differences in how often, and why citizens contact party officials (**Figure 2.3**). For example, in Liberia almost four out of

[21] *It is, of course, possible that a respondent contacted a party official as well as a religious leader. Given the structure of the survey questions, however, it is impossible to say who a respondent thinks of when answering the subsequent questions about the type of contact – the party official or the religious leader. To provide some context to this possible overlap, I grouped citizen contact by the three groups (party representative, local notable, and government official). Across all respondents, 10% contacted someone from each group; 18% contacted a representative from two of the three groups; 27% contacted actors from only one group, while 45% did not contact any of these actors.*

ten (37%) respondents contacted a local party official, while it was only 4% in Madagascar. What is more, we can see clear differences in the type of contact. In Benin and Botswana, even though similar shares of the population contact party officials (16%), far fewer respondents contacted Beninese party officials alone and regarding a personal matter compared to their counterparts in Botswana. Moreover, in Guinea, Niger and Togo, community claim making is nearly universal. Thus, the evidence indicates that although a substantial share of citizens is exposed to "credibility-buying" attempts by politicians (Hicken & Nathan, 2020, p. 288) and a significant number of people approach party activists to seek out clientelist exchanges narrowly defined(Lindberg, 2003), community claim making is comparatively more prominent, and thus, far from irrelevant. On the one hand, this suggests party activists could provide valuable services for citizens, and at the same time, build a reputation as problem solvers and advocates. On the other hand, this bottom-up demand indicates that citizens will be a captive audience for what party activists have to say in their role as community-level ambassadors for their party.

Figure 2.3: Citizen initiated contact with party officials | by type of contact | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer. Note: Share Contacted party official by type of contact: black: Community request & in group, dark grey= ambiguous, light grey= personal issue and alone

2.4.2 Virtually absent between elections?

Following closely on arguments that parties are primarily engaging with citizens in a top-down manner, is the claim that they are largely absent between electoral cycles (Erdmann, 2004). According to this argument, political parties are little more than labels that are attached to ambitious individuals who seek public office. Thus, parties rarely build local organizational structures, and when they do, they remain informal, attached to certain party elites, and ephemeral (Rakner & van de Walle, 2009; van de Walle, 2007). Similarly, parties are often described as platforms used to aggregate and articulate social interest based on ethnic and regional identity or solidarity, rather than more permanent local organizational presence that regularly engage with potential voters (Erdmann, 2004; van de Walle & Butler, 1999). In either case, parties are assumed to be un-reachable at the local level between elections.

The difficulty with this argument is that it is rarely supported by empirical data. Although there have been some attempts of measuring local organizational strength in the electoral off-season across the continent, these are largely based on summary judgements by few country experts, rather than on fieldwork in a representative sample of a country's locations (Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Kitschelt, 2013; Lührmann et al., 2020; Stroh, 2014). In addition, where scholars have conducted fieldwork at the local level, they often found the opposite. For example, in the case of Ghana, Bob-Milliar (2019)describes how elected representatives together with local party workers often establish makeshift party offices in their business or homes creating meeting spots for party members and local residents. Similarly, Paget (2022) shows how the "lone organizers" of CHADEMA, the major opposition party in Tanzania, spend considerable time and resources to develop a local presence for the party in politically unreceptive and hostile communities. The constraint of the latter type of research, however, is that it is often based on a single country, and the results are difficult to compare cross-nationally and over time.[22]

Political parties' ability to engage with citizens over service delivery between elections can also be probed using data from several rounds of Afrobarometer surveys. To do so, we return to the question introduced earlier about citizens contacting party

[22] *To be sure, party leaders like those of the ruling African National Congress in South Africa regularly bemoan that local party branches are not active enough in the periods between general elections and national electoral conferences(African National Congress, 2007; ANC, 2012). However, these critical self-assessments should not be equated with the absence of local branches.*

officials over the previous 12 months. This question was asked across the four most recent survey rounds (Rounds 5-8). While Afrobarometer usually and purposefully conducts fieldwork outside of election campaign periods, there have been several occasions where this was not the case. Between 2011 and 2021, Afrobarometer conducted fieldwork for a total of 20 surveys across 15 countries close to a parliamentary or presidential election.[23] Here, I count surveys for which fieldwork was completed less than three months prior to such an election or was started less than six months after an election as inside the campaign period.[24]

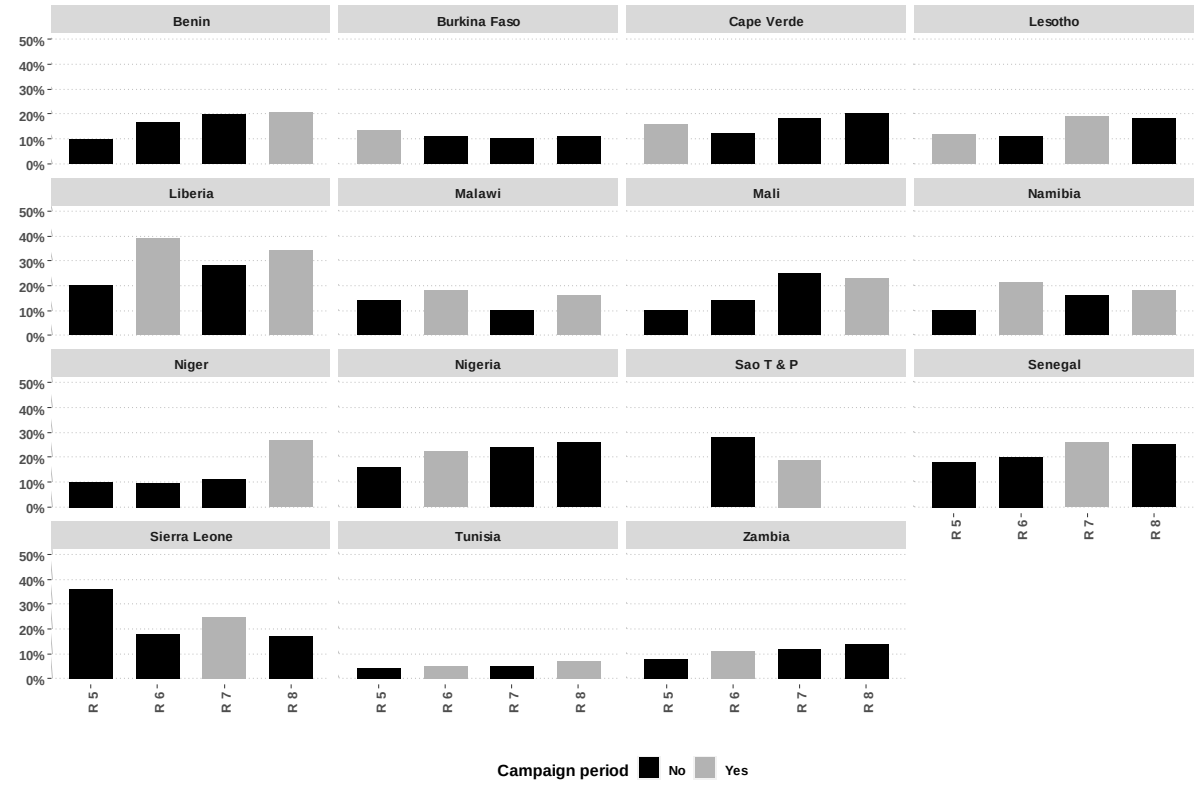
If it is true that parties are only present during the campaign period, we should see significantly higher rates of citizen-initiated contact during these time periods for two related reasons. First, parties would have a heightened interest to be present in communities during the months leading up to an election advertising party as well as candidate attributes and positions, organising rallies, or handing out election incentives to remind citizens of their clientelist or supposed ethnic or regional loyalties. Moreover, and following the clientelist logic, citizens would be more inclined to take advantage of party workers' increased availability and efforts to persuade voters through handouts. While it is difficult to estimate how much the difference in contact-rates between the campaign period and non-campaign period should be, at a minimum, we would expect it to be higher than the 4% margin of error for any two surveys (+/- 2% for each survey). Yet, when comparing the survey results over the past decade (Rounds 5 to 8) this is generally not what we find (**Figure 2.4**). Even under this very generous assumption, only two out of 15 countries fit this criterion (Liberia, 28% in R7 vs. 34% contact rate in Round 8; Niger, 11% in R7 vs. 27% in Round 8). What is more, for 6 out of 15 countries[25] at least one of the surveys conducted outside the campaign period shows a higher citizen-initiated contact rate than the campaign period survey.

Looking at the over-time trend for all countries that were surveyed in Round 5 and Round 8, it is striking that among the 28 countries which were surveyed in all four rounds, we see an increase in the average contacting rate from 14% to 18%. Only three countries recorded a substantial decline in the contacting rate (more than five

[23] Benin (R8), Burkina Faso (R5), Cape Verde (R5), Lesotho (R5+7), Liberia (R6+8), Malawi (R6+8), Mali (R8), Namibia (R+86), Niger(R8), Nigeria (R6), Sao Tome & Principe (R7), Senegal (R7), Sierra Leone (R7), Tunisia (R6+8), and Zambia (R6).
[24] I choose this nine-month timeframe around a national election because of the phrasing of the question, which asks about the 12 preceding months. Thus, even if a respondent was interviewed five months after an election, the question about citizen-initiated contact would still refer to the election period.
[25] Cape Verde, Mali, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, Zambia

percentage points - Sierra Leone (-19), Tanzania (-11), and Zimbabwe (-10)). By contrast, for 17 of the 28 countries, we see a substantive increase of at least 5 percentage points, and for five of them, we see an increase of 10 percentage points or more[26] Thus, despite the frequently held assumption that local party structures collapse following an election and become unavailable to citizens, the data largely do not support this claim. Instead, the over-time trends indicate a growing level of citizen-initiated contact with parties.

Figure 2.4: Citizen-initiated contact during and between campaign periods | 2011-2021



Source: Afrobarometer. Note: Survey was considered as part of the election period if it was completed three months prior to parliamentary or presidential election or started 6 months after election for Rounds 5 to 8.

2.4.3 Are opposition parties weak?

Another strand of research argues that the lack of resources leaves opposition parties typically confined to conducting their rallies in dense urban areas (Resnick, 2013). Therefore, the argument continues, only very few of the continent's parties are able

[26] *The countries with five percentage point increases or more between Round 5 and Round 8 are: Benin (11), Cameroon (6), Cote d'Ivoire (9), Ghana (6), Guinea (5), Lesotho (6), Liberia (14), Mali (12), Mauritius (9), Namibia (8), Niger (17), Nigeria (10), Senegal (7), South Africa (5), Sudan (9), Togo (7), Zambia (6).*

to run face-to-face campaigns across the country, let alone build the kind of local structures that endure beyond the campaign cycle (van de Walle, 2007). Consequently, few parties undergo organizational institutionalisation at a national scale(Wahman, 2017). Those that do are assumed to be ruling parties which rely on government resources and co-opt the civil service to build a nationwide local presence, even where the party itself only has a thin presence otherwise. A second set of parties that is said to be able to institutionalise, are those parties that can draw on historic organizational roots allowing them to reach citizens even if the party is no longer in power today. Parties in this group include former liberation movements, as well as "ex-single parties", or "historic parties" (Southall, 2016; van de Walle & Butler, 1999).

Does the available evidence suggest that opposition parties are largely absent save for urban areas or regional strongholds during election time? In one of the first attempts to systematically compare the organizational strength of African parties, Basedau and Stroh (2008) find that the parties with the strongest organizational structures were also ruling parties at the time. Focusing on sub-national variation, Wahman (2017) demonstrates how the nationalisation of opposition parties (the degree of homogeneity in the geographical distribution of a party's votes) is affected by ethnic fractionalization, the size of the geographic area, and urbanization within a country. At the same time, he shows how these constraints are less consequential for ruling parties.

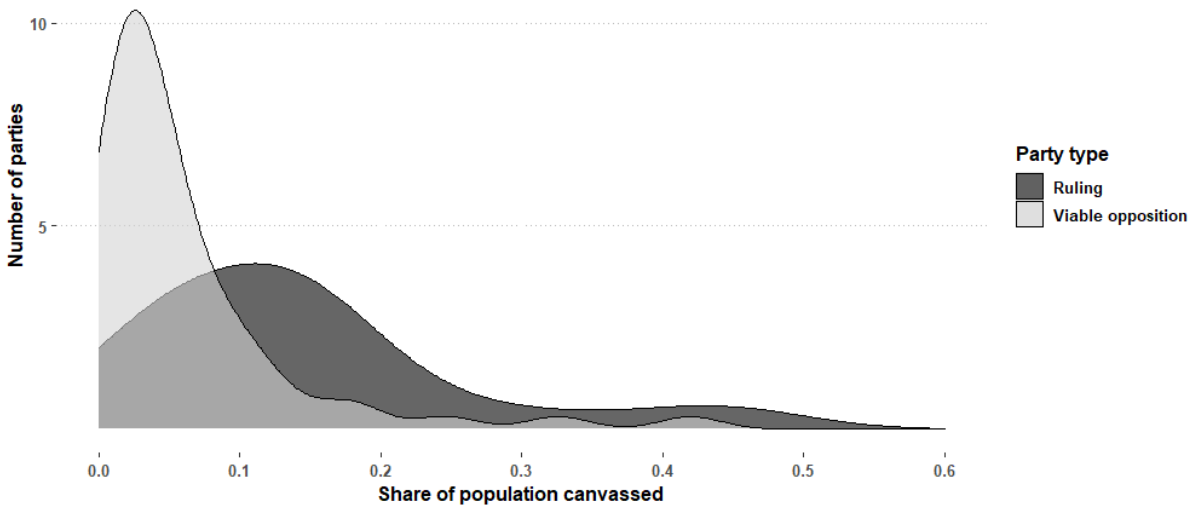
Despite these and other important contributions to our understanding of opposition parties' organizational reach, we still know relatively little about effective party citizen engagement across the continent (especially for opposition parties). This is because most cross-national analyses rely on expert evaluations or voting data – both are relatively distant measures of party-citizen contact. With the completion of Round 8 of Afrobarometer surveys, and the development of the Party Presence Index (Krönke et al., 2022), however, the issue of opposition party strength can be explored in new ways.

As a first step, I focus on party canvassing, an activity clearly initiated by political parties rather than by individual citizens. In Round 8, Afrobarometer asked respondents:

"Thinking about the last national election in [20XX], did any representative of a political party contact you during the campaign?"

A follow-up question asked respondents which party, or parties they were contacted by recording multiple mentions by respondents where applicable. Across 32 countries, there are 94 parties that gained at least 5% of the national vote in the most recent legislative election. Of those parties, more than half (55%) canvassed 5% or more of the population, while the average party in this sample canvassed about 9% of the population. Comparing the party-specific canvassing rates across the 32 countries it is unsurprising that the ruling parties canvas more citizens than the opposition parties (**Figure 2.5**)- on average 14% and 6% respectively.

Figure 2.5: Party canvassing rates | 32 countries, 92 parties | 2019/2021 (Top 3)

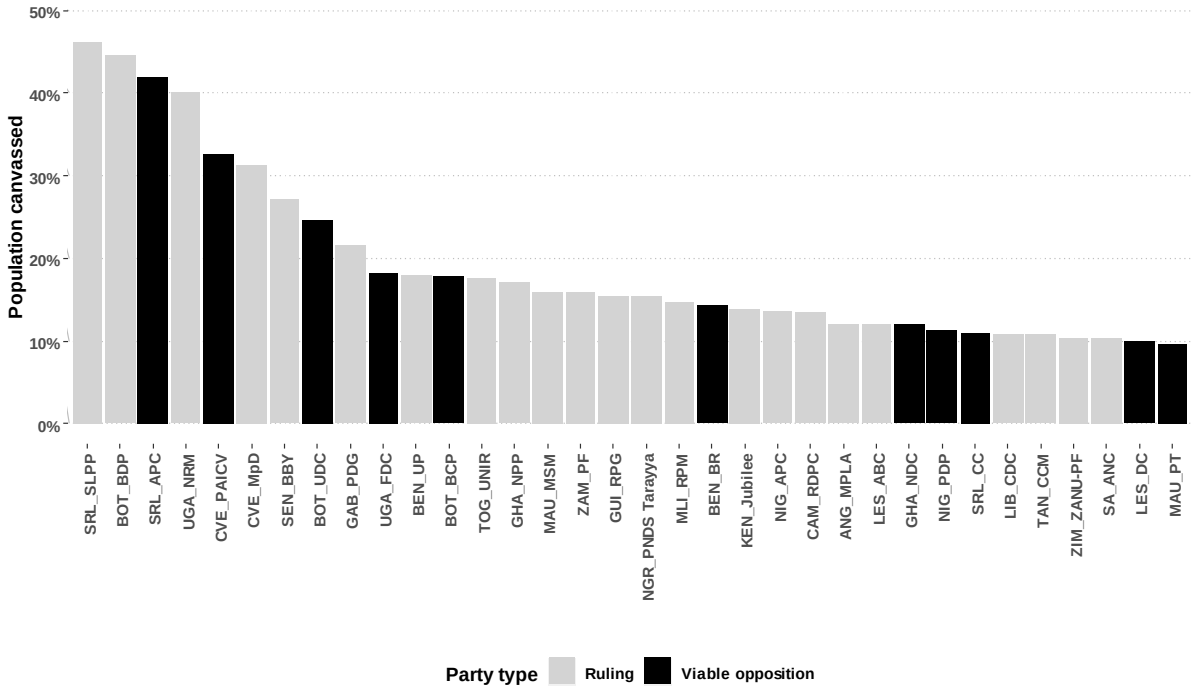


Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Viable opposition parties are defined as having reached at least 5% of the vote in the most recent legislative election.

What is more remarkable given the preceding discussion, however, is how many opposition parties canvass substantial shares of the citizenry come election time (**Figure 2.6**). Using 10% as a somewhat arbitrary cut-off point, the data reveal that across the surveyed countries (32 countries), 34 parties canvassed 10% or more of the population, 23 of which are ruling (68%), and 11 are opposition parties (32%). Thus, a significant sub-set of opposition parties engages with substantial shares of citizens on

a face-to-face basis. Considering that several of them have never been in power (e.g., Botswana's UDC and BCP), or spent more than a decade in the opposition (e.g., Nigeria's PDP), this is no small feat. To better understand the significance of these numbers, we can compare the canvassing rates with other elections from around the world using data from the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP). Across 50 non-African elections covered by CNEP, only 18 parties contacted 10%+ of the population (across eight elections). Of these 18 parties, 8 were ruling, and 10 were opposition parties. Meanwhile, in each of the five African elections that are included in the CNEP dataset, at least one party canvassed 10% or more of the population.[27]

Figure 2.6: Party canvassing rates (10%+) | 34 parties | 2019/2021



Source: Afrobarometer

Canvassing potential voters and telling them about the party's past achievements and future plans are only some of the activities parties regularly engage in, however. To gain a more holistic understanding of ruling and opposition parties local presence, I rely on the survey-based Party Presence Index (PPI) introduced in Chapter 1. In contrast to the canvassing data, the PPI considers both the campaign period as well

[27] *The five African elections in the CNEP data were Kenya 2013, Mozambique 2004, and South Africa 2004, 2009, and 2014.*

as the electoral off-season. Compared to expert-based indices such as those from V-Party, or DALP, the PPI has the additional advantage that it can be calculated for both individual parties (e.g., ruling), as well as groups of parties (all opposition parties). Moreover, it allows for the estimation of parties' local presence at the sub-national level (e.g., urban vs. rural, or by province). By calculating two separate scores - the 'ruling party' PPI as well as a 'viable opposition parties' PPI - for the rural parts of 32 countries, we can test whether the expectations in the literature – opposition party urban bias - reflect the reality on the ground. Moreover, we can also calculate the gap in local party presence between ruling and opposition parties in urban and rural parts of the countries.

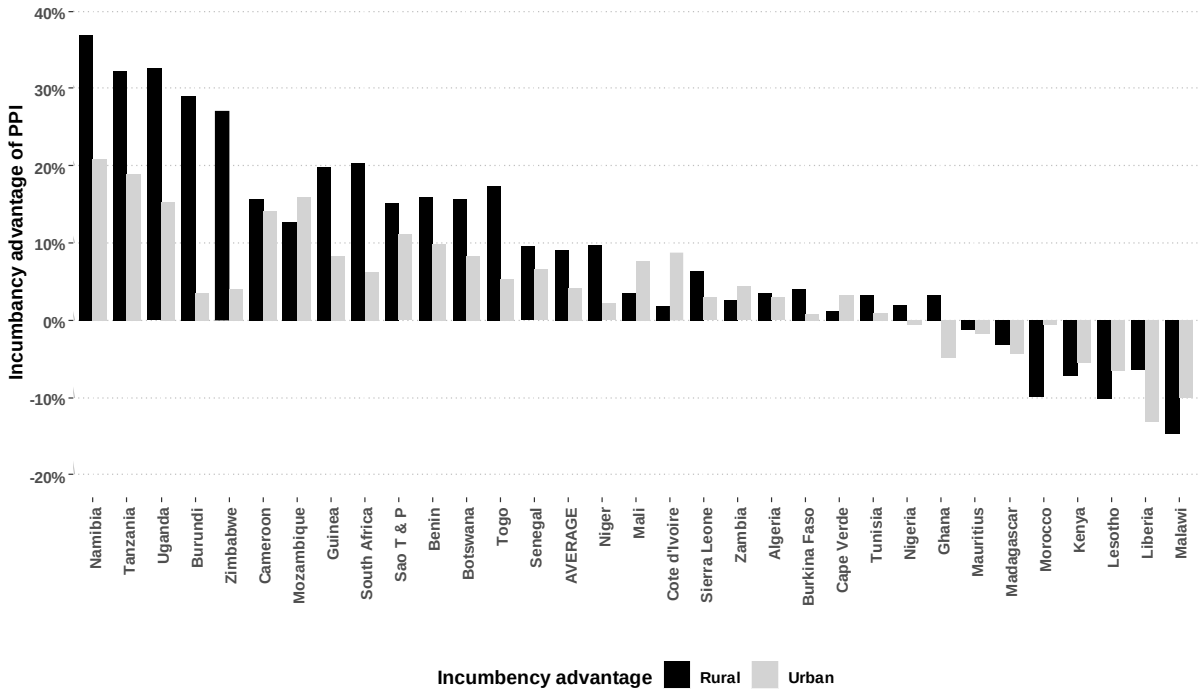
To be sure, by combining all opposition parties which received more than 5% in the most recent legislative elections, the opposition is effectively treated as one party, rather than as its constituent parts. However, the objective here is to test whether opposition parties in general are weak. Therefore, I focus on whether citizens have at least one alternative to the ruling party rather than concentrating on how many alternatives. On average, the ruling party PPI is twice as high (18%) than that of all viable opposition parties (9%) in rural areas. However, this gap varies drastically across countries (**Figure 2.7**). Only in half of the countries (16) is the gap 5 percentage points or higher and in the expected direction. For the remaining 16 countries, the gap is either negligible, or as in the case of Malawi, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia and Morocco, is the gap more than 5 percentage points, but in the opposite direction. That is, in rural parts of these countries opposition parties collectively have a stronger local presence than the ruling party.

How do ruling and opposition parties fare in urban areas? Calculating the same indices for urban areas confirms the expectations in the literature that the gap in local party presence is smaller between the ruling and opposition parties (on average 4 percentage points instead of 9 in rural areas). Moreover, in urban areas fewer ruling parties have a substantial lead over opposition parties - 14 countries lead by 5 percentage points or more.[28]

[28] *Similarly, in urban areas only 7 ruling parties lead by 10 percentage points or more, while the same is true for 15 ruling parties when focusing on rural areas.*

On balance, the commonly held notion of opposition parties being weak and unable to engage voters outside of urban areas is only partly sustained. While it is true that in some countries ruling parties have much denser local networks in rural areas, an asset they can convert during the campaign period by canvassing large proportions of the population, the same is also true for a non-trivial share of opposition parties.

Figure 2.7: Incumbency advantage of PPI | urban and rural location | 32 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Ordered by overall share of incumbency advantage. Incumbency advantage is calculated by deducting the PPI score for all viable opposition parties from that of the ruling party.

2.5 Party activists and local party presence in Africa: Summary

What can we conclude from this section's discussion of African political parties' grassroots networks and their constituent parts – party activists? Given the diversity of Africa's party landscape, it would be unwise to assume that these networks all look alike at the local level. At the very least, however, I provide a corrective to some of the commonly held views about African parties in the literature. For the purposes of the broader argument about party activists developed in this and the two subsequent chapters, there are three important takeaway points.

First, there is a market for party workers to act as problem solvers ambassadors and advocates. Each year citizens initiate bottom-up engagement with party officials at rates that are similar to the party-initiated contacts every four or five years during the campaign period. What is more, on average citizens are far more likely to approach party officials as part of a group and to demand solutions to community problems, than demand help with personal problems. These trends notwithstanding, we see considerable country level variation in both the frequency and type of citizen-initiated contact across countries. I explore the consequences of this variation for citizen satisfaction with service delivery in Chapter 4.

Second, through their local representatives, parties remain approachable between elections. In fact, over the past decade the number of citizens who contacted party activists between elections has remained stable or increased in virtually all countries surveyed by Afrobarometer between 2011 and 2021 (25 out of 28 countries). With almost 1 out of 5 citizens (18%) contacting party officials each year, making the latter an accessible point of contact for citizens in their local communities to resolve concrete issues such as absent teachers, or exchange information about how to improve primary health care for the community.

Third, the local presence of opposition parties varies considerably. Some of them are unable to canvass sizable parts of the population, especially in rural areas; and many opposition parties also do not maintain a local presence between elections. This finding holds true even when treating opposition parties collectively as one unit. However, this characterisation does not fit well for about half the countries for which data was presented above. Indeed, on average, opposition parties maintain a similar local presence in urban and rural areas. Although ruling parties have a larger presence overall and especially in rural areas, the difference is negligible or non-existent in many countries. The strength of many opposition parties' local structures is on display during the campaign periods when they are translated into face-to-face contact with citizens. Indeed, in about a third of the countries surveyed opposition parties were able to engage with at least 10% of the population.

Together, these points suggest that despite the dearth of scholarly work about party activists in Africa, citizens frequently engage with them. In the next chapters, I argue that party activists also fulfil important functions for ruling and opposition party elites

through their roles as community-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors. This is the case because in addition to encouraging people to vote, party activists also contribute to citizens satisfaction with service delivery.

Chapter 3: The connections of party activists

3.1 Introduction

The previous analysis demonstrated that party activists are indeed a common occurrence in local communities across many countries on the continent. Before demonstrating that local party presence is systematically correlated with citizen satisfaction of basic service delivery in **Chapter 4**, I first focus on *how* local party activists influence citizen evaluations of government provided services. According to the Conveyor-belt Mechanism, three types of activities are crucial. First, party activists frequently act as party *ambassadors* in the communities they live in, by spreading information about the party's recent achievements and future plans. Second, party activists also take citizens' concerns to more powerful party officials – they act as *advocates*. The third crucial activity that party workers often engage in is the solving of concrete service delivery issues on behalf of citizens – individuals and groups – by engaging with local bureaucrats or other organisations that can resolve the issue at hand. In short, they act as *problem solvers*, or *fixers*. Although the latter has received some attention from scholars in the Global South, much less is known about party workers' roles as advocates and ambassadors, especially in Africa.[29]

Identifying the extent to which party workers engage in these activities requires detailed analyses of the relationships between party activists on the one hand, and citizens, party elites and bureaucrats on the other. In this chapter, I introduce case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia to investigate more closely the dyads that constitute different parts of the mechanism. In each of the following three sections, I use original survey data to investigate the connections between different pairs of actors to show how the conveyor-belt mechanism works in practice.

First, I focus on the connection between ***citizens*** and ***party activists***. I use panel survey data from Zambia to demonstrate that citizens are not only aware of party activists from both the ruling and opposition parties, but also frequently experience, or hear about party workers operating in their neighbourhoods. The panel data allows me to build on the cross-national evidence presented in **Chapter 2** and provides a more detailed picture of the type of activities – transmitting information

[29] *For stylistic purposes, I use party activists and party workers interchangeably even though that the latter is often perceived as a more passive actor.*

and fixing problems - party activists engage in at different points of the electoral cycle. Additionally, the data confirm that party workers spend more time talking about and helping citizens with community level services and issues than individual issues.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the inner workings of the party as it relates to the conveyor-belt – the relationship between ***party activists*** and ***party elites***. I draw on original survey data of Malawian party elites to show that they spend a lot of time engaging with party workers. In line with my theory, I also find that party elites devote substantial amounts of time exchanging information about ongoing or new government service projects, and about party policies with a range of stakeholders inside the party as well as citizens. This elite-level survey across ruling and opposition parties complements the evidence from the Zambian panel survey and affords more precise analyses of the types of exchanges between the different groups than the cross-national data from Afrobarometer presented in earlier chapters.

In the third section, I then draw on a survey of Malawian bureaucrats to illustrate the interactions between ***party activists*** and ***local bureaucrats***. Although party workers make up a comparatively small share of the visitors that bureaucrats receive, when they do visit, it is primarily in their role as fixers resolving concrete community service issues. Taken together, the evidence presented in the three sections empirically demonstrates that party workers regularly take up the three roles – ambassador, advocate and problem solver – that are important for the conveyor-belt mechanism to work.

3.2 The party activist – citizen connection

3.2.1 The Zambian context

Since Zambia's return to multiparty competition in 1991, the country has been governed by three different ruling parties. First, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) ruled the country in the 1990s and 2000s, initially under the party's founder Frederick Chiluba, and then under Levy Mwanawasa and Rupiah Banda. During this period, Zambia's party system also underwent significant change. Throughout the first half of MMD rule, the number of viable political parties[30] increased from two (1991) to six (2001). Since then, however, the party system

[30] *Viable political parties are defined as those that reached at least 5% of the vote in parliamentary elections.*

consolidated steadily. In the 2006 and 2011 elections, only the MMD, the Patriotic Front (PF), and the United Party for National Development (UPND) garnered more than 5% of the vote in parliamentary elections. Following the PF victory in 2011, the MMD effectively disintegrated by 2016, making it a two-party system (PF and UPND) with a small number of nominally independent candidates (9% of seats). After a decade of increasingly authoritarian rule by the PF, the UPND won the 2021 election by a surprisingly large margin.

Although the UPND and PF - two MMD-splinter parties - have been part of the political landscape for two decades, they have not been able to sustain a strong nationwide organisational presence. Previous analyses have repeatedly shown that the PF and UPND have clear regional strongholds, while they are unable to maintain a strong grassroots level presence outside of these areas (Beardsworth, 2020; Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022).

Relatedly, public opinion data has shown that overall party presence (PPI) as well as partisan identification has remained moderate in Zambia when compared to other countries on the continent (Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022; Mattes & Krönke, 2020). Taken together, the historical pattern of uneven local party presence, average levels of partisanship and the closing space for opposition parties to operate in the run-up to the 2021 election make Zambia a good and potentially tough testing ground for the party activist – citizen connection of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

Against this background the Zambian Election Panel Surveys (ZEPS) was conducted between June and September 2021 mostly in Zambia's Lusaka, Eastern and Muchinga provinces – historically PF stronghold areas (Lust et al., 2021). The first two waves were conducted prior to the election, while the third wave was conducted after the 12 August election. The timing of the three survey waves allows me to analyse the connections between party activists and citizens across the electoral cycle.

3.2.2 Party activist – citizen engagement

To what extent are Zambians able to engage with different political parties in their communities? Keen observers of Zambian politics regularly point to the regional patterns of electoral support for the country's main political parties. This historical pattern notwithstanding, the UPND managed to increase its vote-share outside of its stronghold in Southern Province over the 2016 and 2021 election cycles. The cause

for the party's growth has often been ascribed to a process of 'elite inclusion' - senior politicians and MPs (and their networks) joining the party, and thus compensating for the party's lack of national organizational reach (Beardsworth, 2020).

In the absence of reliable data provided by parties themselves, estimates of the UPND's as well as the PF's local networks have largely been based on expert judgements, or inferred from disaggregated election results. However, there are several key shortcomings of these approaches. While expert evaluations are likely to suffer from reliability and level of analysis issues (Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022), disaggregated election data is equally inappropriate for the purposes of this study for at least two reasons. First, the relationship between organisational presence and vote shares is rarely demonstrated in Zambia, or the African context for that matter. Further, there are several reasons why citizens who do engage with a party at the local level, might not vote for the party, or go to the polls at all. Therefore, this measure would underestimate the engagement between parties and citizens. On the other hand, citizens might vote for a party even though the party does not have any local presence in their area. In this case, using local vote shares as a proxy for the presence of local party activists would overestimate organisational structures. Since we cannot assume that the two effects cancel each other out in a predictable way, it is not advisable to use voting patterns to infer how active party activists are in their communities. Equally, voting data does allow us to identify whether party activists act as problem solver, advocates, or ambassadors.

Second, even if we assume a high level of correlation between election results and the type and frequency of conveyor-belt related activities of party workers, election results only provide a single snapshot in time every five years. Thus, it is difficult to extrapolate any party's activities at the local level between elections. Yet, as we have seen in **Figure 2.4** in **Chapter 2**, citizens increasingly engage with party officials between elections in Zambia. Given these shortcomings, I rely on public opinion survey data that include specific questions about the presence of local party activists. This allows me to directly measure citizens' experiences with party workers.

3.2.3 Personal connections

The first important step in demonstrating the frequency and type of engagement between party activists and citizens, then, is to show that citizens are actually aware

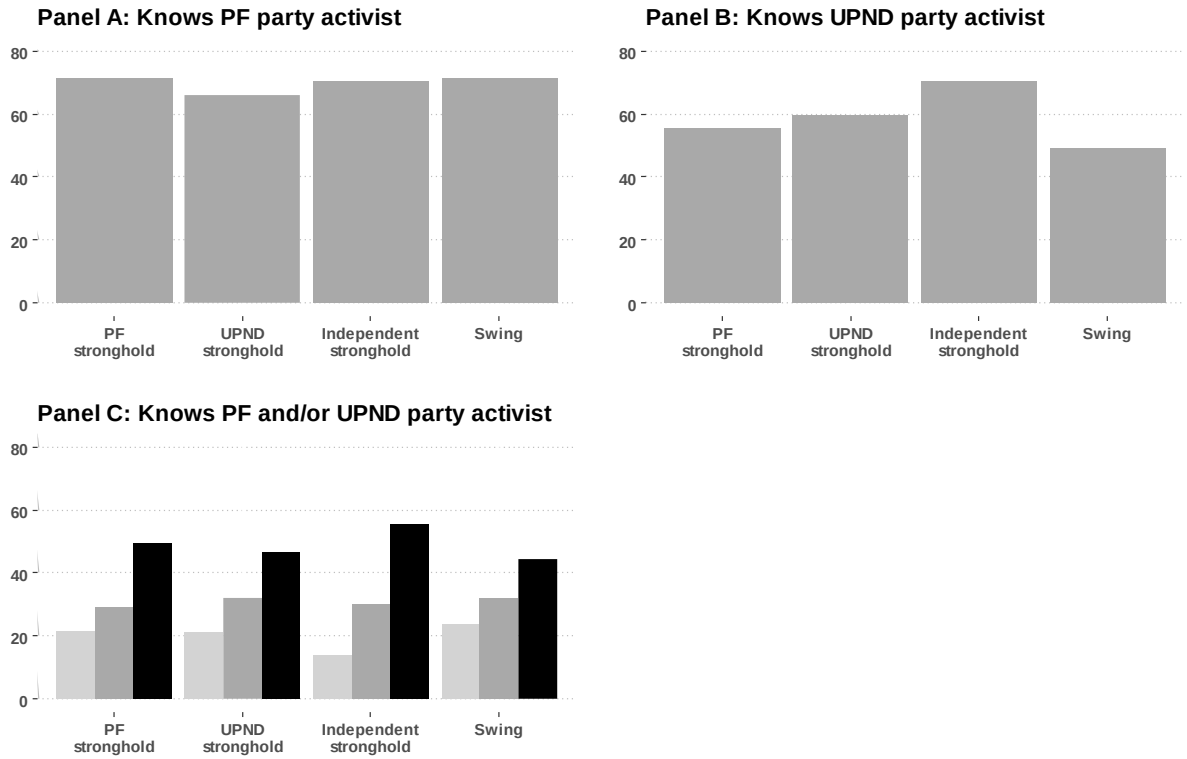
of party activists in their neighbourhood. To do this, I rely on two questions in the Zambian panel survey that directly ask citizens whether they personally know party activists from the PF and the UPND in their constituency.[31]

Overall, 69% of respondents said that they personally know a PF party activist in their constituency, while 53% of respondents said the same when asked about party activists from the UPND. These are significant shares of the population. However, given the above-described regional patterns, it is possible that citizens only have close connections to party workers who belong to the party that dominates the constituency (i.e. the local MP's party). To probe this, I categorised respondents based on the type of constituency they live in. If a party won the constituency both in 2016 and 2021, I consider it a party stronghold. Where there was a change in party at the constituency level, I categorised the constituency as a swing constituency.[32] Contrary to the received wisdom, **Panels A** and **B** in **Figure 3.1**, show that citizens' personal connections to party activists are very similar across the different types of constituencies. Irrespective of constituency type, more than 65% of respondents personally know a party activist from the PF, and at least half (49%) know someone from the UPND.

To further demonstrate that citizens can access conveyor-belts with relative ease, and often have a choice in who they approach, we can also calculate whether citizens have access to none, one, or both of the major parties. About 80% of respondents reported knowing a party worker from at least one party, and approximately half of respondents personally know party workers from both parties (**Panel C**). In short, if we consider a personal connection between a citizen and a party activist as a minimum requirement for this part of the conveyor-belt mechanism, the vast majority of respondents meet this criterion.

[31] *The precise question phrasing is as follows: "Do you personally know any party activists from the PF in this constituency?": "Do you personally know any party activists from the UPND in this constituency?"*
[32] *Swing constituencies include change in any direction. I.e., to PF, UPND, or an independent candidate*

Figure 3.1: Percentage of citizens who personally know party activists in their constituency



Source: ZEPS survey. Note: If a party won the constituency both in 2016 and 2021, I consider it a party stronghold. Where there was a change in party at the constituency level, I categorised the constituency as a swing constituency. Respondents were categorised according to the constituency they live in. In Panel C, light grey = % who do not know party activists from either PF or UPND; dark grey = % who know a party activist from either PF or UPND; black = % who know party activists from PF and UPND. Panel A (N=1347); Panel B (N=1346); Panel C(N=1340). DK and NA excluded.

3.2.4 Type and frequency of party activist – citizen engagement

In addition to having personal connections to local party representatives, an important question is what type of exchanges occur. Do party activists primarily focus on cultivating clientelist relationships with citizens by providing personal goods, or do they focus on solving community problems by providing club goods? And to what extent do party workers focus on their ambassadorial and advocate roles transmitting information about local development projects between citizens and party structures? Relatedly, do party activists engage in these activities only around the election period, or also between elections?

To answer these questions, I make use of a battery of questions in the ZEPS survey that asks citizens to evaluate whether party workers engage in a set of activities: 1) Help individual citizens with their personal problems; 2) Help citizen groups with getting access to government services; 3) Provide information about new, or

ongoing government projects; and 4) Organize social events, or represent the party at community meetings. For comparative purposes, it also includes a question on whether party activists organise community protest in the electoral off-season, an activity that has been documented extensively in Ghana (Bob-Milliar, 2012).

When asked about the time between elections, at least a third of citizens reported that party activists engage in activities that are captured by their conveyor-belt related roles. For example, 33% of citizens reported that party activists help citizen groups with access to government services (problem solver). Similarly, 34% of respondents said that party activists provide information about government projects, and 38% said that party activists organise events and represent the party (advocate and ambassador roles). In contrast, only a quarter of respondents said that party activists solve citizens' personal problems (26%). Although this could technically still be classified as party activists operating as a problem solver, it is often described as relational or one-shot clientelistic exchange in the literature. Either way, it is a less frequent occurrence than the less ambiguous conveyor-belt activities. Even fewer respondents (20%) said that party workers engage in more confrontational activities such as protest between elections.[33] Although the level of activities increases across the board in absolute terms during the election campaign, the increase is higher for the conveyor-belt related activities, and the relative order between the types of activities remains consistent.

Table 3.1: Types of Party Activist – Citizen engagement over time

Type of Activity	**Electoral off-season**	**Campaign season**	**Difference** (percentage points)
Help individuals	26%	32%	+6
Help groups	33%	37%	+4
Provide info about gov projects	34%	65%	+31
Organise events and represent party	38%	73%	+35
Protest	20%	-	-

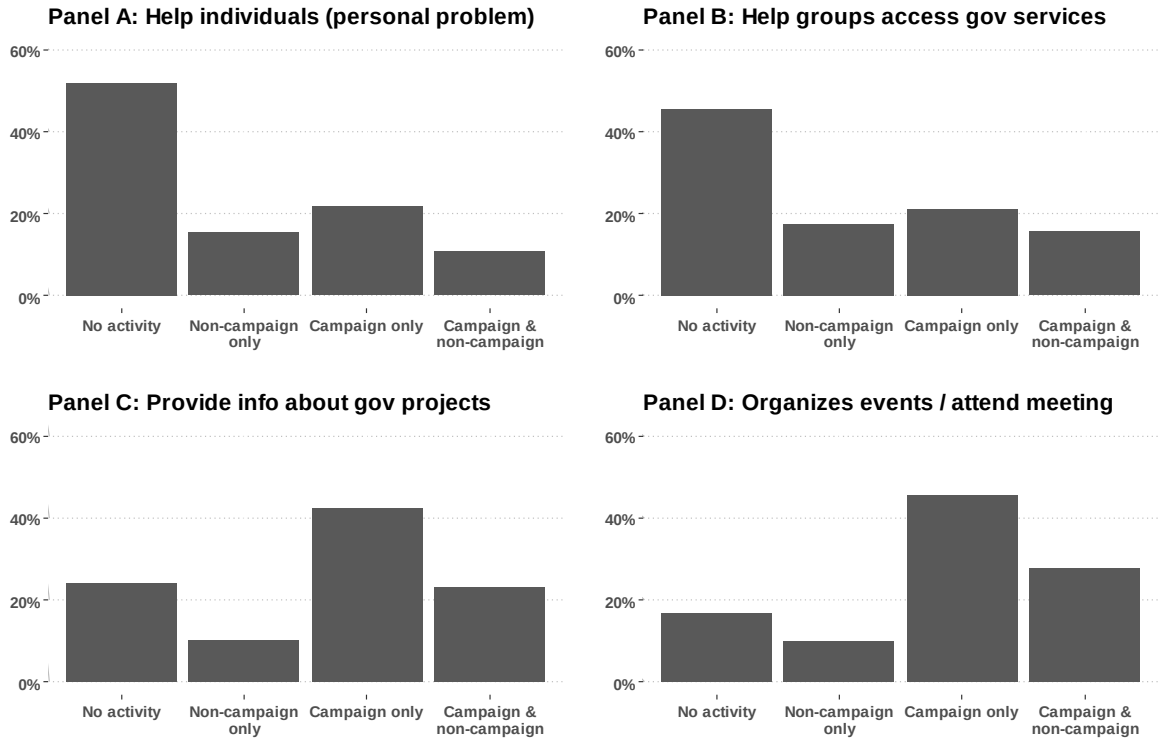
Source: ZEPS Survey. Note: The question on protest was only asked in the first round of the survey, thus no over-time comparisons are possible.

Table 3.1 illustrates the ebbs and flows of different types of activities at the aggregate level. Yet, do individual citizens also experience different patterns at the

[33] *Party cadres engaging in protest and intimidating citizens was a significant problem in the run-up to the 2021 Zambian elections (Beardsworth & Krönke, 2022), but is also common elsewhere on the continent (Bob-Milliar, 2012). However, the ZEPS survey data, as well as a country specific question that was asked in Round 5 in Ghana show that party activists primarily engage citizens along the lines suggested by the conveyor-belt mechanism (Brierley & Kramon, 2020).*

community or constituency level? How many citizens have access to party activists in their various capacities across the electoral cycle, and how many of them only have episodic access? When tracking citizens' responses across the electoral cycle (Rounds 1 and 3), we see two distinct patterns in line with the activities – problem solver, advocate, and ambassador – outlined earlier (**Figure 3.2**). First, party activists regularly and widely disseminate information about government projects and party activities. About 80% of respondents see party activists provide information about government projects, organise party events, or attend community meetings. By contrast, the same is true for less than 60% of respondents for the fixer activities (help individuals and groups). Moreover, substantially more respondents observe instances of the advocate and ambassador activities across the electoral cycle, while the provision of goods to individuals, and the helping of citizen groups seems to be more episodic – often occurring either between elections, or during the campaign period. The latter resembles findings by Brierley and Kramon (2020) in Ghana.

Figure 3.2: Various party activist activities across the electoral cycle.



Source: ZEPS survey.

Conventional wisdom suggests that opposition political parties are least likely to engage with citizens outside the election campaign period. Nevertheless, **Figure 2.4**

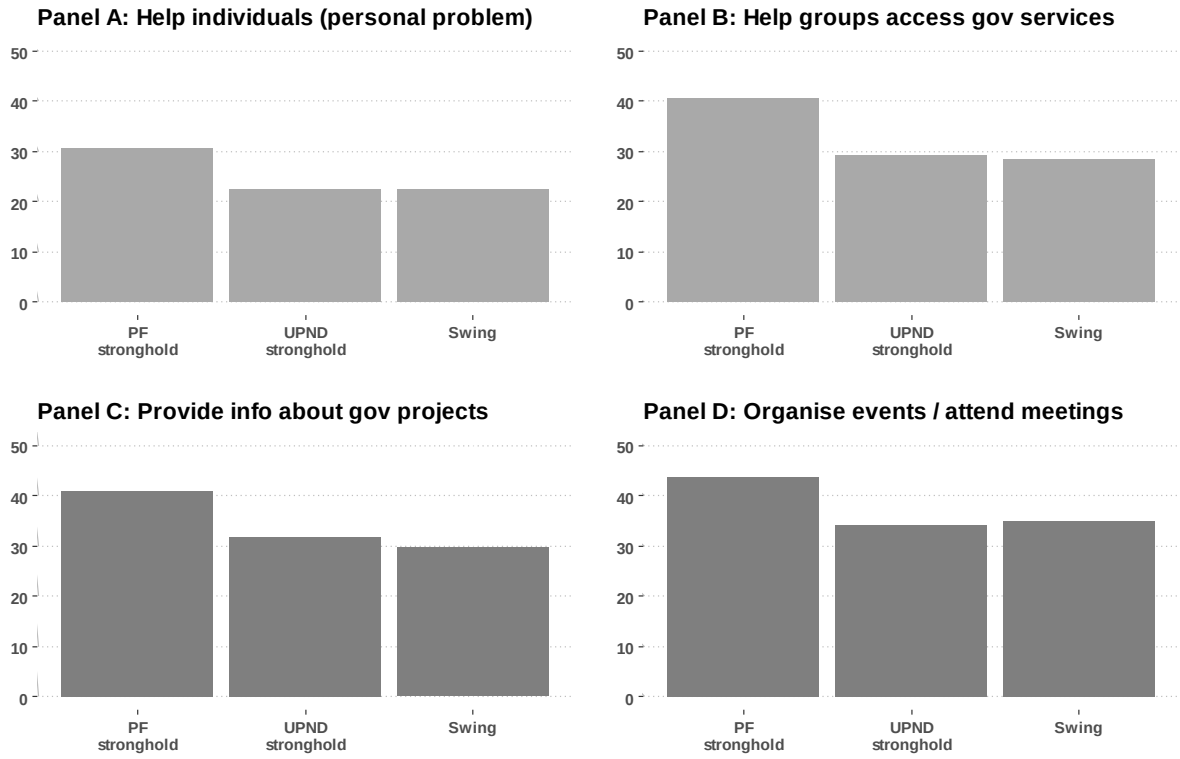
in Chapter 2 suggests that this distinction might often be overdrawn. Indeed, the graph revealed that the incumbency advantage in Zambia is relatively modest when compared to other countries in Africa. This is corroborated by the ZEPS data. The activities that are essential to the functioning of the conveyor-belt mechanism also take place between elections in areas that are not dominated by the ruling party.

Figure 3.3, **Panels B-D** display the activities related to the conveyor-belt mechanism, while Panel A shows the distribution across constituencies for help with personal problems. [34] When disaggregating the different activities by constituency type, we see that the difference is approximately 10 percentage points between PF strongholds on the one hand, and UPND strongholds and swing constituencies on the other. When analysing he gap across the different types of constituencies, it is worth remembering that in the years leading up to the survey, Zambia went through a period of Autocratisation, experiencing a closing of the political arena in which parties could engage with citizens (Ahmed, 2021). Therefore, the gap in conveyor-belt related activities across constituency types would probably be lower in a more open environment.

In short, this section provides several pieces of supporting evidence for the connection between party activists and citizens as outlined in the conveyor-belt mechanism. Not only are citizens aware of local party representatives (the majority of Zambian survey respondents personally know a party activist from at least one party in their constituency), but they also see party workers perform the kind of activities that are at the heart of the mechanism both across the electoral cycle and in different types of constituencies. Lastly, the analysis has also shown that party activists are less likely to help individuals with their personal problems compared to assisting groups of citizens with access to club goods. A finding I build on in the next section.

[34] *Given the question phrasing, it is impossible to identify whether the reported activities were carried out by PF or UPND party workers.*

Figure 3.3: Type of activity | by type of constituency



Source: ZEPS

3.3. Party activist – party elite connection

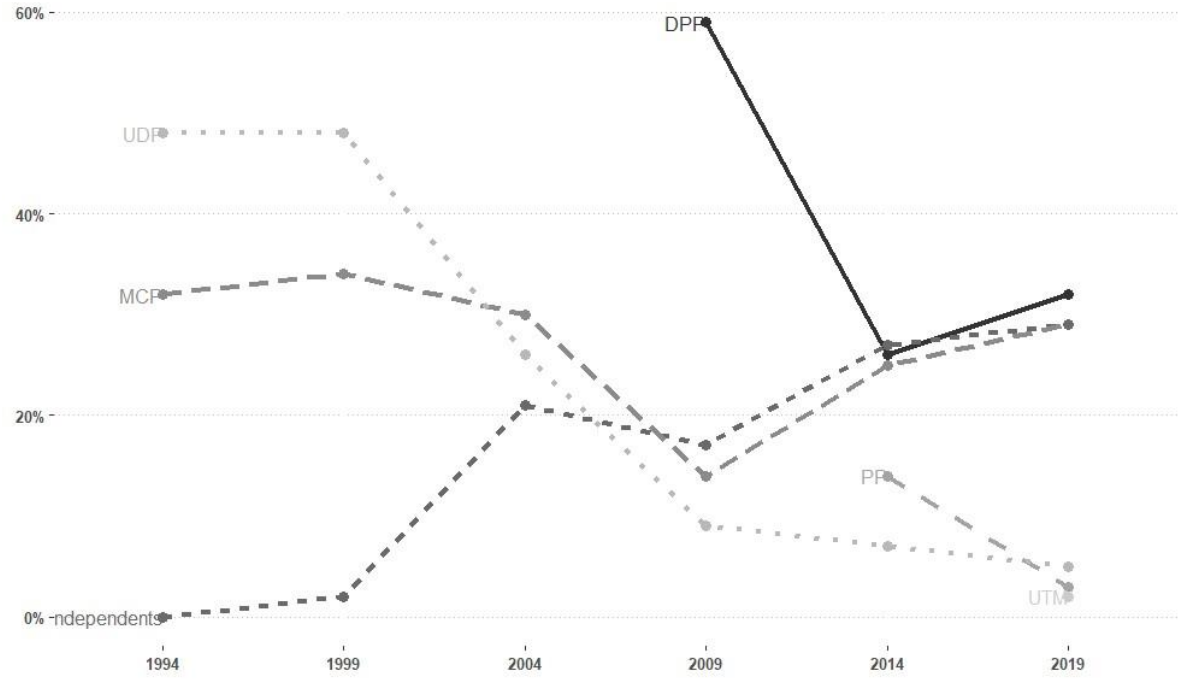
Though important, the connection between party activists and citizens is only one of three crucial nodes that involves party workers in the conveyor-belt mechanism. In this section, I focus on the intra-party connection of party activists and their more senior party members. That is, I provide an analysis of party workers' *advocate* activities (carrying citizen views upward to higher level party structures). In **Chapter 2**, I implied that party workers frequently engage with mid-level party elites (party officials and MPs) as well as party leadership. In these encounters, party activists exchange information about how citizens view basic service delivery, what concrete steps the party takes to improve service delivery, as well as how to address these issues through various policies. Thus, an important question is how often do party activists engage with more senior party members? And relatedly, how frequently do they discuss service delivery issues compared to other internal party matters, or requests for personal favours from citizens?

To analyse the interactions between party activists and party elites, I draw on an original survey of party elites in Malawi.[35] The data confirm that party activists work as citizen advocates inside party structures. Specifically, I find that district elites spend a lot of time engaging with party activists over citizen concerns and local development issues.

3.3.1 The Malawian context

Several factors of Malawi's political landscape make it a good case to test the connection between party activists and district-level party elites. First, the country's history of multiple turnovers of power through peaceful elections creates incentives for parties to create and maintain grassroots structures which can be utilised to engage with citizens across the electoral cycle. Second, since the country's return to democracy, the party landscape has undergone significant changes. The authoritarian successor party - Malawi Congress Party (MCP) – has retained between 20% and 30% of seats in parliament across most of the six parliamentary elections (**Figure 3.4**).

Figure 3.4: Seat share in national assembly | Malawi | 1994-2019



Source: Carr (2021)

[35] *See Chapter 1 for more details on the survey.*

Other parties, such as the once ruling United Democratic Front (UDF, founded on the eve of the multi-party era in 1992), have lost most of their popular support over the past 20 years. Moreover, several parties have emerged in the post-authoritarian period, though not all of them managed to remain viable contestants. Founded in 2005, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidency and a clear parliamentary majority in 2009. While the DPP was in power, party elite disputes caused several party splits. In 2011 Joyce Banda split from the DPP and founded the People's Party (PP), and similarly, in 2018, Saulus Chilima founded the United Transformation Movement (UTM). While the PP has not been able to sustain its popularity beyond 2014 – it only won five out of 193 seats in 2019 - the UTM is yet to contest in a second general election. In addition to varying in age and electoral success, Malawian parties have also been attributed different, albeit generally low levels of party institutionalisation and organisational reach (Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Kalua, 2011). I take advantage of this variation to demonstrate that despite these past assessments, intra-party communication between district-level elites and community-level activists is relatively high and consistent; providing additional evidence in support of the conveyor-belt mechanism. [36]

3.3.2 Frequency of interactions

How much time do party elites spend talking to grassroots activists? And how do the interactions between these actors compare to interactions with other party representatives, bureaucrats, and citizens? To answer these questions, I surveyed more than 400 district level party representatives and asked about their interactions with other party members and external actors. In the organisational charts of the four Malawian parties (MCP, DPP, UDF, and UTM), these members are below the party leadership (national and regional committees), but above party activists (members of constituency, ward, area, or zone committee structures). Therefore, they form an important node through which information must flow for the conveyor-belt mechanism to work effectively.

I begin by establishing a basic understanding of what party work looks like for these district-level elites. I asked respondents how many hours per week they spend on different kinds of party related activities such as administrative work (excl. meetings),

[36] *Malawi has also seen a rising share of at least nominally independent candidates over the past two decades. I exploit this feature of the country's party system in more detail later to analyse the effectiveness of the conveyor-belt mechanism.*

meeting with other party members, elected representatives, bureaucrats, chiefs, representatives of private organisations, as well as citizens. On average respondents spent about 14 hours on all types of party related work. To find out how much time respondents allocate to each of their tasks, I divided the answers from each respondent by the total number of hours reported across all types of party related activities by that interviewee. In **Table 3.2**, I average these measures across the full sample, as well as by political party to calculate the proportion of time spent on each type of activity each week.

Table 3.2: Type of activities of district-level party officials

	Overall	MCP	DPP	UDF	UTM
Meeting party activists	**.244**	**.205**	**.231**	**.282**	**.301**
Meeting party leadership	.019	.017	.024	.014	.017
Meeting elected representatives	.048	.054	.061	.022	.044
Meeting bureaucrats	.019	.019	.019	.024	.016
Meeting chiefs & headmen	.076	.071	.061	.084	.074
Meeting NGOs	.015	.010	.009	.022	.016
Meeting Private sector	.010	.005	.014	.007	.013
Meeting citizens	.258	.268	.248	.283	.242
Admin work	.311	350	.332	.262	.276
N	329	103	103	62	61

Source: Party Elite Survey. Note: Respondents were asked how many hours per week they spend on each of the following party related activities. I divided the responses from each respondent by the total number of hours across all activities by that respondent. "Don't know" and "Refused to answer" responses were coded as missing (N=87). Table reports the average proportion of time spent on each type of party related activity for the full sample of party elites and grouped by political party.

The results in suggest, engaging with party activists makes up 20-30% of the overall time district-level party elites spend on party related work. By comparison, these party operatives spend equally as much time meeting with citizens directly and on other party work that does not include meeting people. Comparing the variation across parties reveals that while there are some differences, the three activities are the most time-consuming ones for respondents across all four parties. In contrast, respondents spend substantially less time meeting with bureaucrats, or representatives from NGOs or the private sector. Meetings with elected representatives, chiefs and headmen falls somewhere in between. This is not entirely

surprising as these are important stakeholders in local communities, especially when it comes to the provision of basic services (Baldwin, 2015).

Given that previous descriptions of Malawian parties have suggested relatively low levels of party institutionalisation and organisational sophistication, one might wonder whether the amount of time spent on meeting party workers and citizens is high or not. Unfortunately, previous studies have largely relied on qualitative data, proxy measures such as membership strength and the frequency of party congresses, or expert evaluations to gage how well parties function organisationally. Thus, it is not possible to conduct any longitudinal comparisons of this data. Nevertheless, it is possible to compare the findings to parties in other parts of the world. To increase comparability with other contexts, I used a similar set of questions as Bussell (2019) for her survey of politicians in India. Although she primarily focuses on constituency service of higher-level elected representatives, she also reports relevant data for other politicians. Overall, the results I present here are broadly consistent with the ones Bussell reports for District and Block Council politicians – those most similar to district-level party officials in Malawi. In her surveys, District and Block councillors spend between a quarter and a third of their time on office work, and meeting with citizens, while spending significantly less time meeting with bureaucrats or representatives of private organisations. However, they spent only between 10% and 15% of their time meeting other politicians (about half as much as Malawian district-level party officials). It is important to note that the question asking about meeting politicians (vs. party activists in the case of Malawi) is less directly comparable. Nevertheless, these results illustrate that party operatives at roughly equivalent levels allocate their time in similar ways in Malawi and India across a range of party related activities. I will build on this comparison below. Another take-away point is that intra-party communication among Malawian parties might be more frequent than previously thought. This implies that party activists also have more opportunities to advocate on behalf of citizens than existing scholarship would suggest.

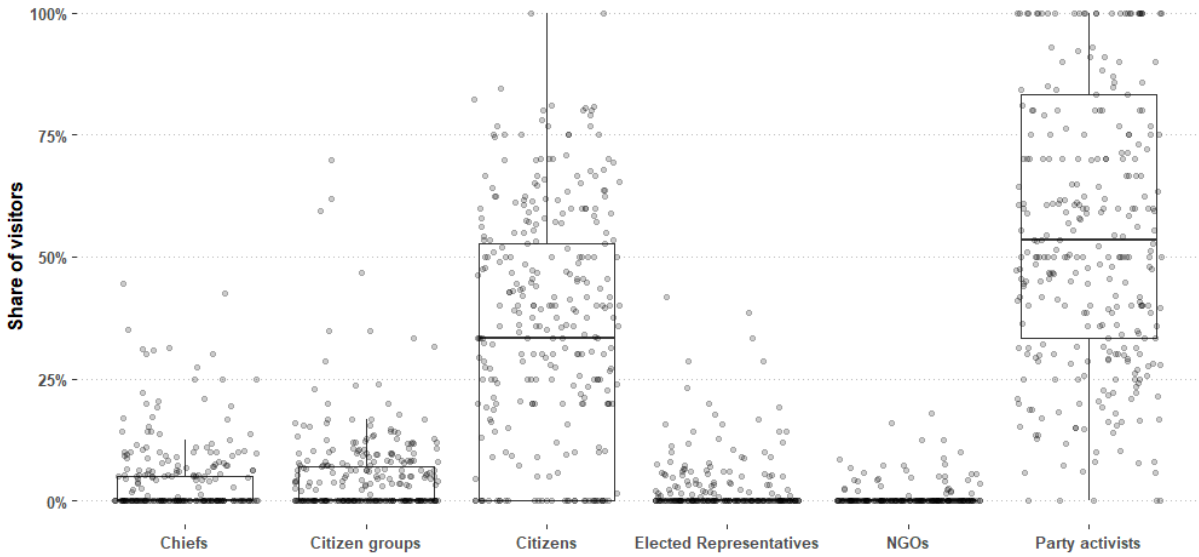
3.3.3 Types of requests

Further unpacking the relationship between party workers and party elites, I asked representatives a second set of questions about who comes to see them and why. The answers to these questions help us to understand whether the conveyor-belt functions as anticipated, or if it primarily works as a clientelist network.

First, I asked out of 100 visitors, how many fall into one of six categories (party activists, elected representatives, chiefs or headmen, NGO representatives, citizens, or citizen groups). To generate the proportions represented by each visitor type, I divided the number for each category by the sum of visitors reported across all six categories. On average more than half of visitors that party elites receive are party activists (57%), while one third are citizens (32%), and a further 5% are citizen groups (**Figure 3.5**). Once again, the variation across parties is small, suggesting that these types of interactions happen across all major parties (results not shown).

In a separate question, I asked how many citizens district-level party operatives receive on a weekly basis. Across the full sample, respondents received an average of 20 citizens per week because of their work as a party representative. There is relatively little variation across parties (DPP=21; MCP=18; UDF=19; UTM=22 citizens visiting per week). When combined with the share of visitors from the previous question, we can estimate that party elites receive at least 20-30 visits from party activists per week. Perhaps most importantly, the results from these two questions support the previous finding that party elites frequently engage with party workers and citizens.

Figure 3.5: Share of visitors to district-level party elites by visitor type



Source: Party Elite Survey. Note: Respondents were asked "Out of 100 visitors that you receive at your office, how many are [insert actor]?"). To generate the proportions represented by each visitor type, I divided the number for each category by the sum of visitors reported across all six categories. N=341

The frequent exchange between party activists and district-level party elites does not necessarily imply that the conveyor-belt mechanism is at work. If citizens and party activists predominantly visit party elites to ask for personal favours, the wider communal benefit of improved satisfaction with service delivery would not be realised. If, however, citizens and party activists mostly seek concrete solutions to community issues, and information about projects that will improve service delivery, we would have evidence of this part of the conveyor-belt mechanism in action. Therefore, we are looking for evidence that party activists engage in the type of *problem solver* and *advocate* activities I outlined earlier. Similarly, I anticipate that citizens predominantly approach party elites in the hope that the latter would solve their concrete service delivery issues, or provide them with information about new or ongoing government service projects (*ambassador* function), rather than individual clientelist goods (e.g., job opportunities). In short, the data also allow us to test whether citizens view party elites as higher-level advocates.

Survey respondents were asked what is the most common thing that the different actors request during their visits. For ease of interpretation, I categorised all types of requests into one of four categories[37]:

1) **Individual requests** (e.g., recommendation for employment, or help with getting access/information for government services for an individual or family)
2) **Community requests** (e.g., help with community problems in general, or getting access/information for government services for a group; or paying fees for government services for a group)
3) **Information exchange** (e.g., information about ongoing or new government service project, information about party policies)
4) **Internal party issues & campaign related requests** (e.g., request for party clothes, the party's way forward, how to join the party)

The first category mostly captures clientelist exchanges, while the second and third categories map onto the different types of activities that I hypothesise political parties engage in to improve citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery, while the fourth one is primarily related to organisation building.

[37] *A residual category of "Other" was included as well. However, less than 2% of responses could not be categorised into one of the 4 substantive categories. Thus, it is excluded from the graph below.*

Looking at why party activists visit party elites in **Figure 3.6**, two things stand out. First, for party activists, finding out information about government projects, service delivery and community development issues are the most common type of request. By doing this, they keep the party in touch with community needs (*advocate* function). Moreover, the data also reveal that activists regularly inquire about the "party's plans for development", and "party promises". These are all examples of party activists gathering information to fulfil their *ambassador* function when they engage with citizens in their communities.

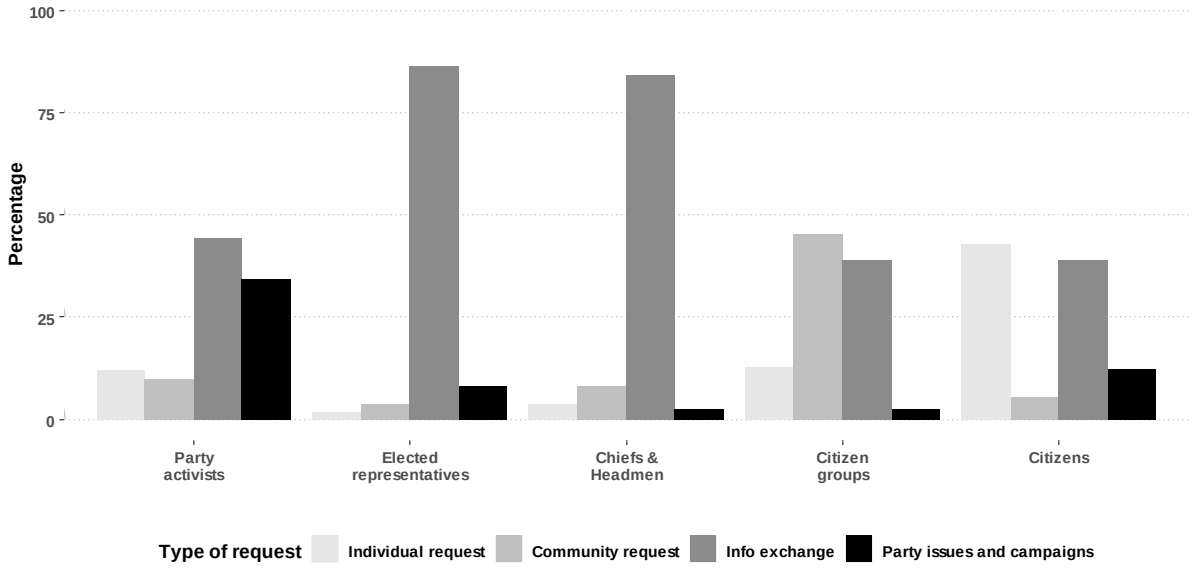
Second, party activists also often request help with tangible issues that they received from citizens, and then relay to more powerful party officials. In their engagements with party elites, about 10% of all requests squarely fall within the *problem solver* category dealing with community problems around service delivery. By forwarding requests such as needing an ambulance for the community to higher level party officials, party activists make sure that the information gets to those within the party who have access to bureaucrats or elected officials to address these issues - playing the role of advocates.

Of course, the problem solver and advocate roles are more distinct in theory, than they are in practice. For example, the data also show that district representatives pass on community requests to other party actors such as elected officials. Not only do these two groups frequently talk about new and ongoing development projects, but the latter also want "to hear about the problems the village is facing", and "Community developmental issues and any other issues of interest". Therefore, the broader point here is that both problem solving and advocate functions frequently take place, and together, outweigh more clientelist types of activities.

Of the most common appeals that activists make to elites, 12% are categorised as individual requests. And while a fair share of them includes recommendations for employment, or help with paying fees for government service, a third (or 4% of the total) are requests directly related to access, or documentation for government services for an individual. Thus, these could also be counted toward the problem solver activities. On balance, then, we find evidence that party activists frequently play their part in the conveyor-belt mechanism and connect local communities and higher-level party representatives addressing issues regarding satisfaction with service delivery.

Figure 3.6 also shows, that where party elites engage with citizens directly, they, too, engage in both the problem solver and advocate type of activities. Unsurprisingly, when citizens approach party elites individually, they are far more likely to ask for access or documentation for a government service for themselves or their families (43%), rather than on behalf of a larger group (6%). However, the second most frequent reason why citizens approach party elites, is to find out about public service delivery projects, and how the party intends to deal with community challenges (39%). This latter type of request is equally pronounced among citizen groups (39%). Although the focus of this section is on the relationship between party activists and elites, these survey results also show that district-level party operatives become party advocates to citizens in very similar ways to more local party workers.

Figure 3.6: Type of requests to district-level party elites



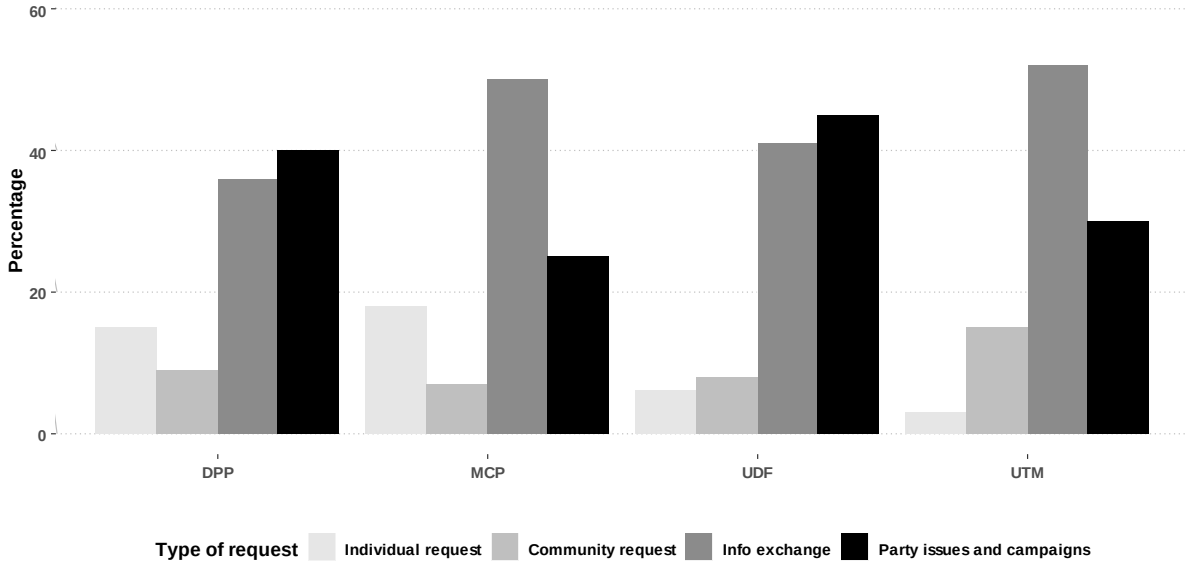
Source: Party Elite Survey. Note: Number of respondents varies as not all respondents receive requests from all actors. Party activists N=349; Elected representatives N=134; Chiefs & Headmen N=207; Citizen groups N=188; Citizens N=290. Less than 1% of responses did not fall into one of the four categories.

I return to the comparison with Bussell's survey of politicians in India to put my survey findings into a broader comparative context. Similar to the questions about how much time party elites spend on different tasks, I also replicated the question structure about who the predominant visitors are, and what type of requests they make. Because Bussell surveyed elected officials, rather than party elites that do not hold elected office, it is not surprising that the majority of visitors across all types of politicians she surveyed were citizens. In contrast, the party officials in my survey

reported more visits from party activists. Despite these differences, however, we see similarities in the type of requests that visitors made. Between 40% and 50% of Indian politicians reported citizens requesting assistance with particularistic benefits, while between 20% and 30% asked about group programmes. In contrast, Indian intermediaries were less likely than individuals to request assistance for particularistic goods. Here, we see a similar pattern in Malawi when comparing the share of individual and community requests between party activists and citizens (categories 1 and 2). Taken together, this illustrates the importance of party activists as advocates for community level issues.

Lastly, I explore differences in the types of requests across parties. Does the difference between the individual and community requests on the one hand, and the information exchange about projects and policies on the other vary by party? Given that the four parties under investigation have very different histories, levels of institutionalisation, and electoral success, it is conceivable that the type of requests from party workers vary by party. For example, the former (DPP) and current (MCP) ruling parties are likely to have more access to resources, and thus, might be more likely to be approached about material requests. Therefore, party activists from these two parties might also forward these types of requests more often to other party members in the organisation. In contrast, it is plausible that the smaller parties focus on the transmission of information, making it more likely that party activists focus on their ambassador and advocate roles, or on strategies of how to build the party organisation. When splitting the requests from party activists by party (**Figure 3.7**), we see some evidence of this.

Figure 3.7: Type of requests to district-level party elites | split by party



Source: Party Elite Survey

About a quarter of all requests from both the DPP and MCP party activists are classified as individual and community requests, while the same is true for only 14% and 18% of requests from UDF and UTM activists. However, across all parties, information exchange about ongoing projects far outweighs these fixer activities, and in two cases (MCP and UTM), these types of requests make up about 50% of requests. Despite this variation in the type of requests at the party level, the data clearly show how important information about ongoing or new government service projects, and updates about party policies are in the day-to-day exchanges between party activists and district-level elites in Malawi.

3.4 Party activist – bureaucrat connection

In this section, I analyse the third dyad – the connection between party activists and bureaucrats. My argument suggests that party activists engage with bureaucrats to help citizens solve immediate service delivery issues, as well as exchange information about government projects that will affect citizen views on service delivery. Analogous to the party activist and elite pair, I investigate how often exchanges between the two actors take place, and what the content of their exchanges are. My expectation, however, is that we will see different interaction patterns because of the distinct resources and access that party elites and district-level bureaucrats provide to party activists. Following the theoretical expectations outlined earlier, I

anticipate that party workers spend more time exchanging information about service delivery issues with party elites, given the latter's various connections to elected representatives and other local notables. In contrast, I hypothesise that party activists primarily approach bureaucrats in their capacity as fixers because the latter are better suited to address concrete service delivery issues. An important caveat to the data that I am about to present is that district-level bureaucrats are likely to only be the second-best option for party activists. This is because party activists would probably first approach a street-level bureaucrats over a given issue, before engaging with district-level bureaucrats.[38] While the type of relationship I describe between party activist and mid-level bureaucrats has already been documented in several other contexts such as India (Auerbach, 2019) and Argentina (Zarazaga, 2014), there is still little systematic empirical evidence in the African context.

I test the assumptions about party activist - bureaucrat interactions using the Malawi Bureaucrat Elite Survey. The telephone survey was conducted with a sample of more than 300 district level bureaucrats who work in the Education, Health, as well as the Planning & Development departments. The latter deals with household-level services such as water, sanitation and electricity. Although the level of decentralisation varies across the different services, each district level unit reports to the respective national department, as well as the District Council.

In each district, District Councils are important venues that deal with several aspects of local governance and development(Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2019). Each Council has six statutory Service Committees (Finance, Development, Education, Works, Health and Environment, and Human Resources) in which council members (MPs, Councillors, Chiefs, and representatives of special interest groups) provide directives on how to implement policies within the district.[39] The bureaucrats I surveyed are therefore an important connection between the national level bureaucratic structures, and the District Councils.

The sample includes district level directors of the respective departments, as well as their subordinates who work at the district office.[40] To illustrate what type of work

[38] Unfortunately, I was unable to collect data on the connection between party activists and street-level bureaucrats due to fieldwork restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
[39] The administrative layer of Districts encompasses between two (Mwanza) and 22 (Lilongwe) MP constituencies in Malawi. Likoma in Malawi's northern region is the only exception to this as the district only has 1 MP constituency.
[40] 92% of respondents have an office space/desk at the district office.

these bureaucrats engage in on a regular basis, I asked them about their tasks and responsibilities. Although most bureaucrats engage with the public directly to some extent, they are not street level bureaucrats. Overall, 86% of respondents supervise other public servants, while 69% provide administrative support and assistance, and about half (54%) deal with public funds, budgets or money. In contrast, only 7% provide political advice as part of their day-to-day work. Thus, these bureaucrats are likely to be approached by a range of stakeholders who want to enquire about service delivery in the district if they could not be helped at the point of service delivery (e.g., clinic administration). This last point is important to keep in mind when analysing the interactions between party activists and the surveyed bureaucrats.

How do these bureaucrats allocate their time, and how much time do they spend meeting with party workers? Like with the Party-Elite Survey, I asked respondents how many hours they spend on administrative work and meeting with various stakeholders. Again, I divided the answers from each respondent by the total number of hours reported across all types of activities by that interviewee. In **Table 3.3**, I average these measures across the full sample, as well as by type of service (community vs. household level services) to calculate the proportion of time spent on each type of activity. For ease of comparison, I also include the overall results for party elites from **Table 3.2** in the last column here.

Table 3.3: Type of activities of district-level bureaucrats

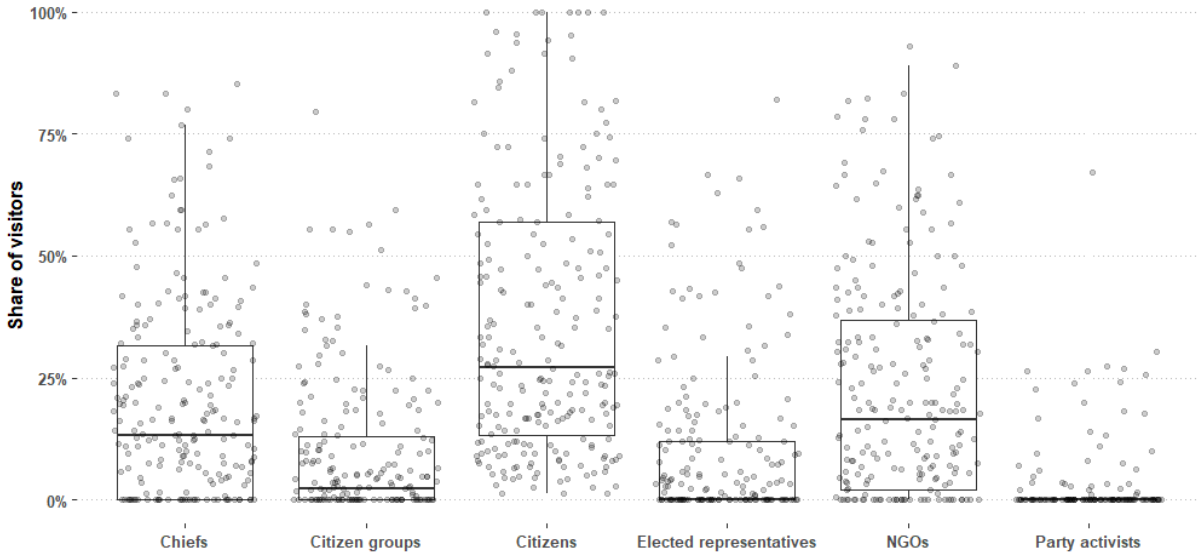
	Overall	Education / Health	Planning & Dev.	Party Elite Overall
Meeting party activists	**.009**	**.007**	**.013**	**.244**
Meeting elected representatives	.024	.020	.031	.048
Meeting bureaucrats	.130	.134	.123	.019
Meeting chiefs & headmen	.035	.027	.048	.076
Meeting NGOs	.042	.045	.039	.015
Meeting Private sector	.017	.017	.017	.010
Meeting citizens	.116	.091	.159	.258
Admin work	.626	.659	.571	.311
N	316	200	116	329

Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey; Note: Respondents were asked how many hours per week they spend on each of the following activities. I divided the responses from each respondent by the total number of hours across all activities by that respondent. Table reports the average proportion of time spent on each type of party related activity for the full sample of party elites and grouped by department.

The results in **Table 3.3** show that bureaucrats spend most of their time (more than 60%) on administrative work that does not involve any meetings. When they do

engage with others, however, they primarily meet with other bureaucrats (13%), or citizens (12%). The data also reveal that overall, bureaucrats spend about as much time meeting with party activists and elected representatives combined, as they do with other external stakeholders such as NGOs (4%), traditional authorities (4%), and the private sector (2%). Focusing on the interaction between bureaucrats and party activists, we see that bureaucrats spend little time meeting with party activists, irrespective of the type of service. This is particularly apparent, when comparing the findings to those of the Party-Elite survey (last column). Further, although a large proportion of bureaucrats do not meet with any party workers, for those that do, party activists make up a small share – not more than 25% (**Figure 3.8**).

Figure 3.8: Share of visitors to district-level bureaucrats



Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey; Note: Respondents were asked "Out of 100 visitors that you receive at your office, how many are [insert actor]?"). To generate the proportions represented by each visitor type, I divided the number for each category by the sum of visitors reported by all six. N=232. as 84 respondents indicated "Don't know" for at least one of the actors.

How should we interpret this first set of findings, and what are the implications of these low contact rates between bureaucrats and party workers for the broader argument? The limited direct interaction between party activists and bureaucrats could be seen as evidence that party activists do not act as advocates or fixers between citizens and district-level bureaucrats. This impression is reinforced by the substantially higher share of chiefs and headmen as visitors at the bureaucrats' offices. However, it is important to put these results into perspective. First, and as mentioned at the outset of this section, the bureaucrats I surveyed are likely to be

the second-best option for party activists. Indeed, party workers who want to help a community to resolve a problem are likely to approach street-level bureaucrats first. Only if they can't fix the issue at the level at which a service is delivered (e.g., school), will they either seek help through party channels (see above), or approach district-level bureaucrats.[41]

Second, compared to the numerically largest group (citizens), we would expect local level party workers to make up a relatively small share of visitors. Third, NGOs are powerful stakeholders that often play important roles at the planning and implementation stages of government projects (Boräng et al., 2022). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that NGOs make up a substantial share of visitors, especially when compared to party representatives (see **Figure 3.8** above).

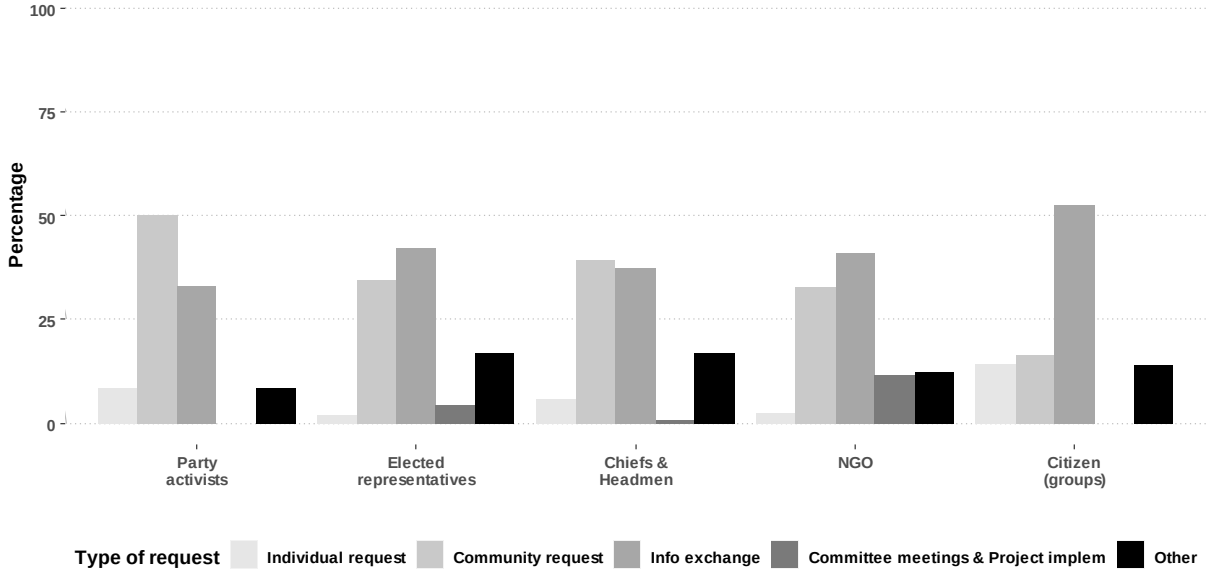
Finally, we can make sense of the survey results by comparing them to the findings from Bussell's survey of elected representatives. Arguably, the elected representatives she surveyed are almost as likely to have access to information about government projects as well-connected party elites who do not hold elected office and bureaucrats. Additionally, and similar to bureaucrats, these elected representatives have incentive and some resources to resolve tangible service delivery issues. Therefore, we can consider the share of party workers and fixers that visit these elected representatives in India as useful reference points. As mentioned before, most visitors to the Indian elected representatives were citizens (more than 70%). In comparison, only around 4% were party workers, while 5-6% were non-partisan fixers. Although the share of party activist visitors is more modest in my bureaucrat survey, this comparative evidence supports the point that low contact rates are not unusual.

Going beyond the mere rate of contact, I analyse what party activists do when they meet with bureaucrats. Given bureaucrats' better access to resources compared to party elites, I hypothesise that party activists primarily approach bureaucrats in their capacity as fixers. I test this assumption by coding the type of engagement between bureaucrats and the different stakeholders into five groups. Consistent with the party elite survey, I kept the individual request, community request, and information exchange categories. However, I replaced the "internal party issues & campaign related requests" with the "committee meetings and project implementations"

[41] *For a similar finding in the Indian context, see Auerbach (2019).*

category. This new category captures a range of issues that deal with committee issues in a narrow sense such as the replacement of a committee member (esp. from elected representatives). Additionally, this category captures meetings that deal with the implementation of projects. These types of meetings were particularly common with NGOs, as government departments frequently collaborate with them throughout the planning and implementation phases. The final category ("Other") captures interactions that do not fit neatly with any of the previous four groupings.

Figure 3.9: Type of requests to district-level bureaucrats



Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey

By disaggregating the responses for each type of visitor according to the type of request, we see several important patterns. First, a clear majority (58%) of interactions initiated by party activists relate to problem-solver type requests from citizens (50% for community and 8% for individual requests). Not only is this higher compared to all other actors that visit bureaucrats, it also differs from what party workers ask about when contacting party elites. This illustrates how party workers tend to focus on their role as fixers when talking to bureaucrats, while taking on the role of information brokers when approaching party elites.

Second, across the board, individual requests are relatively low. With the exception for citizens (14%), not more than 8% of the requests are focused on issues of individual citizens. This confirms the notion that all actors considered here operate primarily on behalf of a larger community, rather than as mediators for individual

clients. Lastly, despite these similarities, however, the request patterns of local elites as a whole (i.e., elected representatives, traditional authorities, and NGOs) also diverges from that of party activists and citizens.[42] This variation hints at the different relationships that bureaucrats have with these actors, and the respective roles these actors play in connecting citizens to government services. I return to this point in more details in Chapter 7, when we focus on the relationship between elected representatives and bureaucrats.

So far, I limited my analysis of how party activists and bureaucrats interact with each other to the district office of bureaucrats. However, bureaucrats and party activists also engage with each other in different context. Malawi has several localised, representative structures in which bureaucrats form one of several stakeholders. For example, the country has a network of citizen-led Area Development Committees (ADCs) as well as Village Development Committees (VDCs) that are intended to support and oversee development processes at the local level (Maiden et al., 2021). Importantly, these are opportunities for bureaucrats and party activists to exchange information about the state of service delivery in specific communities; this information can then be relayed to citizens.

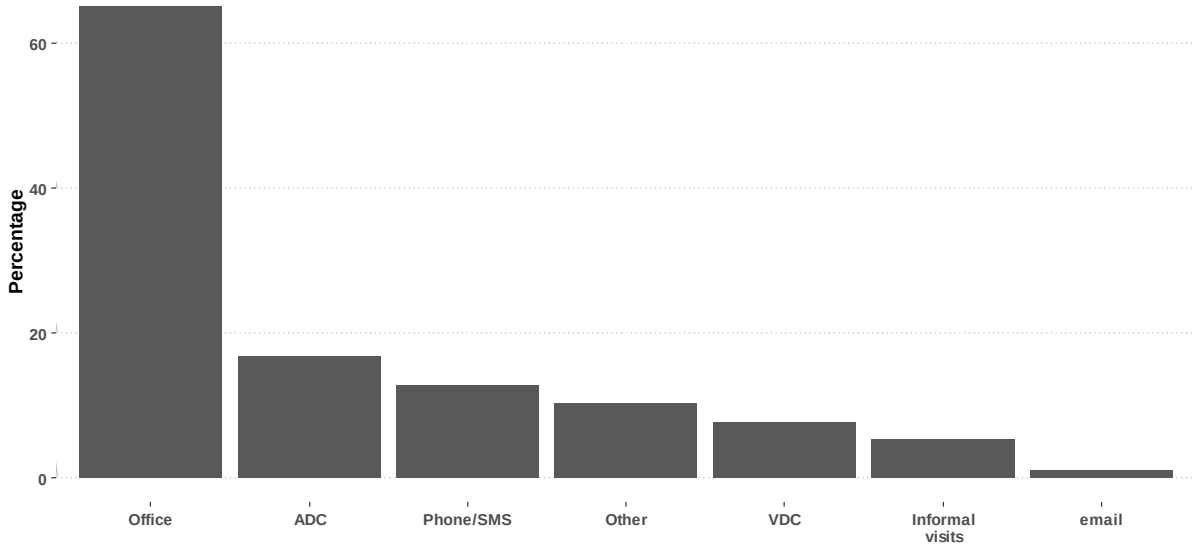
To gage the relative importance of office visits vs. ADCs and VDCs, I included the following open ended survey question: "*When you want to find out what different stakeholders think about service delivery issues, what is the best way to find out what party activists think*?" Interviewers were instructed to record the first two responses that were spontaneously mentioned by respondents. These were grouped into a set of locations (e.g., the office, ADC, VDC, informal visits), remote forms of communication (e.g., phone/SMS and email), as well as the option "does not engage with party activists" and a residual category. Overall, 172 of the 316 bureaucrats engage with party activists about service delivery issues. **Figure 3.10** shows that the vast majority (65%) of bureaucrats finds out how party activists think about service delivery when they meet at the office. Nevertheless, a quarter of bureaucrats uses the development committees (ADCs: 17% and VDCs 7%) to find out what party activists think about the state of service delivery in a given community. These answers not only serve as a reminder that party activists and

[42] *Due to the design of the questionnaire, it is not possible to separate the requests of individual citizens and citizen groups as in the party elite survey above.*

bureaucrats engage with each other through multiple channels, but also help us to contextualise the previous responses.

In sum, this section provides a different picture to the previous section that looked at the relationship between party workers and district level-party elites. As one might expect, district-level bureaucrats receive far fewer visits from party activists, than party elites do. Whenever they do engage with party activists, however, they primarily receive requests to address concrete service delivery issues.

Figure 3.10: Where bureaucrats engage with party activists over service delivery issues



Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey; Respondents were asked: "When you want to find out what different stakeholders think about service delivery issues, what is the best way to find out what party activists think?" N=172. Top two answers are recorded.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has systematically tested the connections between party activists on the one hand, and citizens, party elites and bureaucrats on the other. I introduced case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia to investigate more closely the extent to which party activists engage in the three types of activities (ambassador, advocate, and fixer) that are central to the conveyor-belt mechanism. **Table 3.4** provides an overview of these dyads and the case study evidence.

Table 3.4: *Primary type of party activist activity as part of Conveyor-belt mechanism*

Type of role	Type of connection	Dyad	Case study
Ambassador	Vertical	Party activist – *Citizen*	Zambia
Advocate	Vertical	Party activist – *Party elite*	Malawi

Fixer/problem solver	Vertical Horizontal	Party activist – *Citizen* Party activist – *Bureaucratic elite*	Zambia Malawi

The survey evidence from Zambia revealed that most citizens personally know party workers, and many even haver personal connections to activists from both parties. Even in a challenging political environment like the one in Zambia prior to the 2021 election, citizens frequently experience party workers in their ambassadorial roles providing information about different aspects of basic service delivery. While party activists also engage in some of the problem solver activities that are often the focus in the literature on clientelistism, the survey evidence suggests that party activists spend more time as ambassadors and advocates than fixers. That is, citizens observed them talking about and helping citizens with community level services and issues, rather than providing personal favours. This pattern was consistent across the electoral cycle.

Moreover, the combined evidence of the second and third sections adds confidence to the broader argument that party activists approach fellow party representatives and bureaucrats for different things. The results of the party elite survey confirmed that party workers regularly transmit the concerns of communities to more senior party members, and at the same time, gather relevant information about service delivery to disseminate in their communities. Despite some variation in the type of requests across parties, the data clearly show how important this exchange of information is in the day-to-day operations of both ruling and opposition parties. A dynamic that has largely been overlooked in previous studies.

In contrast, party activists are far less likely to engage with bureaucratic elites. When they do so, it is primarily in their capacity as fixers for concrete service delivery issues. Yet, both activities are necessary for party activists to fulfil their roles in connecting citizens to government and to affect their perceptions of service delivery.

Chapter 4: Party activists and basic service delivery across Africa

4.1 Introduction

The central argument I put forward in this dissertation is that citizens' satisfaction with service delivery depends on political parties acting as effective and efficient conveyor-belts of information between citizens and the state. In **Chapter 3**, I mapped out how local party activists act as problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors in Malawi and Zambia. I outlined how party workers frequently make use of their access to politicians and bureaucrats to address the demands of fellow community members. Although party activist networks have received virtually no attention in the African context outside of their relevance for vote mobilisation and the exchange of material goods and favours, the previous discussion has shown that party activists and citizen frequently engage with each other around basic service delivery issues both during and between elections.

In this chapter, I begin to test the relationship between party worker networks and citizen satisfaction in more detail, drawing on survey data from 33 African countries. I concentrate on the relationship between political parties and their impact on two types of public services – community and household-level services. The expectation is that parties' ability and incentive to disseminate information, as well as aggregate and address citizen' complaints regarding basic services systematically varies depending on the type of service. As outlined in **Chapter 1**, I propose that the conveyor-belt mechanism works better for community-level services such as education and health care, than for household level services such as water, sewerage, and electricity supply (**H 1a** & **1b**).

This is the case, I argue, for three reasons.[43] First, the upfront investments for community-level services such as education and health care are lower on a per capita basis when compared to the provision of water, sewerage, and electricity. Second, citizens are more likely to *demand* local party representatives to do something about community-level services. This is at least in part because it is harder to opt out of community-level services, and thus, it is easier to mobilize fellow

[43] *For a more detailed description of the three reasons, see Community- and Household-level Services section in Chapter 1.*

community members around issues of service delivery (Bussell, 2019; Kruks-Wisner, 2018). Third, parties will get a 'bigger bang for their buck' if they improve community services by, for example, improving the access to a local clinic and advertising these achievements, rather than spending the same money to connect a few households to the sewer system. This incentive to build or improve community level service infrastructure then has a knock-on effect on the kind of issues party activists engage over with citizens.

In my analysis I first demonstrate these diverging patterns for satisfaction with community- and household-level services while holding constant for other likely confounding factors. The penultimate section of the chapter explores the variation in local party presence and its effects on citizen satisfaction with service delivery. Specifically, I test how the type of party (ruling vs. opposition) and the configuration of the party system matter for citizen views on government services (**H 1c**). The section closes by exploring further the importance of competitiveness in the party system, this time at the sub-national level in Malawi. The final section situates the findings in the broader literature.

4.2 Local party presence

Estimating the density of party networks in Africa both across and within countries is difficult. However, the Party Presence Index (PPI), provides a reasonably good proxy of local party networks for more than 30 countries at the national and subnational levels (Krönke, Lockwood, et al., 2022). To get a first sense of whether citizens' access to parties matters, I calculate a base version of the PPI that captures the presence of *all parties*. The expectation is that citizens are more satisfied with government service provision if they have access to at least one party in their neighbourhood that acts as a conveyor-belt of information. Therefore, for this part of the argument the density of all party networks in each location matters, rather than that of the ruling or the opposition parties. To restate the main hypothesis being tested first in this section:

> ***H 1a***: *Citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of education and health-care services in countries where parties have denser networks of party activists.*

I measure citizen satisfaction with each type of government service using the same Afrobarometer questions as before; asking respondents how satisfied they are with how government is handling community-level services (averaging responses for

education and health care), and household-level services (averaging responses for water, sanitation, and electricity). This allows me to test the second part of **H 1**.

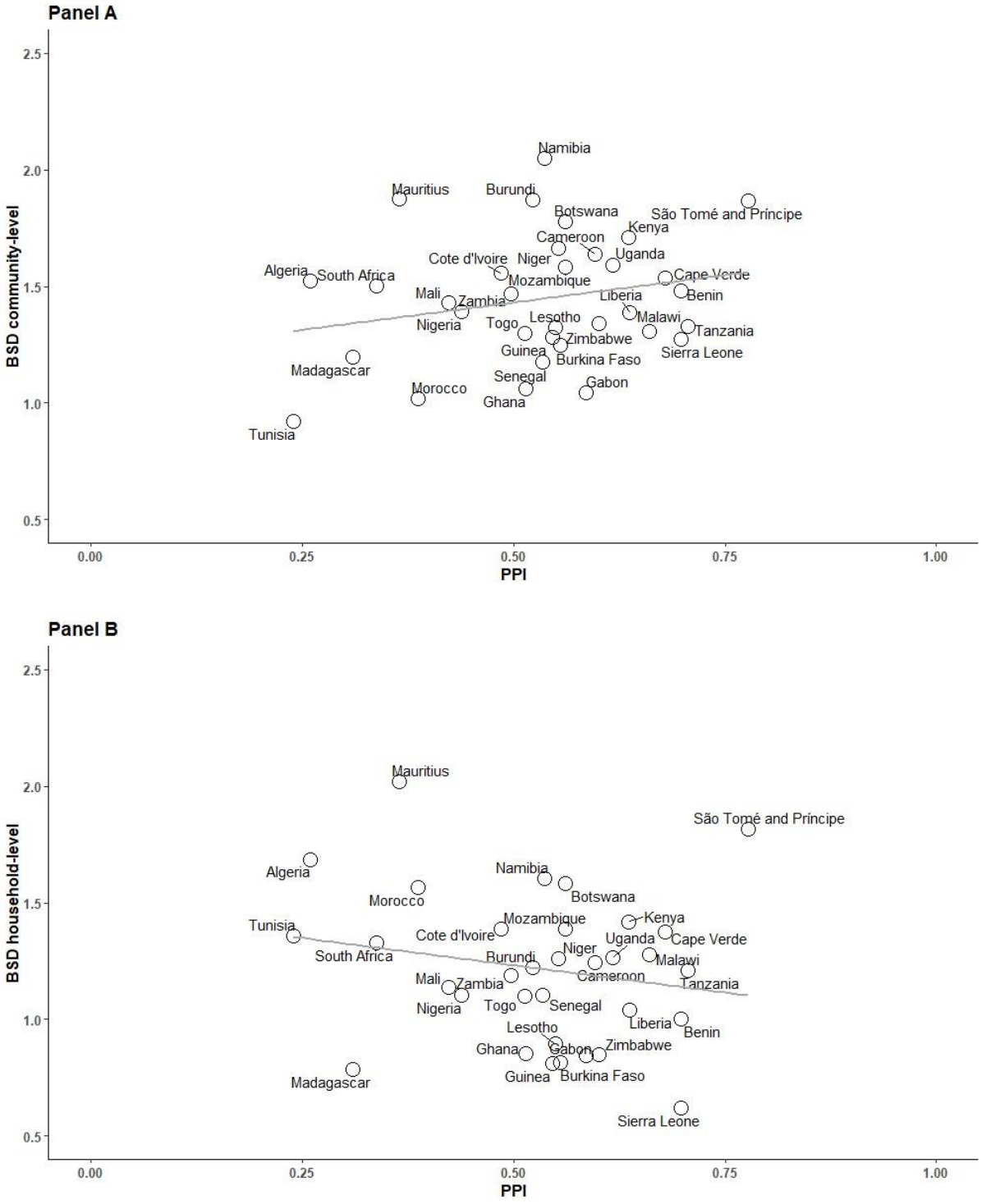
> ***H 1b***: *Grassroots organisational presence of political parties is more consequential for the satisfactory delivery of community-level services, compared to household-level services.*

For this initial descriptive account of the relationship, I aggregate the scores to the same level as the PPI scores. Because party presence varies between and within countries, I calculate the PPI at both the national and subnational levels.[44]

Figure 4.1 shows the relationship between local party presence and the two types of services in 2014/2015. Although the correlation between the PPI and community level services is not strong, it is in the predicted direction. We can observe that in countries with denser local party networks (e.g., Sao Tome and Principe), larger shares of citizens are satisfied with the delivery of community level-services (**Figure 4.1**, **Panel A**). However, there are also clear outliers such as Mauritius where citizens are among the most satisfied with the delivery of community-level services even though the country has one of the lowest PPI scores in the sample. The bivariate correlation of the two variables at the country level has a Pearson's coefficient of .228 (p-value = .202). Notably, **Figure 4.1, Panel B** confirms the hypothesised weaker, or lack of a relationship between the PPI and citizens satisfaction with government's delivery of electricity, water, and sanitation. The Pearson's coefficient is -.191 (p-value = .287).

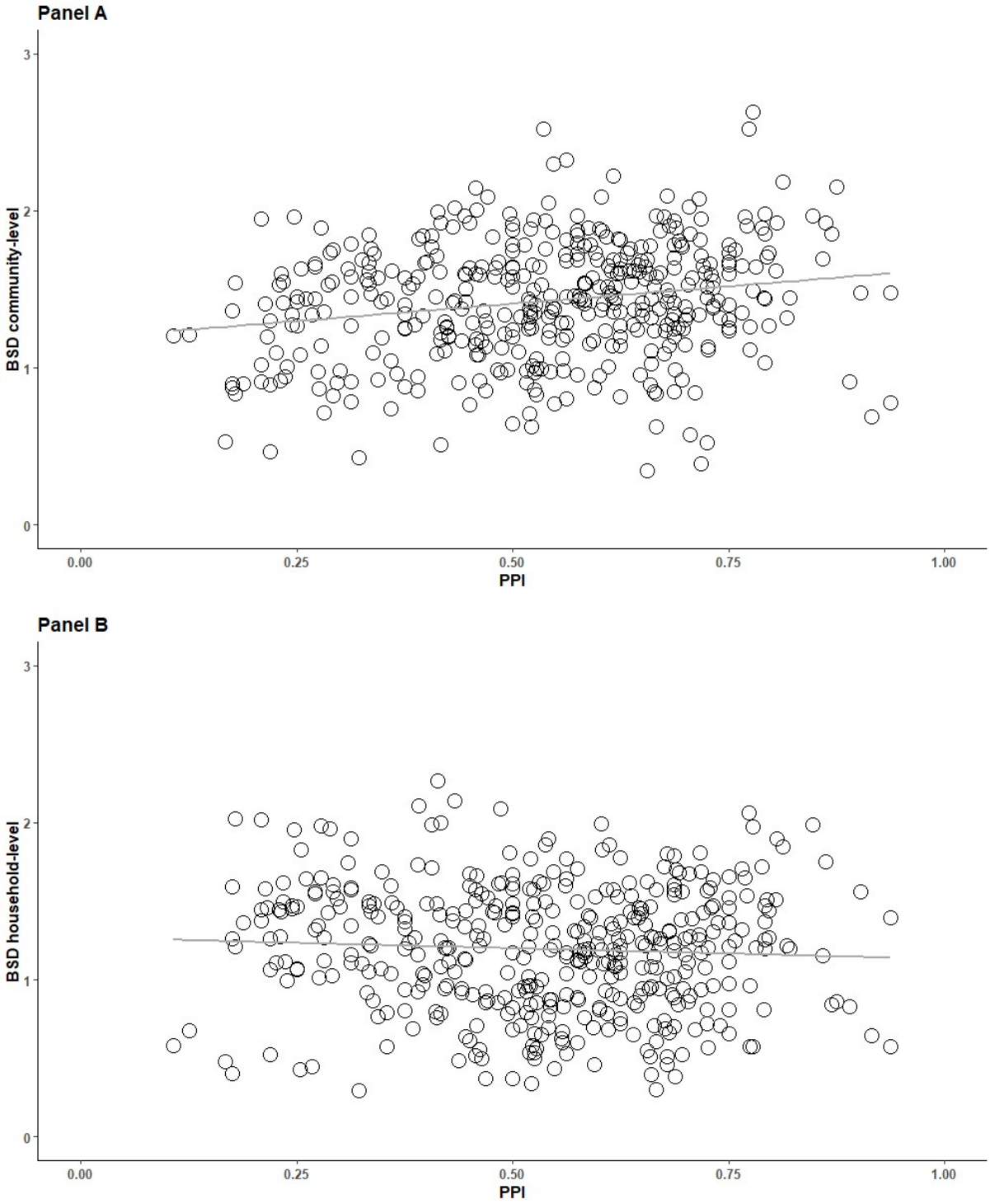
[44] *To guard against outliers when constructing the measure at the province/state level, I only include provinces in which Afrobarometer conducted at least 30 interviews.*

Figure 4.1: PPI and basic service delivery (BSD) at the community/HH level | 33 countries | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer

Figure 4.2: PPI & BSD Community/HH level | 426 sub-national units | 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer. Note: N=426 subnational units. Only sub-national units with 30 or more respondents are included in the analysis.. For Cape Verde, Malawi, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone and Uganda the "LOCATION.LEVEL.1" unit was used because there were very few units at the "REGION" level in the Afrobarometer dataset. Egypt, Sudan and Swaziland are excluded from the analysis due to missing data.

Taken together, this provides preliminary country-level evidence that political parties play a more positive role in the delivery of some basic services, than others. **Figure 4.2** replicates the national-level scatter plots, but this time calculating the PPI and satisfaction scores at sub-national units. Across all 33 countries, I have data for 426 subnational units.[45] Importantly, the hypothesised relationships are confirmed at this higher level of resolution. The bivariate correlation of the PPI and community level services is statistically significant with a Pearson's coefficient of .201 (p-value < .001), while the correlation with household level services has a Pearson's coefficient of -.059 and is not statistically significant (p-value = .227). To assess the importance of party activist networks, compared to other possible determinants of satisfaction with the different services, I now test the main hypotheses through regression analysis.

4.3 Alternative explanations

The African state is often described as being captured by political elites who skew the allocation of resources and provision of services according to political arithmetic. Therefore, it is important to ask whether networks of local party workers play a role in citizens' satisfaction with service delivery after considering the availability and quality of these services. Therefore, I conduct multivariate statistical analyses holding constant for two aspects of state capacity that are crucial in relation to service delivery – geographic reach of the state and bureaucratic professionalism. In addition, I also account for several other potentially confounding explanations. The theoretical justifications for including each alternative explanatory factor and their operationalization are described below.

State Reach: All else being equal, citizens who live near a primary health clinic and have a water tap on their property, are likely to be more satisfied with such a service than those who must walk long distances to get medical treatment or access to clean drinking water. Indeed, previous analysis of Afrobarometer data by Bratton (2009) has shown that the availability of clinics in close proximity to citizens matters for their level of satisfaction with health care. However, Bratton did not find a comparable effect for education. Similarly, Krönke, Mattes and Naidoo (2022) tested whether the geographic reach of the state, mattered for citizen satisfaction with a bundle of government services. When averaging all five government services

[45] *Egypt, Sudan and Swaziland are excluded from the analysis. For Cape Verde, Malawi, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone and Uganda I replace the "REGION" units with the "LOCATION.LEVEL.1" units these countries only have very few "units at the "REGION" level in the Afrobarometer dataset. Each sub-national unit usually refers to the largest sub-national unit in each country (e.g., Province in South Africa).*

(education, health care, water, sanitation, and electricity), however, they did not find a statistically significant relationship between physical infrastructure and satisfaction with government services. Building on their analysis, and in line with my argument outlined above, I separate community- and household-level services in my analysis below to test for differential effects.

I measure the extent to which government infrastructure is available to citizens using an individual-level version of the measure I introduced in **Chapter 1** (**Figure 1.2**). The measure developed by Krönke et al. (2022) draws on Afrobarometer survey data (incl. fieldworker observation data for each enumerator area). I capture the presence (or absence) of a range of state infrastructure in the area in which the interview was conducted. Specifically, I examine whether fieldworkers observed a school, and or health clinic "in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area or in easy walking distance." Second, I rely on respondents' answers in the same survey as to whether they have a toilet, water, or electricity connection in the household. Although it is possible to measure this second set of services at the community level, it is more desirable for citizens to access these services at the household level.[46] Thus, I employ the household-level version of *State Reach* for water, sanitation and electricity services.

I aggregate the responses for community- and household-level services for each respondent, giving each type of infrastructure or household connection equal weight. Second, I re-scale the scores so that a respondent can score between 0 and 1 for each type of service. For example, someone who has access to water, sewerage and electricity on their property gets a score of 1, and 0 if she has access to none.[47]

State Professionalism: Although the availability of service infrastructure is likely to affect citizen satisfaction, how one is treated by those who administer the service is likely to matter even more. For example, how easy or difficult it is for citizens to use various services and whether they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour when using these services can make a clinic visit decidedly more frustrating.

---

[46] Even though some of the household-level services (e.g., water) are regularly delivered at the community-level through community boreholes, this is far from ideal. This becomes even more clear, once we consider a related safety aspect such as women and children having to go to toilets that are shared by multiple households in a community in the middle of the night.

[47] For additional information about the construction of the State Reach and Professionalism indices, please see Appendix A as well as Krönke et al. (2022).

However, even when somebody did not go to a clinic recently, frequently hearing about incidences like these in the media, or from friends and family can decrease citizens' confidence in such a government service. In short, how citizens experience the state at the local level matters. Analysing the extent to which this dimension affects citizen satisfaction with education and health care, Bratton (2009) found that this subjective assessment mattered far more than the objective availability of services. In line with these findings, others have found that the same holds true when considering the professionalism of local bureaucrats across a more comprehensive bundle of government services (Krönke, Mattes, et al., 2022); also see **Figure 1.2** in **Chapter 1**. Thus, my expectation is that the positive relationship between bureaucratic professionalism and citizens' satisfaction with services will hold, even when splitting the services into community and household-level services.

Analogous to the *State Reach* variable, I rely on the *State Professionalism* measure developed by Krönke et al. (2022). This measure has two important advantages compared to most other government effectiveness or corruption measures. First, instead of creating an aggregate professionalism score for all substantive areas that a state might cover ranging from outward facing departments such as education to inward facing ones such as taxation or the military, it focuses on the same government services that are relevant for this study. Second, it can also be constructed at the same sub-national level as the PPI and State Reach variables, and thus, consider both variation between and within countries.

4.3.1 Control variables

I argue that party activists act as conveyor-belts of information between citizens and the state. To show that parties have an important role to play that goes beyond being an option on the ballot every 4 or 5 years, I control for several additional factors that are likely to influence both local party presence and satisfaction with service delivery.

Elected officials listen: In the introductory chapter, I outline how the responsiveness of MPs is a second important aspect of the conveyor-belt mechanism (**H 2**). Before testing the relationship in more detail in the subsequent chapters, it is important to show that the relationship between the PPI and citizen satisfaction holds, even after accounting for the responsiveness of MPs and local councillors. Therefore, I am including a variable that measures the amount of time respondents think that

elected officials try their best to listen to citizens. I average the responses for MPs and local councillors so that 0 connotes 'never', and 3 means 'always'. According to my theory, those who perceive elected representatives as more responsive, are also more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of basic services.

Closeness to election: One potential criticism of the PPI is that it is susceptible to survey effects. Because three of the four PPI variables are in reference to the election cycle, respondents' ability to recollect party presence and engagement could vary depending on the timing of the survey. At the same time, research has shown that parties and governments could increase the service delivery in the run-up to an election (e.g., Min (2015)), or provide rewards to certain constituencies after winning an election. Similarly, ruling and opposition parties are likely to increase their engagement with potential voters during campaign season, and therefore, increase the effectiveness of the conveyor-belt mechanism during these periods. Thus, the timing of the survey could impact the key independent as well as the dependent variables. Given these dynamics, I include the timing of the survey as a control variable. I do not make strong prior assumptions about whether a parliamentary or presidential election is more important, or whether parties increase service delivery just before an election to build credibility, or after an election to reward voters. Thus, the variable is coded as the absolute number of months between survey fieldwork and the closest presidential or parliamentary election.

Quality of elections: There are two separate reasons why the quality of elections should be included as a control variable First, the literature frequently notes that free and fair elections are conducive to the delivery of basic services (Ahlborg et al., 2015; Halperin et al., 2010). Though it usually refers to input (e.g. budget allocation), output (e.g. schools built) and outcomes (e.g. literacy rate) of basic services, rather than citizens' satisfaction with them, the logic of the relationship still applies: free and fair elections make it more likely that citizens think their vote counts, which in turn can increase their perception of being able to punish bad, and reward good performance of politicians regarding service delivery. As standard theory predicts, this would have a positive effect on basic service delivery in the long run. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated the "power of democratic elections in inducing higher public service delivery, even in contexts where state capacity appears to be low" (Min, 2015, p. 100). In addition, free and fair elections are also likely to encourage opposition parties to build a presence on the ground and compete in

elections as their efforts are more likely to be rewarded. Thus, to separate the effect of elections from the conveyor-belt mechanism, and because it has potentially a positive effect on the PPI and the dependant variables, I include an individual level assessment of the quality of elections. For this analysis, the perceptions of the survey respondent are more consequential than those of a group of experts (e.g., Freedom House, or Varieties of Democracy). Therefore, I include survey responses as a control variable.

Demographics & Partisanship: To guard against any effects based on respondents' demographic or socio-economic background, I include a battery of standard individual level control variables (age, gender, location (urban/rural), lived poverty[48], level of formal education). Additionally, I include a dummy variable that indicates whether a respondent supports the ruling party at the national level as this could potentially bias citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of basic services by government. Finally, I also include a variable that gages respondents' interest in and willingness to discuss politics.

4.4 Data analysis

Figure 4.1 (national-level) and **Figure 4.2** (sub-national-level) showed a positive relationship between the density of local party networks and citizen satisfaction with community-level services, but not with household level services. I now employ country-level fixed-effects OLS regression analysis to test this relationship in a more rigorous way. **Models 1** and **3** show the relationship between the province-level PPI scores and citizen evaluations of community and household level services respectively without covariates, confirming the earlier results (**Table 4.1**). In **Models 2** and **4**, the two dependent variables are regressed on the six explanatory variables as well as the standard demographic and party identification variables introduced above.

[48] *The Lived Poverty Index is a 5-item index that is commonly used in Afrobarometer analysis to evaluate the extent to which respondents experience material deprivation (Mattes, 2008). The five items ask the following: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough 1) food to eat; 2) clean water for home use; 3) medicines or medical treatment; 4) fuel to cook your food; 5) a cash income?*

Table 4.1: Fixed-effects OLS regression results for party presence, and community and household level services

	Satisfaction with community-level services		**Satisfaction with household-level services**	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
(Intercept)	1.45 ***	1.37 ***	1.22 ***	1.21 ***
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)
PPI	0.10 ***	0.07 ***	0.04 ***	0.04 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
State reach (community)		0.01		
		(0.00)		
State reach (household)				0.09 ***
				(0.01)
State professionalism (community/household)		-0.00		0.02 ***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Elec rep listen		0.08 ***		0.08 ***
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Months to closest election		-0.04		-0.09 *
		(0.04)		(0.04)
Quality of election		0.12 ***		0.09 ***
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Close to ruling party		0.18 ***		0.15 ***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Age		-0.02 ***		-0.01
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Gender (ref=female)		0.00		0.00
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Location (ref=rural)		0.03 ***		-0.06 ***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Lived poverty index		-0.13 ***		-0.17 ***
		(0.00)		(0.00)
Education		-0.01		-0.01
		(0.01)		(0.00)
Engage in politics		0.01		0.01 **
		(0.00)		(0.00)
N	48069	36524	47308	36034
N (Country)	33	32	33	32
AIC	116720.74	86252.62	112017.70	82015.26

BIC	116755.86	86388.71	112052.75	82151.14
R2 (fixed)	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.11
R2 (total)	0.11	0.16	0.15	0.19

*Source: Afrobarometer; Note: All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

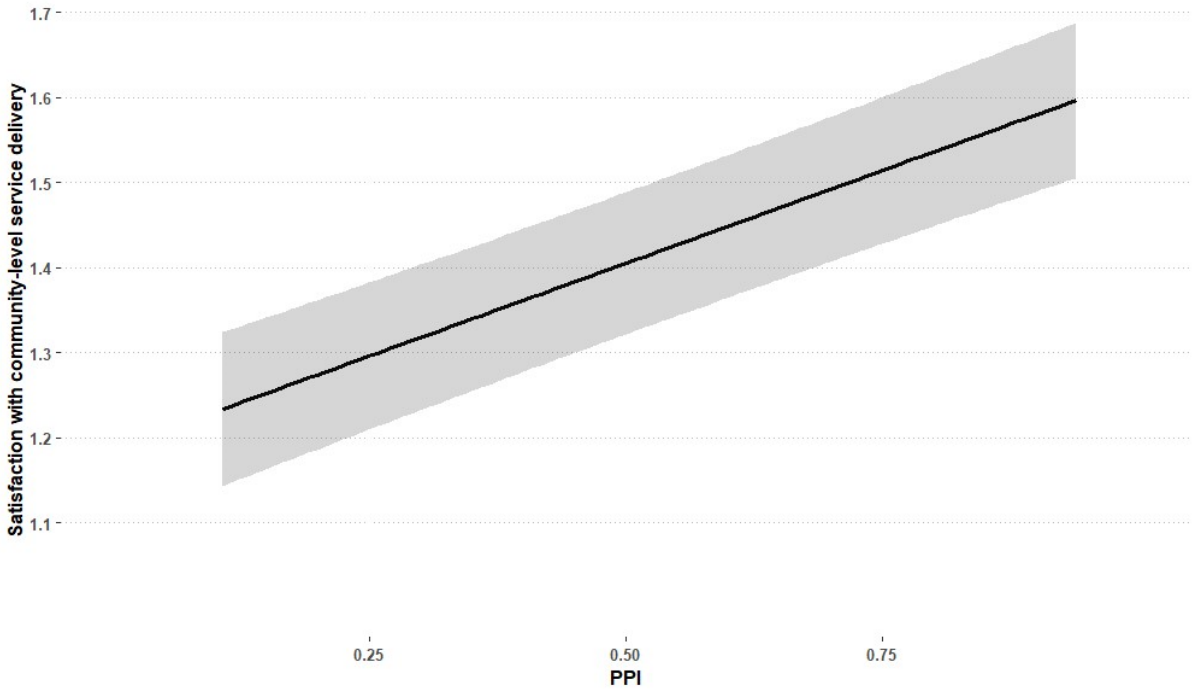
The analysis produces four important findings. First, the results show that in provinces and regions with denser local party presence, citizens are more satisfied with basic service delivery in general (confirming **H1a**), and with health and education services in particular (confirming **H1b**). Moving from a region scoring lowest on the PPI to the one with the highest is associated with an increase in satisfaction with community level services of 0,38 (satisfaction scores scaled zero to three). Given that the baseline score is 1.4, this represents an increase of 26% (**Figure 4.3**). In comparison, the effect of local party presence is more modest for household level services. At this point, the attentive reader might worry that the reported effect of the PPI does not take sub-national variation in population density into account. However, the PPI is calculated based on a nationally representative sample. This means that to reach the same party network density in an urban and a rural area, the PPI automatically requires a higher absolute number of citizen-party engagements in more densely populated areas (for additional technical information on the index construction, see Appendix A). Additionally, the model also includes an urban/rural variable at the individual level to capture other geography based conditions that might affect respondents experience with government service delivery.

Second, the effects of the two state capacity variables differs across the two types of services. While the physical reach of service infrastructure and the level of professionalism of local bureaucrats (state professionalism) does not have a statistically significant effect on citizens' satisfaction with community-level services, state capacity has a statistically significant effect on citizens' satisfaction with household-level services. For the former, satisfaction levels do not increase if a school and clinic are in close proximity to respondents. In contrast, access to water, sewerage and electricity at the household level significantly improves how citizens view the provision of these services.

These findings are in line with the argument that household level services are more dependent on state action. Indeed, it has a more substantive effect than party

presence for these services. Health and education services, on the other hand, provide better opportunities for local party activists to operate as fixers advocates and ambassadors. Therefore, denser local party networks matter more for citizen satisfaction for community services.

Figure 4.3: Effect of PPI on satisfaction with community-level service delivery | 2014/2015



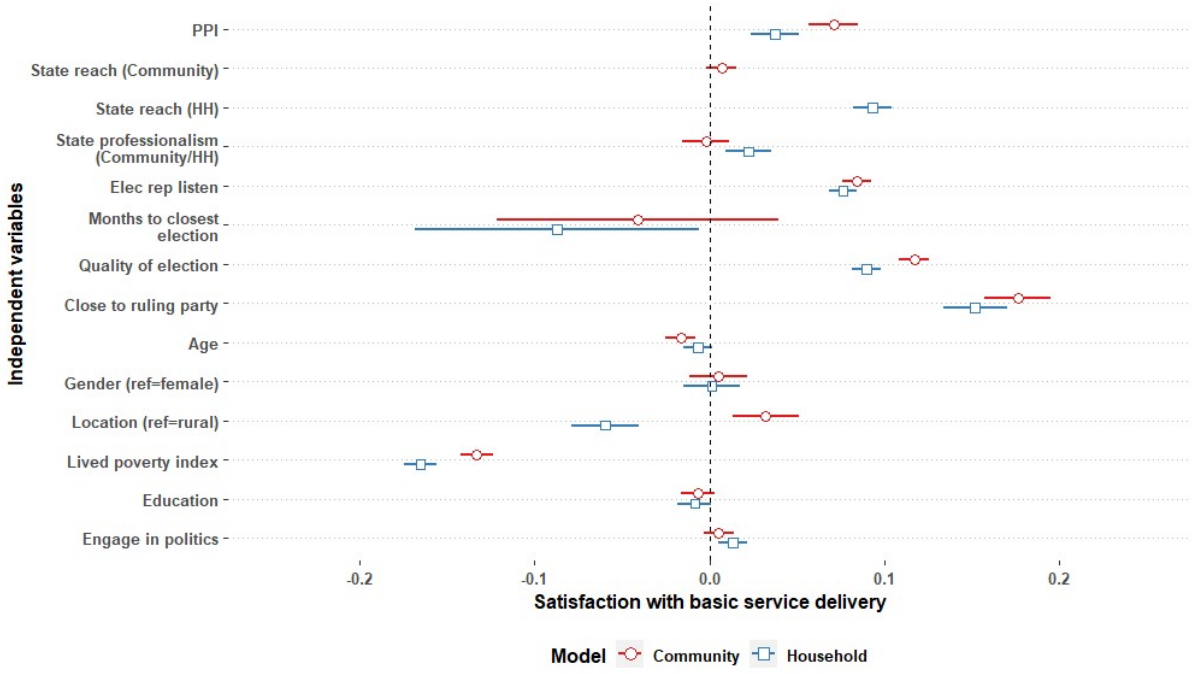
*Source: Uses simulated predicted values from Model 2 in **Table 4.1***

A third important set of findings is that electoral responsiveness matters. In addition to party workers (PPI), the responsiveness of elected representatives forms an important aspect of the conveyor-belt mechanism, and this is also borne out in the data. Citizens who perceive elected representatives as more responsive are also more satisfied with service delivery. In fact, MP and councillor responsiveness seems equally as important for satisfaction with community-level services, as local party presence (**Figure 4.4**). I explore the importance of MPs in more detail in **Chapters 5-8**. Moreover, and as expected according to standard democratic theory, the quality of elections positively affects aspects of service delivery. Citizens who perceive elections as free and fair, are also on average more satisfied with service deliver. This supports the broader argument that choice matters. If citizens have a real choice in who they elect, and how they hold them to account – via elections or by

contacting party activists and elected representatives – citizens are more likely to be satisfied with government services.

A fourth substantive finding concerns the electoral cycle. Previous research has shown that service delivery varies across different stages of the electoral cycles. For example, Min(2015) has shown that village electrification is higher in election years compared to non-election years. However, the related expectation that levels of satisfaction would be higher in the months closer to an election is only partly confirmed.[49] While the proximity of an election does not matter for satisfaction with community-level services, citizens are less satisfied with the delivery of water, sanitation, and electricity the further they are from an election. Although a more in-depth analysis of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study, these partially diverging results deserve more attention in future research.

Figure 4.4: PPI and satisfaction with community and HH level services



Source: Afrobarometer; Note: The figure is based on Models 2 and 4 in Table 4.1. For ease of comparison, the effects in the figure are standardised.

[49] *The companion analysis in Chapter 8 suggests that there is an effect for countries with single-member electoral districts, but not for countries with other electoral factors. The difference in results could be driven by the inclusion of the electoral system type variable, or by the sample of countries included.*

Lastly, standard individual-level control variables (except for gender) are statistically significant for at least one type of service. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the direction of the relationship between respondents' location and satisfaction with basic services changes depending on the type of service. While urbanites are more satisfied with the delivery of education and health care, rural residents are more satisfied with household level services. One possible explanation for this is that rural residents are more appreciative of the service expansion that has taken place in more recent times. This interpretation is supported by Brinkerhoff et al. (2018), who have shown that when rural citizens have access to water at the community level, they are more satisfied with the service than urbanites.

The results in Models 2 and 4 are robust to several alternative specifications. Including various measures of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (Fearon, Herfindahl index, and Posner's measure of politically relevant ethnic groups), does not substantively change the relationship between the PPI and service satisfaction measures. Moreover, the inclusion of either MP or local councillor responsiveness (vs. MP and councillors) also does not alter the main result.

At this point, readers might be concerned that the construction of the PPI - aggregating individual survey respondents' engagement with political parties to the provincial level - raises the possibility of an ecological fallacy. That is, even if individuals in areas with higher PPI scores tend to be more satisfied with their basic services, it does not necessarily follow that individuals who themselves have engaged more with parties are more satisfied with their services. To check this possibility, I rerun Models 2 and 4 by including an individual-level cumulative measure of the four PPI related variables (attend rally, attend meeting, contact party official, work for candidate). Each respondent can score between 0=no contact and 4=contact across all four composite variables. Although the relationship between this individual level measure of citizen-party engagement and satisfaction with service delivery is weaker, it remains statistically significant for both community and household level services.[50]

4.5 Exploring the relevance of party type and system

So far, I have shown that in areas with denser party activist networks, citizens are more satisfied with basic service delivery. But does it matter which party network, or

[50] *Please see Appendix B for the regression results.*

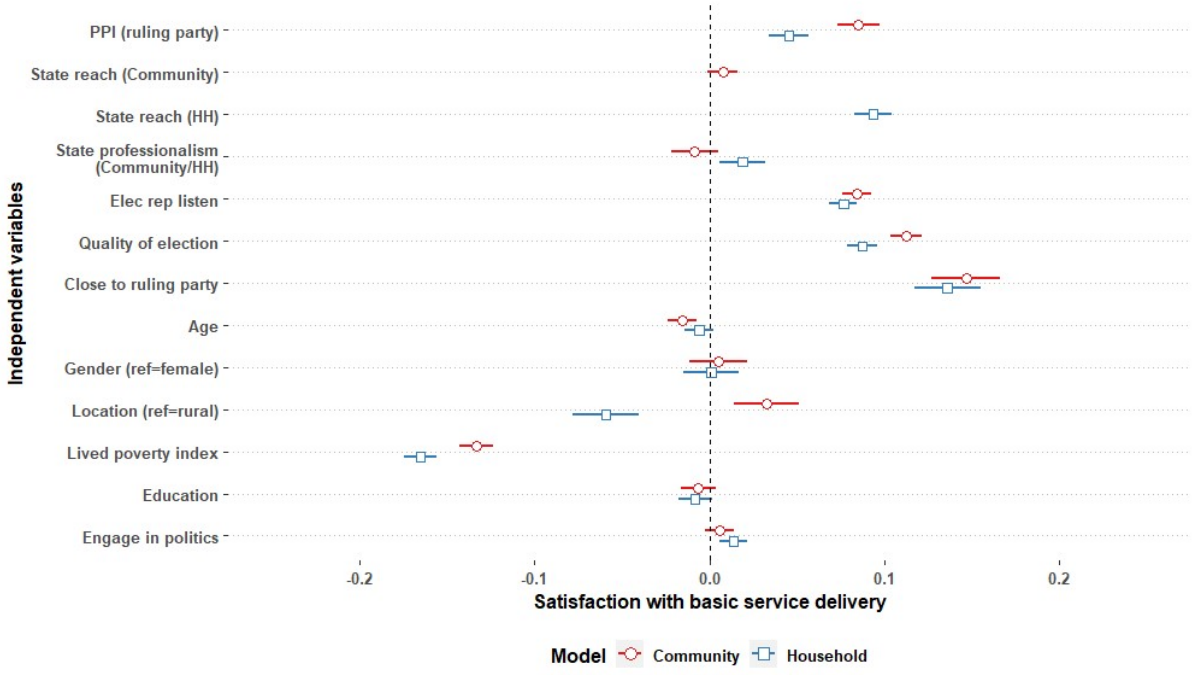
networks citizens have access to? If so, does local party presence only matter if citizens have access to the ruling party? Does the composition of the party system matter? This section begins to explore these questions and provides some preliminary insights.

4.5.1 Ruling parties

First, although I have shown that African opposition parties engage with citizens at the local level, ruling parties frequently remain better resourced and more institutionalised than most of their competitors (Basedau & Stroh, 2008). Compared to opposition parties, ruling parties also have more opportunities to effectively oversee bureaucrats, which puts them in a better position to exchange information with citizens and address their requests. In fact, many top-down models of broker-citizen relationships assume that citizens would prefer connections to incumbent party activists over those to opposition party activists (Auerbach & Thachil, 2018). Taken together, this would suggest that ruling parties in particular are in a good position to increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

To get a sense of these dynamics I re-run the cross-country comparisons in Models 2 and 4, but this time, I replace the measure for overall levels of party presence with a version of the PPI that only captures the density of ruling party networks. **Figure 4.5** is a graphical representation of the regression models. Put simply, the results confirm that in communities with higher levels of ruling party presence, citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of basic government services. Similar to the overall PPI measure, the effect of the ruling party PPI is higher for satisfaction with community-level than household level- services. The effects of the other predictors remain substantively the same as in the previous models.

Figure 4.5: Ruling PPI and satisfaction with community and HH level services



Note: The figure is based on Models 1 and 2 in Table B.1 in the appendix. For ease of comparison, the effects in the figure are standardised.

4.5.2 Opposition parties

A second, contextual set of constraints is particularly relevant for opposition parties. While the overarching assumption is that opposition party activists have incentives to be responsive to citizens' problems and try to exchange information about service delivery with citizens, there are several conditions that could make this less likely. These include the configuration of the party system (number of viable parties and stability of party system), and the level of political and bureaucratic control at the sub-national level. It is conceivable, and in line with the overall argument, that in a country where an opposition party has control over parts of the country, opposition parties would pursue a strategy akin to ruling parties. For example, in Malawi parties have regional strongholds, which allows them to exercise considerable political power in several districts.[51] This control parts of the country (incl. bureaucratic structures) could allow opposition parties to increase satisfaction with service delivery without being entirely dependent on the national ruling party.

[51] *In Malawi, a district encompasses several MP constituencies.*

Opposition parties could pursue a similar strategy in a stable party system with more decentralised bureaucracies. Empirical evidence from Tanzania and India helps to illustrate the point. In the case of Tanzania, McLellan (2020) demonstrates that the decentralization of local government provided opposition parties with the incentives to increase local state capacity as well as the bureaucratic powers to improve service delivery where they controlled local councils.

Similarly, in India, a country in which power is delegated to several sub-national bureaucratic and political bodies, Auerbach and Thachil (2018) found that citizens are: 1) more likely to support opposition parties if they have a local presence, and 2) prefer co-partisan brokers over incumbent party brokers. Moreover, Bussell (2019) and Auerbach (2019) have shown how local party representatives navigate the multiple layers of governance to solve citizens problems. This suggests that opposition parties stand a realistic chance of being rewarded at the polls if they engage with their communities and can access some levels of government or the bureaucracy.

By contrast, in a party system with few established opposition parties that are unable to oversee or even access local bureaucrats, the opposition might face different incentives. For example, for new, or small opposition parties that are unable to point to a positive track record, it might be a better electoral strategy to focus on the shortcomings of the ruling party. Similarly, where citizens are increasingly reliant on retrospective performance evaluations, even relatively institutionalised opposition parties might focus on pointing out the shortcomings of current collective good provision instead of contributing to satisfaction with service delivery Thus, citizens in these countries, and especially in areas with high levels of opposition party presence might be less satisfied with service delivery. In short, I hypothesize that opposition parties have an impact on citizens' satisfaction with service delivery, albeit in different ways depending on the contextual constraints.

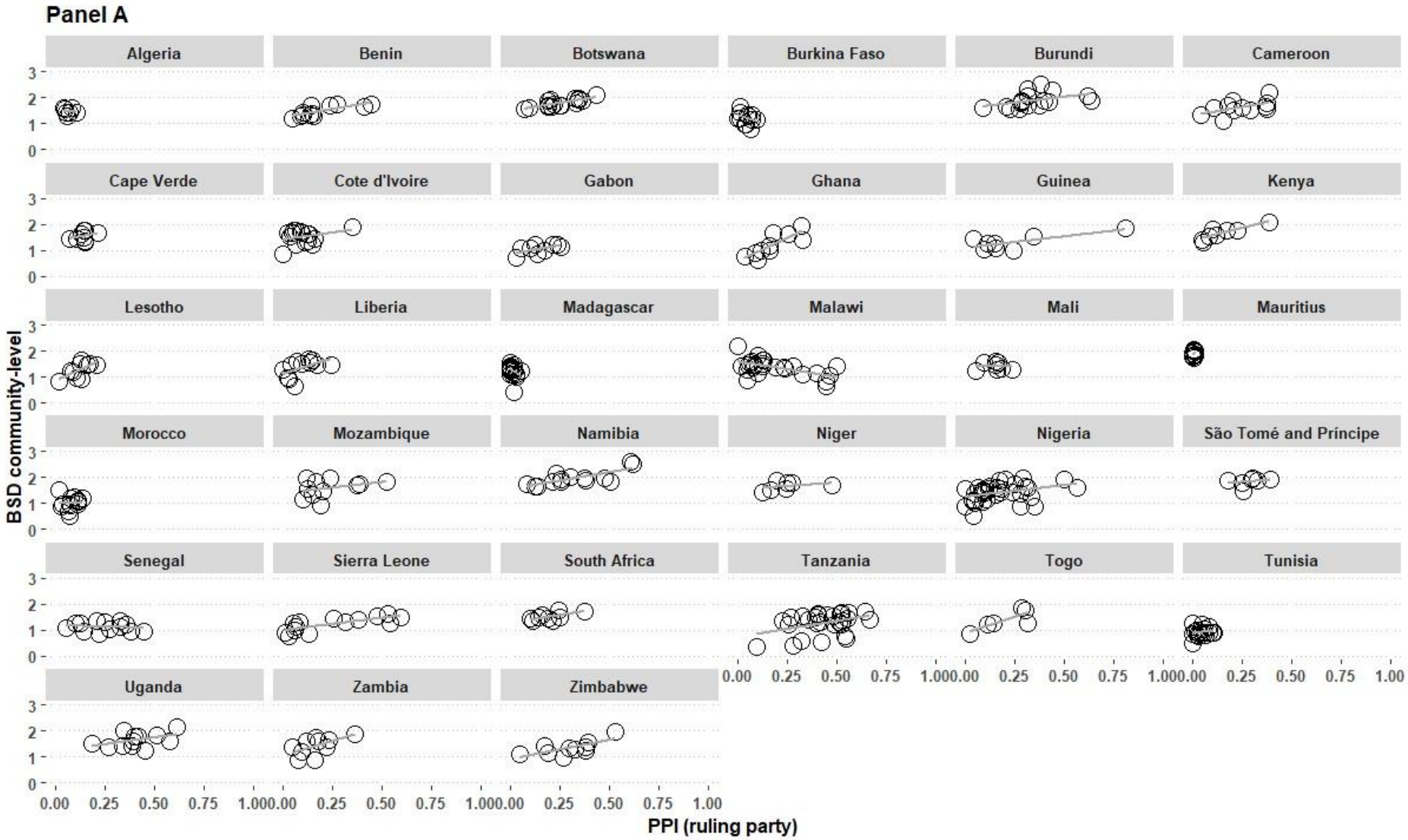
> ***H 1c**: The effect of opposition party networks is likely to vary depending on the composition of the party system and a party's influence at the local level.*

Current data limitations regarding the level of political and bureaucratic decentralisation across the continent make it difficult to evaluate **H 1c** using a regression model like the ones introduced earlier. Therefore, I only conduct very

preliminary and descriptive comparisons to assess the proposed relevance of opposition party local networks and effects of the party system. However, I use these insights to identify suitable cases for a single country study. I start by identifying broader patterns that help us understand in which countries local party presence matters for satisfaction with service delivery.

Figure 4.6 displays the relationship of ruling (Panel A) and opposition parties' (Panel B) networks on the one hand, and citizen satisfaction with government education and health care services on the other. In line with the regression results shown earlier, we see that in most countries where ruling parties have denser networks of party activists, citizens are also more satisfied with service delivery (results for household-level services are slightly weaker, not shown). While this relationship is particularly strong in countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia, it is not universal. A qualitative 3-fold categorization of the 33 sample countries into 'positive', 'negative', and 'ambiguous/no relationship' between the two variables shows that about three quarter of all cases for community-level services, and just over half of all cases for household-level services display a clear positive relationship between ruling party local presence and satisfaction with service delivery (**Table 4.2**).

Figure 4.6: ***PPI (ruling party) at province level (30+ respondents only)***



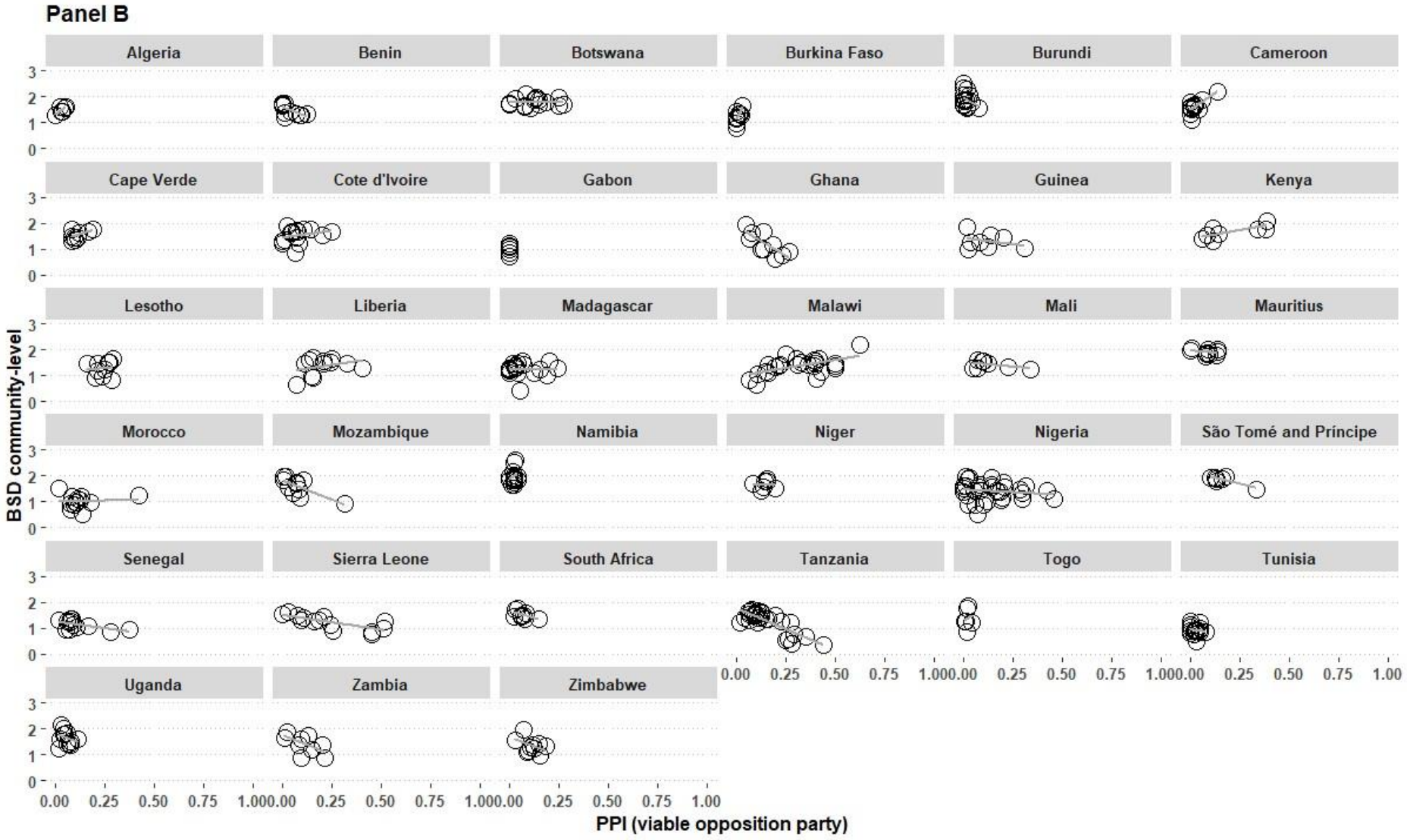

Panel B
Algeria
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Cote d'Ivoire
Gabon
Ghana
Guinea
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritius
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
São Tomé and Príncipe
Senegal
Sierra Leone
South Africa
Tanzania
Togo
Tunisia
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe
BSD community-level
PPI (viable opposition party)

Table 4.2: Party specific PPI and satisfaction with community-level and household-level services

	Community-level services		*Household level services*	
	Ruling	**Viable opposition†**	**Ruling**	**Viable opposition†**
Positive relationship	**BEN**, **BOT**, **BUR**, CAM, CVE, CDI, GAB, **GHA**, **GUI**, KEN, LES, LIB, **MOZ**, NAM, NIG, NGR, **STP**, **SRL**, **SAF**, **TAN**, TOG, **UGA**, **ZAM**, **ZIM** 24 (73%)	CAM, CVE, CDI, KEN, LIB, MLW 6 (19%)	**BEN**, BOT, BUR, CVE, CDI, GAB, **GHA**, KEN, LES, LIB, MOR, **MOZ**, NAM, **STP**, **SRL**, TUN, **ZAM**, **ZIM** 18 (55%)	CAM, CVE, CDI, KEN, MAD, MLW, NGR 7 (22%)
Ambiguous / no relationship	ALG, MAD, MLI, MAU, MOR, SEN, TUN, 7 (21%)	ALG, BOT, BFO, LES, MAD, MAL, MAU, MOR, NAM, NIG, NGR, TOG, TUN 13 (41%)	ALG, CAM, GUI, MAD, MLI, MAU, NIG, NGR, SEN, SAF, TAN, TOG 12 (36%)	ALG, BOT, BFO, BUR, GUI, LES, LIB, MAU, MOR, NAM, TOG, TUN, UGA 13 (41%)
Negative relationship	BFO, MLW 2 (6%)	**BEN**, **BUR**, **GHA**, **GUI**, **MOZ**, **STP**, SEN, **SRL**, **SAF**, **TAN**, **UGA**; **ZAM**, **ZIM** 13 (40%)	BFO, MLW, UGA 3 (9%)	**BEN**, **GHA**, MLI, **MOZ**, NIG, **STP**, SEN, **SRL**, SAF, TAN, **ZAM**, **ZIM** 12 (37%)
	N=33 (100%)	N=32 (100%)	N=33 (100%)	N=32 (100%)

Source: Afrobarometer; Note: † Gabon is not included in the viable opposition group, as it did not have one at the time of the survey. Countries that are underlined show a positive correlation for viable opposition, but not for the ruling party in each service. Countries in bold show a positive correlation for the ruling party and a negative correlation for viable opposition parties in each service.

Does this mean that opposition party presence does not matter? No. One example is a subset of seven countries (Benin, Ghana, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe) in which the positive correlation for ruling parties coincides with a negative correlation for opposition parties for both types of services. The pattern in these countries provides preliminary support in favour of **H 1c**, showcasing how the impact of opposition party activists might be conditioned by levels of party institutionalisation, as well as their access to power within political bodies at the sub-national level. Factors that could make them more likely to pursue a strategy focused on using local party activists to highlight government shortcomings, rather than use party workers as problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors to increase satisfaction with service delivery.

What about the alternative strategy of opposition parties? Are there cases in which opposition parties successfully increase citizen satisfaction to present themselves as viable candidates for future elections? In about 20% of countries the local presence of opposition parties increases citizen satisfaction. In Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Liberia the pattern for opposition party local presence mirrors that of the countries' ruling parties for at least one type of service. Without further analysis of these countries, it is difficult to say whether citizens are more satisfied

because they have better access to the ruling, or opposition parties, or because of some other reason (e.g., higher level of competition between different parties). Malawi is the only country, however, in which the presence of opposition party activists is positively associated with service satisfaction for both types of services, while it is negatively correlated to strong ruling party presence. This makes Malawi a particularly useful case to test **H 1c** and further investigate under what conditions opposition parties improve satisfaction with service delivery. Before turning to the Malawian case, however, I first explore the role of the party system at the country-level.

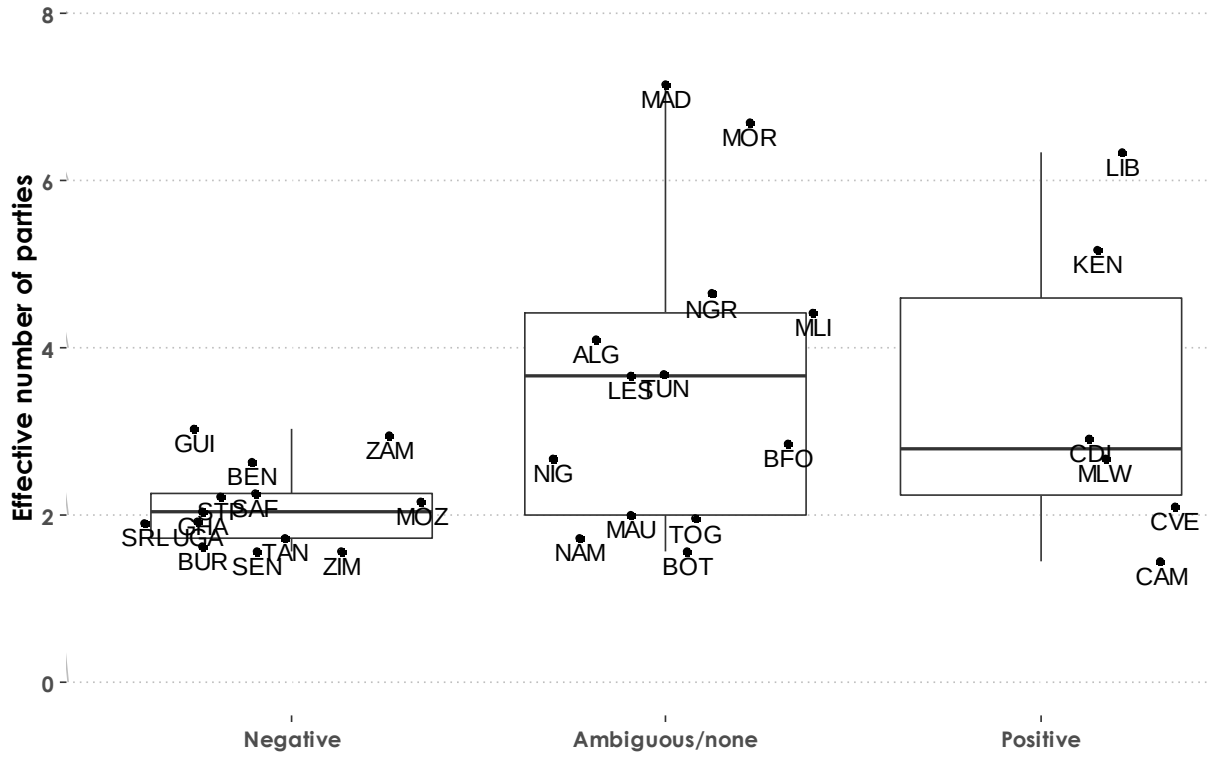
4.5.3 Effective number of parties

Does the composition of the party system affect how opposition parties engage with voters? In an established two-party system like Ghana, the opposition party might be inclined to employ local party activists as ambassadors to discredit the ruling party's track record (Weghorst & Lindberg, 2011). However, in countries with more than one viable opposition party, these parties and their local representatives might pursue different strategies to set themselves apart from other contestants in their quest to persuade voters. While such strategies might include negative campaigning, or the distribution of private goods and election incentives, they are also likely to include more information about alternative ways to improve government service provision. In short, in party systems with multiple viable opposition parties, party activists could be more likely to act as problem solvers, and share an alternative plan for service delivery, rather than just highlighting how the ruling party's approach is not working.

While this relationship could be contingent on access or control of the bureaucracy at sub-national levels, and thus, require a detailed analysis at that level of analysis, I limit myself here to a country-level comparison for exploratory purposes. I start by grouping countries according to the type of relationship between the opposition party PPI and satisfaction with service delivery – negative, ambiguous/non, positive (also see **Table 4.2**). Next, I calculate the average number of effective parties in a country for each of the three groups. This helps us to understand whether opposition parties systematically differ in their contribution to service delivery depending on their status of being the only, or one of several viable opposition parties. The x-axis in **Figure 4.7** identifies the type of relationship between viable opposition parties and satisfaction with service delivery (negative, ambiguous/none, and positive). The y-axis represents the effective number of parties in each country. The key message

from this figure is that where there is only one viable opposition party (two-party system), dense opposition party networks are likely to decrease citizen satisfaction with service delivery.[52] In contrast, where viable opposition parties must not only compete against the ruling party, but also other viable opposition parties, they are more likely to increase citizen satisfaction in areas where they have a strong local presence. This provides additional empirical support for **H 1c**.

Figure 4.7: Number of effective parties per country grouped by type of relationship between opposition PPI and satisfaction with basic service delivery.



Source: The categorisation for the relationship between viable opposition parties and citizen satisfaction with service delivery is taken from Table 4.2 above. Data on the effective number of parties is drawn from Gallagher (2019) and complemented with own calculations.

4.5.4 Malawi case study: The surprising significance of opposition parties

So far, I have argued that in party systems with more than two parties, opposition parties have a particular interest in eliminating frictions with service delivery because it allows them to set themselves apart from both the ruling party as well as each other. Further, I have argued that the level of local political control also matters (**H 1c**). Due to data constraints, however, I am unable to test the second part of **H 1c**

[52] *No country scores higher than three on the effective number of parties measure (Guinea=3,03; Zambia=2,96).*

through cross country analysis. Therefore, I examine this claim by returning to the Malawian case.

The country is a particularly good test case as it meets several necessary conditions for the argument to work. First, Malawi is one of several countries in which the presence of opposition party activists is positively associated with government service satisfaction. Second, Malawi has more than one viable opposition party. And third, the country has regions that are clear party strongholds, as well as more competitive areas. Additionally, the country's administrative division into 28 districts with substantive political power, and Afrobarometer's large sample (N=2400) enable me to exploit the variation at the sub-national level.

To preview the main finding of this section, I show that Malawian opposition parties build dense and effective networks of local party activists where they have the opportunity to access resources and political power at the district-level. Using a unique feature of Malawi's electoral landscape – the high share of independent candidates – I also show that the connection between local party activists and citizen satisfaction with service delivery only holds for parties, but not for independent MPs and their activists. This last finding also provides initial evidence for the connection between the party activist and MP layers of the conveyor-belt mechanism I described in *Scenario 4* (**Chapter 1**).

Malawi's District Councils are important venues that deal with several aspects of local governance and development (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2019). Council members - MPs, Councillors, Chiefs, and representatives of special interest groups - provide directives on how to implement policies within the district. And unlike in many other countries, Malawian MPs have the right to vote in council meetings. Each district encompasses between two (Mwanza) and 22 (Lilongwe) MP constituencies in Malawi.[53] Given their influence at the national and district level, combined with the fact that a large share of resources for districts comes from the national budget, MPs exercise a disproportionate amount of power compared to the only other voting members on the Council – local councillors (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2019; O'Neil & Cammack, 2014).

[53] *Likoma in Malawi's northern region is the only exception to this as the district only has 1 MP constituency.*

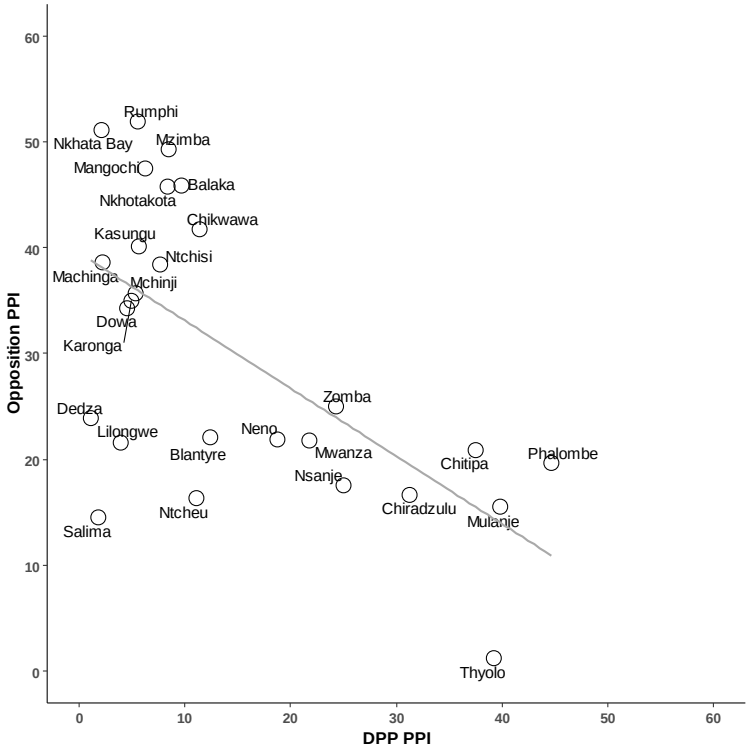
This means that how money is distributed at the district level depends in large part on the power balance in these district councils, especially among MPs. While any increase in the share of MPs is likely to improve a party's ability to influence the distribution of recurrent expenditures, or the Local Development Funds, increasing the share of MPs from 30% to 60% is arguably more consequential, than increasing it from 0% to 30% as a voting majority allows parties to dictate service delivery priorities. These dynamics shape the efforts of parties and their local party activists. The closer a council is to an equal split between the ruling and viable opposition parties, the higher the pressure for parties to persuade voters, and the more incentives for party activists (and MPs) to deliver via the conveyor-belt mechanism.

To show how this works in practice, I draw on Afrobarometer data from 2012 (Round 5) due to the timing of the survey, as well as the larger sample size compared to most subsequent surveys. I start by calculating the PPI scores at the district level for the then ruling DPP and the major opposition parties (MCP, UDF, PP). As can be seen in **Figure 4.8,** the DPP had a better grassroots presence than other parties in districts such as Phalombe, Mulanje, and Thyolo, while its network was virtually absent in places like Salima and Dedza. By contrast, opposition parties built dense networks of partisan activists in Rumpi, Nkhata Bay, Mzimba and Mangochi, where they also had a clear advantage over the DPP.[54] However, there are also several districts in which the PPI scores are more balanced (e.g., Ntcheu, Zomba, Blantyre).

Districts that are not completely dominated by one party can work in favour of party activists in two ways. First, politicians and bureaucrats often exert more effort to deliver services in these areas (Asunka & Afulani, 2018; Keefer & Khemani, 2009). This is likely to make it easier for party activists to solve citizens' problems and convey constituents' concerns. In turn, citizens will be more likely to be satisfied with service delivery. Second, a more competitive environment also increases partisan activists' value as problem solvers and ambassadors to politicians who want to gain more or maintain current levels of influence.

[54] In line with the data from Round 6 shown earlier, districts with high opposition party PPI scores are correlated with higher levels of citizens' satisfaction with community-level services.

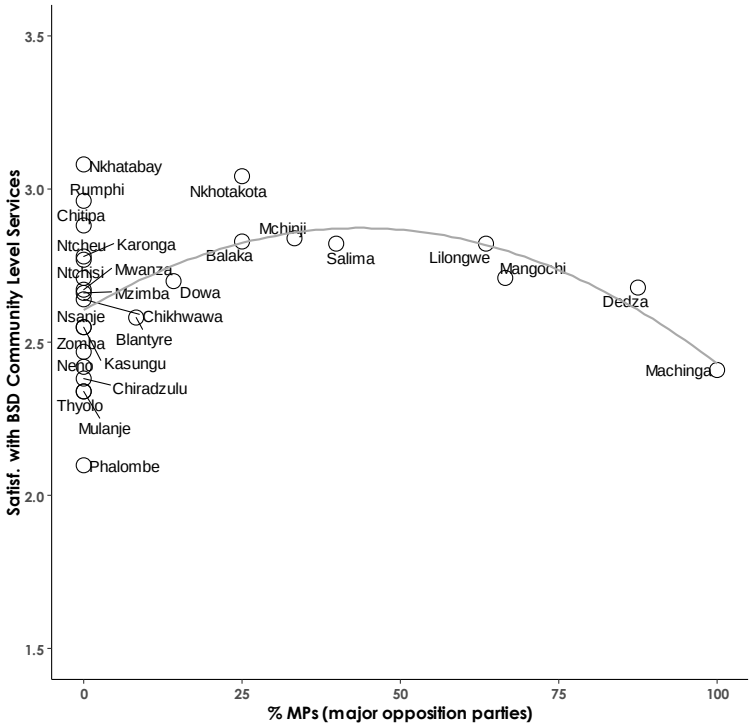
Figure 4.8: PPI Score ruling vs. opposition (MCP, UDF, PP) parties | Malawi | 2012



Source: Afrobarometer

Empirically, this can be illustrated by comparing the balance of power among MPs (i.e., a form of competitiveness at the district council level) with citizens' level of satisfaction with service delivery. In **Figure 4.9**, the x-axis displays the percentage of opposition party MPs in a given district council, and the y-axis shows the average level of satisfaction with community-level services. As expected, the closer the cumulative share of the major opposition party MPs is to 50%, the more satisfied are citizens in this district (e.g., Mchinji, Salima, and Nkhotakota). In contrast, in districts without major opposition party MPs (e.g., Phalombe, Mulanje), and those that are entirely dominated by opposition MPs (e.g., Machinga) we see lower levels of satisfaction with service delivery. This is the case, I argue, because opposition parties either do not have the necessary party network (e.g., Phalombe), or sufficient incentives to improve satisfaction with service delivery, which in turn, would persuade additional citizens to vote for these parties and eventually increase their power in those district councils (e.g., Machinga). And while districts like Nkhata Bay and Rumphi seem like exceptions to the rule, it is worth remembering that both districts scored exceptionally high on the opposition PPI (50%+, **Figure 4.8**).

Figure 4.9: DPP / opposition party MP share at district level and citizen satisfaction with service delivery (Community-level services) | Malawi | 2012



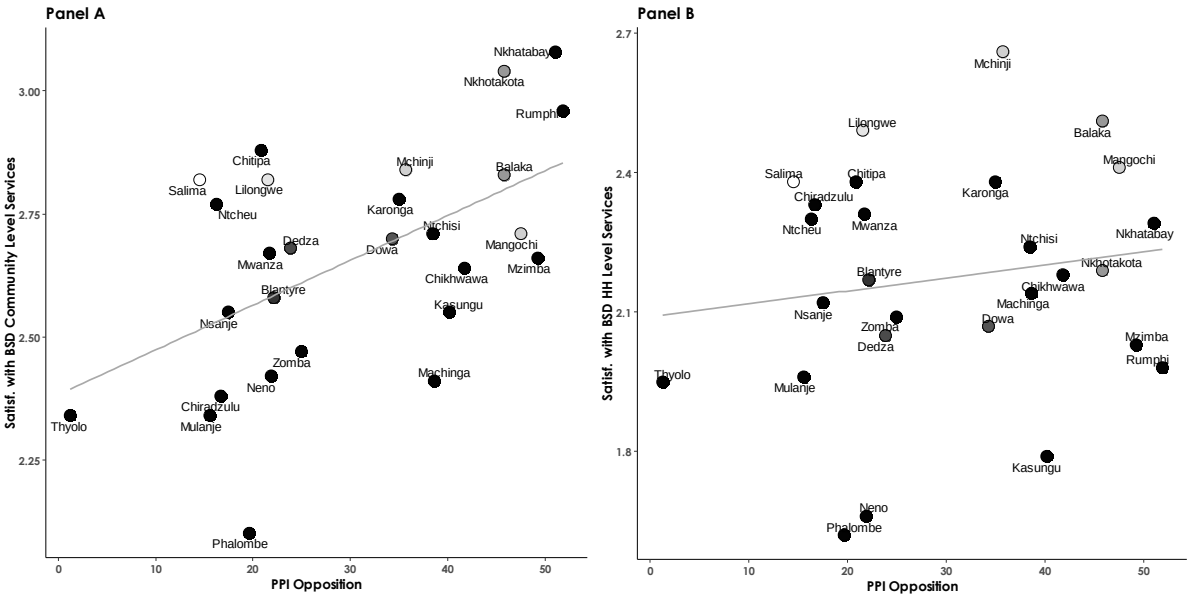
Source: Afrobarometer and Malawi Electoral Commission.

Indeed, as **Figure 4.10** shows, the combination of a dense network of partisan activists (x-axis) and a competitive environment at the district level (shading of circles), makes it especially likely for opposition parties to improve how citizens view government service delivery (y-axis). Panel A shows that districts with high opposition PPI scores (far right on the x-axis) and councils with an opposition MP share close to 50% (light circles) have higher satisfaction scores (upper end of y-axis) than those that miss at least one of these two features. However, the pattern in Panel B also corroborates earlier findings that the conveyor-belt mechanism is less effective for household-level services. In short, this provides corroborating evidence for **H 1c**, but this time in the opposite direct: that opposition parties can improve satisfaction levels if they have sufficient local power.

Could the observed patterns be the result of the large number of independent MPs (30%) that sit on district councils across Malawi? This is unlikely to be the case since, by definition, they cannot win a majority of seats at a council. However, what if several independent MPs co-ordinate their efforts and act as a *de facto* party to

increase their influence on district councils to increase their odds for re-election? To show that this is not the case either, I employ bivariate correlation analysis.

Figure 4.10: Opposition party PPI, MP seat share and satisfaction with service delivery (Community-level services) | Malawi | 2012



Source: Afrobarometer and Malawi Electoral Commission. Note: The cumulative seat share of MCP, UDF and PP MPs at the district level is captured by the fill colour. The lighter the colour, the closer the share is to 50%. The trendline is based on the correlation of the PPI measure and the satisfaction with BSD.

First, I capture the competitiveness of the ruling party, major opposition parties and independents by calculating the absolute difference of their MP seat share from 50%, and then inverse the score for ease of interpretation. Put simply, the higher the value on this index, the more competitive the district is from the point of view of the respective group (ruling, opposition parties and independents). We would therefore expect a positive correlation between this competitiveness measure and the satisfaction measure. **Table 4.3** confirms that the strong relationship between competitiveness and satisfaction with service delivery for opposition parties (.419), as well as a weaker relationship for the then ruling DPP (.224). However, it also shows that a higher share of independent MPs in a district does not increase citizen satisfaction with community or household level services (-.026). Overall, the different pieces of evidence presented in this section suggest that the connection between the density of opposition party networks and citizens' satisfaction with education and health care services is driven by the incentives of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

Table 4.3: Correlation between the MP competitiveness measure and citizen satisfaction of service delivery at district level | Malawi | 2012

MP type	Community level
Ruling party	.224
Major opposition parties	**.419****
Independents	-.026

*Note: Competitiveness for ruling party, major opposition parties and independents was measured by calculating the absolute difference of the MP seat share from 50% and then inverse the score for ease of interpretation. Therefore, the higher the value the more competitive the district is from the point of view of the respective group (ruling, opposition parties and independents). N=27. *** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, * Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed). Bold=correlation is significant and in expected direction.*

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I systematically tested whether networks of local parties can affect citizen satisfaction with local service delivery. I hypothesised that localities with denser networks of party workers also have more satisfied citizens. In doing so, I started with the assumption that the overall density of party networks matters and that we would find systematic variation depending on the type of service (community- vs. household-level). The results of the cross-national quantitative analysis have confirmed these assumptions. Even once we consider the proximity of service infrastructure, as well as the quality of bureaucratic professionalism, we observe a positive relationship between PPI and citizen satisfaction, and it is stronger for education and health care, than for water, sewerage, and electricity.

Because ruling and opposition parties can have very different approaches in how they engage with citizens over government service delivery, I conducted additional exploratory analyses. While the regression analysis using the ruling party PPI index revealed that higher local presence of ruling parties increases citizen satisfaction, the findings for opposition parties was more mixed. Thus, I provided additional case study evidence from Malawi that allows for sub-national comparisons, while at the same time, accounting for other contextual factors. Ultimately, the case study results corroborate the broader finding of this chapter: party activists matter, and they do so in different ways depending on the type of service (Scenario 2). Moreover, the results also confirm results from other chapters in which I show that party activists and elected representatives not only engage with citizens and bureaucrats, but also enhance each other's effect through the vertical integration of their efforts (Scenario 4).

PART TWO: ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Chapter 5: MPs and their constituents in Africa

5.1 Introduction

Elected representatives, and especially members of the national legislature (MPs), are key players in African politics. This is reflected in the vast literature focusing on the intra-party selection of MPs, their behaviour during the campaign period, as well as their role in forging alliances to gain executive power. Where scholars have analysed MPs' efforts to deliver public services, or engage with citizens in their constituencies, there has been an overwhelming focus on the distribution of material incentives and particularistic goods. However, much less is known about the exchange of information between legislators and citizens in Africa.

In Part II (Chapters 5-8), I outline why MPs form a crucial part of the conveyor-belt mechanism, how they participate in the exchange of information between citizens, party structures, and the bureaucracy, and how this, in turn, improves citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of basic services (**H 2**). Focusing on the role of national-level elected representatives, I begin this chapter by situating African MPs' efforts to deliver basic services in the broader literature of the Global South. Next, I outline the three roles MPs fulfil as part of the conveyor-belt mechanism. As *high-level problem solvers, ambassadors*, and *advocates*, they regularly complement, oversee, and support the efforts of party activists to increase citizen satisfaction. Following the description of these archetypes, I outline various incentives for MPs to improve experiences with basic service delivery. I argue that MPs' focus on these three roles is driven by their need to engage in constituency service. Through constituency work they build a positive reputation in their home district that helps them with their immediate goal – re-election – as well as their more distant goals – the pursuit of material and non-material goals such as seeking higher office, shaping public policy, or defending democracy. Throughout the chapter, I emphasize their contribution to the exchange of information with other stakeholders, rather than focusing on the distribution of material incentives as is common in the existing literature.

The next section probes two commonly held views about the relationship between citizens and their MPs. First, I use cross-national descriptive data to explore the assumption that citizens frequently engage with their elected representatives during the campaign season, but less so between elections. Second, I examine the commonly held belief that citizens who contact MPs primarily seek out clientelistic goods and services for their personal benefit, rather than the greater good of the community. Taken together, the descriptive evidence provides the starting point for the three subsequent chapters that demonstrate empirically how, when, and why MPs are part of the conveyor-belt mechanism. The penultimate section of the chapter discusses how the electoral system type affects the conveyor-belt mechanism. The chapter closes with a brief summary, before subsequent chapters provide a more detailed picture of how the conveyor-belt mechanism works at the MP-level.

5.2 Defining constituency service

Elected representatives in democratic legislatures perform four core functions: 1) overseeing the executive, 2) making laws, 3) representing the views of their constituents in the legislature, and 4) constituency work in their home districts. While the first two functions often take place inside the legislature, constituency service, and to some extent representation, primarily take place in an MP's home district[55]. Despite several seminal studies on elected representatives' constituency-facing activities (e.g., Fenno (1978) and Cain et al.(1984)), scholars have paid far less attention to what MPs do in their districts compared to their behaviour in the legislature (Bussell, 2019, p. 25).

Scholars disagree on what exactly constituency service entails. Cain et al. (1984, p. 113) make an explicit link between the constituency and the legislature, defining it as "the non-partisan, nonprogrammatic effort to help individual constituents in their dealings with the larger government, and to defend and advance the particularistic interests of the constituency in the councils of the larger government". Fenno (1978, p. 101) focuses primarily on who it is to whom MPs respond, describing the essence of constituency work as "providing help to individuals , groups, and localities [local governments] in coping with the federal government". Meanwhile, Norris (1997, p.

[55] In countries with large list-PR systems such as Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, these connections are less clear. Nevertheless, some of the subsequent points still apply to some extent when MPs engage with citizens, even if they are not found within a discrete geographic location.

37) emphasises the geographic aspect of constituency service and includes all activities of MPs that focus primarily on the constituency rather than parliament. In contrast, Africanists emphasize the clientelist relationship between MPs and their constituents, with some going as far as categorising the "provision of private goods in the form of favours, personal assistance, cash handouts and so on [as] a fifth expected duty" alongside constituency service, representation, oversight, and law-making (Lindberg, 2010, p. 118).

For the purposes of this analysis, I depend on Fenno's and Norris' definitions for three related reasons. First, conceptually, Fenno's focus on individuals, groups and local governments mirrors my focus on these actors as part of the conveyor-belt mechanism. MPs not only engage with citizens in their constituencies, but also with local government structures (I discuss this in more detail below). Second, Norris' definition is sufficiently broad to include a range of activities that MPs often engage in when serving their citizens. That is, it is not narrowly focused on the provision of a public service, or of a personal favour, but also includes various forms of communication with a range of local actors. And third, Norris' definition also limits the geographic space in which to observe these activities empirically.[56]

A focus on the constituency also helps to emphasise its centrality throughout the electoral cycle. This is where candidates are usually nominated, MPs are elected, and where citizens are most likely to engage with national legislators. Once in office, legislators also use it as a source of information to update their legislative (and campaign) strategies (Siefken & Costa, 2018). With this working definition in mind, I now turn to describing three different roles that elected officials take on as they engage with citizens over basic service delivery.

5.3 MPs in the conveyor-belt mechanism

According to the conveyor-belt mechanism theory, party members need to remain in constant communication with each other as well as with citizens to increase citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. In the previous three chapters I focused on the various relationships of local party activists. I demonstrated how they take on the role of local ambassadors, advocates and fixers depending on who they engage

[56] *While MPs' representational activities in the legislature are no doubt important, they are less clearly linked to the conveyor-belt mechanism and citizens satisfaction with service delivery, and thus, excluded from this analysis.*

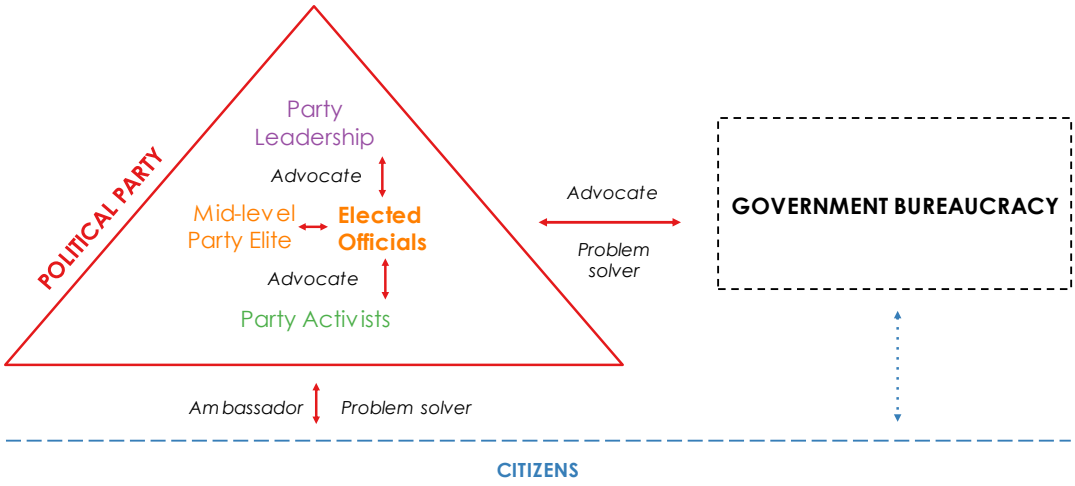
with. Like their grassroots counterparts, legislators take on similar roles, but at a higher level of aggregation – the constituency.

According to my theory, elected officials take on three archetypical roles within their constituency. First, they operate as ***high-level problem solvers*** by engaging directly in casework, or infrastructure project assistance (**Figure 5.1**). This is a key aspect of Fenno's definition of constituency work, and entails resolving the requests of constituents or citizen groups by contacting bureaucrats (vertical and horizontal connections).

Additionally, elected officials also act as ***high-level advocates***. Whether through personal contact, or via intermediaries (e.g., constituency staff, or party activists),[57] many MPs develop a set of constituency priorities for which they advocate when engaging with other mid- and high-level party officials, as well as bureaucrats (horizontal and vertical connections).

Lastly, they act as ***high-level ambassadors*** by advertising their and the party's recent achievements regarding service delivery. Here, their activities can range from a speech at a ribbon-cutting event for the opening of a school, or similar acts of personalised credit claiming (Mayhew, 1987), to instances where MPs reference the achievements of the party, rather than their own (e.g., at a community event).

Figure 5.1: Conveyor-belt mechanism: connections and activities of elected officials



Note: Party leadership=national-level party executive; mid-level party elites=party members who hold an elected position within the party structure but are not elected to public office; elected officials=MPs; Party activists= party members who form the most grassroots extensions of political parties.

[57] *Other local actors such as traditional or religious leaders, while important, are excluded from this conceptualisation as they are not directly incorporated into structures.*

The three ideal roles of elected representatives sketched out here are not entirely new. However, this conceptualization shifts the focus from that of the current literature on African MPs. Existing scholarly accounts often narrowly focus on distributive politics that emphasise the clientelistic allocation of public services and how this relates to the re-election of MPs. I broaden this focus to include both MPs' efforts to resolve concrete delivery issues, as well as their communication with citizens regarding basic service delivery during and between the election campaign cycle. I unpack each role in more detail below.

5.3.1 MPs as high-level problem solvers

In many ways, constituency service looks remarkably similar across geographic and political contexts, as well as over time. Whether in Richard Fenno's (1978) classic study of US Members of Congress, or Jennifer Bussell's (2019) recent work on elected politicians in India, legislators in single-member districts frequently act as high-level problem solvers for a wide range of citizen concerns. The type of requests citizens make to legislators range from seeking help to access their veterans' benefits, pension, voter card, or public loans, to resolving appeals by citizen groups to build local infrastructure such as sewer pipes, hand pumps, or water treatment plants (Bussell, 2019; Fenno, 1978).

Although not all citizens are equally likely to approach elected politicians with such requests (Grossman & Slough, 2022; Ofosu, 2023), there are important procedural commonalities that unite constituency service across contexts. To deal with the high volume of requests, MPs often try to resolve citizen requests through structured engagement (e.g., office hours), rather than ad hoc meetings. Moreover, the interactions between petitioners and the MPs are usually characterised by mutual respect, even in otherwise quite hierarchical societies (e.g., India). At the same time, MPs regularly respond to citizen requests in a non-partisan fashion (Bussell, 2019; J. A. Harris & Posner, 2019).

Another commonality among legislators who attempt to help citizens access services is that they rarely do so on their own. Whether elected politicians have dedicated staff that deal with these requests while MPs are outside the constituency, or their staff accompanies them on their tours through the constituency, MPs have similar support structures in place. Given the nature of many of these requests, MPs also often depend on their (or their staff's) relationship with

low or mid-level bureaucrats, or other local elites (e.g., traditional leaders) to resolve bottlenecks or accelerate processes that address issues of service delivery (Baldwin, 2015; Bussell, 2019; Fenno, 1978; Judge-Lord et al., 2018).

Lastly, in places where MPs have access to Constituency Development Funds (CDFs), legislators often use these monies to realise small-scale developmental projects - local public goods, or club goods, such as water pumps, or a new roof for a class room or health clinic (Baskin & Mezey, 2014; Bussell, 2019; J. A. Harris & Posner, 2019).

Despite these commonalities, MPs differ in how much time they allocate to this activity. Although the overall time allocated to addressing citizen requests is substantial,[58] research has shown that this can vary depending on the size and composition of the constituency, as well as MPs' personal characteristics such as gender (Thomsen & Sanders, 2020), partisanship, or seniority (Judge-Lord et al., 2018; Thomsen & Sanders, 2020; York, 2020). These personal characteristics of MPs not only matter for how much time they spend on this activity, but can also affect whose concerns they respond to, whether due to electoral incentives, or personal biases (Butler & Broockman, 2011; Costa, 2017; Driscoll et al., 2018).[59]

In sum, elected politicians frequently engage in high-level problem solving by engaging with citizens and trying to resolve a diverse set of concerns with the help of their staff, or through engaging with bureaucrats. While the focus of the existing literature is on the decision-making processes of how to allocate and provide services, or address casework, the extent to which citizens are satisfied with MPs' efforts to resolve their concerns has remained understudied. In addition to showing that MPs resolve concrete delivery issues, I also address this empirical gap in the subsequent three chapters.

5.3.2 MPs as high-level advocates

A second important role that MPs fulfil as part of the Conveyor-belt Mechanism is that of a ***High-Level Advocate***. Though it is important to the functioning of the mechanism, and takes place in the constituency, it is not necessarily visible to local

[58] For example, in her survey of elected politicians in India, Bussell found that members of the National Parliament and State Assembly spend about one-fifth of their time attending to meetings. A similar portion of their time is allocated to meeting politicians, and conducting policy work (Bussell, 2019, p. 52).

[59] For similar results at the municipal level in South Africa and India, see McClendon (2016) and Gaikwad and Nellis (2021) respectively.

residents. In the seven constituency roles Norton (1994) describes for MPs, three - safety valve, advocate, and promoter of constituency interests - are constituent parts of the high-level advocate role.

First, they operate as safety valves for citizens, allowing constituents to feel heard while gathering information about what they care about. This happens either directly at campaign events and townhall meetings, or indirectly through meeting grassroots party activists.[60] Though related in some respects, it is distinct from their problem-solver role. Advocate related activities often have longer time horizons and involve policy changes, or the re-allocation of budgets following extensive lobbying efforts.

As an advocate and promoter of the constituency, MPs take on an active role, marching in demonstrations or making speeches at party events or formal and informal engagements with bureaucrats in which they lobby for the concerns of constituents. The nature of this activity may require the MP to occasionally go beyond the geographic borders of the constituency (Norton, 1994). As York (2020) has shown, even opposition party MPs in non-democratic regimes are able to take on this role.

It is difficult to quantify how much time MPs spend on this type of activity, as it usually takes place alongside other activities (e.g., problem solver activity, intra-party work). Additionally, this is likely to vary depending on MPs' role orientation (Norton, 1997), and position within in the legislature, as well as the party structure. Relatedly, their ability to effect any change in how the bureaucracy operates might depend on a similar set of contextual factors: their position within the legislature (Rogger, 2018), electoral competitiveness of the constituency (Callen et al., 2016; Nath, 2016), or the lines of accountability between them and bureaucrats (Gulzar & Pasquale, 2017), as well as their position within the party.

5.3.3 MPs as high-level ambassadors

In addition to their roles as problem solvers and advocates, MPs also act as ***High-Level Ambassadors*** by advertising their and the party's recent achievements and new plans regarding service delivery. To use Mayhew's (1987) terms, they engage in *personalised credit claiming* and *position taking*.

[60] *Lockwood and Krönke (2022) show that this function is much easier in single-member district electoral systems.*

Legislators claim credit by "peel[ing] off pieces of governmental accomplishment for which they can believably generate a sense of responsibility" (Mayhew, 1987, p. 22). Projects they initiate using their constituency development funds also fall in this category (e.g., opening of a new clinic, refurbishing of a school classrooms). Though similar, the act of publicly taking credit for goods and services is distinct from the above problem-solving activity. The latter is the provision of goods and services, while acting as an ambassador refers to communicating the accomplishment.

Position taking, on the other hand, refers to the "public enunciation of a judgemental statement on anything likely to be of interest to political actors" (Mayhew, 1987, p. 23). In the context of this study, taking a position on issues related to service delivery becomes a political commodity. For example, an MP might support the party president on prioritizing free secondary education at the expense of providing free tertiary education or increase VAT to finance fee tertiary education.

Both personal credit claiming and position taking occur in a variety of situations, from a speech at a ribbon-cutting event, at townhall meetings, during rallies on the campaign trail, as well as through local radio interviews.

Across the electoral cycle, these ambassadorial activities can take up a great deal of time. For example, in Malawi and Zambia, MPs reported that talking to citizens and meeting groups takes up half their time in the constituency, substantially more than the second most common activity (listening to citizens) that took 37% of Malawian and 31% of Zambian MPs' time (Barkan et al., 2010). MPs' attention to these activities are likely to ebb and flow with the electoral cycle and differ depending on the electoral safety of the seat they are competing for. Those who are in safe seats are likely to spend less time on this type of activity. This might be particularly true in countries that do not have inclusive primary elections as a smaller electorate could be more effectively persuaded through clientelism or patronage (Acheampong, 2021). Relatedly, a recent study on the effect of debates on political attitudes in Ghana also showed that changes in attitudes based on policy debates

are less likely to persist in party strongholds (Brierley et al., 2020). This suggests that position taking is less effective in these environments.[61]

In sum, there are three roles that MPs take on when engaging with citizens, party officials and bureaucrats – high-level problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors. Although previous scholarship has theorised and empirically demonstrated different parts of these roles, we currently lack a systematic analysis of them in the African context. Thus, I break new empirical ground by describing the activities related to each of these roles, when MPs are likely to prioritise certain roles, and how much time MPs allocate to these roles.

5.4 Connecting the Why, and How: Reputation building and satisfaction with service delivery

Activities such as building a new clinic and broadcasting the completion in the community, or taking a certain policy position on secondary education answers the question of ***how*** MPs increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery. However, to fully understand their behaviour, we also need to answer two related questions: ***Why*** do legislators do what they do? And how are the answers to these two questions connected?

5.4.1 Why do candidates seek elected office?

A long literature focusing on advanced wealthy democracies points to three broad goals that legislators pursue to varying degrees, and at different times in the electoral cycle (Fujimura, 2016). First, they want to make "good public policy" (Fenno, 1973, p. 1). Second, legislators want to capitalise on the prestige of political office to advance their political career. While some seek a more senior position within the legislature, others hope to increase public recognition before running for higher office (e.g., presidency) (Fenno, 1973). Third, some seek a legislative seat to create career opportunities for themselves outside the legislature. Indeed, many politicians have used the political capital they accumulated during their time in

[61] *At this point, the reader might wonder whether the three roles described above are limited to elected officials. Conceptually, the roles of high level-problem solver, advocate and ambassador also apply to aspiring legislators. However, it might be more difficult for them to deliver in the same way as MPs can. For example, they might simply have fewer opportunities to claim credit, especially if they do not hold any other public office. Similarly, credit claiming and position taking might require MP candidates to invest comparatively more resources if they intend to run in a part of the country in which their party is traditionally weak (e.g., see Paget (2022)). Unfortunately, data limitations do not allow me to test the extent to which aspiring legislators take on these three roles. Thus, it is for future research to test whether aspiring legislators invest their time and resources in similar ways as sitting MPs to fulfil these three roles.*

office to enter high level positions in the private sector (Eggers & Hainmueller, 2009; Fenno, 1978; Mayhew, 1987).

In poorer and less democratic settings, legislative candidates often have similar goals (Fisman et al., 2014; Weghorst, 2022). Yet, especially in the African context, the literature traditionally focuses more on legislators' pursuit of material benefits, whether for personal enrichment or to meet cultural expectations (Ekeh, 1975; Koter, 2017; Lindberg, 2003; van de Walle, 2001). In addition to this dominant narrative, others have highlighted that especially in one-party dominant or authoritarian regimes, standing for office allows legislative candidates to pursue non-material benefits. That is, when their chances of success are minimal because of an uneven electoral playing field, they run for office because they see it as a moral necessity to defend the rule of law, advocate for democracy, or uplift their community (K. F. Greene, 2007; LeBas, 2011; Weghorst, 2022). Whether (aspirant) legislators pursue material or self-expressive goals, their pursuit creates incentives to gain the party nomination in intra-party elections to then participate in legislative elections (Strøm, 1997).

5.4.2 Reputation building and constituency service

If selection by the party, and election by the public are the hurdle that legislators need to clear before they can realise their other goals (Mayhew, 1987; Strøm, 1997), the question becomes how best they can achieve this. I argue that in contexts where MPs think citizens see constituency service as the primary responsibility of elected representatives, legislators will focus on constituency service as much as possible, often at the expense of their other tasks (Opalo, 2019).[62] By taking on the roles of high-level problem solvers, ambassadors and advocates legislators can demonstrate that they care about citizens. It is the building of such a reputation among citizens that connects ***why*** legislators run for office with ***how*** they increase citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery (**Figure 5.2**).

The capacity to increase chances of re-election is by far the most important incentive for constituency service (Opalo, 2019; Papp, 2020). However, not everyone that seeks re-election is equally likely to engage in constituency service as a form of

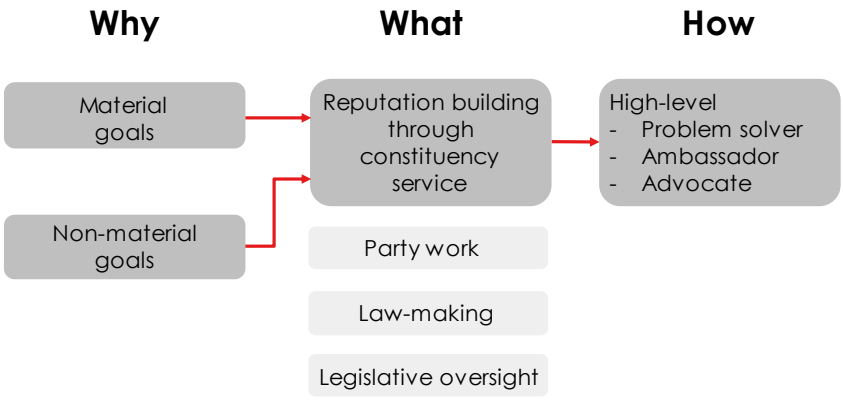
[62] *However, as Mattes and Mozaffar have shown using ALP data, while "MPs in SMD districts broadly understand voters' demand that they pay close attention to the constituency, they misinterpret this as a demand for material goods and development and systematically underappreciate the public's demand for representation" (Mattes & Mozaffar, 2016, p. 212). I build on this insight by highlighting citizens' interest in the exchange of information with MPs.*

reputation building. For example, the incentive to engage in constituency service varies depending on the electoral formula. In single member districts the incentive is highest to create a personal vote, while the geographic overlap of legislators in multi-member districts can create incentives to free-ride on the party's reputation in some circumstances (Carey & Shugart, 1995; Papp, 2020; Shugart et al., 2005), a point I will return to in this and subsequent chapters.

In addition to the electoral incentives, scholars have also identified intrinsic motivations for why legislators are responsive to citizens. Even in the absence of strong electoral incentives, some legislators prefer working in their constituencies because it provides more immediate feedback than law-making or oversight (B. Cain et al., 1987; Giger et al., 2020; Norris, 1997; Papp, 2020). In the schematic representation in **Figure 5.2**, I include this intrinsic motivation in the non-material goals category.

In short, I propose that, all else being equal, legislators' primary goal is selection at the party stage and election in a general election to pursue their material and/or non-material goals. Therefore, legislators tend to focus on constituency service as the most effective way to build a positive reputation in their home districts. This focus on constituency service prompts MPs to take on the role of high-level problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors.

Figure 5.2: Connecting the goals of legislators to citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery



5.5 (Mis)conceptions about African MPs

Having sketched out ***how*** legislators contribute to citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery, and ***why*** they take on these roles, this chapter closes by probing three commonly held views about the relationship between citizens and their MPs in

Africa. Specifically, I use cross-national descriptive data to explore the assumption that 1) both citizens and MPs prioritise constituency service over other aspects of MPs' roles. 2) citizens engage with MPs primarily during the election campaign period; and 3) citizens who contact MPs primarily seek out personal goods and services for their own benefit as clients, rather than the greater good of the community as citizens. Importantly, unpacking the widely held believes about the legislator-citizen relationship helps us to understand how plausible the proposed theory is, and how easily it can travel across different contexts. Although there are examples that confirm and contradict each of the commonly held assumptions in the literature, the cross-country evidence presented below provide more support for some claims than others. Taken together, this descriptive data provides the background against which the three subsequent chapters test the empirical implications of my theory.

5.5.1 The importance of constituency service

How important is constituency service to citizens and MPs? Scholars have long argued that Africans prefer their elected representative to engage in constituency service and representation over legislating and oversight (Asante et al., 2011; Barkan et al., 2010; Kim et al., 1984; Lindberg, 2010; M. A. Thomas & Sissokho, 2005). Indeed, as early as 1984 Kim, Barkan and Jewell (1984) empirically demonstrated that Kenyans wanted their MP to focus on expressing the views of the people in the district, obtain government projects for the district and explain policies to voters, rather than proposing, debating, and amending bills. Similarly, scholars often assume that African MPs prioritise constituency work and the provision of personal material goods (Opalo, 2019). Yet, empirical studies in this area are often limited to single case studies, which makes it difficult to know whether these findings are applicable more widely across the continent.[63]

Since the conveyor-belt mechanism assumes the exchange of information between citizens and MPs, as well as the provision of constituency service, both citizens and MPs should prioritise these over other roles (e.g., law-making and oversight). If citizens do not expect their MPs to listen to them, nor care about constituency service, and equally, if MPs do not prioritise these tasks, the conveyor-belt mechanism is unlikely to work. Thanks to the African Legislatures Project (ALP), it is possible to capture MPs

[63] *Apart of several case studies (Acheampong, 2021; Asante et al., 2011; Lindberg, 2010), so far only the African Legislatures Project has collected systematic data about African MPs' attitudes and behaviours (Barkan et al., 2010).*

attitudes towards their job across 17 countries and to compare it to public opinion data from Afrobarometer. I start with a fundamental question. How interested are MPs in what their citizens have to say? According to the ALP data, 90% of legislators said that their peers are either "very interested" or "interested" in constituents' opinion.

Further, each project fielded surveys asking respondents to identify MPs' most important role. Although the survey questions were not identical, respondents could choose from four broad categories: constituency service, representation, oversight, and law-making. To capture the exchange of information between citizens and MPs (ambassador and advocate roles), I use the responses categorised as "representation".[64]

Overall, 45% of Afrobarometer respondents said MPs should prioritise listening to constituents and representing their needs, a further 31% said constituency service, 15% said MPs should focus on law-making, and only 6% selected oversight.[65] This is in line with conventional wisdom about Africans' preferences regarding their elected representatives.

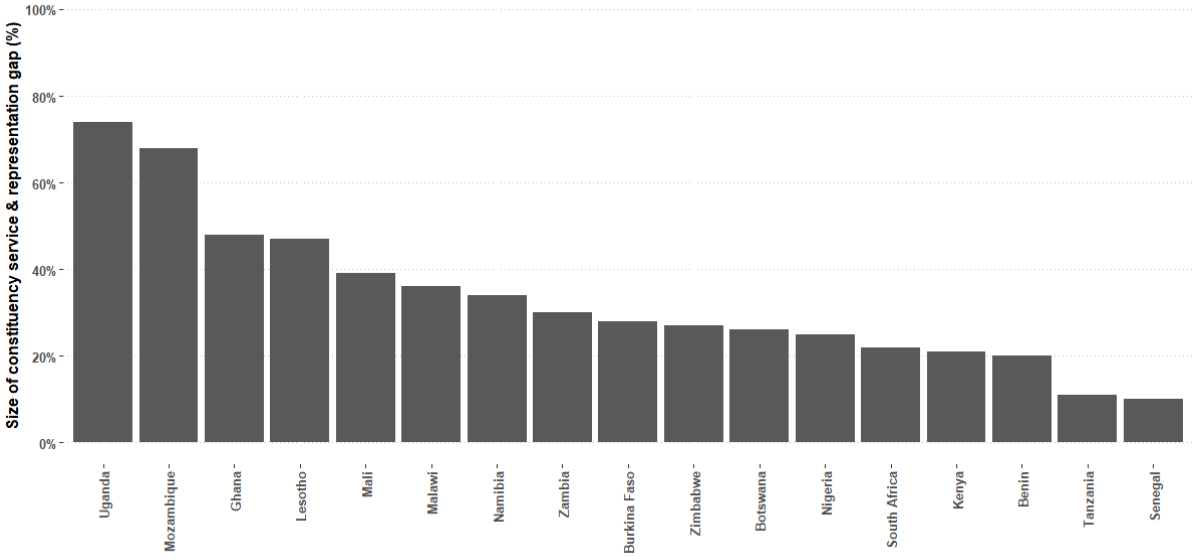
How does this compare to MPs' priorities? Among the more than 800 legislators surveyed, 42% of MPs said that representation or constituency service is their top priority (32% and 10% respectively), while 41% selected law-making, and only 7% said oversight.[66] While this shows that MPs try to balance the demands of their constituents with their responsibilities in the legislature, it reveals a substantial gap between MPs and citizens. One that is not well documented in the literature.

When citizens' demand for constituency service and representation is higher than MPs' emphasis on this role (or vice versa), we observe a constituency service and representation gap. To quantify the citizen-MP gap, I calculate the percentage point difference between the percentage of Afrobarometer respondents minus the percentage of MPs from each country who prioritise the two tasks. As **Figure 5.3** shows, in all 17 countries citizens expect their MPs to prioritise the exchange of

[64] The exact question phrasing for the "representation" option was as follows: In your opinion, which of these following jobs is the most important part of being an MP? (ALP) and Members of Parliament have different responsibilities. Which of the following do you think is the most important responsibility of your Member of Parliament? Listen to constituents and represent their needs (Afrobarometer). Note, when only focusing on MPs (Chapter 7) I use alternative survey questions to better capture the exchange of information between citizens and MPs at the constituency level.
[65] The remaining 4% either said "none of these" or selected "Don't know".
[66] The remaining 10% provided multiple and overlapping or other responses.

information and constituency service at higher rates than MPs do. On average, this gap is 33 percentage points. However, the gap is most pronounced in Uganda (74) and Mozambique (68), and smallest in Tanzania (11) and Senegal (10).[67] In sum, the results not only confirm the high demand for the exchange of information and constituency service among citizens, but also highlight important variation in the extent to which MPs match citizens' expectations. While this only partially confirms the conventional wisdom in the literature, it also suggests that the conveyor-belt mechanism has important limitations related to MPs ability to match their constituents' expectations around role prioritisation. In **Chapter 7**, we build on these results and analyse citizens' expectation in terms of how much time MPs *should spend* in their district, and the *perceived supply* of constituency service.

Figure 5.3: Citizen-MP gaps in emphasis on constituency service and representation by country | 17 countries | ca.2008/2010



Sources: African Legislature Project MP Survey and Afrobarometer Round 4; Note: The size of the constituency service gap is the percentage point difference between the percentage of Afrobarometer respondents minus the percentage of MPs from each country who answered that constituency service is the most important job for MPs to perform.

5.5.2 Citizen-initiated contact with MPs

Moving beyond the prioritisation of constituency service, it is also necessary to understand patterns of citizen-legislator contact, as this is one of the avenues

[67] *Using the same data but only focusing on representation, Mattes and Mozaffar (2016) find that MPs in SMD systems are less likely to meet citizens' demand for representation than MPs in multi-member and PR countries. When conducting a similar analysis for constituency work only, I also find a difference according to electoral system type, though in the opposite direction.*

through which the Conveyor-belt Mechanism operates. Setting aside the question of *why* citizens contact legislators for the moment (see next sub-section), I focus here on *how often* citizens and legislators personally engage with each other.

Prior studies suggests that "politics in Africa is far more personal and participatory than politics in other parts of the world" (Mueller, 2018, p. 37). Whether Africans contact elected representatives to hold them accountable (Mueller, 2018; Ringo & Lekorwe, 2013), or because they expect that political machines fulfil their requests (Nichter & Peress, 2017), the level of citizen initiated contact with MPs has remained stable over the past two decades (Krönke & Kakumba, 2022b, 2022a).

Despite this long-term stability of contacting rates, scholars who analyse clientelistic relationships between citizens and MPs often focus on the campaign period arguing that citizen-initiated contact is seasonal, (Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Lindberg, 2003; Nichter, 2014; Nichter & Peress, 2017). This implies that citizen-initiated contact decreases outside the campaign season.

At the same time, however, we know from other contexts that MPs spend a lot of their time on constituency service outside the campaign period (e.g., Bussell (2019)). I probe the seasonality of citizen-initiated contacts with MPs by replicating the earlier analysis in **Chapter 2,** where I traced citizen-party activist contact rates across time within countries. Since the question about contacting MPs was first introduced in Round 2 of Afrobarometer, I can provide a more comprehensive picture than for the citizen-initiated contact with party activists. According to conventional wisdom, we would expect contacting rates between citizens and MPs to be higher when an Afrobarometer survey was conducted within a campaign season, or shortly thereafter. In line with the previous analysis, I count surveys for which fieldwork was completed less than three months prior to such an election or was started less than six months after an election as inside the campaign period.[68]

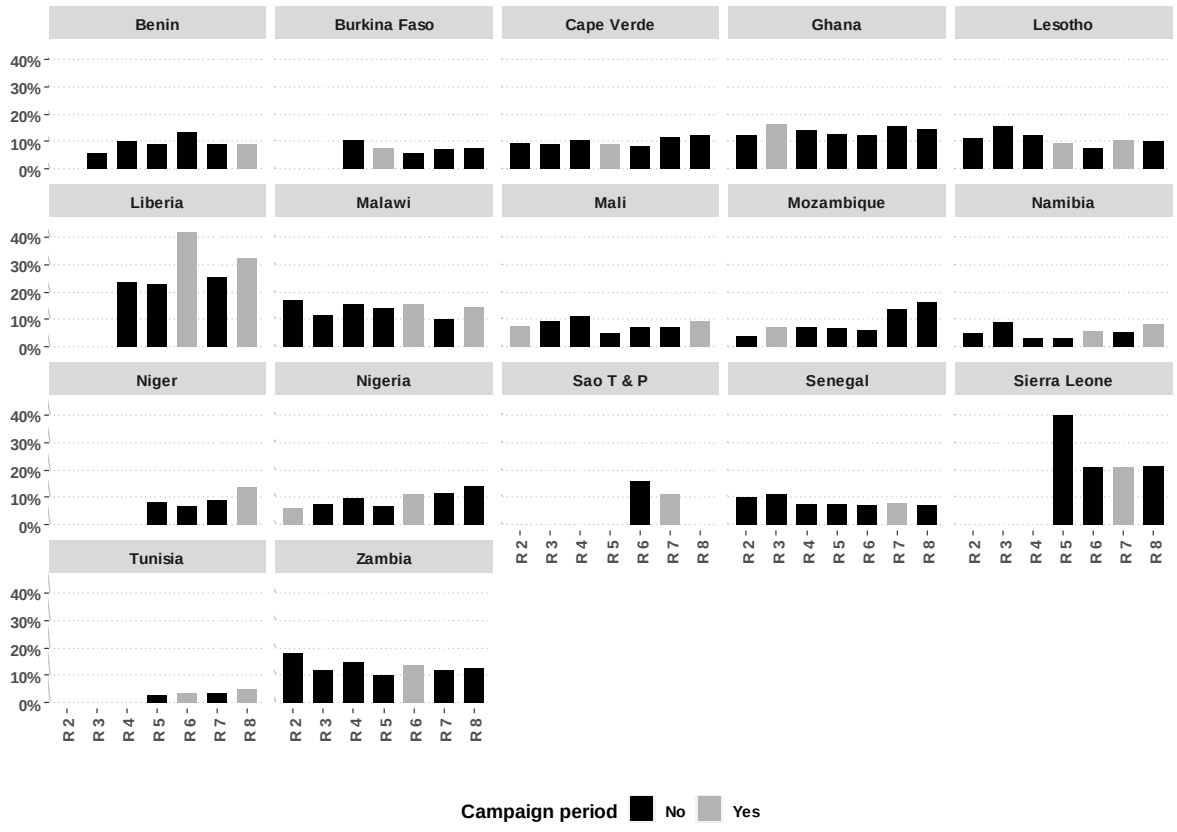
While it is difficult to estimate how much the difference in contact-rates between the campaign period and non-campaign period should be, at a minimum, we would expect it to be higher than the 4% margin of error for any two surveys (+/- 2% for each survey). Even with this generous threshold, there is very little evidence

[68] *I choose this nine-month timeframe around a national election because of the phrasing of the question, which asks about the 12 preceding months. Thus, even if a respondent was interviewed five months after an election, the question about citizen-initiated contact would still refer to the election period.*

suggesting that citizens are more likely to contact MPs during the campaign season (**Figure 5.4**). In fact, only in Liberia and Niger can we observe the anticipated seasonal changes with substantially higher contacting rates during the campaign season. Rather than the expected short-term changes, we see remarkable consistency in contacting rates in some countries (e.g., Cape Verde, Ghana), or longer-term increasing contacting rates (e.g., Nigeria and Mozambique), albeit at different levels.

Taken together, the evidence implies that despite the frequently held assumption that citizens stop engaging with their elected representatives following an election, the data largely do not support this claim. Instead, the over-time trends demonstrate how citizens consistently seek to engage their elected representatives.

Figure 5.4: Citizen-initiated contact with MPs during and between campaign periods | 2020-2021



Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Survey was considered as part of the election period if it was completed three months prior to parliamentary or presidential election, or started 6 months after election for Rounds 2 to 8. Zimbabwe was excluded due to missing data for the survey that took place during the campaign period (Round 3).

5.5.3 Clientelistic bottom-up linkages?

A third stereotype about the citizen-MP relationship is that legislators mainly provide goods and services to citizens through patron-client relationships rather than delivering them on a more programmatic basis. Political scientists have long argued that in the absence of state-provided public goods legislators act as mediators who provide small favours to meet citizens' daily needs in return for political loyalty (Weingrod, 1968), even as the demand for programmatic delivery of goods and services increases (Nathan, 2019).

On the one hand, scholars have provided empirical evidence for this phenomenon during the campaign cycle (Kramon, 2017; Nichter & Peress, 2017; Wantchekon, 2003). Whether as a top-down demonstration of electoral prowess, or as an attempt to fulfil citizen requests, clientelistic exchanges such as "attending to individuals' school fees, electricity and water bills, funeral and wedding expenses" takes on a prominent role in descriptions of citizen-MP relationships (Lindberg, 2003, p. 124).

On the other hand, similar patterns have also been observed between elections. Lindberg reports that a clear majority of Ghanaian MPs "rank personal assistance as 'the thing ordinary constituents hold them accountable for the most'", while they report constituency service to be only the second most common duty for which they are held accountable (Lindberg, 2010, p. 124).

Yet, there is growing evidence that the clientelistic nature of the citizen-MP relationship has received outsized attention. For example, documenting reasons why Ghanaian constituents engaged with their MP, Gyampo finds that while 38% requested financial and non-financial assistance, 56% engaged with their MP to discuss development projects or to discuss proposed /enacted legislation (Gyampo, 2017). Similarly, Mueller (2018) reports that of the citizen requests to Nigerien politicians, 28% of citizens contacted politicians for clientelistic reasons, while 52% of requests were of programmatic nature (and the remaining 20% related to administrative issues).

Even in the electoral arena scholars have provided evidence that challenges the hitherto dominant view. First, while the demand for the provision of clientelistic goods is often taken for granted, Kao and colleagues (2017) find that those who are deemed most vulnerable to clientelism – the poor - are repelled by candidates who promise an immediate exchange of particularistic goods for votes. Instead, the

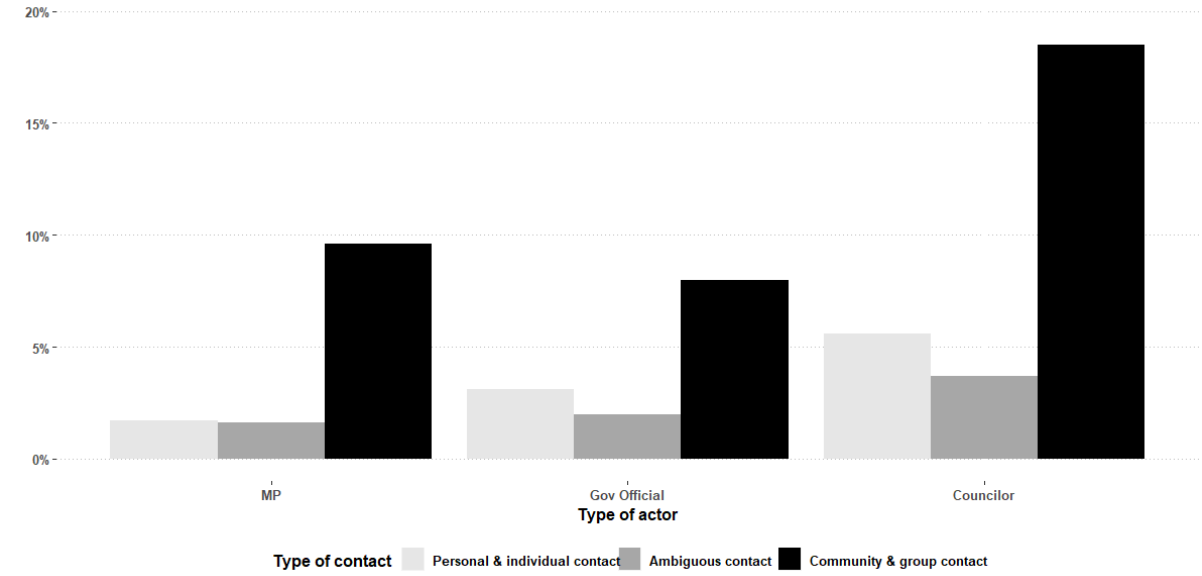
authors find that poor Malawians prefer candidates who promise community goods. Concordant findings from Ghana, Kenya and Zambia show that only a small section of the electorate is decisively influenced by clientelism, and instead voters are more interested in local public goods (Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Young, 2009).

The question of how clientelistic citizen contact with legislators is can also be explored using Afrobarometer data. Building on the analysis in Chapter 2, I tease out different types of contact - clientelist, ambiguous and community driven. In contrast to the previous analysis, however, I rely on data from Round 4 rather than Round 6. This has the advantage that the follow-up questions about the type of contact only refer to three types of actors (local councillors, MPs and government officials), rather than to the larger set described in Chapter 2.[69] Thus, the estimates for the type of contact are likely to be more accurate.[70] These technical differences notwithstanding, the results are remarkably similar for councillors, MPs and government officials across the two datasets (see **Figure 2.2** in Chapter 2).[71] The data suggest that citizens are much more likely to contact any of these three actors regarding a community issue and as part of a group, rather than by themselves and for personal issues (**Figure 5.5**). Across all 20 countries, about 10% of all respondents contacted an MP as part of a larger group about an important community issue. In contrast, only two percent of respondents contacted MPs alone and about personal problems.

Even when breaking down the data by country, the share of potentially clientelistic contact form citizens remains substantially smaller than the community driven requests in all countries but two countries - Cape Verde and Namibia (**Figure 5.6**). Thus, the data do not support the claim that citizen-MP relationships are predominantly clientelistic in nature.

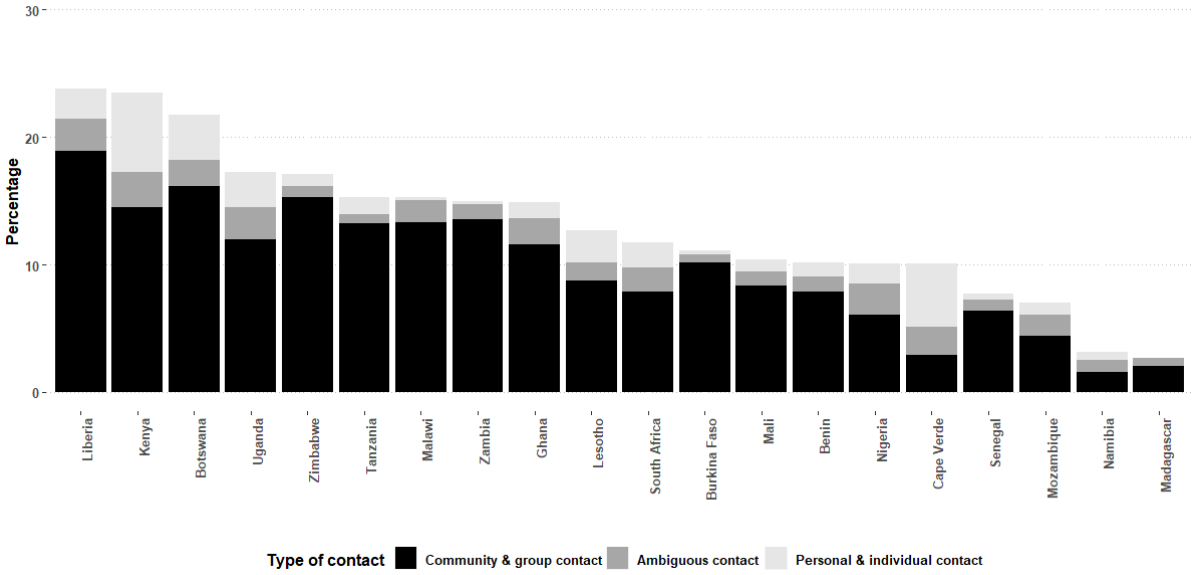
[69] *In Chapter 2 I had to rely on data from Round 6 because citizens were not asked about contact with party officials in Round 4. Round 6 also asked about two additional actors traditional and religious leaders.*
[70] *Like in the previous analysis it is possible that a respondent contacted an MP as well as a Councillor or government official. Given the structure of the survey questions, however, it is impossible to say which official a respondent thinks of when answering the subsequent questions about the type of contact – the MP, Councillor, or bureaucrat. To provide some context to this possible overlap, I compared the combinations of possible contacts. Across all respondents, 6% contacted all three officials; 4% contacted an MP and Councillor; less than 1% contacted an MP and bureaucrat, 3% contacted a Councillor and bureaucrat, 2% only contacted an MP, 13% only contacted a Councillor, 3% only contacted a bureaucrat, while 68% did not contact any of these actors.*
[71] *The fact that the proportion of community driven vs. clientelist contact is consistent between Round 4 and Round 6 provides additional confidence in the results. The variation in absolute contacting rates is due to the additional countries in Round 6 as well as some variation across time in the countries that were surveyed in both rounds.*

Figure 5.5: Citizen initiated contact with local actors | by type of contact | 20 countries | 2008/2009



Source: Afrobarometer.

Figure 5.6: Citizen initiated contact with ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES | by type of contact | 20 countries | 2008/2009



Source: Afrobarometer.

5.6 The role of the electoral system type

For ease of discussion, I have largely sidestepped the role of electoral system type in the connection between citizens and their elected officials so far. Yet, a vast

literature on political participation has demonstrated that the rules through which MPs are elected shape the political participation of citizens as well as the behaviour of legislators (Blais & Dobrzynska, 1998; Bowler & Farrell, 1993; Gosnell, 1930).

In line with the broader scholarship, Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) have shown that all else being equal, voter turnout is lower in African countries with single member electoral systems than in those with proportional representation (PR). Moreover, Lockwood and Krönke (2022) demonstrate that citizens also adjust how they engage with elected representatives between elections.[72] A longitudinal comparison of citizen-initiated contact split by electoral system type provides additional evidence for the proposed difference: citizens in proportional representation (PR) systems are less likely to contact elected representatives than in other systems. This is so because the connection between citizens and elected representatives is clearer, closer, and more responsive in non-PR systems (**Figure 5.7**). Relatedly, Mattes and Mozaffar demonstrate that Africans in PR-systems, particularly those using closed lists with large electoral districts, reduce citizen awareness, participation and valuation of democracy, while Ibrahim and Friesen (2022)show that the size of the constituency matters for citizen initiated contact – individuals in smaller constituencies are more likely to contact their MPs than those in larger constituencies.

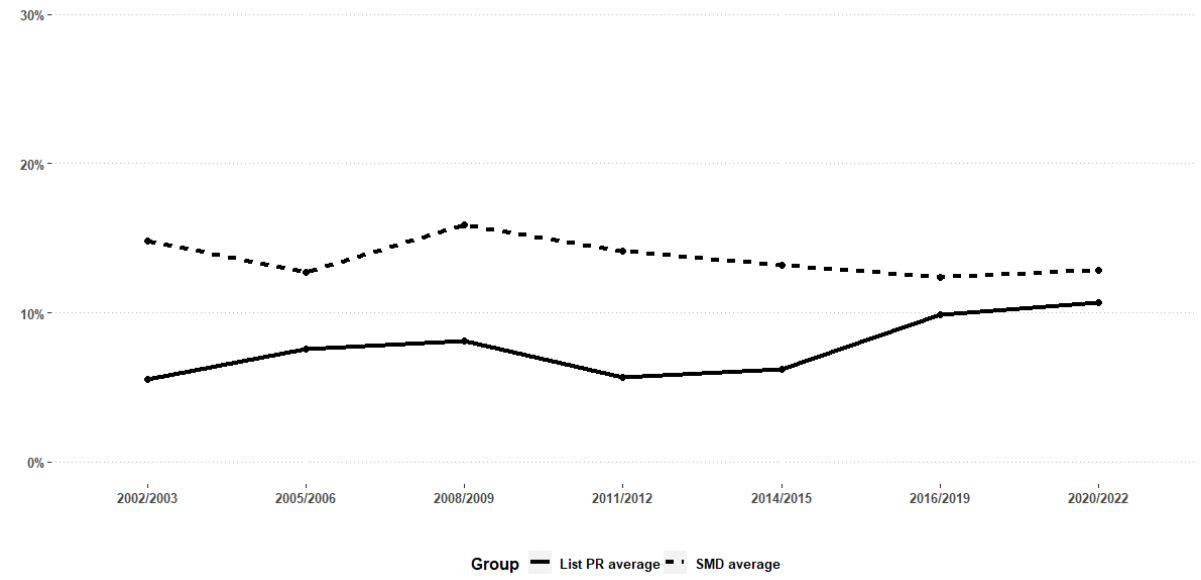
With regards to the attitudes of MPs, Mattes and Mozaffar (2016, p. 209) find that African "MPs who are elected from single-member districts are far more likely to see themselves as 'constituency servants'". Their finding aligns with results from other world regions, suggesting that the electoral rules are the most important predictors of the extent of constituency service in a country (Papp, 2020). There is also a growing literature indicating that close list PR systems (especially with large district magnitude) decrease incentives for MPs to engage in constituency service activities (André & Depauw, 2013; Carey & Shugart, 1995; Crisp & Simoneau, 2018).

How do these findings affect the functioning of the conveyor-belt mechanism? To investigate the impact of the electoral system type for the proposed mechanism, I split my analysis between countries with closed-list PR systems or mixed systems on

[72] *Specifically, they argue that "citizens in PR systems are significantly more likely to protest than those in majoritarian ones, while those in majoritarian systems are more likely to contact elected representatives. This is because the connection between citizens and representatives in majoritarian systems is clearer, closer, and more responsive, making contact an effective strategy and providing an efficient "safety valve" when citizens want to hold their government accountable" (Lockwood & Krönke, 2022, p. 583)*

the one hand, and those who employ a single-member district system on the other. This is justified, given that both the Africa specific literature as well as the wider scholarship document consistent differences between citizens and MPs who operate in closed-list PR systems versus most other systems. Given the data limitations of this study (Afrobarometer and ALP), I conduct separate analyses for countries with single-member districts (Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe) from those with closed-list PR systems and a high district magnitude (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa), as well as mixed systems (Lesotho and Senegal).

Figure 5.7: Citizen initiated contact with MPs split by electoral system type | 2002-2021



Source: Afrobarometer. Note: contact MP at least once. No data for Zimbabwe in Round 3. The increase of List-PR contacting rates is mostly driven by the doubling of contacting rates in Mozambique among a small sample of five PR countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa).

5.7 MPs and citizen engagement in Africa: Summary

The introductory chapter to **Part II** started by providing a conceptual framework through which we can understand why and how elected representatives can contribute to citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery. MPs complement, oversee, and support the efforts of party activists to increase citizen satisfaction by taking on the roles of high-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors. Their focus on these roles is driven by the need to engage in constituency service to build a positive reputation in their home district that helps them with their immediate goal – re-election – as well as their more distant goals – the pursuit of material and non-

material goals. Additionally, this chapter previewed the different incentives based on the electoral system type, which will be explored further in subsequent chapter.

This chapter also provided important empirical groundwork for subsequent analyses. I demonstrated that Africans demand that their MPs prioritise representation and constituency work, and that the latter at least partially meet this need. Further, I showed that citizens frequently contact their elected representatives; and contrary to the conventional wisdom of the literature, they do so consistently during and between campaign periods. Lastly, I provided data that challenges another commonly held believe in the literature. That is, citizens predominantly engage with MPs over community issues, rather than to extract clientelistic goods and services. The next chapter provides detailed case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia about how MPs fulfil their conveyor-belt related roles as problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors, before testing the second main hypothesis - the role of MPs in the conveyor-belt mechanism - from the MPs' and citizens' perspectives in the two subsequent chapters (Chapters 7 and 8).

Chapter 6: The connections of MPs

6.1 Introduction

As high-level ambassadors, advocates, and problem solvers, MPs develop various connections with citizens, party members, as well as bureaucrats. And while these roles are frequently ascribed to elected representatives in the Global North, their counterparts in the Global South are usually described as politicians who maintain patronage networks to keep them in power. In the previous chapter, however, I challenged the literature's focus on the exchange of clientelistic goods and services by suggesting that African MPs behave much more similar to their colleagues in the Global North than the literature would suggest.

In this chapter, I return to the Malawian and Zambian case studies to provide empirical evidence for my claims. Each of the subsequent three sections provides survey evidence of the vertical connections MPs have with citizens and party members, as well as their horizontal connections with government bureaucrats (**Table 6.1**). To study these dyads, I combine new evidence from the Malawi MP survey, with additional data from the three surveys I used to describe party activists' connections in Chapter 3. After demonstrating the plausibility of each of the three conveyor-belt related roles, in this chapter, I return to testing MPs' contribution to citizens' satisfaction with service delivery cross-nationally in the two final empirical chapters.

Table 6.1: Primary type of MP activity as part of Conveyor Belt Mechanism

Type of role	Type of connection	Dyad	Case study
Problem solver	Vertical	MPs – *Citizen*	Zambia
	Horizontal	MPs – *Bureaucratic elite*	Malawi
Advocate	Vertical	MPs – Citizens	Malawi
	Vertical	MPs - Party activists & *elite*	Malawi
	Horizontal	MPs – Bureaucratic elite	Malawi
Ambassador	Vertical	MPs – *Citizen*	Zambia

6.2 High-level problem solvers

MPs engage with citizens and bureaucrats to address a wide range of citizens' concerns. For example, as part of their constituency service activities, MPs might hear from citizens about inadequate medical supplies at a local clinic, or overcrowded classrooms in a secondary school somewhere in the constituency (vertical connections). MPs will then often seek out the relevant bureaucrats

themselves, or via one of their staff members or local party activist (horizontal connection). Whether MPs talk to bureaucrats to resolve logistical bottlenecks or allocate parts of their constituency development funds to solve these types of problems, each time they aim to affect real tangible change (see **Figure 5.1**). To reiterate a point made earlier, this role differs from MPs' roles as advocates and ambassadors as they not only transmit information between different actors, but also attempt to improve government service delivery. To be compelling, empirical evidence that MPs frequently take on this role, would need to demonstrate at least two things. First, citizens should see MPs as capable problem solvers. And thus, see value in approaching MPs, rather than just contacting bureaucrats, or other intermediaries. Second, the evidence would show that MPs use their position to show that MPs use their position in the constituency to improve the functioning of community and household level services in their constituency.

6.2.1 The Vertical Connection of Zambian MPs as Problem Solvers

MPs are not the only port of call for dissatisfied citizens. Although most Africans say that the managing of schools and health clinics is the responsibility of central and local government, they also approach traditional leaders when seeking improvements to service delivery (Logan, 2013). Indeed, as Baldwin has demonstrated in the Zambian context, traditional leaders often act as development brokers, co-producing public goods with elected representatives (Baldwin, 2015). Additionally, recent Afrobarometer data confirm that most Zambians view traditional leaders as influential stakeholders for local governance,[73] with two-thirds of Zambians saying that traditional leaders mostly look out for what is best for the people in their communities (66%), rather than for their own interests (16%), or those of politicians and government officials (11%). So, how valuable are MPs as problem solvers?

The important role of traditional leaders notwithstanding, citizens expect their elected representative to listen to their concerns. From previous analysis we know that citizens contact MPs at roughly similar rates as government officials and other party representatives. Additional analysis of the Afrobarometer Round 6 data also

[73] *In the 2021 Afrobarometer survey in Zambia 55% of respondents said that traditional leaders have "a lot" of influence when it comes to governing their local community, while an additional 14% said that they have "some" influence.*
In a separate question, citizens were asked if the influence traditional leaders have in governing the respondent's local community should increase, stay the same, or decrease? 35% of respondents said that it should "increased al lot", while a further 14% said that it should "increased somewhat".

shows that most Africans who approached a bureaucrat, also approached a party activist or elected representative to tell them about an issue that is important to them.[74] This, then, begs the question of who citizens see as the most capable problem solver? To answer this question, we return to the Zambian case study.

In Round 2 of the Zambia Citizen Panel survey, we asked respondents the following question:

> *How likely are each of the following to help members in this constituency solve a service delivery problem such as overcrowded classrooms, or hiring more nurses?*

We asked citizens to evaluate 1) ruling (PF) and opposition (UPND) party activists, 2) their MP, 3) local bureaucrats, and 4) a local chief or headman. Each respondent could choose between "not likely" (0), "somewhat likely" (1) and, "very likely" (2).

As can be seen in column 3 in **Table 6.2**, on average respondents are somewhat likely to say that their MP (1.15) will be able to help them with service delivery issues; and local bureaucrats (1.04) and traditional leaders (0.92) are seen as similarly likely to solve these types of issues. In comparison, party activists – and especially those from the opposition - are seen as less capable problem solvers by citizens. Although several studies have found an incumbency advantage in the distribution of these types of resources, citizens in ruling and opposition party strongholds are almost equally as likely to see MPs as problem solvers (1.23 vs. 1.07). Therefore, and when read together with the results on the frequency and type of citizen-initiated contact with MPs in Chapters 3 & 5, citizens see MPs as capable and frequently sought-after problem solvers, on par with local bureaucrats.

The survey results also provide additional valuable insight regarding the role of party activists as problem solvers. While citizens' evaluations of bureaucrats, traditional leaders, and UPND party activists are fairly similar, we see more variation for PF party activists. In PF strongholds, the latter are seen as equally likely to resolve community-level service problems as chiefs or headmen in other constituencies. This provides additional piece ofevidence for the Conveyor Belt mechanism at the party-activist level (**H1**).

---

[74] For example, when categorising the citizen-initiated contact from Round 6 into three groups (party representatives, local notables [religious and traditional leaders], and government officials), we find that across all respondents, 10% contacted someone from each group; 18% contacted a representative from two of the three groups; 27% contacted actors from only one group, while 45% did not contact any of these actors.

Table 6.2: Likelihood of solving community problem | by type of actor

Type of Actor	Min - Max	Average score	Type of constituency		
			PF stronghold	*UPND stronghold*	*Swing*
Party activist (PF)	0-2	**.67**	.86	.48	.59
Party activist (UPND)	0-2	**.55**	.57	.51	.53
MP of constituency	0-2	**1.15**	1.23	1.07	1.09
Local bureaucrat	0-2	**1.04**	1.16	.94	.97
Chief / headman	0-2	**.92**	1.04	.84	.83

Source: ZEPS. Note: DK = excluded

6.2.2 The horizontal connection of Malawian MPs as problem solvers.

As mentioned at the outset of this section, if MPs are really problem solvers, we should observe that, they use their position in the constituency to improve the functioning of community and household level services in their constituency.

In many instances it is difficult for researchers to quantify an MP's contribution, let alone determine if their impact is meaningful, or not. For example, would the department of education have built the additional classroom at a local school, or reduced teacher absenteeism in any case, or did the additional time and resources an MP allocated to these issues make a difference? And if it made a difference for the building of new infrastructure, can we assume that their influence is similar when it comes to the maintenance of buildings, or the training of staff?

With these limitations in mind, I make use of the Bureaucratic Elite survey I conducted in Malawi. In Chapter 3 we learned that Malawian bureaucrats spend a non-trivial amount of time meeting with elected representatives, primarily inquiring about community issues and requesting updates on government projects and programmes. When asked for the proportion of time to a range of functions, Malawian district-level bureaucrats said they spent an average of 63% of their time on admin work, 13% on meeting with other bureaucrats , and engaging with citizens (12%), they also regularly receive elected representatives (2%) in their office, at a rate similar to representatives from the private sector (2%), as well as chiefs and headmen (4%). At first sight, the time spent with MPs might seem little. However, in the case of MPs, there are, on average, only seven MPs in each district. In

comparison, the average number of traditional leaders and private sector representatives is much higher (e.g., 825 village headmen and 143 group village headmen per district), yet district-level bureaucrats spend similar amounts of time with each group.[75] Moreover, it is important to remember that Malawian MPs also participate in the District Council meetings, in which both MPs and district-level bureaucrats from the different departments are present. These are additional opportunities for MPs and bureaucrats to discuss and resolve service delivery issues.

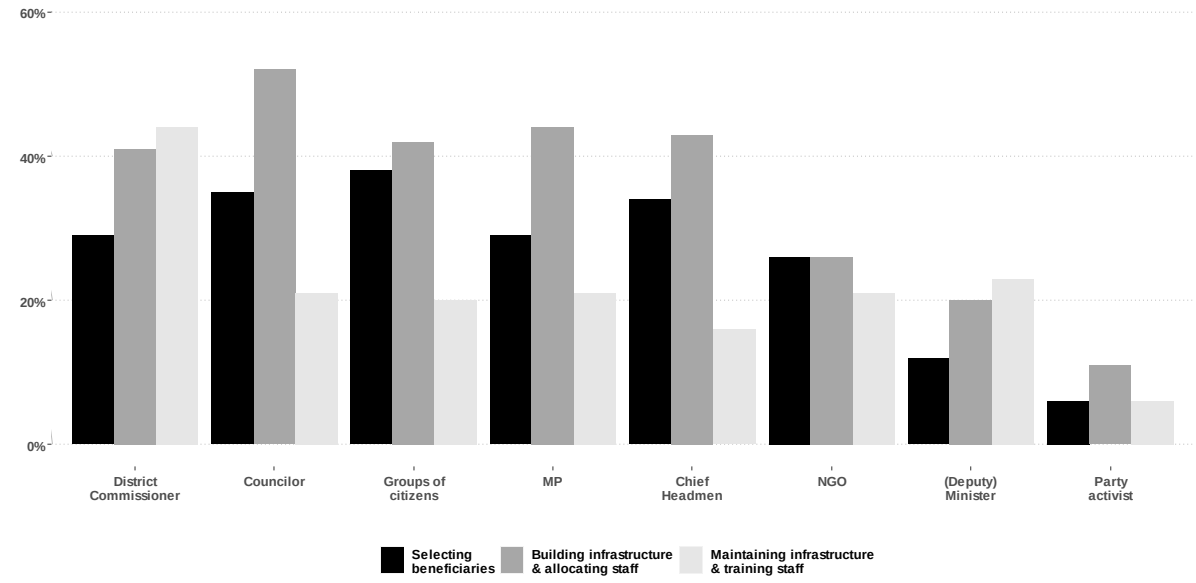
Taken together, then, there are good reasons to believe that MPs' regular engagement with district-level bureaucrats, and their financial resources such as their community development funds (CDFs) translate into meaningful influence when it comes to the distribution of public services. Indeed, this is also borne out in the data. In a separate battery of questions, I asked bureaucrats to evaluate how influential eight different stakeholders are when it comes to different aspects of government projects and programmes: 1) selecting beneficiaries, recipients or locations; 2) building new infrastructure, or allocating new staff (e.g., schools, clinics, taps); and 3) maintaining existing infrastructure, or train and discipline current staff (e.g., teachers, nurses, engineers, etc.). Unsurprisingly, District Commissioners – the highest politically appointed actors in a district - are the most influential actors overall, followed by local councillors and groups of citizens (**Figure 6.1**, actors listed in descending order of overall influence). MPs are the fourth most influential stakeholders. Three out of 10 (29%) bureaucrats said that MPs have "some" or "a lot" of influence when it comes to selecting beneficiaries or locations, while 44% said the same regarding the building of new infrastructure or employing of new staff, and 21% said that MPs are influential regarding the maintenance of service delivery infrastructure and training of staff.

When it comes to securing funds for projects and programmes related to service deliver in the district, a slightly different picture emerges (**Figure 6.2**). While District Commissioners (67%) remain the most influential actors, MPs (46%) are now the

[75] *In the seven-level hierarchy of traditional leaders in Malawi, there are approximately 23000 village headmen, 4000 group village headmen, 264 traditional authorities, and 6 paramount chiefs in Malawi (listed in ascending order of power) (Carlson & Seim, 2020). Malawians often refer to village headmen when they make reference to 'chiefs'.*

second most important stakeholder, slightly above bureaucrats[76] (43%), and local councillors (42%).[77]

Figure 6.1: Influence of different actors regarding delivery of government projects and programmes

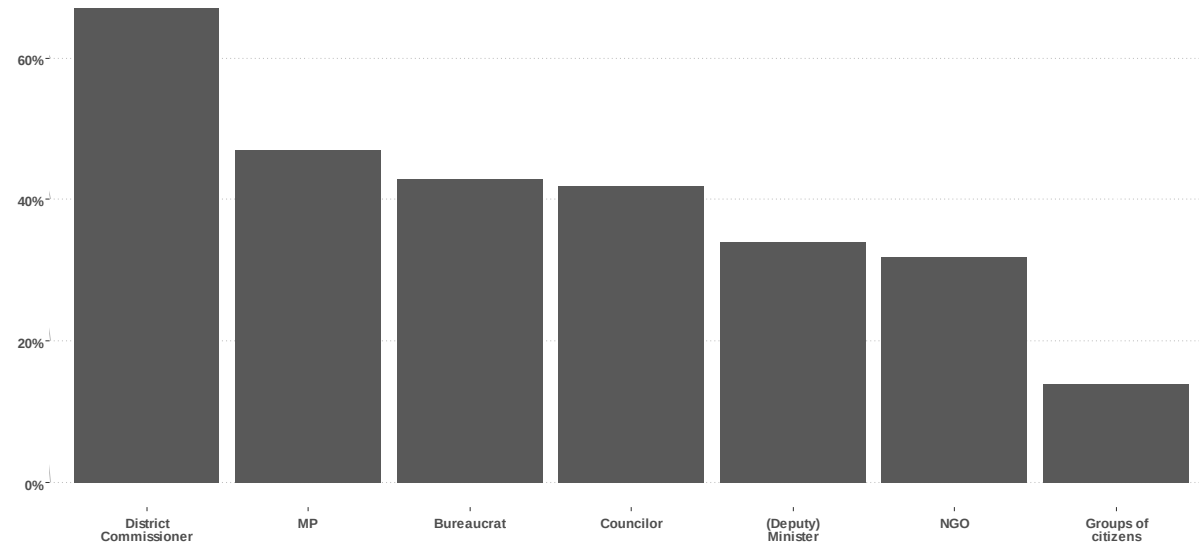


Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey

In sum, the survey evidence presented here not only suggests that citizens see MPs as capable problem solvers (Zambia case study), but also that MPs have considerable influence along various stages of the service delivery process ranging from the sourcing of funds to the selection of beneficiaries, as well as the implementation of projects and the maintaining of government programmes (Malawi case study). Though not explicitly tested here, other scholars have also found that the allocation of these projects is not primarily driven by a logic of clientelistic transfers for political supporters, but rather a complex electoral geography (e.g., Harris & Posner 2019) and politicians' broader knowledge of their constituency (e.g., Jablonski & Seim 2023). MPs (as well as local councillors), then, can be considered as capable and active problem solvers who form part of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

[76] *Here, survey respondents were asked about their peers - "bureaucrats like them".*
[77] *Due to questionnaire constraints, the survey did not ask bureaucrats to evaluate traditional leaders and party activists.*

Figure 6.2: Influence of different actors regarding the securing of funds for the district



Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey

6.3 High-level advocates

The second role that MPs frequently take on is that of high-level advocates. Whether through personal contact, or via intermediaries (e.g., constituency staff, or party activists), many MPs develop a set of constituency priorities for which they advocate when engaging with other party officials and bureaucrats. More specifically, this role requires MPs to develop three types of connections. First, vertical connections with citizens. These are external to the party organisation. Second, MPs develop vertical intra-party connections with party activists (downward) and party leadership (upward). To a lesser extent, MPs also develop horizontal connections with bureaucrats to put certain issues on a medium-, or longer-term developmental agenda. Thus, this role is different to solving more immediate issues through material improvements as part of their problem solver role. Having presented data on the connections between MPs and bureaucrats in the previous section, the remainder of this section provides empirical evidence for the other two connections.

6.3.1 Malawian MPs' external vertical connections

The cross-country comparisons in Chapters 3 & 5 have demonstrated that citizens regularly approach elected officials to voice their grievances. The first important step in demonstrating the transmission of grievances from citizens via MPs to other stakeholders is then to show that MPs translate these grievances into policy priorities

for their constituencies. To look at this process from the MP perspective, I make use of the MP Survey conducted by the GLD in Malawi in 2021/2022.

Surveying 71% of sitting MPs (137 of 193 MPs), the GLD asked legislators how many demands they face from their constituents to take different actions. For each of the actions, they were asked to indicate whether "almost no" (0), "a few" (1), "some" (2), or "many" (3) constituents demand assistance. The first two types of issues in this set of questions – infrastructural services and complaints about government – are integral to the Conveyor Belt mechanism, while the others (job creation) are part of constituency service more broadly, as well as MPs' other tasks. **Table 6.3** clearly shows that MPs regularly face demands from citizens that are anticipated by the Conveyor Belt mechanism (2.8 and 2.1 out of 3 respectively).

Table 6.3: Demands from constituents to MPs

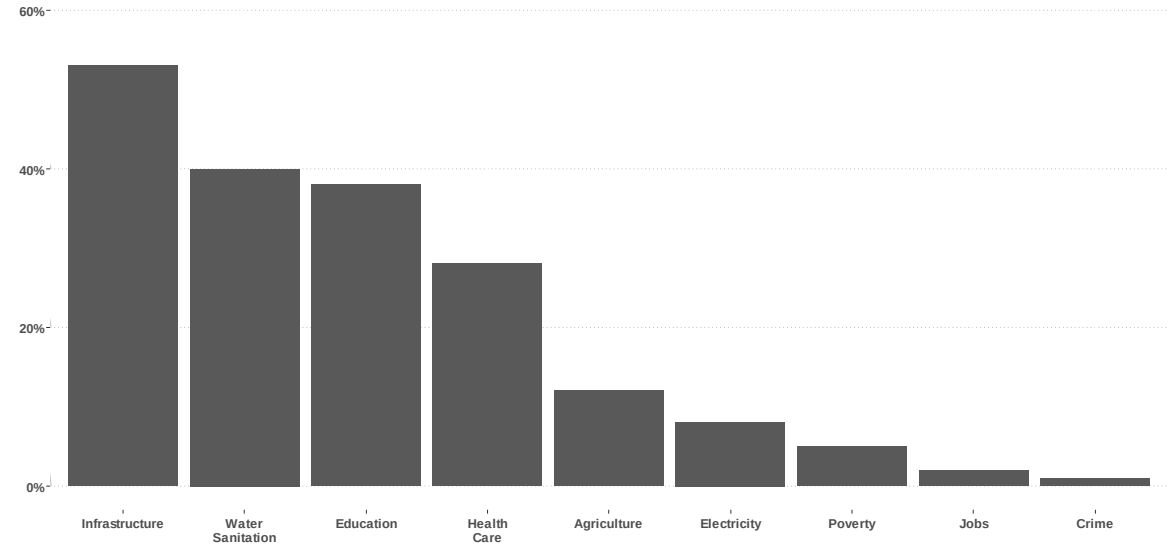
Question	Min-Max	Average
Infrastructural services (e.g., roads, education, health)	0-3	2.8
Complaints about the government	0-3	2.1
Personal problem	0-3	2.8
Jobs-creating investment in the constituency	0-3	2.4
New laws	0-3	1.2

Source: Malawi MP Survey; Note: N=137. Respondents were asked: I'd like to understand how much you face demands from your constituents, to take different actions. For each of the following, please tell me if many, some, a few or no constituents demand your assistance….? 0=None; 1=A few; 2=Some; 3=Many.

Faced with various demands to improve government performance, the next question is which issues legislators prioritise. If my theory, MPs should prioritise on community- over household-level services when advocating on behalf of their constituents in other political arenas such as in party committees, or meetings with bureaucrats. A separate set of questions in the MP survey allows us to observe this process (**Figure 6.3**). When asked about the two most important issues in their constituency, MPs mentioned education (38%) and health care (28%)., this is much higher than one of the household-level services – electricity (8%). The 20 and 30 percentage point-gap between electricity and the community-level services is even more remarkable when considering that only 15% of Malawians had access to electricity in 2020 (World Bank). Given the importance of electricity in people's everyday lives (e.g., to connect a fridge, switch on lights at night, or connect other appliances), it is reasonable to assume that MPs focus more on electricity. However, this is not the case.

A large share of MPs also indicated that they prioritise water and sanitation (40%). Though this is somewhat contradictory to the expectations stipulated earlier, it can at least partly be explained by the fact that in Malawi water is mostly accessible and used through community-level boreholes or tube wells, rather than at the household level. In fact, according to Round 8 of the Afrobarometer survey (2019/2021), only 9% of Malawians have household-level water connections (9%) - the third lowest share of across 34 countries – while 88% of Malawians have a borehole or tubewell in their neighbourhood.[78] Under these conditions, it is to be expected that the service is prioritised more like a community-level service.

Figure 6.3: Constituency issues MPs prioritise



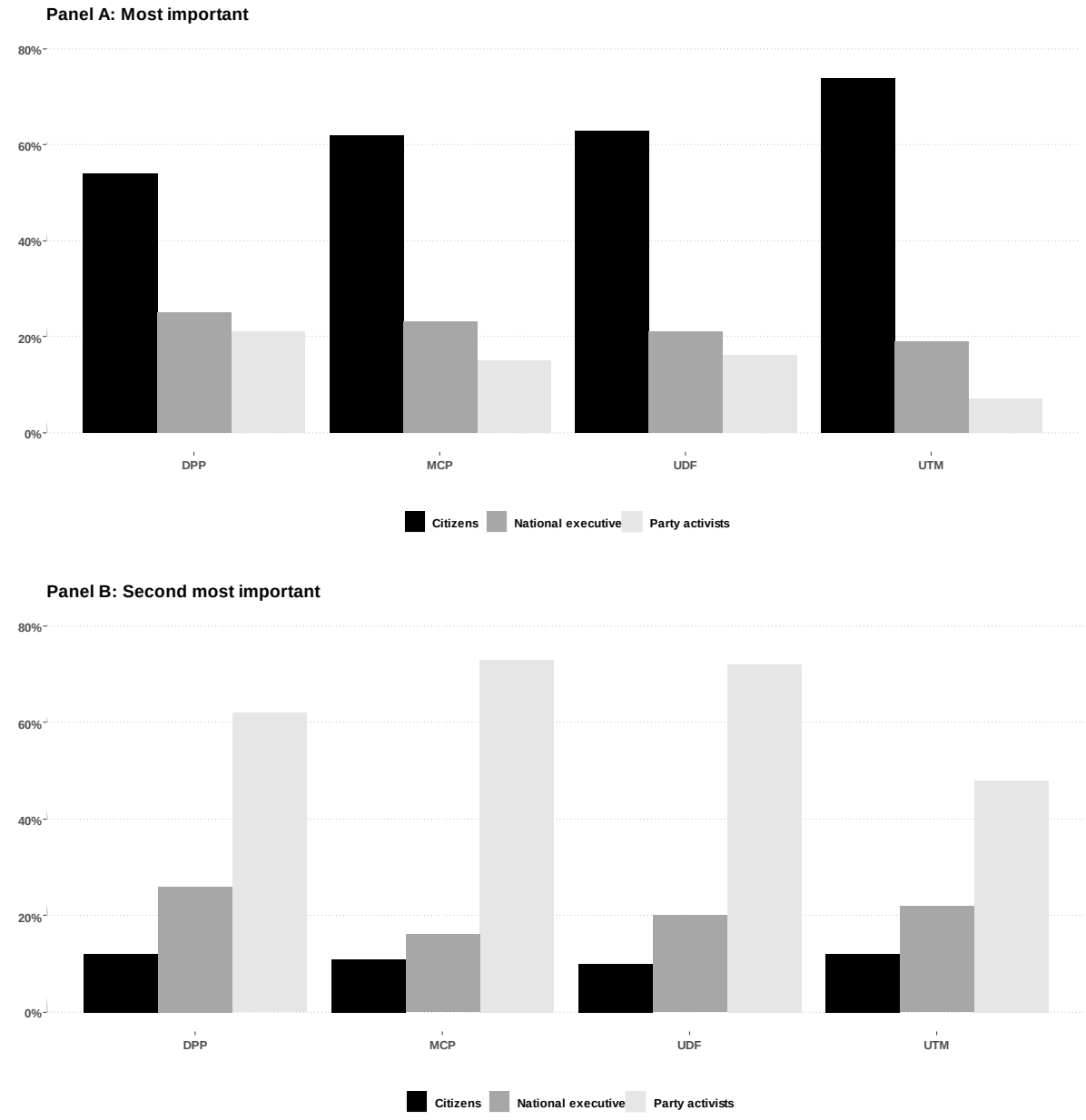
Source: Malawi MP Survey

How do political parties develop solutions to the issues they prioritise? Who do they have in mind when developing new policies and programmes? Do they listen to what citizens propose, or do MPs primarily follow the directives of their party leadership? To further probe the flow of information from citizens to party representatives, I take advantage of a question in the Party Elite survey. I asked district-level party representatives to rank the influence of 1) citizens, 2) party activists, and 3) their party's national executive committee when developing a

[78] *In contrast, 34-country average is 39%, and seven countries have at least a 75% connection rate at the household level: Mauritius (100%), Botswana (86%), Tunisia (84%), Morocco (80%), South Africa (80%), Senegal (76%), and Cabo Verde (76%).*

response to basic service delivery issues. The results are unambiguous. Irrespective of party affiliation, a majority of respondents rank the views of citizens as most important, ranging from 54% among DPP MPs to 74% of UTM respondents (**Figure 6.4**, **Panel A**). party activists are the second most important group (**Panel B**). Although this survey question does not specifically refer to MPs, the results corroborate the bottom-up flow of information from citizens to party representatives.

Figure 6.4: Ranking the importance of actors for party elites when developing the party's response to basic service delivery issues | split by party



Source: Malawi Party Elite Survey.

6.3.2 Malawian parties' internal vertical connections

A key part of the Conveyor Belt mechanism hinges on the intra-party connections between different party representatives. This is especially true for MPs (and party activists) in their role advocates. In Chapter 3, I mapped out the frequency and type of some of these vertical connections. For example, the Party Elite Survey (PES) data revealed that district-level party representatives spend about a quarter of their time meeting with party activists, another 2% meeting with the party leadership, and a further 5% with elected representatives. Further, virtually all requests from MPs to party elites focused on the exchange of information about community issues. These patterns were consistent across all four major parties.

To emphasize that the connections between party activists, MPs and party elites are not merely informal and/or infrequent, I bring additional evidence from the Malawian Party Elite survey to bear. In the survey, we asked district-level representatives how often they attended meetings of different party structures ranging from regional committee (the largest sub-national unit in Malawi) to branch and ward committee meetings (**Table 6.4**).

Table 6.4: Attendance of committee meetings by district-level party representatives per month | by party affiliation

	Committee	Average	MCP	DPP	UDF	UTM
Frequency of participation per month (District representatives)	Regional	.2	.2	.2	.2	.3
	District	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.5
	Constituency	1.1	1	1	.7	1.4
	Branch/Ward	.7	.5	.7	.5	1.1
Total number of attendees per meeting	Regional	16	18	14	20	15
	District	45	42	55	43	36
	Constituency	35	34	41	37	29
	Branch/Ward	27	25	31	31	25

Source: Party Elite Survey; Note: Respondents were asked: How often do you attend meetings of the following party structures?

As one might expect given logistical challenges, respondents attended only very few regional committee meetings (ca. 0.2/month). In contrast, they attended at least one district and constituency meeting (1.4 and 1.1 respectively), and up to one branch/ward meeting per month. What is more, apart from regional committee meetings, all meetings have large numbers of participants ranging from 27 to 45 attendees on average. Although I only have data showing how often district elites participate in these meetings, and thus, I am unable to capture how often each of the meetings take place without them, the data suggest a regular and structured exchange of information between party representatives from different levels.

The frequency and size of these meetings, combined with the fact that MPs and party elites primarily talk about ongoing or new government service projects and related party policies (see Chapter 3), as well as party activists' crucial role in the development of the party's response to service delivery issues, suggests that parties have roust intra-party linkages. Put differently, these vertical intra-party connections allow MPs (and party activists) to regularly advocate on behalf of citizens in different political arenas.

6.4 High-level ambassadors

Whether they talk about how many constituents they helped in the past as problem solvers or deliver a campaign speech in which they announce the party's plans to hire more teachers, MPs act as high-level ambassadors making the democratic process legible for citizens. To use the terminology of the Conveyor Belt mechanism: Elected representatives disseminate information about basic service delivery to citizens (vertical connection). This type of communication requires at least a modicum of programmatic politics - something that is unlikely to occur according to the prevailing wisdom in the Africanist literature, which often views politicians' policy proposals as valence discourses (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013). Along with several recent studies that have highlighted salient programmatic cleavages between parties in Africa for various issues (e.g., Saidou & Bertrand (2022); Greene and Rauschenbach (2018); Hallink and Siachiwena (2023)), I add to this nascent literature by 1) demonstrating that citizens seek out policy related information from party representatives on the campaign trail, and 2) illustrating the variation in issue salience in line with the predictions of the Conveyor Belt mechanism. I using survey evidence from both Zambia and Malawi. First, I show that a large motivating factor for citizens to attend campaign rallies is to hear news and gain new information. Second, because elected representatives frequently participate in rallies during campaign periods, they have ample opportunity to act as ambassadors. Third, while parties use campaign events to develop distinct party brands, they regularly focus on community-level government services.

6.4.1 Zambia: Are people interested in the messages of ambassadors?

Are citizens interested in what party representatives have to say at campaign events? Citizens attend campaign events for different reasons. Some are interested in what the candidates have to say, while others attend rallies because it is a social event where they can catch up with friends, collect a t-shirt or get free food. Some

might even go because they fear that their absence would lead others to think poorly of them. And while most citizens probably go for more than one reason, I am particularly interested in whether citizens attended a campaign rally at least partly because they want to hear news and gain new information from party representatives. The results in **Table 6.5** show that nine out of ten respondents who went to a rally during the 2021 campaign period in Zambia, did so because they sought out new information.[79] Put simply, Zambian MP and councillor candidates encountered captive audiences when they spoke on the campaign trail in 2021.

Table 6.5: Reasons why citizens attend campaign rallies

Party	Attend the campaign rally at least partly because…	Average score
PF	*Hear news and gain information*	*88%*
	Enjoy the event and company of others	60%
	Get goodies and gifts, or other material rewards (respondent, or their household)	32%
	Others will think poorly of you / your household if you don't participate	11%
	Have to pay fines, lose property or suffer other material loss or be physically punished if not attending	4%
UPND	*Hear news and gain information*	*91%*
	Enjoy the event and company of others	63%
	Get goodies and gifts, or other material rewards (respondent, or their household)	28%
	Others will think poorly of you / your household if you don't participate	10%
	Have to pay fines, lose property or suffer other material loss or be physically punished if not attending	4%

Source: ZEPS

6.4.2 Identifying ambassadors during the campaign period

The campaign period for Zambia's general election lasted for about three months and officially started on 15 May 2021. And in many ways, this campaign season was unusual. In a more repressive political environment than before, the police often used excessive force with impunity when engaging with opposition supporters, while COVID-19 related campaign restrictions were applied selectively to limit opposition rallies (Ahmed, 2021; Amnesty International, 2021; du Plessis, 2021). Nevertheless, both major political parties – the then ruling PF and opposition UPND - conducted a sizable number of election campaign rallies. According to the ZEPS survey, respondents reported that on average the PF organised 3.6 public rallies in their neighbourhood/close to their village, while the UPND managed to organise an

[79] *Given the phrasing of the question, it is likely that a certain percentage of respondents agreed with the statement because it was socially desirable. Nevertheless, even if this was the case for about half of those respondents, it would still be the second most common reason for attending a rally.*

average of 2.3 public rallies.[80] When asked whether they attended any of these rallies, the mean response among all respondents was 1.2 for PF rallies and 1.1 for UPND rallies. However, the median response was zero for both, suggesting that not every respondent went to one rally of each, but rather that a significant share of respondents attended more than one rally, while others attended none. Nevertheless, these numbers suggest an active and publicly engaged campaign period despite the above-mentioned constraints.

Did MP candidates use these opportunities to engage with potential voters? The survey data presented in **Table 6.6** suggests that this was the case. Across the board, at least three quarter of rally attendees said that the MP and local councillor candidates were present during at least one of the rallies respondents attended. This means that MP candidates had ample opportunity to act in their roles as ambassadors and speak about the issues they think resonate most with (prospective) constituents.

Table 6.6: Type of party ambassadors at campaign rallies

Party	Type of Actor at campaign	Average score
PF	Presidential candidate attending	19%
	MP candidate attending	80%
	Local councillor candidate attending	74%
UPND	Presidential candidate attending	21%
	MP candidate attending	77%
	Local councillor candidate attending	76%

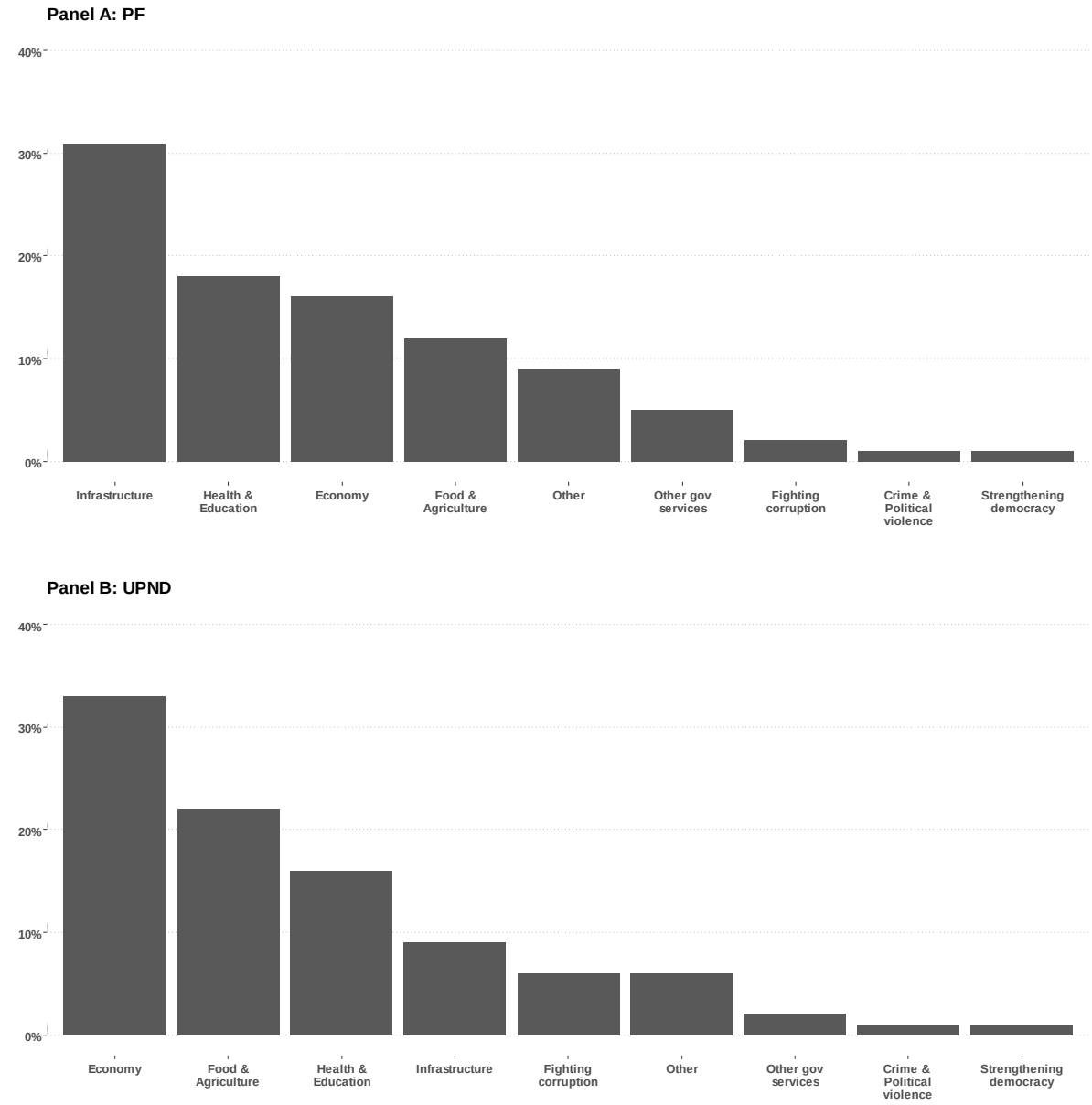
Source: ZEPS

6.4.3 Zambia: What are the key messages of the ambassadors?

How much of what MPs convey during local rallies do citizens remember? While some studies have employed experimental designs to learn more about how policy-centred debates shape citizens' views of candidates (Brierley et al., 2020) it is difficult to capture this at a large scale. However, the ZEPS survey allows us to describe citizens' broader perceptions of parties' campaign messages and how they map on to citizens' priorities.

[80] *Three caveats apply to these estimates. First, though the survey is based on an initially random sample, the survey itself is not a nationally representative survey (see Chapter 1). Second, the answer options were such that respondents could choose between one to five rallies, or "more than five" as an answer. Lastly, citizens might not be aware of all rallies that were organised in their neighbourhood. Thus, the estimates could be slightly higher.*

Figure 6.5: Citizen perceptions of issue salience for PF and UPND



Source: ZEPS Survey

When asked what the most important problem is that Zambia faces, a clear majority (57%) mentioned the economy and 18% mentioned health care. In contrast, far fewer mentioned agriculture (10%) and infrastructure (5%) as the country's main challenge (Seekings et al., 2021). Although the parties did not do an equally good job at addressing citizens' top priority, both were consistent in addressing community-level services. When asked what the two most important messages were the PF and UPND emphasized throughout the campaign, we can see that the PF is seen to focus most on infrastructure development (31%), as well as the delivery of health care and education (18%) (**Figure 6.5, Panel A**). On the other hand, citizens

identified the management of the economy (33%) and issues related to food and agriculture (22%) as the top two messages of the UPND, with health care and education coming in third (16%) (**Figure 6.5, Panel B**). Thus, although the UPND did a far better job at communicating their stance on the most pressing issue – the economy – both parties did equally well in addressing issues related to community-level services. Meanwhile, neither party had a noticeable message on electricity, water and sanitation (other government services).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the ways in which MPs connect with citizens, other party members, as well as bureaucrats. Through the case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia, I demonstrate that MPs frequently take on the roles of high-level problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors. Moreover, the data also show that MPs regularly engage with party activists over issues related to basic service delivery. These opportunities to exchange information have meaningful implications. For example, Jablonski and Seim (2023) have shown in the case of Malawi, better informed politicians are more likely to allocate resources to schools neglected by donors and those with greater need.

Having demonstrated that MPs take on conveyor belt related tasks, the next chapter focuses on why MPs decide to do so, and whether it makes a difference to citizens satisfaction with service delivery.

Chapter 7: MPs and basic service delivery across Africa: MP perspective

7.1 Introduction

Under what conditions do legislators increase citizen satisfaction with basic government service delivery? According to my theory, MPs' election seeking behaviour should nudge them to optimize their time towards meeting citizens' needs. There are systematic differences in how legislators allocate their time. While some MPs focus on their home districts, only a subset of these spend most of their time checking up on local development projects and engaging with constituents' demands both in person and with the help of local party structures. In contrast, others frequently return to their constituencies and rather focus on other work. A third group of MPs spends most of the time outside the constituency engaging primarily in legislating and government oversight. Some of these activities are more in line with those outlined in the conveyor-belt mechanism than others, and thus, we would also expect differences in citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

This chapter continues to unpack the role of MPs in the conveyor-belt mechanism. To date, most scholarship on the MP-citizen relationship has overlooked the systematic unevenness in the presence of MPs in their home districts, how they engage with citizens, and the resulting divergence in citizens' satisfaction with public services in Africa. This chapter contributes to filling this gap by answering the question: *Do more constituency focused and engaged MPs increase citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of basic services?*

The chapter advances the argument that MPs' involvement in the conveyor-belt mechanism varies across countries and to some extent between different public services. Using MP survey data from the African Legislatures Project (ALP), we learn that constituency work is the most valuable task for most legislators across the 17-country sample. The data show that in addition to the electoral incentives nudging MPs to invest time into constituency work, many MPs also find it more rewarding than law-making or exercising executive oversight. Building on the theoretical model in Chapter 5, I show that legislators not only see the delivery of basic services as a government priority over many other pressing issues, but that MPs across the continent also vary in their efforts to address service delivery issues through

conveyor-belt activities. Next, this chapter introduces country-level evidence corroborating that MPs' shape citizen satisfaction with service delivery (confirming **H 2a**). Further, I show that this relationship is mediated by the electoral system type of a country (confirming **H 2c**). The chapter closes with an investigation into which legislators are more likely to spend time in their constituency, and become high-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors.

7.2 The centrality of Constituency work

The previously mentioned underlying assumption of the MP-citizen connection is that MPs view their work in the constituency as essential to their election prospects so they can pursue their material and non-material goals. The centrality of constituency service is often assumed, yet it is rarely demonstrated empirically in the African context. Although several studies have explored the relationship in single country studies, we know relatively little about African MPs and their motivations for constituency service in a comparative sense (Kim et al., 1984; Mattes & Mozaffar, 2016). As mentioned in Chapter 5, in most of the case studies scholars describe legislators as focused on the distribution of material goods in the constituency (Acheampong, 2021; Ichino & Nathan, 2017; Lindberg, 2010) and their relationships with party members. Using data from the ALP project, I already provided cross-country evidence that legislators prioritise the exchange of information with constituents and the provision of constituency service, though not to the same extent as citizens (see **Figure 5.3**). First, I illustrate this using legislators' attitudes. The next section provides additional insights into MPs attitudes and behaviours.

Beyond their general level of interest in constituents' views, MPs were also asked about possible electoral consequences if they were to ignore constituents' opinions. Here, an overwhelming majority of 80% said that an MP would "probably" or "definitely" lose their seat in the next election should they ignore constituents' opinions. Importantly, this believe is held universally among MPs, irrespective of their personal background, experience as a legislator, or the type of electoral system they operate in.[81] This strong electoral incentive among African MPs provides a partial answer to why MPs focus on constituency work.

[81] *I test this using a fixed-effects OLS regression. The regression included the following variables: MP's demographic characteristics (age, gender, education), their experience in office, whether they belong to the president's party, as well as the electoral system type (SMD vs. other systems), and how close to an election the survey was conducted.*

Studies from the Global North have also highlighted that legislators might prioritize spending time in the constituency because it is more rewarding to engage with citizens than making laws or conducting executive oversight (B. Cain et al., 1987; Norris, 1997; Papp, 2020). The ALP data suggests that this is the case in Africa, too. On average, 51% of MPs said that constituency work is the most rewarding aspect of their job.[82] Although I find no differences between MPs based on demographic factors, their party affiliation, or experience as a legislator, there are some differences based on the electoral system type. In countries with single-member districts (SMDs), 58% of MPs said that constituency work is the most rewarding part of their job, compared to only 40% of respondents in other countries. A possible explanation for this is that the narrower geographic boundaries in SMD systems allows MPs to develop clearer and deeper ties to their constituents, and thus make the exercise more rewarding.

Overall, this survey evidence emphasises that electoral incentives as well as intrinsic motivations nudge MPs towards constituency service. An important related question, then, is whether these attitudes are connected to how MPs allocate their time.

7.3 Reputation Building in the Constituency

Afrobarometer data has taught us that citizens across the continent see constituency service and represent (i.e., listening to them) as the primary responsibility of elected representatives (see Chapter 5). Equally, we have seen that legislators have electoral incentives and are driven by intrinsic motivations to focus on constituency service as much as possible, often at the expense of their other roles. In this section, I make a transition from measuring legislators' attitudes to focusing on their behaviour that increases citizen satisfaction with service delivery in two steps. First, I demonstrate that addressing issues of community and to a lesser extent household-level services is high up on the agenda of legislators. Second, I operationalise the concept of MPs as high-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors for cross-national comparison using the ALP MP survey. I provide data on how much time MPs spend in their constituencies, and to what extent they engage in the type of activities that are part and parcel of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

[82] *For comparison, 10% of MPs said that constituency service is the most important aspect of their job, while 32% mentioned representation (see Chapter 5).*

7.3.1 What issues do MPs care about?

To date, we know surprisingly little about what issues MPs see as developmental priorities that should be addressed by the state either at the national, or at the constituency level. And on the rare occasion where scholars highlight substantive debates, they are categorised as bundles of valence or position issues (Bleck & van de Walle, 2013). However, this does not allow us to gage the relative importance of individual issues. While the Malawi MP survey data in Chapter 6 provided novel insights, it is limited to a single case. Therefore, I use an open ended question from the ALP MP survey to differentiate MPs developmental priorities between constituency-focused and other issues across the continent:

"In your opinion, what are the three most important problems facing this country that government should address? Which of these is the most important?"

Interviewers categorized the answers using a comprehensive pre-existing list of issues. To assess the relative importance of basic services, I condensed this list into four categories, three related to services and goods that are frequently used at the constituency level, and one residual category. The three constituency-level categories include: 1) education and health care (community-level services), 2) electricity, water and sanitation (household-level), and 3) infrastructure, roads as well as safety and security.[83]

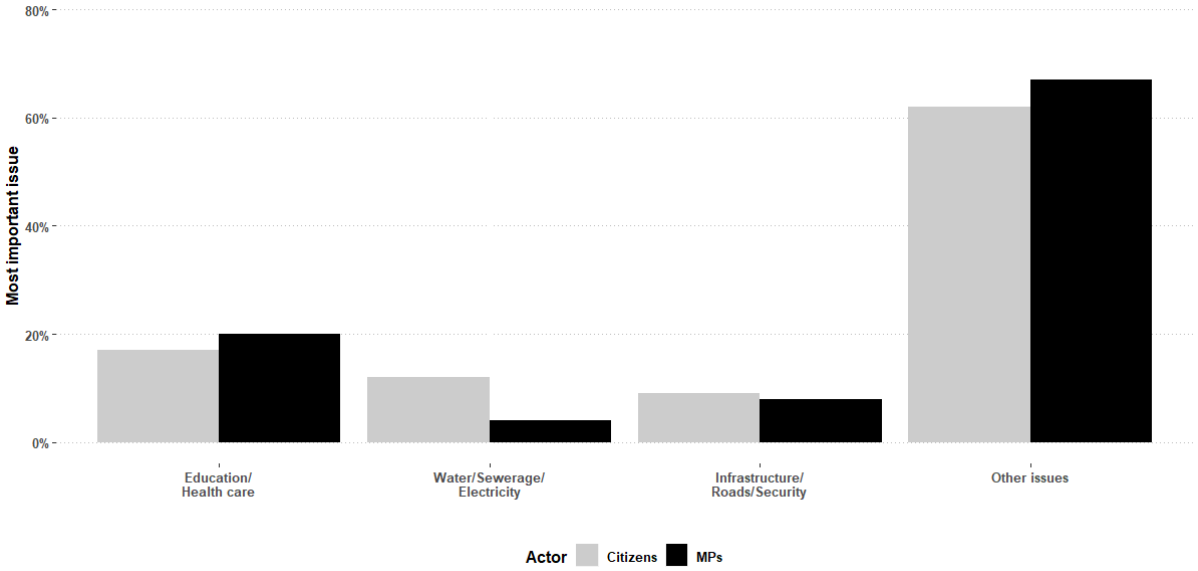
Overall, 32% of responses from MPs fall within one of the three constituency-level categories, while 67% refer to other issues (esp. unemployment [11%] and poverty/destitution [10%]). Importantly, among the three types of constituency issues, health care and education (20%) are mentioned two and a half times more often than infrastructure and roads (8%) and five times more often than water, sanitation, and electricity (4%). This not only demonstrates that MPs care about basic service delivery, but it also confirms the relative ranking of community- and household-level services as predicted by the conveyor-belt argument.

My theory would predict that MPs who focus on constituency work by taking on the tasks of high-level ambassadors would be better at picking up what citizens care about. It is, of course, possible that legislators focus on issues that their constituents do not care about. However, this does not seem to be the case. Afrobarometer

[83] *While the issues in the third category are also community-level goods, they are not the focus of this study, and thus, are reported separately.*

asked citizens the same question about the most important issues in the country. Repeating the process of issue categorisation for Afrobarometer data and comparing it to the MP preferences shows a remarkable level of issue congruence between MPs and citizens (**Figure 7.1**). Indeed, a more detailed analysis by Mattes, Krönke and Mozaffar (2022)shows that this is the case both at the national and constituency level in Africa.[84] Thus, not only do MPs prioritize basic service delivery, but many also seem to be in tune with what their constituents care about.

Figure 7.1: Three most important problems according to MPs and citizens | 2008/2012



Source: Afrobarometer and ALP. Note: For MPs, the results are based on the MP survey. Question: In your opinion, what are the three most important problems facing this country that government should address? Which of these is the most important?. N=814 (MIP1); N=806 (MIP2); N=784 (MIP3). For citizens, the results are based on Round 4 of the Afrobarometer survey (17 countries included in ALP). Question: In your opinion, what are the three most important problems facing this country that government should address? Which of these is the most important? N=20393 (MIP1); N=19584 (MIP2); N=18122 (MIP3).

7.3.2 Mapping MPs activities in their constituencies

The above results about MPs' priorities can be read as a pre-condition for the functioning of the conveyor-belt mechanism at the constituency level. Building on this, the mechanism prescribes regular engagement between MPs and citizens in the home district to improve citizens' satisfaction with service delivery through the conveyor-belt related roles – problem solver, advocates, and ambassadors. The strength of these relationships can be represented graphically in a 2x2 table (**Table 7.1**). For the conveyor-belt mechanism to work optimally at the constituency-level,

[84] *Also, see Clayton et al. (2019)for additional analysis of issue prioritisation along gender lines.*

legislators need to spend substantial time in their home districts and engage with constituents directly and indirectly with the help of local party structures. Conversely, when MPs focus on other activities (e.g., law making, executive oversight, or party work outside the constituency), and primarily engage with local elites such as traditional or religious leaders, we would expect a breakdown of the conveyor-belt mechanism resulting in less satisfied citizens (light grey quadrant in the bottom left corner, **Table 7.1**).

Table 7.1: Theoretical expectations: Effects of MP time allocation, and engagement with constituencies on satisfaction with service delivery

Note: MP focus on constituency service (rather than law-making and executive oversight) refers to actual time spent doing these activities. MP engagement is recorded as 'High' if MP personally engages with constituencies and has a strong local representation, and 'Low' if an MP rarely actively engages with citizens and does not have a local office/representation. Darker quadrants represent higher anticipated levels of citizen satisfaction with community-level services, while lighter shades reflect lower levels of satisfaction with these issues.

Starting to map out this relationship cross-nationally, I start by analysing how much time legislators actually spend in their home district. To measure this, I make use of another question in the ALP MP survey:

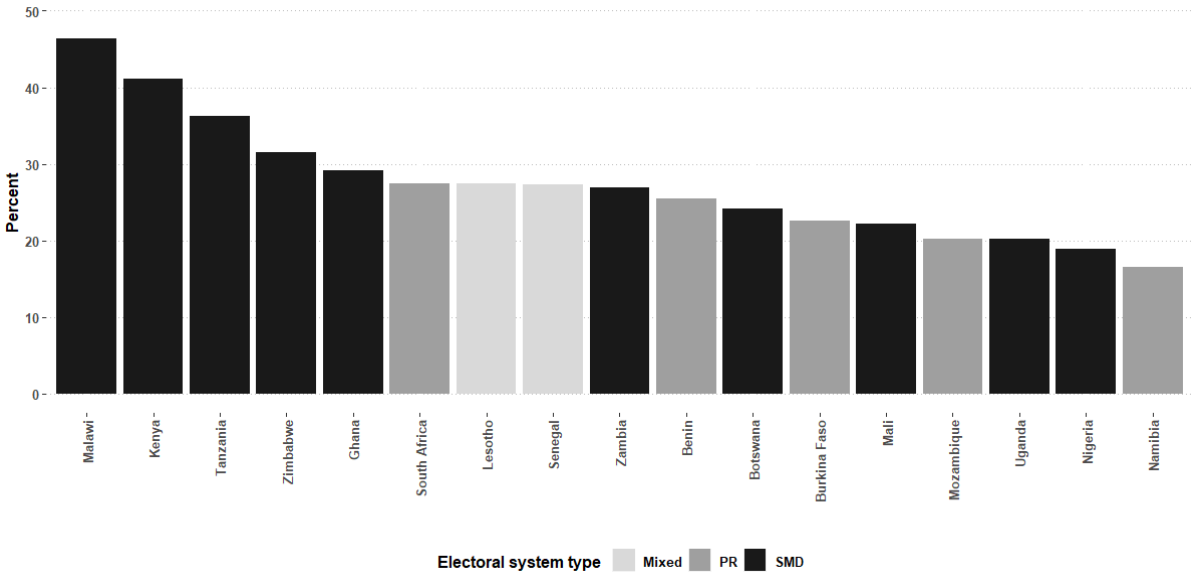
In a year, what percentage of your time is devoted to each of the following?

MPs were asked to allocate their time across 5 types of work: plenary work (representation), constituency work, committee work (law-making), party work (outside of the constituency), and their other job (including ministerial work). **Figure 7.2** shows the country averages of how much time MPs spend engaging in constituency work. Across all 17 countries legislators spend about a quarter of their time (27%) on constituency work. However, while Malawian MPs allocate on average 46% of their time to constituency work, Namibian MPs spend only 16% of their time doing the same. We also see familiar patterns when comparing the country averages by electoral system type. On average, MPs from SMD systems spend more time in their home districts than their peers in other systems. The anticipated consequence of this variation is that the conveyor-belt mechanism functions better in countries like Malawi than Namibia.[85] However, measuring how

[85] *The impact of structural factors such as the type of electoral system, the competitiveness of elections, and the presence of CDFs is analysed in more detail below.*

much time MPs spend in their district is only captures variation along the x-Axis in **Table 7.1**. It is equally as important to understand how much they engage with citizens when they are in their home district (variation along the y-axis).

Figure 7.2: MP Focus on constituency work | 17 countries | 2008/2009



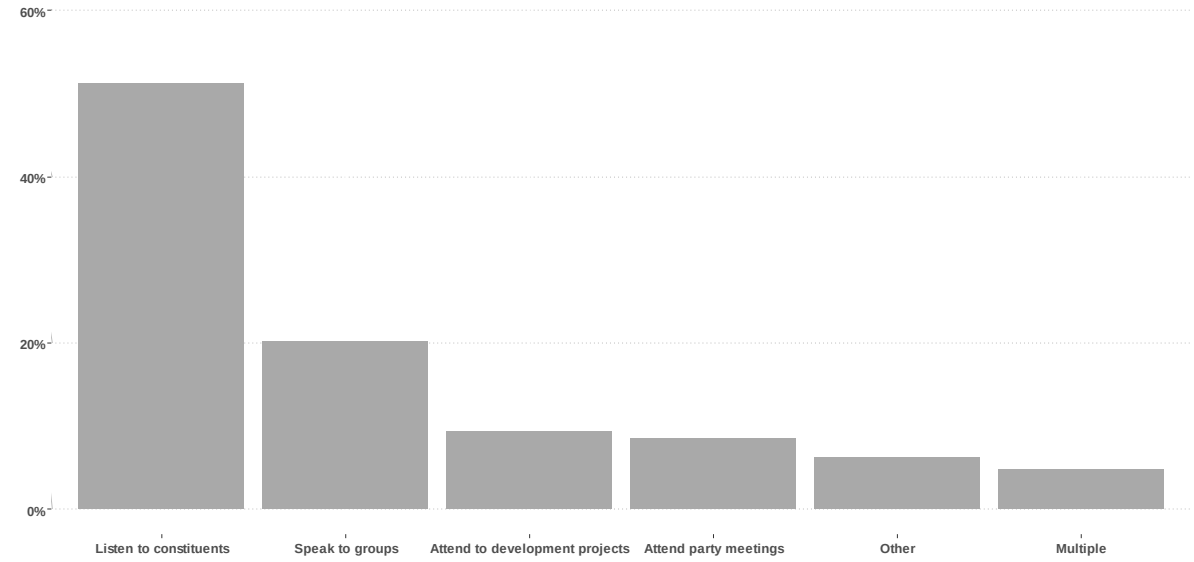
Source: ALP MP survey (N=788); Note: This refers to the average percentage of time MPs spent on constituency service in each country.

The three conveyor-belt related archetypes are hypothesized to engage with citizens by, for example, speaking at local rallies (ambassador), listening to what citizens and local party activists have to say (advocate), and engaging with local bureaucrats to follow-up on development projects (problem solvers). In practice, however, these different types of interactions with stakeholders often match more than one of the stylized roles.[86] Due to this overlap, I limit myself here to demonstrating that MPs regularly engage with citizens, party activists and bureaucrats in the proposed ways. When MPs were asked how they spend most of their time in their home district, a majority said that they are listening to constituents (51%), while 20% of MPs primarily give speeches to groups at meetings and rallies (**Figure 7.3)**. MPs spend comparatively less time attending party meetings with local activists or following up on development projects with bureaucrats. Presumably because these activities require less time and are not public facing. What is perhaps more surprising, is that only 6% of MPs reported prioritizing activities that are often

[86] *This is also illustrated in Chapter 6, where several survey questions/pieces of empirical evidence I presented could feasibly speak to more than just one role.*

captured as anecdotal evidence for patronage relationships with citizens in the literature (e.g., attending weddings and functions, talking to traditional leaders, etc.).

Figure 7.3: MP activities in constituency | 17 countries | 2008/2009



Source: APL MP survey (N=768). Note: Respondents were asked: How do you spend most of your time when you are in your constituency? Response options: Giving speeches to groups at meetings and rallies; Listening to constituents; Attending local political party meetings; Assisting, visiting, and inspecting development projects; Meeting with government officials; Other. Attending functions, like weddings and funerals; other. In the graph, two response options are combined (Assisting, visiting and inspecting development projects; Meeting with government officials) into Attend to development project.

7.3.3 Problem Solvers, Advocates and Ambassadors

The detailed descriptions of the three conveyor-belt related roles in the previous chapter help us to understand *how* legislators increase citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery. On the one hand, MPs who take on these roles objectively improve the functioning of basic services by reducing teacher absenteeism or upgrading a clinic through speaking to bureaucrats. On the other hand, they improve citizen sentiment by publicly claiming credit for these improvements at community events or by taking positions on policy issues and sharing them at a campaign rally. To effectively execute all these roles, however, MPs need support structures such as office space, strategists, and volunteers at the constituency level.[87] Due to data limitations in the ALP data, I can't measure each role individually, as I did in **Ch**apter 6. Instead, I have to restrict myself to operationalizing the roles by measuring the

[87] *To some extent this overlaps with the party activist networks that I described in **Part I**, though the latter encapsulates a broader set of people that are less tied to a particular individual.*

underlying support structures as well as how MPs engage with citizens. Thus, I use three ALP survey questions to operationalise all three roles together. Each question is relevant for at least one of the archetypes.

First, I use the question of whether MPs have someone who represents them when they are not in their constituency to estimate the level of human resources available to MPs. I assume that it is easier for MPs to process citizen requests, publicise policy position, and follow-up with bureaucrats in the home district when they have dedicated representatives working for them. Across all 17 countries, 78% of MPs have dedicated staff at the constituency level (**Table 7.2**). Especially in countries with SMD systems constituency offices were very prevalent. For example, In Botswana and Nigeria every surveyed MP had an office. In contrast, only a quarter of Namibian legislators (24%) and 2% of Mozambican MPs reported having representatives in their constituency during their absence (both are large-list PR countries).[88]

Next, I capture whether MPs have a constituency office or not. On the one hand, this gives citizens a physical place where they can voice their complaints directly to the MP or his/her staff. On the other hand, I use this question as a proxy to infer the presence of other resources that MPs can use to engage with citizens and party activists alike (e.g., storing campaign material, dedicated meeting space, etc.). The response pattern for the constituency office variable is very similar to that of the previous questions, with MPs in SMD systems (73%) generally being more likely to have constituency offices than MPs in countries with PR systems (55%). The importance of a constituency office is also corroborated by a separate question in the ALP survey. Regardless of whether a respondent had an office, 93% of MPs said that having an office in their constituency would improve their relationship with their constituents.

Third, I measure which method MPs primarily use when consulting their constituents. I categorize MPs who have structured direct engagement with citizens (e.g., attending general public meetings that are open to all), or use party structures to gage citizen sentiments (e.g., meetings with constituency party officials) as legislators who are part of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

[88] *The almost universal presence of constituency offices in South Africa is very surprising and likely due to the country's idiosyncratic past of the SMD system under Apartheid, and the assigned constituency system, a concerted effort by Parliament to bring politics to the people (spearheaded by the ANC).*

Table 7.2: MP engagement with constituents| component scores | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | 2008/2009

	Representation in constituency	Constituency office	Type of engagement with citizens
Country			
Benin	95%	75%	93%
Botswana	100%	100%	90%
Burkina Faso	73%	59%	86%
Ghana	88%	82%	76%
Kenya	94%	98%	70%
Lesotho	93%	87%	95%
Malawi	100%	48%	58%
Mali	76%	44%	60%
Mozambique	2%	22%	78%
Namibia	24%	14%	59%
Nigeria	100%	100%	65%
Senegal	66%	50%	45%
South Africa	96%	98%	85%
Tanzania	76%	80%	72%
Uganda	88%	86%	86%
Zambia	75%	38%	83%
Zimbabwe	72%	54%	88%
17-country average	*78%*	*70%*	*75%*
Electoral system type			
SMD	87%	73%	74%
Mixed	79%	67%	67%
List PR	58%	55%	80%
N	802	801	779

Source: ALP MP survey. Note: Respondents were asked: 1) Do you have someone who represents you when you are not in your constituency? Answer options: Yes; No;2) Do you have a constituency office? Answer options: Yes; No; 3) What is the primary method you use when you consult your constituents? Answer options: Attend general public meetings (open to all); attend meetings with religious leaders; hold meetings with traditional local authorities; hold meetings with constituency party officials; hold meetings with provincial/regional party officials; live in the constituency.

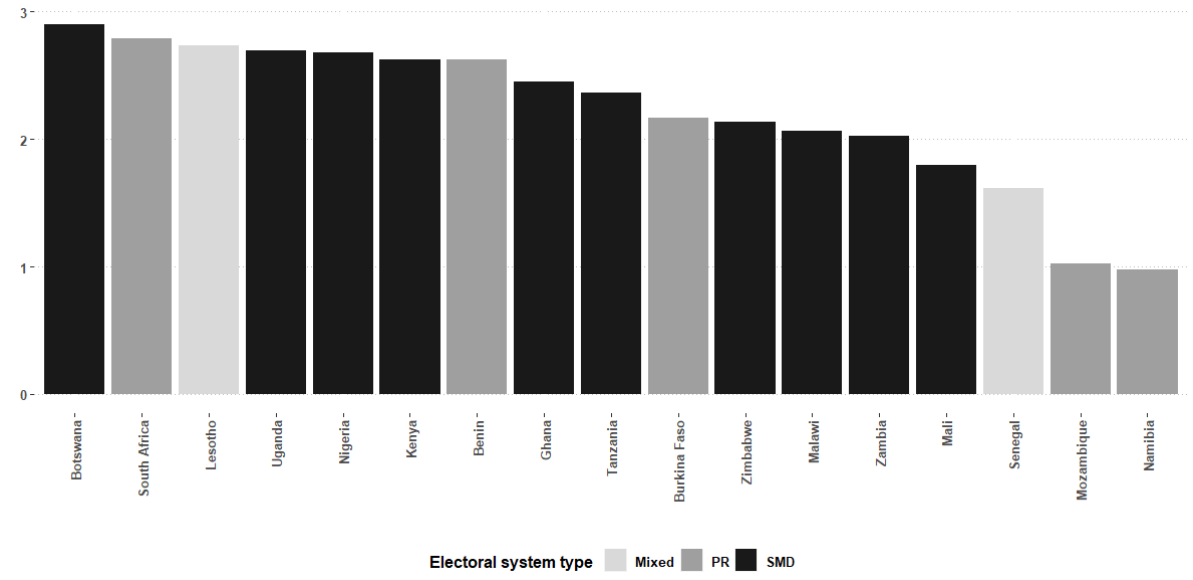
In contrast, MPs who are further removed because they primarily attend meetings with religious and traditional leaders, are missing the necessary close connection to constituents or having poor local support structures. Similarly, MPs who primarily use informal meetings to gage what citizens think are unlikely to engage with constituents at scale. This means they are coded as falling outside the party-centric roles of high-level problem solvers, ambassadors, and advocates. Three quarter of MPs (75%) report engaging in the type of activities I associate with the three

archetypes. Unlike with the previous two questions, we see similar response patterns across electoral system types, and fewer countries with extremely low averages – Senegal scores lowest with an average of 45% for this variable.

To coherently capture this dimension of MP engagement with the constituency, I create a simple additive index using all three questions (**Figure 7.4**). The maximum score (3) means that an MP not only has physical and human resources that help with constituency engagement, but also that direct and structured engagement with citizens takes place on a regular basis. A score of zero reflects the opposite.

The 17-country average of just above two suggests a substantial level of MP-citizen engagement. Moreover, the data also suggest that high-level problem solvers, ambassadors, and advocates are more prevalent in SMD systems (average=2,4) than in PR systems (1,9).

Figure 7.4: MP engagement with constituents| aggregate scores | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | 2008/2009



Source: ALP MP survey (N=765). Note: This refers to the average score for the MP conveyor belt engagement in each country.

7.4 The conveyor-belt at work: MPs and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery

Does time spent in the constituency, and the type of MP-citizen engagement matter for how satisfied citizens are with the delivery of basic service delivery? I argue that when MPs operate as high-level problem solvers, advocates and ambassadors,

citizens are indeed more satisfied with community-level services (**H 2a**), while their presence is less consequential for citizen satisfaction with household-level services (**H 2b**).

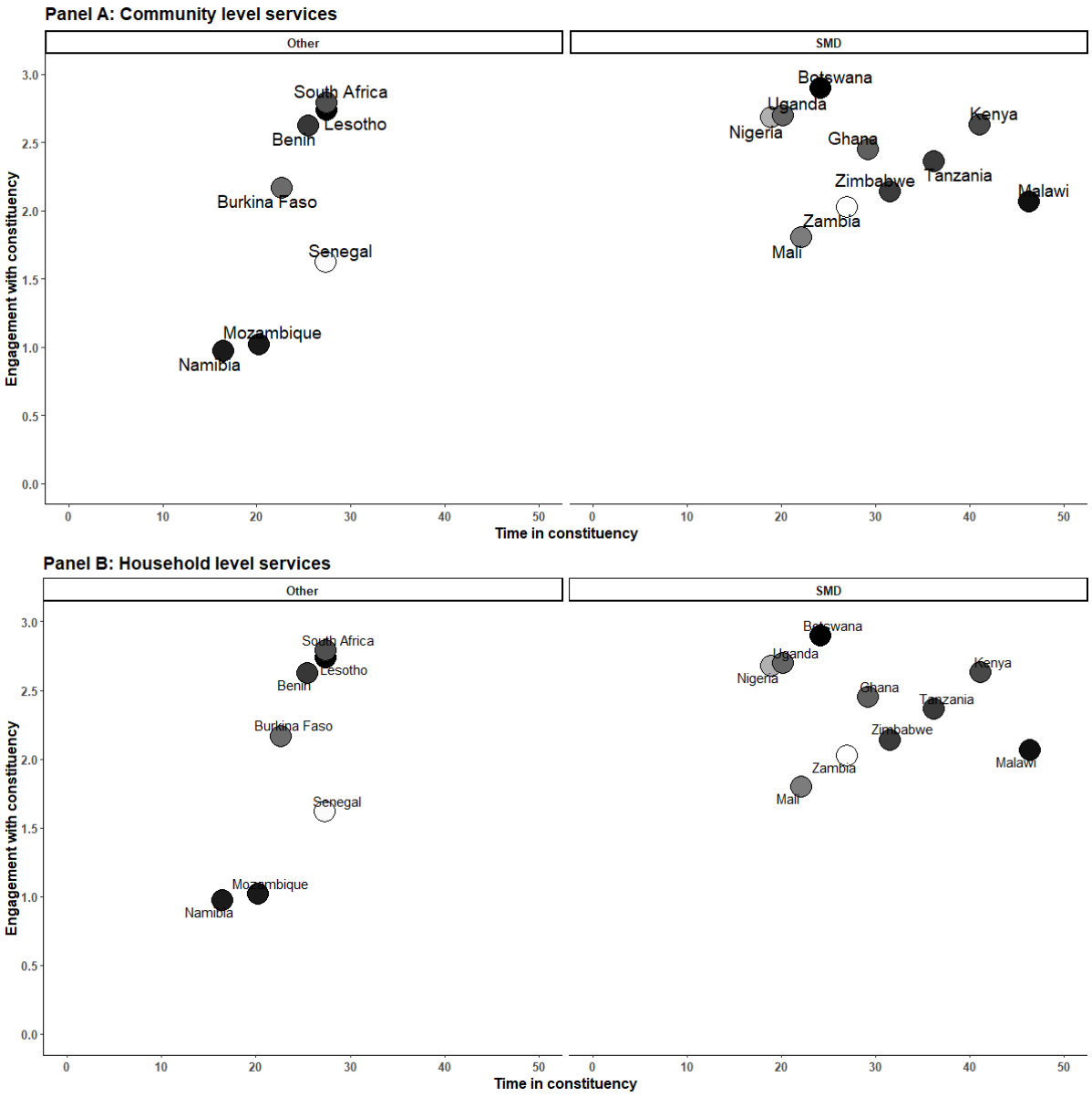
As a first cut, it is useful to look at whether any association exists between what these types of MPs focus on and citizen satisfaction with different services at the country level. To do so, I use the country-average scores for the two dimensions I developed above. I plot the average amount of time a legislator spends in the constituency on the horizontal axis. On the vertical axis, I plot the values of the MP conveyor-belt engagement index. Following the theoretical expectations outlined in **Table 7.1** above, we would expect that countries that score high on both (top-right quadrant) also have more satisfied citizens when it comes to health care and education. That is, we would expect the circles to have a darker fill colour, while countries that score low on both (bottom-left quadrant) should have a lighter fill colour. According to the theory, this relationship should be less clear for household level services. Throughout this chapter, we have also seen higher average scores for countries with SMD electoral rules compared to other electoral systems for each of the key dimensions. This is expected, given that the electoral connection is strongest in these types of systems. Thus, I am reporting the results separately for SMD systems.

Figure 7.5 shows the relationship between the two dimensions measuring the presence of high-level problem solvers, ambassadors, and advocates (or 'conveyor-belt MPs) and citizen satisfaction levels with the two types of services. Starting with **Panel A** and **H 2a**, two things stand out. First, the relationship is in the predicted direction for community-level services among countries with SMD-systems. The countries in the bottom left quadrant of the scatter plot (Mali and Zambia) also have low citizen satisfaction scores (lighter fill colour).[89]

In comparison, citizens are more satisfied in countries that score highest on at least one dimension of the conveyor-belt mechanism (Botswana and Malawi).[90] The high scores on one dimension, combined with a moderate score on the other dimension for both Botswana and Malawi, suggest that there might be a substitution effect. Put differently, MPs who spend a lot of time in the constituency are unlikely to spend all of it on conveyor-belt related activities, while those that dedicate most of their time

[89] *Zambia scores 1 on the 4-point scale of 0-3, while Mali scores 1.5.*
[90] *Botswana and Malawi both score 2 on the 4-point scale of 0-3.*

Figure 7.5: MP conveyor-belt activities and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery | split by electoral system | 17 countries | ca 2008/2010



Source: Afrobarometer and ALP

in the constituency on these activities, generally spend less time in their district. However, to fully unpack this, it is necessary to conduct further analysis at the MP level (see below). Meanwhile, Kenya - the country scoring relatively high on both MP role variables – has an average satisfaction score. Overall, this distribution is in line with **H 2a**.

A second observation is that the predicted relationship breaks down in countries with PR and MMD systems (confirming **H 2c**). For example, even though South Africa

scores two-points higher on the MP engagement dimension than Mozambique and Namibia, and MPs from all three countries spend roughly similar amounts of time in the constituency, South Africans are less satisfied with health care and education services. It is worth mentioning that Lesotho, although formally classified as a country with a mixed electoral system, uses a SMD system with a separate PR component (unlike Senegal). Thus, it functions more like the SMD systems on the right-hand side of **Panel A**. If we were to include Lesotho among SMD countries, it would further strengthen the relationship proposed in **H 2a**.

When comparing the evidence in **Panel B** against the theoretical, the evidence only partially meets the expectations. On the one hand, the non-SMD countries show no clear relationship between conveyor-belt type activities and citizen satisfaction (also confirming **H 2c**). On the other hand, the pattern among SMD countries for household level services remain quite similar to that in **Panel A**. That is, while low levels of citizen satisfaction in Kenya and Tanzania seem to confirm the prediction that the conveyor- elt is less effective for household level services, the overall pattern remains relatively consistent.

In short, the data provide preliminary country-level evidence that, depending on the electoral system type, MPs who focus on their roles as high-level problem solvers, ambassadors, and advocates increase citizen satisfaction with the delivery of (some) basic services.

7.4.1 Confounding Factors

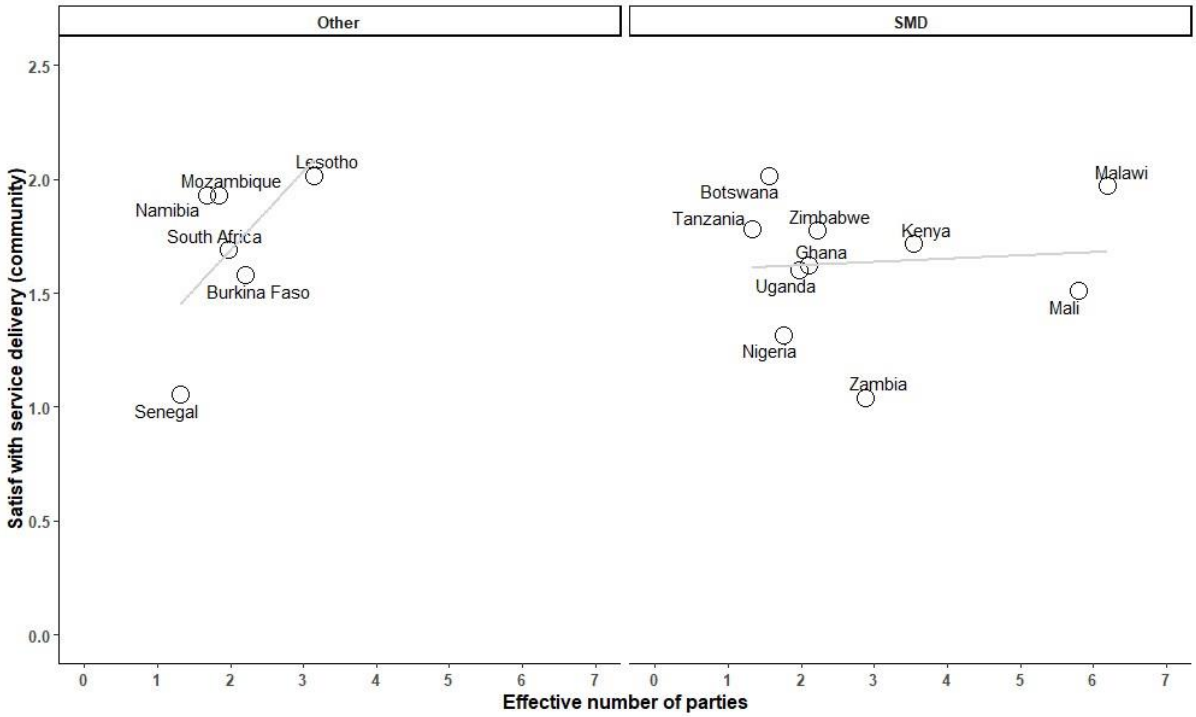
There are, of course, confounding factors that could influence the relationship between MP behaviour and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery. I explore two of them - party system and constituency development funds – through cross-country comparisons below. Unfortunately, ALP data is only available for 17 countries, making it impractical to conduct a reliable regression analysis at the country level. Therefore, I limit myself to interpreting scatter plots.

Party System: It is possible that citizens will be more satisfied with service delivery in countries with a more diverse party system. In such countries citizens are more likely to be exposed to information about service delivery problems, as well as more likely to hear about different solutions to these problems from a broad range of parties (see Chapter 4). At the same time, a more diverse party system is likely to increase MPs' efforts to engage with citizens and communicate to them what they are doing

or planning to do about the issue. Although it would be ideal to measure the impact of the party system at the constituency level, I am unable to do so cross-nationally due to data limitations. Therefore, I settle for a country-level comparison in which I correlate the diversity of the party system with the average citizen satisfaction scores. To measure the diversity of the party landscape, I once again use the number of effective parties in a country for the most recent election prior to the citizen survey.

The two scatter plots in **Figure 7.6** do not confirm the expected positive relationship between the number of effective parties in the legislature and citizen satisfaction with service delivery.[91] Among countries with SMD systems, the relationship seems random, or even slightly negative if one were to exclude the potential outlier in the sample (Malawi). Similarly, it is difficult to make out a clear trend for the six countries with PR and mixed electoral systems. This makes it unlikely that the positive relationship we observed between MP behaviour and citizen satisfaction is driven by the diversity of the party system.

Figure 7.6: Effective Number of Parties and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2008/2010



Source: ALP and Afrobarometer. Note: The scores for the effective number of parties was calculated using data from Gallagher (2019) and Carr (2021).

[91] *The results for household services are similar, but not shown here.*

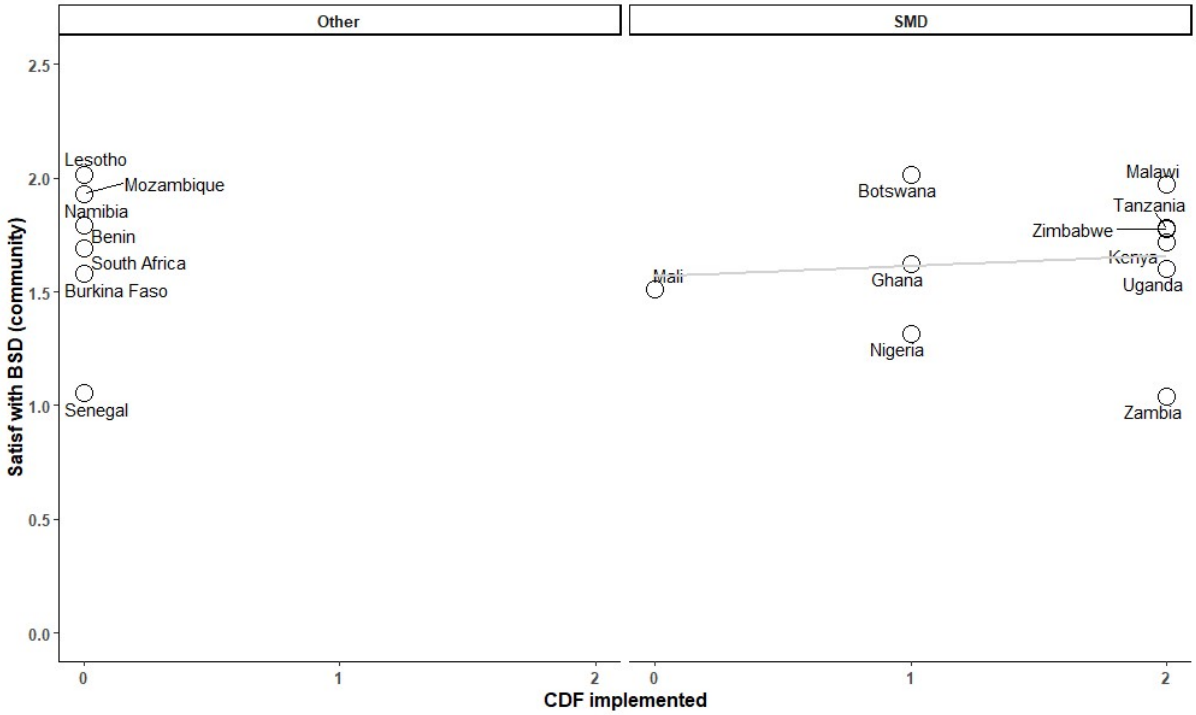
Constituency Development Funds: It is also plausible that MPs might use discretionary funds such as government provided Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) as a substitute to spending time engaging with citizens in their districts (Barkan & Mattes, 2014; Mattes & Mozaffar, 2016). Instead of focusing on their roles as high-level ambassadors and advocates in their home districts, MPs might use CDF budgets to provide personal goods and services to citizens rather than improve citizen satisfaction with service provision. Alternatively, MPs could use the money to buy themselves time to do other things (e.g., law-making) by building community and household level infrastructure, but not spend time communicating the developments.

Such efforts by MPs could be interpreted in at least two ways by citizens. Either they appreciate the fact of additional infrastructure and possible improvement of service delivery, or they might bemoan the decreasing levels of MP presence in the constituency, thus decreasing the opportunities to engage with their elected representative over remaining issues such as lack of equipment at the new schools and clinics, or long delays in delivering promised electricity hook-ups. To measure the potentially confounding effect of CDFs, I use a categorical variable (*CDF)*, which uses the same classification as Barkan & Mattes (2014).[92]

The comparison in **Figure 7.7** reveals no clear pattern. Irrespective of the electoral system type, countries that implemented CDFs (2), those that considered CDFs at the time of the survey (1), and those that did not have CDFs (0), do not systematically differ from each other when it comes to citizen satisfaction with service delivery. Consequently, it is unlikely that CDFs affect the relationship between MP behaviour and citizen satisfaction. To put this finding on firmer analytical ground, however, it is necessary to further investigate the determinants of MP behaviour. A task I turn to next.

[92] *Because the authors coded three cases (Botswana, Ghana, Namibia) as 'ambiguous', I also run robustness checks in which I: 1) exclude the cases from the analysis, 2) categorize them as having CDFs, and 3) classify them as not having CDFs. The results remain substantively the same.*

Figure 7.7: CDFs and citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2008/2010



Source: ALP and Afrobarometer. Note: 0=countries without CDFs, 1=countries that considered CDFs, 2= countries that had implemented CDFs at the time of ALP fieldwork.

7.5 Who are the conveyor-belt MPs?

The theoretical discussion in Chapter 5 and empirical analysis in this chapter have shown the centrality of constituency work and how MPs' attitudes connect to electoral incentives. Further, I demonstrated that, depending on the electoral system type, citizens are more likely to be satisfied with basic service delivery when a larger share of MPs behaves in accordance with the conveyor-belt mechanism. However, we know less about the variation at the MP level. Why do some African MPs spend more time in their districts or have the type of party infrastructure and citizen engagement associated with the high-level problem solver, advocate, and ambassador archetypes, while others do not.

Previous research has taught us that there are several demographic and electoral characteristics of legislators and their constituencies that are likely to be correlated with MPs' behaviour. In this section, I test several explanations for why legislators might be more or less likely to spend time in their districts or engage with their constituents in line with the conveyor-belt mechanism. Therefore, I now use the two key independent variables from the previous section as dependent variables.

7.5.1 Political career

Elected representatives often make important career choices that affect their political trajectories long before they even decide to run for office (Weghorst, 2022). Once elected, legislators need to adjust their behaviour to the political circumstances they face in their constituency. There are at least six such factors that are likely to influence whether MPs take on the roles related to the conveyor-belt mechanism roles: previous work experience, partisan identification, candidate selection process, travel between the capital and the constituency, tenure of the MP, and a legislator's role orientation.

Work experience in government and party leadership: First, depending on legislators' previous work experience in the two organisations that are crucial for the conveyor-belt mechanism - the government bureaucracy, and political parties - MPs might be more or less likely to take on the conveyor-belt related roles. It is likely that MPs who previously worked in government are more aware of how important constituency service is to citizens, and how best to meet their demands. Therefore, they are likely to spend more time in their constituency and make more concerted efforts to engage with citizens.

MPs who previously worked as party leaders are likely to have made comparable experiences. Indeed, Tavits (2013) found that strong local party structures can influence the central party disproportionately. Ambitious MPs with party leadership experience and awareness of this dynamic might thus dedicate more time to constituency work and organizational development in their district.

However, the opposite could be true as well. MPs without prior experience in government or party leadership might dedicate more time to constituency work to increase their local power base and reduce the risk of competitors winning the next primary, or general election. In this scenario, they would spend more time in the constituency, even if they would not necessarily differ in the type of citizen engagement. I measure the potential effect of each type of prior experience through separate dummy variables (1 = prior experience, 0 = no prior experience)

Party ID: MPs belonging to the ruling party have better access to material resources and political power through their party's privileged access to state coffers (Wahman & Seeberg, 2021). This advantage may allow them to return to their constituencies more often, and to establish more sophisticated operations in their district through

which they engage with citizens. It is also conceivable, however, that opposition candidates who have fewer opportunities to establish a reputation as an efficient MP in the legislature (e.g., as committee chair), focus their efforts on constituency service instead (York, 2020). This might be particularly likely, given the often-unmet demand for constituency service among African citizens (see Chapter 8). To adjudicate between the two arguments, I include a dummy variable, coded one if the MP belongs to the president's party, and zero otherwise.

Candidate selection: Legislative candidate selection mechanisms vary in Africa. While a sizable share of countries has adopted primary elections with electorates ranging from local party elites, to all rank and file party members, other parties have top down selection processes that are dominated by the national party leadership (Ichino & Nathan, 2017).[93] In cases where MPs are appointed by high-level party structures, they are incentivised to spend more time pleasing the party leadership, often engaging in activities that are less constituency focused. In contrast, when MPs are selected via a large selectorate (e.g., all party members in the constituency), there are considerable incentives for MPs to spend time in the constituency connecting with local party representatives (and potentially ordinary citizens). Rather than relying on party-level selection rules, I employ an ALP MP survey question in which MPs are coded as one when nominated following a competitive primary election with at least two candidates, or by a local party branch, and zero if the MP was nominated by a regional or national party committee.[94]

Burden travelling to constituency: Once elected, MPs need to balance their time between their home district and the legislative arena. The burden to travel to the constituency could affect the two dependent variables in different ways. Legislators who need to travel further and for longer between the capital and the constituency might decide to spend less time in their home district. In contrast, for MPs with a geographically more distant constituency it might be particularly useful to establish a local office and effective representation to compensate for the fewer trips to the constituency. It would also make it more important to engage with citizens directly to cultivate the personal vote. Thus, we would expect geographic distance to

[93] *For a detailed description of the candidate selection rules across more than 15 African countries, see the Political Parties Database Round 2 (Scarrow et al., 2022).*

[94] *Unfortunately, this variable does not capture some important constituency level variations. For example, whether all rank-and-file members, or only branch leaders are eligible to vote at primary elections. Ichino and Nathan (2017)have shown that these differences matter.*

correlate positively with the constituency engagement variable. I capture these dynamics through MP reported distance between the capital and their constituency.[95]

MP tenure: Even though the turnover rate in African legislatures is high, a sizable share of MPs continue to win re-election (Warren, 2019). It is often asserted that as MPs become more senior, they devote less time to their constituencies (Fenno, 1978). However, Judge-Lord and colleagues (2018, p. 1) find that "as legislators spend more time in Washington they often expand their constituency service work, even as they expand their policy work." This suggests that time spent in the legislature, or an MP's rank are less predictive of their attention to constituents. To test the relationship for each of the dependent variables, I correlate them with number of legislative terms an MP has completed.[96]

Constituent servant role orientation: Finally, some MPs might simply spend more time in their constituency, build responsive local structures and put a premium on engaging with citizens because they enjoy these activities more(B. Cain et al., 1987; Norris, 1997; Papp, 2020). Put simply, they are constituent servants, rather than institutionalists, or partisans (Mattes & Mozaffar, 2016). To measure MPs' role orientation, I create a three-point index ranging from two (MPs see constituency service as the most important and rewarding role of an MP) to zero (MPs see it as neither the most important, nor the most rewarding role).

7.5.2 Demographic characteristics

Beyond legislators' career pathway and electoral circumstances, several demographic factors are likely to affect their efforts to engage in constituency service in line with the conveyor-belt mechanism.

Gender: Several studies focusing on the Global North demonstrate that women spend more time on constituency service than men. The explanations for this pattern range from gender specific socialisation (Richardson & Freeman, 1995), to women's higher levels of civic-mindedness (S. Thomas, 1992), and electoral considerations (Thomsen & Sanders, 2020). However, an analysis of responsiveness among Indian legislators found no gender differences in overall responsiveness to citizens' appeals.

[95] *Because a related question about travel time between the constituency and the capital has more missing data, I only use it in the robustness check. The results remain substantively the same.*
[96] *I also employ a narrower measure of this concept as a robustness check, whether an MP is a chair/deputy chair of a legislative committee, or not. However, the drawback of this measure is that the appointment to such a post is at least in part conditional on the overall performance of an MP's political party.*

In the African context, Mattes and Mozaffar (2010) found no significant effect of an MP's gender on the amount of time they dedicate to constituency work.[97] Yet, they did not test the effect of gender on the MP-citizen engagement dimension. Thus, I test for differences along gender lines in this analysis (male=1, female=0).

Education: Legislators' formal education might also shape their constituency service efforts. For example, more educated MPs might have a better grasp of bureaucratic processes and be more efficient at structuring citizen engagement.[98] However, so far researchers found no difference in time allocation to constituency service (Mattes & Mozaffar, 2010) and responsiveness to citizen demands (Bussell, 2019) among legislators in the Global South. These findings notwithstanding, I include a measure of formal education to test it against both dependent variables.

7.5.3 Results

I analyse the data using country fixed effects OLS regression models. Because of the different electoral incentives for MPs associated with the electoral system type, as well as the empirical differences observed earlier, I report three models for each of the variables that underly the MP archetypes. First, Models 1-3 estimate to what extent the nine political career, party and demographic variables correlate with how much time MPs spend in their home district **(Table 7.3** and **Figure 7.8)**.

After running the regression for all MPs (Model 1), I subset the data and re-run the analysis for legislators in single-member districts (Model 2). The third model includes all legislators who were elected through alternative electoral rules. Models 4-6 (**Table 7.4** and **Figure 7.9**) repeat the same procedure for the second dependant variable – MP engagement in the constituency. The analyses of the two sets of regressions produce results that partly vary depending on the electoral system type. For example, legislators' professional experience prior to being elected matters for MPs in SMD systems, but not for legislators in other systems. In SMD systems, MPs with any government experience (local, provincial, or national) are less likely to build local structures and prioritize consulting with citizens.[99] Thus, they are less likely to act as high-level problem-solvers, advocates, and ambassadors. This evidence also supports the argument that in SMD systems MPs without government experience

[97] *While they use the same ALP MP survey data as I do, our model specifications differ somewhat for the analysis on time spent in the constituency. Thus, I include the MP's gender in both analyses.*
[98] *A similar argument has been made with regards to local-level fixers in India (Krishna, 2011).*
[99] *Though MPs with government experience in SMD systems are also less likely to spend time in their constituency, this relationship is not statistically significant at conventional levels.*

Table 7.3: Predicting MP time spent in constituency | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2010

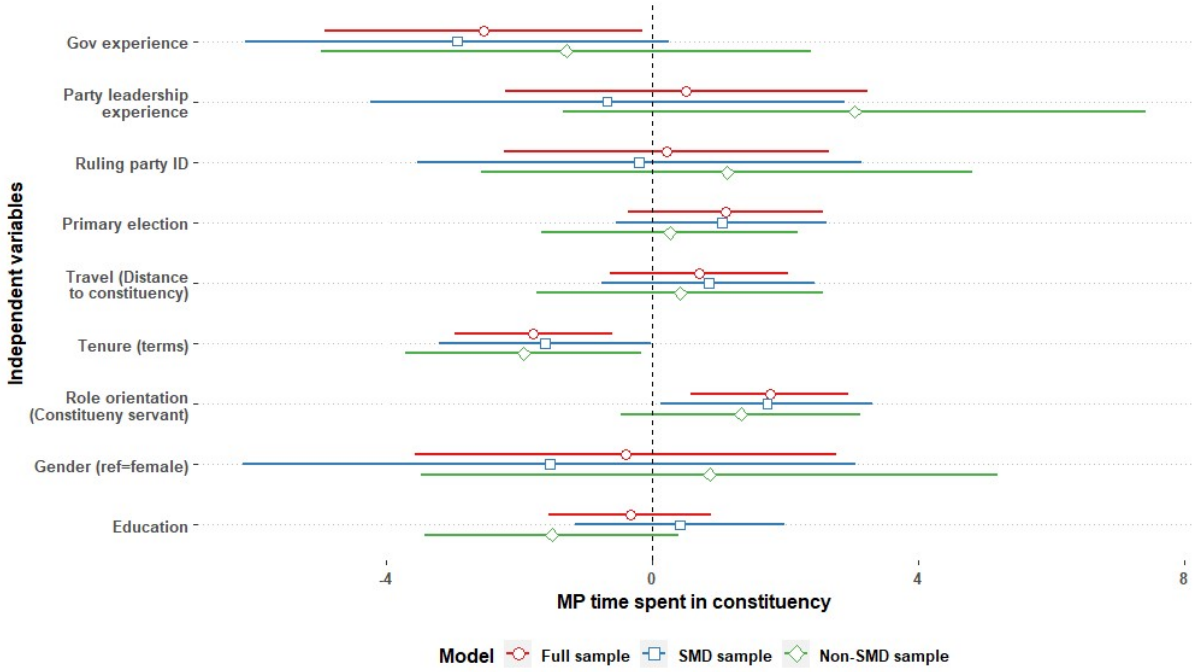
	Full sample	**SMD sample**	**Non-SMD sample**
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
(Intercept)	28.85 ***	33.44 ***	21.04 ***
	(2.46)	(3.62)	(3.12)
Gov experience	-2.53 *	-2.93	-1.29
	(1.22)	(1.62)	(1.87)
Party leadership experience	0.52	-0.67	3.05
	(1.38)	(1.82)	(2.23)
Ruling party ID	0.22	-0.19	1.13
	(1.25)	(1.70)	(1.88)
Primary election	1.11	1.05	0.27
	(0.74)	(0.81)	(0.98)
Travel (Distance to constituency)	0.71	0.85	0.43
	(0.68)	(0.82)	(1.10)
Tenure (terms)	-1.78 **	-1.60 *	-1.93 *
	(0.61)	(0.81)	(0.90)
Role orientation (Constituency servant)	1.77 **	1.73 *	1.34
	(0.60)	(0.81)	(0.92)
Gender (ref=female)	-0.38	-1.54	0.86
	(1.61)	(2.35)	(2.21)
Education	-0.33	0.41	-1.50
	(0.62)	(0.80)	(0.97)
N	543	316	227
N (Country)	16	9	7
AIC	4375.09	2552.93	1803.15
BIC	4426.65	2598.00	1844.25
R2 (fixed)	0.04	0.04	0.06
R2 (total)	0.23	0.28	0.12

*Source: ALP. Note: All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

need to spend extra time to raise their public profile by establishing linkages with citizens and bureaucrats, since their re-election is directly dependent on delivering for and communicating with a relatively small group of constituents.

In contrast, previous experience in party leadership is only statistically significant and positively correlated with the constituency engagement variable. One possible interpretation is that politicians in non-SMD systems use an iterative process to become an elected official. Ambitious rank-and-file party members might start by building strong local branches and stable linkages with the community and use those as leverage to move up the party ranks (see Tavits (2013)). Once in a party leadership position, their chances of securing a prominent position on legislative candidate lists is likely to increase, and with it, the likelihood of becoming an MP. In contrast, in SMD systems, MPs are less likely to rely on top-down nomination processes (Arriola et al., 2022; Choi, 2018).

Figure 7.8: Predicting MP time spent in constituency | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2010



Source: ALP; Note: The figure is based on Models 1-3 in Table 7.3. For ease of comparison, the effects in the figure are standardised.

The non-significant correlation between party leadership and constituency engagement for legislators in SMD systems provides additional support for this

interpretation. This also fits with the broader argument of the conveyor-belt mechanism, according to which the connection between citizens, parties and bureaucrats is less likely to work effectively in contexts where MPs' re-election is not dependent on bottom-up accountability pressures in a geographically confined area.

Conceptually, this relationship is also partly captured by the MP candidate nomination variable. However, the results remain statistically non-significant. MPs who were nominated by a local branch or following a competitive primary election (bottom-up), are not more likely to score highly on the two dependent variables than if they were nominated by provincial or national structures (top-down). While this result is surprising, it is possible that the variable used to operationalise the relationship is inappropriate. The coding of the response categories does not allow me to capture the more nuanced, but important differences of the selection process at the local level (e.g., how big is the electorate at primary elections – branch leaders vs. all party members in the constituency?).[100] To better understand the relationship between the candidate nomination process and MP behaviour it is necessary to conduct additional analyses with more granular data, something that is beyond the scope of this study.

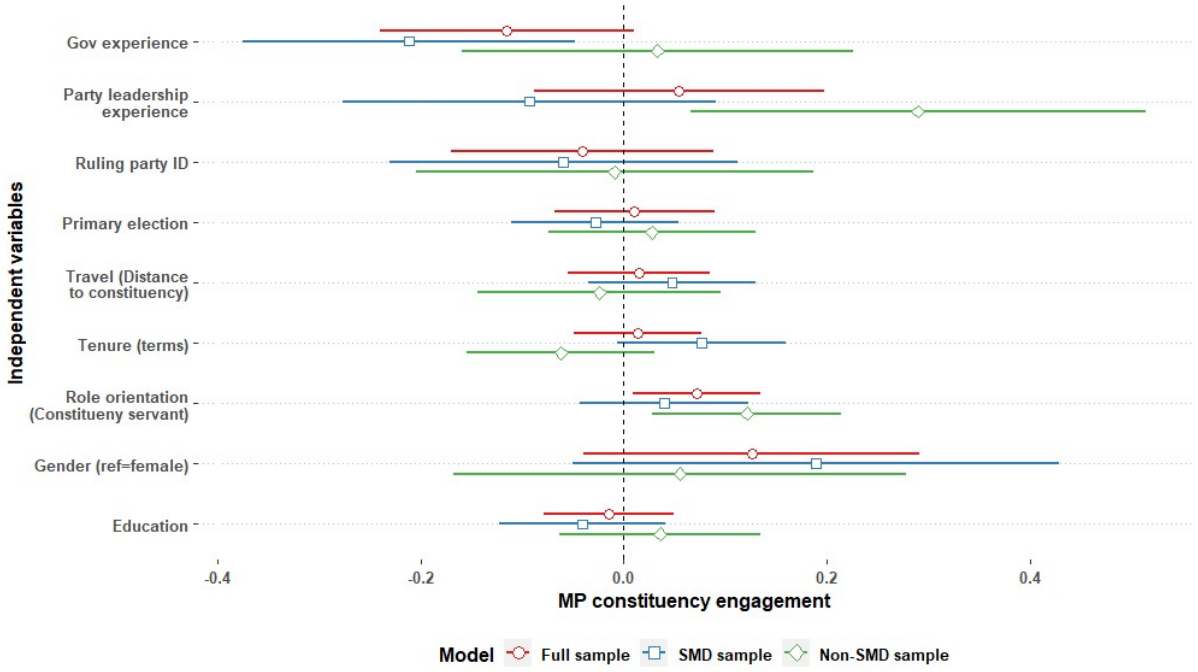
[100] *For more detail on this, see Ichino and Nathan (2017).*

Table 7.4: Predicting MP constituency engagement | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2010

	Full sample	**SMD sample**	**Non-SMD sample**
	Model 4	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
(Intercept)	2.14 ***	2.37 ***	1.69 **
	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.36)
Gov experience	-0.11	-0.21 *	0.03
	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.10)
Party leadership experience	0.05	-0.09	0.29 *
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.11)
Ruling party ID	-0.04	-0.06	-0.01
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Primary election	0.01	-0.03	0.03
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Travel (Distance to constituency)	0.02	0.05	-0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Tenure (terms)	0.01	0.08	-0.06
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Role orientation (Constituency servant)	0.07 *	0.04	0.12 *
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Gender (ref=female)	0.13	0.19	0.06
	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Education	-0.01	-0.04	0.04
	0.01	0.08	-0.06
N	533	304	229
N (Country)	16	9	7
AIC	1214.92	702.65	536.43
BIC	1266.26	747.25	577.64
R2 (fixed)	0.01	0.05	0.03
R2 (total)	0.46	0.25	0.63

*Source: ALP. Note: All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

Figure 7.9: Predicting MP constituency engagement | split by Electoral System | 17 countries | ca 2010



Source: ALP; Note: The figure is based on Models 4-6 in Table 7.4. For ease of comparison, the effects in the figure are standardised.

A related question is to what extent does partisanship influence MP behaviour? Scholars of African politics often emphasize that government party legislators are better resourced than opposition candidates. Whether this is due to centralised efforts in which parties access state resources and channel them to co-partisan MPs (Brierley & Kramon, 2020), or parties attract wealthier candidates in the first place (Wahman & Seeberg, 2021), this resource imbalance can have negative effects on the quality of representation (Koter, 2017). Viewed against the findings in previous studies, the null-results for the party affiliation variable are surprising. Based on the regression results, the ruling party advantage does not make the governing party MPs more likely to act as high-level problem solvers, ambassadors or advocates. As outlined above, a possible complimentary explanation is that because opposition party candidates have fewer opportunities to proof themselves and more limited resources, they make additional efforts along the lines of the conveyor-belt mechanism, compensating for their resource disadvantage. Hence, we would not detect a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Models 1-3 also tell us that across the board more experienced legislators spend less time in their constituencies. This finding is in line with Fenno's (1978) observation from more than four decades ago. However, the results from Models 4-6 also show that in SMD systems more experienced MPs seem to compensate for this pattern by developing sophisticated local operations and engage more with citizens.

Finally, probing the importance of legislators' role orientation provides intuitive results. MPs who view constituency service as the most important and rewarding activity of a legislator, are also more likely to spend time in their constituency, and act as high-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors. It is noteworthy that a legislator's role orientation is more predictive of this behaviour than the travel burdens an MP faces going from the capital to their constituency.[101] In short, their attitudes towards constituency work clearly shape their behaviour as it relates to the conveyor-belt mechanism.

Regarding legislators' demographic characteristics, neither their formal level of education nor their gender are statistically significant predictors for the two variables related the conveyor-belt archetypes.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides empirical evidence in support of the conveyor-belt mechanism as it relates to MPs. Using evidence from 17 African countries, I show that the election goals of legislators are connected to citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery through a process of reputation building at the constituency level. First, I demonstrated that constituency work in general, and the issue of service delivery in particular, is perceived as crucial by MPs. Next, I introduced survey evidence measuring to what extent legislators engage in a set of activities that are common to their roles as high-level problem solvers, advocates, and ambassadors.

The cross-national analysis of MP behaviour and citizen satisfaction with service delivery then revealed that the electoral system type conditions how the conveyor-belt mechanism works at the MP level. The data support the theoretical expectation that in single-member district countries where more MPs behave according to the conveyor-belt mechanism, citizens are more satisfied with service delivery. However, this relationship does not hold in countries with other electoral rules. This pattern is

[101] *The results regarding the travel burden remain substantively the same whether measured as the distance, or duration of travel between the capital and the constituency.*

unlikely to be a result of other country-level confounding factors such as the party system (ENP) and constituency development funds.

There have been few studies that explicitly examine how MPs contribute to citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of government services in Africa. Accordingly, scholars have primarily focused on the distribution of material goods and services among constituents (Lindberg, 2010; Opalo, 2022). In contrast, very few authors have explicitly focused on how African MPs transmit information, for example by connecting citizens to what is happening in the capital (Barkan, 1979; Barkan & Okumu, 1974), or by using electoral handouts as information signalling about future performance (Kramon, 2017). Building on this work, my study focuses more explicitly on how MPs convey information to multiple stakeholders – other party representatives, citizens and bureaucrats.

The last empirical section of this chapter returned to the question of why some MPs become high-level problem solvers, ambassadors and advocates, and others do not? Going beyond electoral incentives that are shaped by the electoral system type, the analysis demonstrated that MPs' career path (experience in government and party leadership, length of tenure), and role orientation matter for the functioning of the conveyor-belt mechanism.

Although this chapter has provided crucial evidence on when MPs behave according to the conveyor-belt mechanism, it is unable to pinpoint exactly which aspects of MPs' behaviour shapes citizens' satisfaction with government service delivery, to which I now turn.

Chapter 8: MPs and basic service delivery across Africa: Citizen perspective

8.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the MP-citizen relationship from the vantage point of citizens. Using the same 17-country sample as in the previous chapter, I first document citizens' expectations of how MPs should provide constituency service and whether MPs meet these expectations. The second section uses individual-level data to test which aspects of the relationship affect citizens' perceptions of service delivery. The results confirm that when citizens perceive MPs to be more responsive, they are also more satisfied with service delivery. Throughout the chapter I also highlight how the electoral system type shapes citizens expectations and behaviours towards their elected representatives, and consequently, their attitudes towards service delivery.

8.2 How do citizens view and experience their MP?

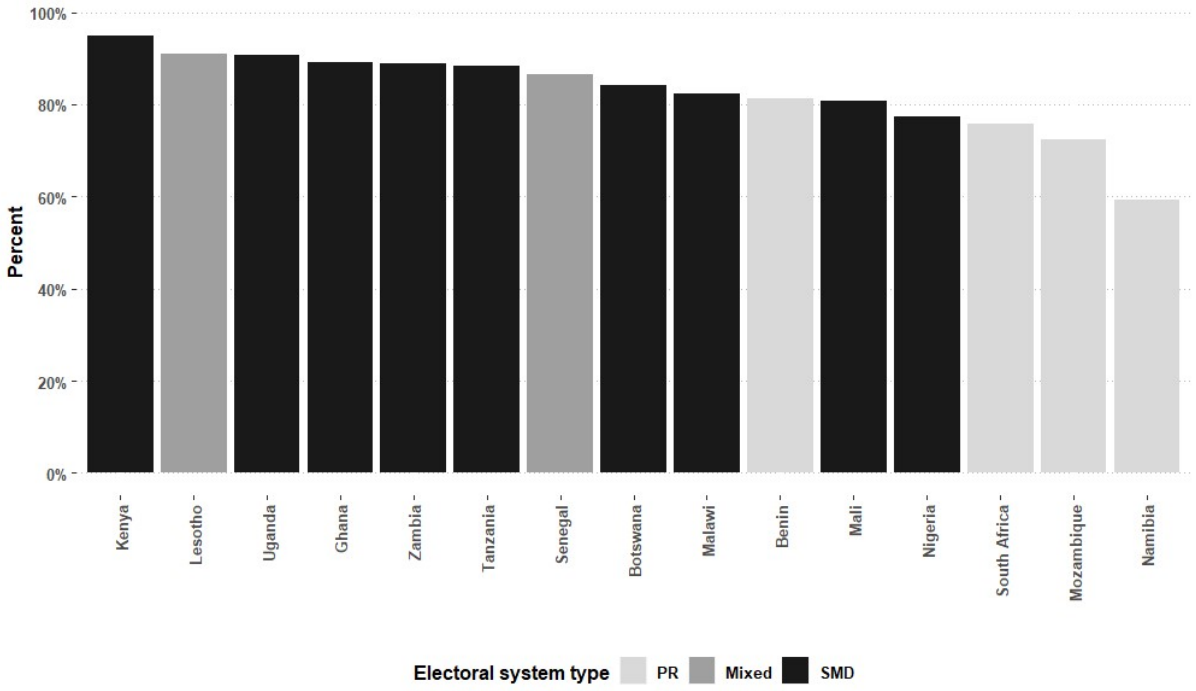
8.2.1 MPs as delegates or trustees?

According to citizens, how important are service delivery issues, and how should they be addressed? The data presented in Chapters 6 & 7, suggest that community-level services are high up on the list for both citizens and their elected representatives. To remind the reader, almost four out of 10 citizens (38%) want government to prioritize public goods such as health care, education, water, electricity, public security, roads, or other local infrastructure. Furthermore, a detailed analysis across 17 countries shows remarkable issue congruence between MP and citizen preferences both at the national and constituency level in Africa (Mattes et al., 2022). Therefore, not only do citizens prioritize basic service delivery, but most MPs are also in tune with what their constituents care about.

This overlap of issue priorities prompts an important question: How do citizens want their MPs to help resolve these issues? Do Africans see their representatives as "delegates" or "trustees"? That is, do citizens want MPs to take "instructions" or receive "mandates" from them, or should MPs follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the constituency (see Pitkin (1967))? Here, survey evidence from Round 3 of the Afrobarometer provides some useful insight. Across 15 of the 17 countries that were also surveyed by the African Legislatures Project, a clear majority of citizens view MPs as delegates, and do not want MPs to act on their own ideas

(**Figure 8.1**). On average, citizens in SMD and mixed electoral systems are more likely to view their MPs as delegates, whereas at least one in five citizens in PR systems view their MPs as trustees. This makes intuitive sense given that the connection between citizens and their MPs is clearer and closer in SMD systems compared to PR systems (Lockwood & Krönke, 2022).

Figure 8.1: Elected leaders listen vs. follow own ideas | 15 countries | 2005/2006



Source: Afrobarometer Round 3; Note: No data for Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?. Choose Statement A or Statement B. A: Our elected officials should listen to constituents' views and do what they demand. B: Our elected leaders should follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country. (Strongly) agree with "Listen". Sample average = 82%.

8.2.2 MPs' expected and perceived presence in the constituency

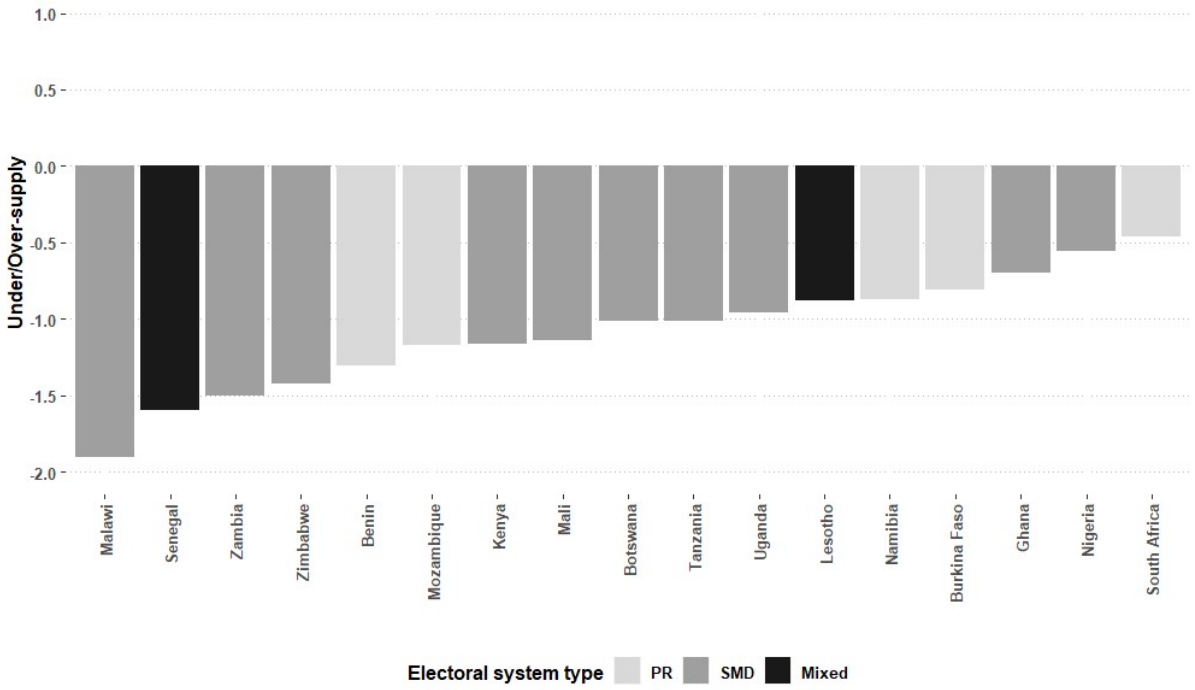
In the preceding chapters, I demonstrated that citizens frequently and consistently seek out their elected representatives (Chapter 5) and that they are keen to hear new information about service delivery from MP candidates on the campaign trail (Chapter 6). Meanwhile, Chapter 7 not only showed how much time MPs spend in their constituencies, but also which activities they prioritise during their visits. However, these MP-citizen relationships also vary within constituencies. Therefore, I now analyse individual-level data to determine the extent MPs fulfil citizens' expectations of constituency service.

Thanks to Afrobarometer data from Round 4 (2008/2009), it is possible to quantify both the extent to which citizens demand constituency service, and whether they are satisfied with MPs' level of community engagement. Specifically, citizens were asked how much time their MP *should* spend in their constituency to visit the community. The response options were as follows: 1) At least once a year, 2) At least once a month, 3) At least weekly, 4) Almost all of their time. Across 17 countries, the average citizen wanted their MP to visit the constituency at least once a month. However, when asked about how much time their MP actually *does* spend in their constituency, the average response option is closer to "at least once a year". This suggests a significant under-supply of MPs' constituency service activities.

Although the response categories provide only rough estimates for the discrepancy between demand and perceived supply of MP-community engagement, it is nevertheless possible to calculate the perceived over or under-supply of constituency service for each respondent. Across the 17 countries, only nine percent of respondents reported that their MP spends more time in the constituency than they demand the MP does. In other words, these respondents perceive an over-supply of constituency service. In comparison, one in three respondents (29%) reported that their demand for constituency service was in line with what they expected of the MP, while 62% of respondents said that their MP spends less time in the constituency than they think the MP should (under-supply).

When disaggregating the data by country (**Figure 8.2**), two points stand out. On the one hand, in each country the average citizen reports an under-supply of constituency service. This echoes findings from several country specific analyses such as Lindberg (2010) in Ghana. On the other hand, we also observe some meaningful difference across countries. While the perceived under-supply is most pronounced in Malawi (-1,9), Senegal (-1,6), and Zambia (-1,5), the gap is substantially smaller in, South Africa (-0,5), and Nigeria (-0,6). The difference along electoral system type is relatively small (PR= -0,9; SMD=-1,1; Mixed systems= -1,2). In the second part of this chapter, we return to this issue and analyse whether the perceived under-supply of constituency engagement negatively affects citizens' satisfaction with service delivery.

Figure 8.2: Citizens' perceived supply of MP's time in constituency | 17 countries | 2008/2009



Source: Afrobarometer Round 4. Note: To calculate the perceived over/under supply of constituency service (y-axis) respondent scores for the question of how often an MP does visit the constituency is deducted from the score of how often a respondent says the MP should visit the constituency to engage with the community. The response categories are: 1) At least once a year, 2) At least once a month, 3) At least weekly, 4) Almost all of their time.

8.2.3 Dimensions of MP-citizen engagement

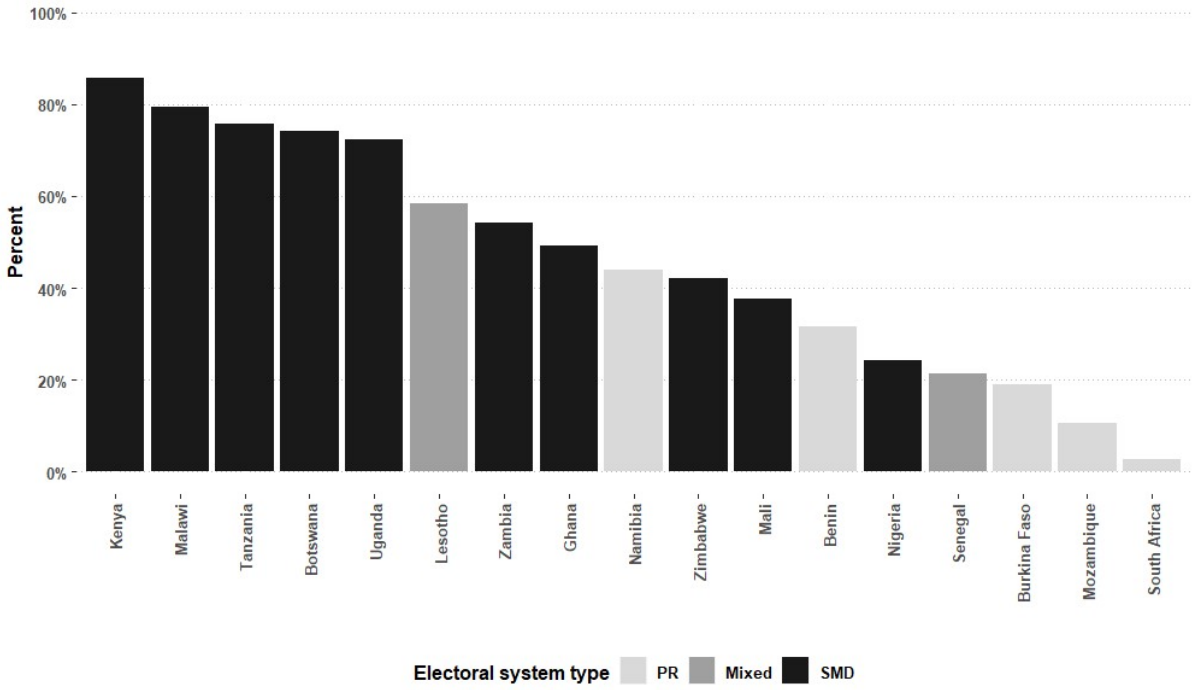
Knowing that citizens expect MPs to spend more time in the constituency and act as delegates when addressing the country's most pressing issues helps to underscore the demand for a functioning Conveyor Belt, but it does not tell us whether citizens perceive their MPs to be responsive. To determine the latter, I make use of a series of questions which measure several aspects of the vertical connection between MPs and citizens.

- Can citizens identify their MP?
- Do citizens contact their MP?
- Do citizens believe that their MPs try their best to listen to what they have to say?
- Can citizens make MPs listen to issues that matter in the community?
- Do citizens feel heard outside of the campaign season?

For citizens to engage with their elected representative, they ought to be able to identify him or her (**Figure 8.3**). Across all 17 countries, almost half (46%) of

respondents were able to identify their MP correctly. While this is a comparatively easy task for citizens in countries with SMD systems (62%), it is more difficult for those in PR systems (19%). Yet, there is substantial variation even among countries with SMD systems (e.g. a 62 percentage-point difference between Kenya and Nigeria). Not being able to identify one's MP does not mean a breakdown of the Conveyor Belt mechanism altogether, as citizens can still engage with party activists (see Scenario Three in Chapter 1). However, it closes off an important avenue for citizens, making it less likely that parties function as strong Conveyor Belts (Scenario Four).

Figure 8.3: Citizens identify MP correctly | 17 countries | 2008/2009



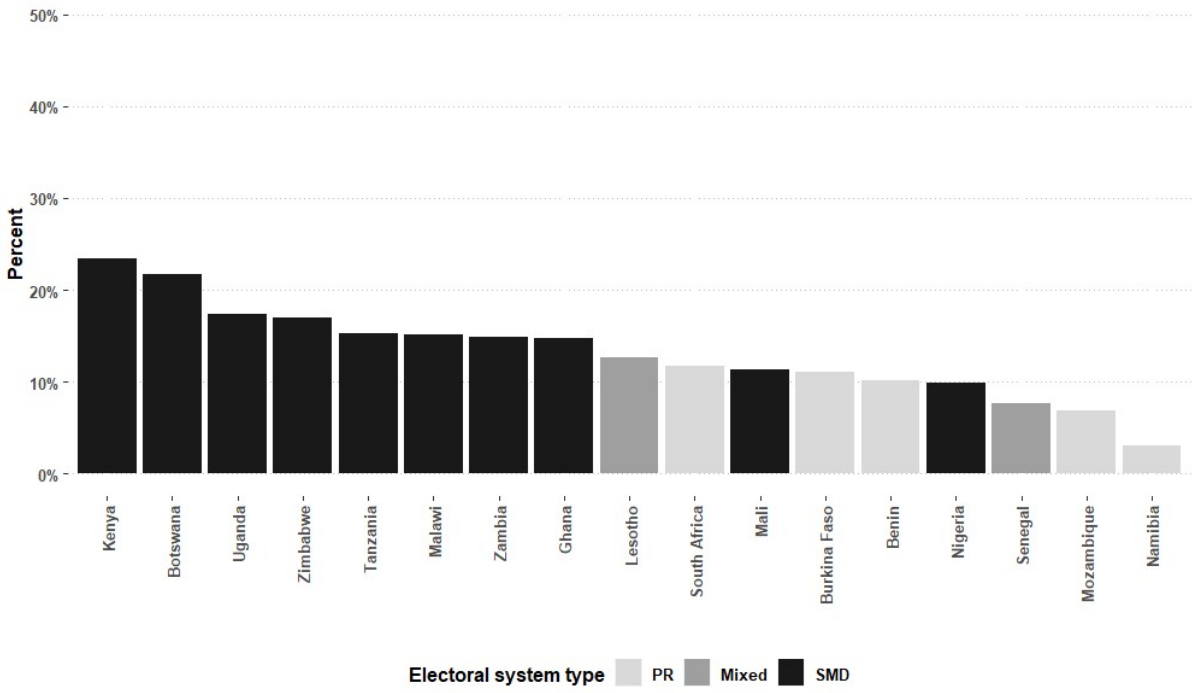
Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Can you tell me the name of: Your Member of Parliament? Percentage of respondents who could provide the correct name. Source: Afrobarometer.

Citizens who can identify their MP are also better able to track their overall performance, as well as what they say publicly, in the newspapers or on the radio. However, as Chapter 5 has shown, citizens also often take the initiative to contact their MP to talk about community issues (see, **Figures 5.5 & 5.6**).[102] And while citizens in SMD countries are consistently more likely to contact their MP (**Figure 5.7**), there are noticeable differences across countries, even within the same electoral system

[102] *Far more respondents contacted their elected representative in a group and about a community issue, as opposed to by themselves and about a personal problem.*

families (e.g., Kenya 23% and Nigeria, 10%, **Figure 8.4**). Notwithstanding some variation, then, these data support my argument that a significant share of citizens regularly engage in collective claim-making around community problems – the second important dimension of the MP-citizen relationship.

Figure 8.4: Citizens contacting MP | 17 countries | 2008/2009[103]



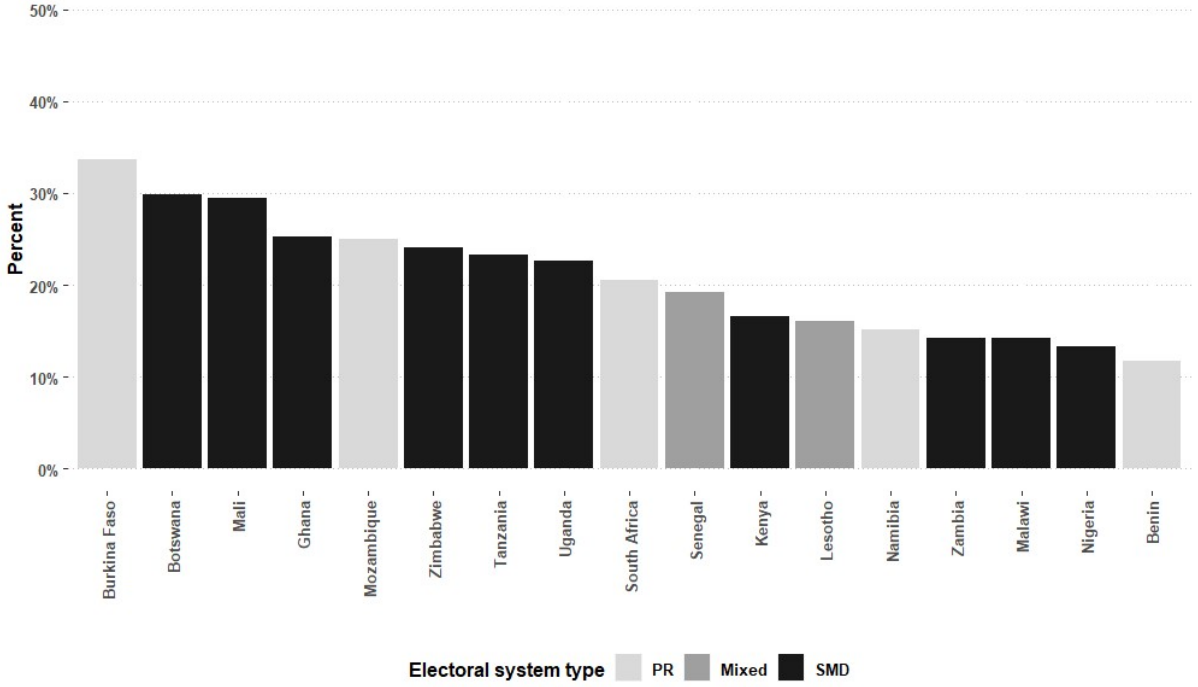
Source: Afrobarometer; Note: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A Member of Parliament? Percentage of respondents who contacted MP at least once.

As outlined earlier, the conveyor belt mechanism predicts a strengthening of the connection between elected representatives and citizens whenever MPs are responsive to their constituents' demands. To capture the exchange of information between citizens and MPs, I rely on two separate questions. Starting with the question of whether MPs try their best to listen to what ordinary citizens have to say, 21% of respondents said that this is in fact the case (**Figure 8.5**). To put these numbers into perspective: 33% and 49% of citizens said the same about local councillors, and traditional leaders respectively. Although MPs receive the lowest scores here, it is

[103] *In South Africa, only 3% of respondents were able to identify their MP correctly, while 12% of respondents contacted an MP at least once in the preceding 12 months. These unusual results are probably a result of the question phrasing and the electoral system used in South Africa. The question asked respondents whether they contacted a member of parliament. While most citizens in single and small member districts will interpret this to mean 'their' MP, this is presumably less straight forward in PR systems such as South Africa.*

important to keep two things in mind. First, there are far more local councillors than MPs in any country. So, for MPs to score only 12 percentage points lower than councillors speaks to their ability to effectively connect with citizens. Second, when comparing councillors and traditional leaders, the former should be considered as part of the Conveyor Belt, and thus, further strengthen the connection between citizens and parties, while the latter would fall outside the mechanism, representing a complementary avenue for citizens to voice their issues.

Figure 8.5: MPs listen | 17 countries | 2008/2009



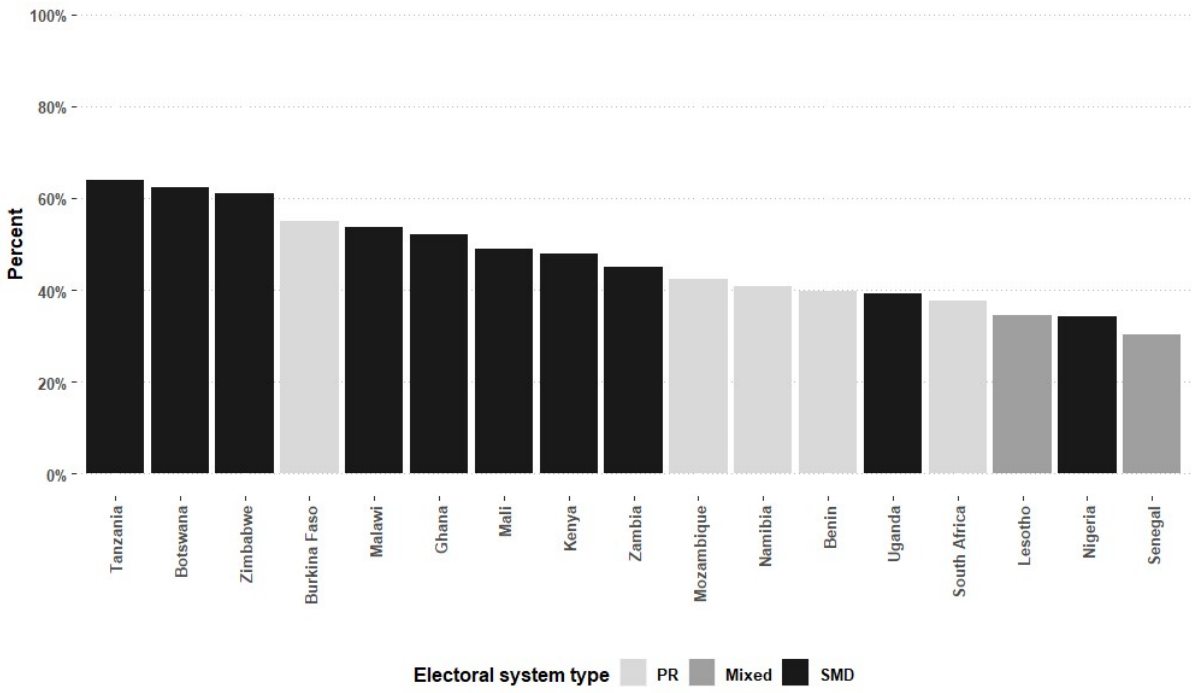
Source: Afrobarometer; Note: How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say: Members of Parliament? Percentage of respondents who said 'often' or 'always'.

Building on the above, citizens were also asked whether they think that they could make an MP listen (and potentially act) on issues that matter to the community if they would get together with others. Almost half (46%) of all respondents said that it would be "somewhat" or "very likely" that they could do such through community mobilization (**Figure 8.6**). In comparison, 59% of citizen said the same regarding councillors.[104] Further, it is worth noting that this question also captures the different incentives for citizens and communities to organize and engage with elected

[104] *Once again, the responsiveness of local councillors should not be seen as a competing avenue for the exchange of information, but rather as part of the Conveyor Belt mechanism (as both are usually part of political parties), even if it is not explicitly theorised in this dissertation.*

officials that are baked into the different electoral system types. Thus, it is not surprising that citizens in SMD countries are more optimistic about making their MP listen to them.

Figure 8.6: Make MPs listen | 17 countries | 2008/2009

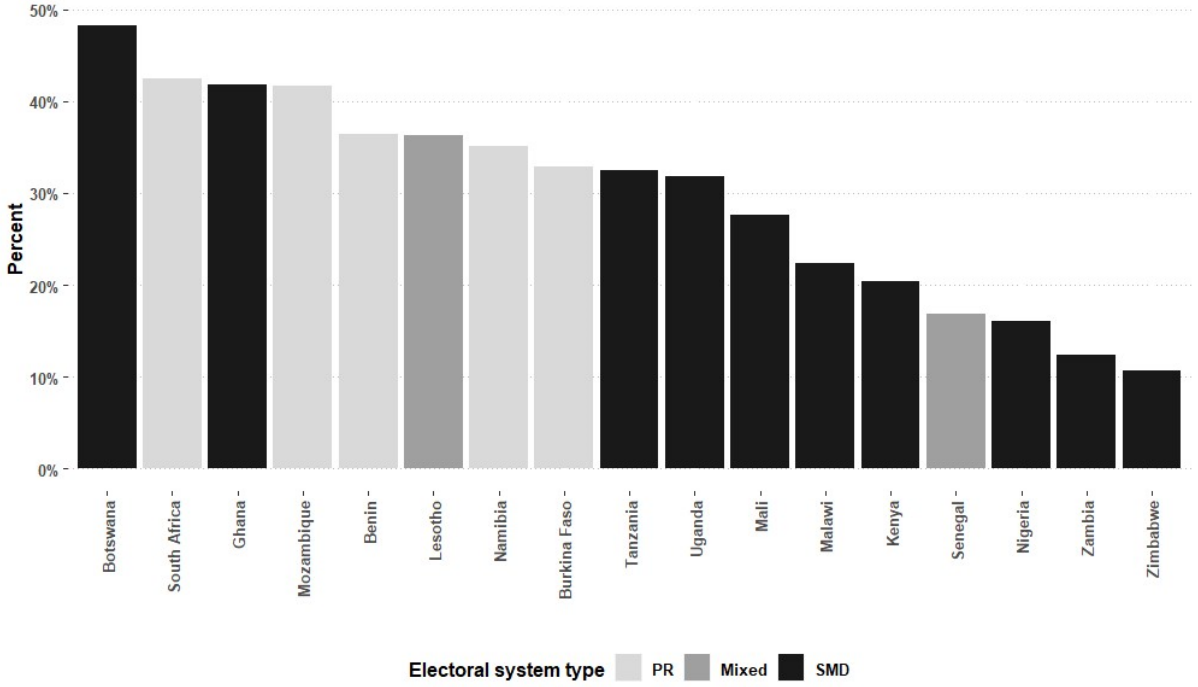


Source: Afrobarometer; Note: In your opinion, how likely is it that you could get together with others and make: Your Member of Parliament listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community? Percentage of respondents who say 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely'.

Of the preceding four questions, the first pair focused on citizens ability to identify and contact their elected representatives, whereas the second pair measured MPs' responsiveness, or the quality of the interaction. However, none of the questions make explicit reference to when these interactions take place. Therefore, in the last question, I aim to capture whether citizens feel heard between elections. Where this is the case, citizens' satisfaction with public service delivery is likely to increase. Unfortunately, the question does not explicitly mention MPs, or other party representatives, however, the question is asked immediately after three questions about citizens' role in holding the president, MPs and local councillors to account. Thus, I use it as the best available proxy to capture the temporal dimension of the MP-citizen relationship.

Across the 17-country sample, one third (32%) of respondents said that it was 'somewhat easy' or 'easy' for an ordinary person to have their voice heard between elections (**Figure 8.7**). However, there is both considerable variation across countries and surprisingly high score among countries with PR-systems. However, a more intuitive finding is that more democratic countries (e.g. Botswana (51%), South Africa (45%), Ghana (44%), and Namibia (37%)), seem to perform better than less democratic ones (e.g. Zimbabwe (11%)).

Figure 8.7: Voice heard between elections | 17 countries | 2008/2009



Source: Afrobarometer; Note: How easy or difficult is it for an ordinary person to have his voice heard between elections? Percentage of respondents who said it is 'somewhat easy' or 'easy'.

These macro-level comparisons are insightful as they demonstrate national differences and highlight how the type of electoral system partially shapes how citizens view their MPs. To better understand if and how citizens make use of the conveyor-belt mechanism, I complement this analysis with micro-level comparisons. Are citizens who can correctly identify their MP, also more likely to contact him or her and perceive the MP as more responsive? Moreover, are these citizens also more likely to feel heard between elections? Using bivariate correlations to test these assumptions, the answer is as a qualified yes. Among respondents in SMD systems, all the individual variables are correlated with each other and in the expected

direction (**Table 8.1**). However, this is not the case in the full sample, and among respondents in non-SMD systems (Appendix C). With that being said, the size of the coefficients remains small across all dyads. Factor analyses and reliability tests for the entire sample, as well as the SMD and non-SMD sub-samples suggest that these items do not form an underlying dimension.[105] Rather, each variable represents a distinct aspect of the citizen-MP connection, warranting separate treatment in subsequent analyses.

Table 8.1: Citizen-perceptions of MPs: Inter-item correlations | SMD systems | 17 countries | 2008/2009

	Identify MP	Contact MP	MPs listen	Make MPs listen
Contact MP	**.15*** **			
MPs listen	**.06*** **	**.14*** **		
Make MPs listen	**.08*** **	**.20*** **	**.19*** **	
Voice heard between elec.	**.06*** **	**.06*** **	**.12*** **	**.13*** **

*Source: Afrobarometer; Note: *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed). Bold=correlation is significant and in the expected direction.*

8.3 Engaging with MPs: Citizen Perspective

In the previous chapter, I presented macro-level data suggesting that citizens are more satisfied with service delivery in countries where MPs spend more time on Conveyor Belt related activities (confirming **H 2a**). This section makes a similar point by providing micro-level evidence from the citizen perspective. Additionally, I offer limited evidence that citizens' connections with, and views of their MPs matter more for their satisfaction with community level services than household level services (**H 2b**). Methodologically, I conduct fixed-effects OLS regressions for both community and household level services using the full sample, with the five MP-related predictor variables introduced above. To tease out the effect of the electoral system type, I also re-run the same analysis on the SMD and non-SMD sub-samples.

Regarding the criteria for including additional variables in the regression models, I continue the approach adopted in previous chapters and focus on evaluating the key factor of the theory rather than explaining as much of the variation in the dependant variable. Therefore, I test the relationship between citizens' perceptions

[105] *The Cronbach's Alpha for the full as well as the sub-samples was not higher than .40, and factor analyses for each sample with Bartlett scores and varimax rotation produced factors that did not explain more than 14% of the variance.*

of MPs and their views on service delivery, while considering possible confounding effects (**Table 8.2**).

First, being close to a political party assumes at least a basic level of engagement with the available options on the electoral menu. Thus, respondents who feel close to a party, and especially those who feel close to the ruling party could be more likely to identify or contact an MP. It is also likely that partisans care more about the issues their party highlights. Therefore, respondents might perceive MPs to be more attentive to their needs and make them feel heard between elections. Partisans could also have an advantage in mobilizing other members of the community (esp. co-partisans) and make MPs listen to their concerns and suggestions. At the same time, closeness to the ruling party might also lead to more favourable evaluations of basic service delivery. To measure the potentially confounding effect of being a partisan of the ruling party, I use a dummy variable (*Close to ruling party)* which separates respondents who feel close to the party that holds the office of the president/prime minister from those that do not.

Table 8.2: Summary of potential individual-level confounding factors

Potential Confounding Variable	**Expected Impact on MP related IV**	**Expected Impact on Satisfaction with Service Delivery DV**
Close to ruling party	Partisanship/Closeness to ruling party makes it more likely to know of, or contact MP and to feel heard (+)	Supporting the ruling party makes it more likely to see ruling party's efforts in a positive light (+)
Closeness to legislative election	Surveys conducted closer to an election, are more likely to capture a 'campaign effect' positively influencing the main predictor variables (+)	Increased government communication close to an election is likely to improve citizen perceptions of service delivery (+)

Second, and notwithstanding the consistent citizen-initiated contact with political parties across the electoral cycle shown in Chapter 5, citizens' chances of engaging with political elites vary across the electoral cycle since communication from MPs and parties will increase during the campaign period. In the runup to elections, MPs are more likely to engage with potential voters to raise their public profile, while they might focus on other matters between elections. Such a campaign effect can influence how citizens view MPs across all five indicators. For example, in the months prior to an election, or immediately thereafter, citizens might be more likely to identify an MP correctly when asked by an interviewer because of increased news coverage. Similarly, the campaign effect might positively influence citizens' views on

government performance. The measure used in the analysis *Closeness to election* reflects the number of months between the median date of the fieldwork period and the closest national legislative election. Lastly, I include a battery of basic socio-economic factors to control for age, gender, location (urban/rural), lived poverty, education, as well as interest in politics and the available service infrastructure in the neighbourhood of each respondent (**Table 8.3**).[106]

Table 8.3: Descriptive statistics of variables included in main regression analysis

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Identify MP	.44	.50	0	1
Contact MP	.13	.34	0	1
MPs listen	.21	.40	0	1
Make MPs listen	.45	.50	0	1
Voice heard between elections	.30	.46	0	1
Satisfaction with community-level services	1.63	.86	0	3
Satisfaction with household-level services	1.26	.84	0	1
State reach (community-level services)	.77	.32	0	1
State reach (household-level services)	.38	.37	0	1
Close to ruling party	.32	.47	0	1
Months to closest election	15.62	7.76	5.47	30.1
Free and fair elections	2.24	.71	1	3
Engaged in politics	.54	.31	0	1
Age†	.66	.68	0	2
Gender (ref: female)	.5	.50	0	1
Location (ref: urban)	.63	.48	0	1
Lived poverty	1.31	.95	0	4
Education	1.38	.93	0	3

Source: Afrobarometer Round 4 (17 countries). Note: †=Respondents are grouped into three categories (18-30; 31-56; 57+)

In the first set of models, I assess the impact of each of the five MP-related variables on citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery individually (**Table 8.4**). Overall, how citizens view and engage with their MPs influences how satisfied they are with basic services. In the full sample (Columns 1 & 4) four of the five MP-related independent variables are significantly associated with the two dependent variables, even after introducing potentially confounding variables as well as controls for respondents' socio-economic status (coefficients are not shown).

While there is value in knowing one's MP and being able to contact them, the real benefit comes from engaging with a responsive MP. This is particularly true in SMD systems where citizens have a more direct connection to their elected representatives (**Figures 8.5** and **8.6**). Accordingly, the basic features of the MP-citizen connection - identifying or contacting an MP - are less effective in improving

[106] *Unfortunately, the Afrobarometer Round 4 data do not allow me to create the same versions of state reach variable from my analysis in* ***Chapter 4****. The more detailed questions about household-level availability of sewerage and electricity were only introduced in later survey rounds. Thus, I only measure the water connection at the household level.*

satisfaction with education and health care in SMD systems. Both points are confirmed empirically. Not only do we see smaller effects for these two (*Identify MP* and *Contact MP*) compared to the other variables, but they are also both not statistically significant in the SMD sample (Columns 2 and 3).

Table 8.4: Citizen-perceptions of MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery | individual variable models | split by electoral system type | 17 countries | 2008/2009

Citizen perceptions of MPs	**Satisfaction with community level services**			**Satisfaction with household level services**		
	Column 1 Full sample	*Column 2* SMD	*Column 3* Non-SMD	*Column 4* Full sample	*Column 5* SMD	*Column 6* Non-SMD
Identify MP	.01	-.01	**.06****	-.02	-.02	-.02
Observations	21554	13133	8421	20781	12627	8154
R^2	.17	.18	.17	.18	.19	.17
Contact MP	**.04***	.01	**.10*****	**.08*****	**.07*****	**.09*****
Observations	21557	13135	8422	20783	12629	8154
R^2	.18	.18	.17	.18	.19	.17
MPs listen	**.14*****	**.09*****	**.14*****	**.18*****	**.17*****	**.21*****
Observations	21553	13133	8420	20780	12627	8153
R^2	.18	.19	.17	.19	.20	.18
Make MPs listen	**.13*****	**.13*****	**.13*****	**.15*****	**.13*****	**.18*****
Observations	21552	13132	8420	20779	12627	8152
R^2	.18	.19	.17	.19	.19	.18
Voice heard between elections	**.07*****	**.12*****	.00	**.07*****	**.08*****	**.06*****
Observations	21553	13131	8422	20779	12625	8154
R^2	.18	.18	.17	.18	.19	.17

*Source: Afrobarometer; Note: Reporting results of separate regressions treating satisfaction with community-level and household-level services as dependent variables. Independent variables are the five indicators of MP related citizen perceptions. Results are from OLS models. Standard errors are shown in parentheses. Each regression also includes the following control variables: closeness to ruling party, months to closes election, location (urban/rural), age, gender, lived poverty, education and engagement in politics. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level. Bold=correlation is significant and in the expected direction. In each case, the R^2 value refers to the entire model.*

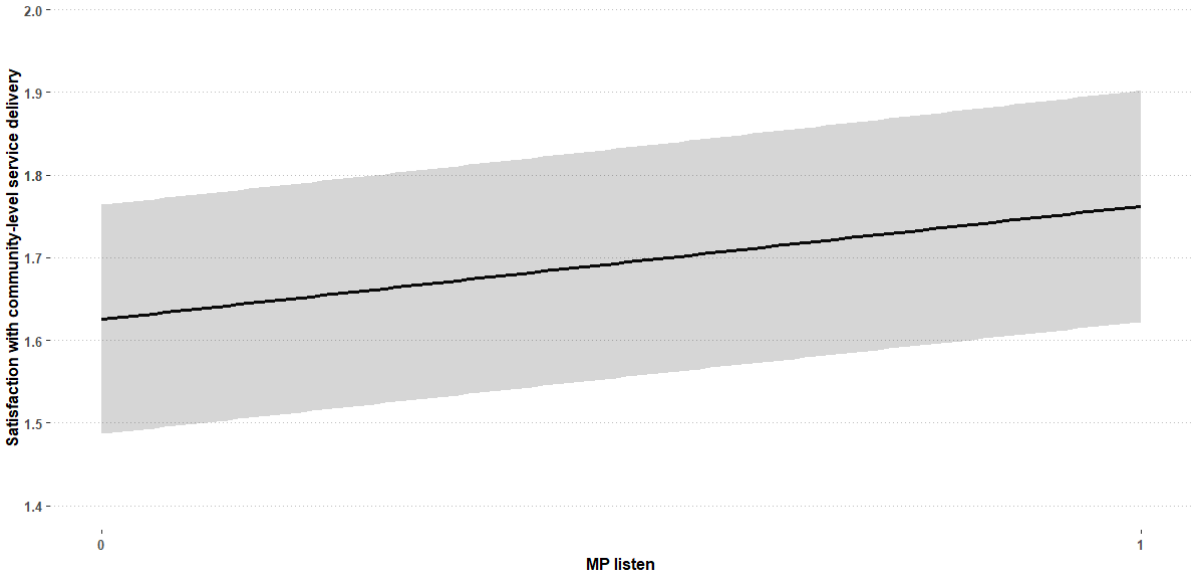
In contrast, the variables that tap directly into the exchange of information between citizens and MPs *(MPs listen,* and *Make MPs listen*), have larger coefficients. Substantively, this means that there is a stronger connection between perceiving one's MP to be responsive and satisfaction with service delivery than there is between having contacted an MP and satisfaction with service delivery.

A related concern is that MPs stop being responsive outside of the campaign period. Thus, the fifth variable captures how easy or difficult it is for citizens to make their voice heard between elections. For community-level services, this variable is only statistically significant for respondents in SMD countries. This suggests that where MPs operate as advocates in their constituencies across the electoral cycle, citizens are more satisfied with service delivery.

Focusing on household-level services, we see broadly similar patterns (*Column 5* and 6). In SMD and non-SMD countries, citizens who can identify their MP are not more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of water, sanitation, or electricity. And while the *Contact MP* variable is statistically significant, the coefficient is about half as strong compared to the variables measuring MP responsiveness (*MPs listen* and *Make MP listen*). Taken together, this underscores the importance of an MP's responsiveness vis-à-vis presence in the constituency.

Do the observed statistically significant differences also make a substantive difference? Since I am particularly interested in the transmission of information, I use the *Make MP listen* variable to demonstrate the substantive effect. **Figure 8.8** shows that citizens who believe that their MP tries to listen to constituent concerns are 0.14 points (on a 4-point scale) more satisfied with community-level service delivery than those who don't think that their MP tries to listen to them, holding other variables at their mean value.[107] Considering that the mean satisfaction level on the 4-point scale is 1.63 for community-level services, a 0.14 point increase, translates to a nine percent increase. As the next part of the analysis will show, this is a modest but important improvement.

Figure 8.8: Effect of making MP listen to citizen concerns on satisfaction with community-level service delivery | 2008/2009



Source: Uses simulated predicted values from MP listen model in Column 1 in Table 6.4.

[107] *In the case of community-level services, the effect size is comparable for the Make MP listen variable. The effect size is slightly larger for household-level services across the two variables.*

Having analysed the statistical and substantive significance of the key factors individually, what are the combined substantive impacts of the MP-related variables on citizens' satisfaction with the two types of services compared to the potentially confounding and control variables? To answer this question, I include all five MP-related variables into the same regression models.

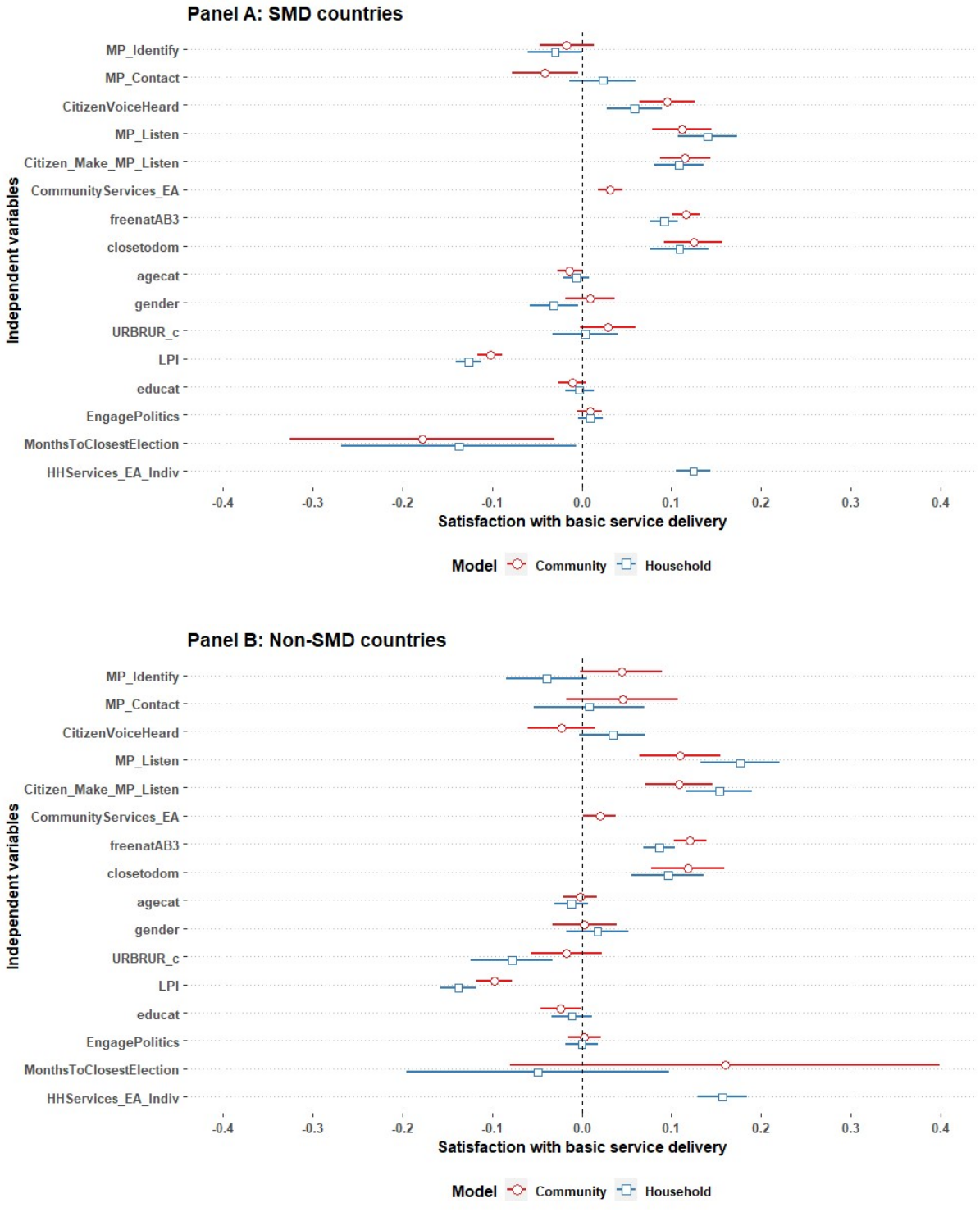
Figure 8.9 reveal several important insights highlighting how the conveyor-belt mechanism works.[108] First, the two variables focusing on the exchange of information between citizens and MPs (*MPs listen*, and *Make MPs listen*) have significant impact in the expected directions even after including potential confounding factors, control variables, and country level fixed effects (Panel A & Panel B). A third variable (*Citizen voice heard between elections*) is statistically significant in SMD countries (Panel A). Put differently, the quality of the interaction (including the anticipated responsiveness of MPs) significantly increases citizens' satisfaction with service delivery, especially in countries with SMD systems. In contrast, merely being able to identify ones elected representative, or contacting their MP is unlikely to improve citizens' perception of service delivery. This confirms the results above and fits well with the results from Chapter 7 where larger shares of *Conveyor Belt MPs* were positively associated with citizen satisfaction with service delivery. To explore this point further, I also ran additional models which included the *over/under supply of constituency service* introduced at the outset of this chapter (results not shown). While there was a positive relationship between the perceived supply of constituency service and satisfaction with service delivery, it was not statistically significant in the SMD sub-sample, and the coefficient size was small across all models. Thus, these results further substantiate the point that the quality of the interaction matters more than the frequency.

Second, the presence of physical service infrastructure has a limited positive effect on citizen satisfaction with community-level services, but a more substantive effect for household-level services. This, too, is in line with the findings from the cross-national analysis conducted in Chapter 4. The comparison of the standardised coefficients also underscores that MPs play a more important role in the satisfactory delivery of education and health care than for the delivery of water, sanitation, and electricity. In the case of community-level services, the coefficients for several of the

[108] *The full regression results can be found in Appendix D.*

MP related variables are higher than the infrastructure variable, whereas the coefficients are roughly similar in the case of household-level services. This is true for respondents in both SMD and non-SMD countries.

Figure 8.9: Citizen-perceptions of MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery | 2009/2009



Source: Afrobarometer. Note: Panels A and B are based on Models 1-4 in Table D.1 in Appendix D. For ease of comparison, the effects in the figures are standardised.

A third important insight emerges when comparing the relative importance of the MP-citizen connection to the two potentially confounding factors introduced earlier. Starting with partisanship, the analysis shows that citizens who feel close to the ruling party are more likely to be satisfied with service delivery across the board. This is to be expected. What is perhaps more surprising, is that the effect size of being close to the president's party, is comparable to having a responsive MP. This suggests that the Conveyor Belt mechanism works even for opposition party supporters and non-partisans.

Moreover, the MP-citizen connection is still statistically significant, even once we consider the timing of the survey. The data suggest a positive campaign effect in SMD systems. The closer a survey took place to an election the more satisfied citizens were with service delivery in SMD systems. Yet, there was no clear campaign effect in non-SMD systems.

Lastly, we can also compare the effect of the MP related variables to other socio-economic and demographic factors. Among the control variables, only citizens' experience of poverty has a similarly strong, albeit negative effect on satisfaction with service delivery. In contrast, respondents' age, gender, location, education, and interest in politics are not consistently and statistically significantly associated with perceptions of service delivery.

These results are also robust to several alternative specifications of the statistical model, including additional country-level (ethnic fractionalisation, presence of CDFs, effective number of parties) and individual-level controls (Councillors listen, Traditional leaders listen). For additional information, please consult Appendix E.

8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I focus on the MP-citizen relationship from the vantage point of citizens. After demonstrating that citizens view their elected representatives as delegates who ought to follow citizens' instructions, rather than trustees who should act on their own, I provided evidence that citizens demand for constituency service is often only partially met. Taken together, this suggests that citizens frequently want their MPs to act as advocates.

Using individual-level data, I build on this insight and show which aspects of the MP-citizen connection are associated with citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. I show that it is less about citizens' ability to identify or contact their elected

representative, but rather about the quality of the interaction, that is, the responsiveness of MPs. This difference is robust even after accounting for a range of potential confounding factors, including the phase of the electoral cycle, respondents' partisan identification with the ruling party, as well as additional socio-economic and demographic control variables. In short, these results confirm that citizens are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of education and health-care services in countries where MPs are more responsive to constituent needs (**H 2a**).

Strikingly, the effect of MP responsiveness is larger than the presence of the physical service infrastructure in the case of community-level services, and comparable to having the necessary connections for water, sanitation and electricity services in the neighbourhood and at the household level. These results provide limited evidence in support of H **2b**, that MPs engagement with citizens in their constituencies is more consequential for the satisfactory delivery of community-level services, compared to household-level services.

I conclude by emphasizing that the results presented in this chapter also describe variation across electoral system types. Though the effect size of MP-related variables is often similar between SMD and non-SMD variables, we have seen that citizens in SMD countries are better at identifying and more likely to contact their MP, as well as make him or her listen to citizen concerns. Therefore, the conveyor-belt mechanism is more likely to operate in countries with single-member districts (partially supporting **H 2c**).

These insights help to contextualize several findings in the Africanist literature. On the one hand, they echo the results of a recent study by Ofosu (2023) who demonstrates that constituents want their representatives to go beyond providing community development projects, but also to listen to their views. The study joins other recent studies that emphasise citizens' desire to deliberate with officeholders (Barkan & Mattes, 2014; Paller, 2019).

On the other hand, my results confirm that the citizen-MP relationship varies widely across the continent. Figures 8.3 – 8.7 supports Demarest's (2021) interpretation that Nigerian lawmakers have weak ties to their constituents due to party activists' expectations of clientelistic favours. Yet, as she points out, Nigeria might constitute one end of the spectrum rather than the norm. Elected representatives in Ghana and Botswana seem to do a better job at connecting with their constituents even

though they face some of the same challenges that come with intra-party selection through local party officials (Acheampong, 2021; Ichino & Nathan, 2022).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter revisits the main argument and findings of the dissertation and discusses their implications for several important debates in the social science literature. I begin by summarising the theoretical underpinnings of the conveyor-belt mechanism, as well as the cross-country and case study evidence I marshalled in support of my argument. Next, I evaluate the evidence against the four scenarios outlined in Chapter 1 and discuss the scope conditions of the conveyor-belt mechanism. Finally, the concluding section suggests a number of fruitful directions for further research.

9.2 Revisiting the Argument

The existing literature on the democracy advantage views political parties that participate in competitive elections as a key reason why democracies outperform autocratic regimes in the delivery of government services. In short, their desire to get re-elected incentivises them to deliver public services to as many people as possible. At the same time, however, a related literature on clientelism and distributive politics in the Global South often paints a negative picture of parties' role in the provision of these services, suggesting that citizens trade political support for excludable benefits and services. When viewed side by side, then, these two literatures describe seemingly contradictory trends. On the one hand, political parties are said to improve service delivery where they participate in intense electoral competition. On the other hand, they are often seen to worsen service delivery in the Global South, and in Africa in particular.

In this dissertation, I argue that closer attention to how African parties aggregate and address citizens' complaints, as well as transmit information between citizens and the state helps to explain under what circumstances political parties improve service delivery. Drawing on case study evidence from Malawi and Zambia, I demonstrate that party activists and MPs – two key actors within political parties – regularly act as problem solvers, advocates.

For example, The Zambian Panel Survey showed that most citizens know party activists from at least one major party (80%), and approximately half of all respondents even know party activists from both major parties. Further, Zambians

also confirmed the importance of party activists for service delivery: 33% of citizens reported that party activists help citizen groups with access to government services (problem solver), while 34% of respondents said that party activists provide information about government projects, and 38% said that party activists regularly organise events and represent the party (ambassador roles).

Similarly, the original survey data from Malawi and Zambia provided novel evidence about the connections between MPs on the one hand, and citizens, party activists, and bureaucrats on the other. Malawian bureaucrats describe MPs as powerful advocates when it comes to the allocation of financial and human resources for service delivery projects.

However, I have also gone beyond providing empirical evidence that party representatives act as fixers, and facilitators for the exchange of information between citizens and the state. Through comparisons at the country-level, as well as rigorous micro-level analysis for up to 33 African countries, I have also addressed the 'So what?' question. The conveyor-belt mechanism provides a novel explanation for both cross-national as well as sub-national variation in citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. It does so, by highlighting how the density of local party presence and the strength of vertical connections within political parties vary across contexts. This variation, I argue, leads to different levels of satisfaction with service delivery among citizens. On the one hand, the conveyor-belt mechanism helps us to understand why we see different levels of satisfaction between community- and household-level services. The incentives for political parties to improve the physical infrastructure and experience of community services such as education and health care, as well as citizens' ability to mobilise around these issues are both more favourable compared to household level services. On the other hand, I provide preliminary evidence that the type of party network (ruling vs. opposition) and the context in which parties operate (fluidity of party system and level of bureaucratic decentralisation) affects the relationship between political parties and citizens' satisfaction with service delivery.

9.3 From hypotheses to scenarios

Throughout this dissertation, I identify and test the connection between citizens, political parties, and bureaucrats at the party activist and at the MP level by testing hypotheses **1a-c** and **2a-c**. In Chapter 1, I outlined four scenarios (**Table 1.3**) that

describe various combinations of outcomes for these hypotheses. In this section, I briefly summarise some of the key findings against the expectations laid out in these scenarios.

In **Scenario One**, the density of party activist networks and the MP-citizen linkages are not correlated with citizens' satisfaction with service delivery. In line with this scenario, scholars of African politics often describe political parties as absent between elections, primarily providing preferential treatment to a subset of potential voters. The findings I present in Chapters 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 suggest that this description of parties is only poorly supported by empirical evidence. On the one hand, citizens across the continent regularly approach party activists and elected representatives (MPs and local councillors) to discuss community issues, and they do so consistently during and between elections. On the other hand, many African parties maintain a local presence across the country.

However, while most ruling parties are present across the country, the local presence of opposition parties varies considerably. Even though many opposition parties have sophisticated organisational structures, others are unable to canvass sizable parts of the population. In the aggregate, however, political parties provide citizens with accessible local party networks that help to improve citizens' satisfaction with service delivery, and community level services in particular (confirming **H1a** & **b** and **H 2 a** & **b**). Although my overall findings demonstrate that this pessimistic scenario of universally weak parties is rare, the conveyor-belt mechanism does not apply universally. The preceding analysis showed that the composition of the party system (**H 1c**), as well as the electoral system type (**H 2c**) influence whether and how well the mechanism works. I expand on this below.

In **Scenario Two**, MPs build independent conveyor-belts. That is, they are likely to develop local structures that are closely tied to them as individuals, but do not connect to a larger party organisation. In these cases, independent MPs and those linked to a party (whether through weak or strong party ties) would be equally likely to increase citizen satisfaction. According to the 17-country MP survey, this scenario seems unlikely for most of the cases I studied. For example, 75% of MPs primarily have structured direct engagement with citizens (e.g., attending public meetings that are open to all), or use party structures to gage citizens' sentiments (e.g., meetings with constituency party officials). Moreover, 70% of MPs have a local constituency office,

and 78% have representatives in their constituencies even when they are not in their home district. In the case of the latter, most are either volunteers, or paid for by the party or parliament. Taken together, this suggests that MPs often rely on broader party structures to develop functioning conveyor belts.

To show that independent MPs are unlikely to increase citizen satisfaction with service delivery in the same way as their partisan peers, the case study evidence I presented in Chapter 4 is particularly instructive. Specifically, I used Afrobarometer data to show that opposition parties increase satisfaction with service delivery when they maintain dense local organisational structures and operate in competitive areas. The more competitive these district councils were, the more likely ruling and opposition parties were to increase citizen satisfaction. However, this was not the case for independent candidates. In short, even in a case like Malawi that has more favourable conditions for independent candidates than most other African cases, political parties had the hypothesised impact on service delivery, while independent candidates did not.

Next, **Scenario Three** describes cases where conveyor-belts only work at the community level through networks of local party activists that do not connect or coordinate their efforts with elected representatives and other party elites. However, this scenario is also unlikely to apply in most of the countries I study.

While it is true that citizens receive help with community problems and obtain information about government projects from party activists, the latter do not work in a vacuum. Rather, these local party networks are connected to higher-level party representatives. Party activists regularly engage with party officials at different levels, even in a country like Malawi, which is often described as lacking parties with strong organisational structures. For example, the Party Elite Survey in Malawi demonstrated that both party activists and MPs connect with district-level party representatives at least once a month to address community concerns, exchange information about government service projects and debate party policies. Perhaps surprisingly, this level of engagement was relatively consistent for old and new parties, as well as ruling and opposition parties.

Finally, **Scenario Four** represents the expectation that party activists and MPs form a strong conveyor-belt in which they not only engage with citizens and bureaucrats, but also enhance each other's effect through the vertical integration of their efforts.

Throughout my dissertation, I find supporting evidence for this scenario. At the MP level, elected representatives frequently prioritise conveyor-belt related activities over law-making and oversight by developing local structures in their communities that are integrated with larger party structures. For example, among the more than 800 legislators surveyed by the African Legislatures Project, 42% of MPs said that representation or constituency service is their top priority, and that they spend about a quarter of their time (27%) on constituency work.[109] Moreover, whenever they are in the constituency, they spend most of their time on conveyor-belt related activities. Further, evidence from the Malawi Party Elite survey also shows that party workers, play a significant role in the development of party programmes that address service delivery issues (Chapter 6), thus reinforcing the connection between local party workers and candidates who run for elected office.

Nevertheless, the conveyor-belt mechanism does not work equally well across all countries. I also present preliminary evidence (Chapter 4) that the positive effect of political parties depends at least in part on the composition of the party system. Opposition parties have fewer incentives to improve citizen satisfaction with service delivery when they are the only viable challenger in the country. This dynamic changes, however, once there are two or more viable opposition parties.

While the available data does not allow me to develop a league table of how well the mechanism works in each country, or within each party, it is possible to highlight some countries that do well (or poorly) more often than not. Let us consider four important markers of the conveyor-belt mechanism: 1) level of citizen-initiated contact about community-level issues; 2) density of local party presence (as measured by the PPI); 3) time MPs spend on conveyor-belt related activities; and 4) level of citizen satisfaction with service delivery. Across all four variables, Botswana scores near the top, or at least in the top half of countries, suggesting that the conveyor-belt mechanism is working well. Perhaps not coincidentally, Botswana is also one of the longest and most stable democracies on the continent. Here we can see how the conveyor-belt mechanism makes the democracy advantage work. In contrast, countries such as Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Senegal score relatively low across all four variables, suggesting that the conveyor-belt mechanism is not working as well in these contexts.

[109] *Importantly, these attitudinal and behavioural patterns are more prevalent among MPs in single-member-districts.*

9.4 Scope conditions

As the preceding paragraphs show, the scope conditions of the conveyor-belt mechanism are few, giving it broad geographic reach across Africa and beyond. To summarise these scope conditions, it is useful to revisit several key factors side-by-side (**Table 9.1**).

First, I argue that political parties help to objectively improve the functioning of basic services by reducing teacher absenteeism or upgrading a clinic through speaking to bureaucrats. Moreover, they improve citizen sentiment by publicly claiming credit for these improvements at community events or by taking positions on policy issues and sharing them at a campaign rally.

However, it is significantly easier for political parties to make credible claims and improve citizen satisfaction with service delivery in countries with higher levels of state reach and bureaucratic professionalism (e.g., Botswana, Cape Verde, and Mauritius, see columns 2-4), than in countries where parties engage with less capable government bureaucracies (e.g., Liberia and Mozambique).

Second, I emphasize the roles of party activists and MPs as advocates, ambassadors, and problem solvers. The evidence from the two case studies in Malawi and Zambia shows that party representatives are not only actively engaging with citizen and bureaucrats, but also regularly engage with each other. Importantly, Zambia (and to a large extent Malawi) have party related scores that are close to the 33 and 17-country averages (columns 5-7). What can these findings tell us about countries for which I only have partial data? On the one hand, this makes it improbable that the conveyor belt mechanism works as theorised in countries with underdeveloped local party networks such as Algeria (PPI=26%) and Tunisia (PPI=22%). On the other hand, it is likely that party activists and elected representatives meaningfully improve citizen satisfaction in countries like Sierra Leone (PPI=64%).

A third set of scope conditions relates to democracy, specifically, free and fair elections and effective multiparty competition. Free and fair elections make it more likely that citizens think their vote counts, which in turn can increase their perception of being able to punish bad, and reward good performance of politicians regarding service delivery. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated the "power of democratic elections in inducing higher public service delivery, even in contexts

where state capacity appears to be low" (Min, 2015, p. 100). Echoing this finding, the analyses in Chapters 4 & 8 have shown that perceptions of electoral quality play a substantive role in citizens evaluation of service delivery.

In addition, free and fair elections increase opposition parties' incentives to build a local presence as their efforts are more likely to be rewarded at the ballot box. Indeed, a comparison of the PPI (column 5) and perceived election quality (column 8) data reveals that the two often go together (e.g., São Tomé & Príncipe, and Algeria). And while some countries have high levels of electoral quality and a low PPI score (e.g., Mauritius), there is no country in the sample that has low quality elections, and a high PPI score. Taken together this suggests that countries need to conduct largely free and fair elections for the conveyor-belt mechanism to work well.

Relatedly, I have also presented suggestive evidence that the number and strength of opposition parties competing in elections matters for the working of the conveyor belt mechanism. In cases such as Malawi and Liberia where citizens have the choice between a ruling party and at least two viable opposition parties, the latter have more incentives to increase citizen satisfaction (esp. if they have stronghold areas in a context of substantive administrative decentralisation), rather than engage in negative campaigning. Although my exploratory analysis revealed intuitive results, more rigorous empirical tests are required to better understand this scope condition, especially the interaction between national and local government.

Finally, I theorise and empirically test the effect of the electoral system type on the conveyor-belt mechanism (**H 2c**). While this scope condition is less important at the party activist level, I find that the link between citizens and elected representatives is more immediate and responsive in single-member district (SMD) systems (also see Lockwood and Krönke 2022). Citizens are more likely to engage and demand accountability from MPs, and in turn, MPs are more likely to improve citizen satisfaction levels in SMD systems. Looking beyond the 17-country ALP sample, we would expect the conveyor belt mechanism to work better in other SMD countries such as Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, compared to countries with a large list proportional representation electoral system (e.g., Togo and Tunisia). To what extent these findings apply to mixed electoral systems is harder to tell, however. Based on the results of the two countries in the ALP sample (Lesotho and Senegal), it seems

Table 9.1: Characteristics of African regimes | Afrobarometer Round 6 sample

Country	State reach		Bureaucratic professionalism	PPI	MP Conveyor-belt activities		Electoral quality	ENP	Electoral system type
	Community-level	Household-level			Time in constituency	Constituency engagement			
Algeria	92%	97%	83%	26%			42%	4,09	PR
Benin	81%	40%	71%	60%	26%	2,6	66%	2,64	PR
Botswana	88%	73%	86%	45%	24%	2,8	78%	1,56	SMD
Burkina Faso	81%	31%	79%	48%	23%	2,2	65%	2,86	PR
Burundi	53%	26%	79%	41%	-	-	81%	1,63	PR
Cameroon	98%	77%	63%	45%	-	-	57%	1,45	Mixed
Cape Verde	87%	84%	82%	58%	-	-	57%	2,1	PR
Cote d'Ivoire	76%	74%	72%	37%	-	-	55%	2,91	SMD
Gabon	80%	81%	59%	52%	-	-	37%	-	SMD
Ghana	70%	50%	61%	38%	29%	2,5	47%	2,04	SMD
Guinea	69%	45%	68%	51%	-	-	67%	3,03	Mixed
Kenya	65%	57%	70%	57%	41%	2,6	61%	5,16	SMD
Lesotho	66%	41%	83%	46%	27%	2,7	75%	3,67	Mixed†
Liberia	86%	33%	48%	61%	-	-	54%	6,34	SMD
Madagascar	85%	39%	72%	18%	-	-	84%	7,15	SMD
Malawi	**72%**	**35%**	**76%**	**57%**	**46%**	**2,1**	**70%**	**2,67**	SMD
Mali	77%	50%	77%	40%	-	-	84%	4,41	SMD
Mauritius	88%	99%	86%	26%	-	-	91%	2	SMD
Morocco	84%	92%	68%	35%	-	-	34%	6,7	PR
Mozambique	56%	53%	63%	51%	20%	1	53%	2,16	PR
Namibia	41%	52%	84%	47%	16%	1	79%	1,73	PR
Niger	77%	24%	79%	49%	-	-	84%	4,64	Mixed
Nigeria	89%	71%	65%	39%	19%	2,7	48%	2,68	SMD
São Tomé & Príncipe	68%	61%	74%	75%	-	-	82%	2,21	PR
Senegal	72%	78%	76%	47%	27%	1,6	87%	1,57	Mixed†
Sierra Leone	62%	31%	61%	64%	-	-	70%	1,9	SMD
South Africa	56%	87%	83%	32%	27%	2,8	72%	2,26	PR
Tanzania	75%	41%	70%	67%	36%	2,4	76%	1,72	SMD
Togo	83%	44%	69%	44%	-	-	61%	1,95	PR
Tunisia	54%	95%	79%	22%	-	-	71%	3,69	PR
Uganda	67%	30%	69%	58%	20%	2,7	69%	1,91	SMD
Zambia	**83%**	**59%**	**76%**	**45%**	**27%**	**2**	**78%**	**2,96**	SMD
Zimbabwe	73%	62%	75%	54%	32%	2,1	56%	1,57	SMD
Average	74%	58%	73%	47%	28%	2,2	66%	*3*	-
Data source (year)	AB (2015/2015)	AB (2015/2015)	AB (2015/2015)	AB (2015/2015)	ALP (2008/2012)	ALP (2008/2012)	AB (2015/2015)	Gallagher (2014/2015)	V-Dem (2014/2015

Note: †=Lesotho and Senegal have a clear FPTP component as part of their mixed system. To make comparisons with other countries easier, dark grey shading=highest value in column; light grey shading=lowest value in column; Bold font=the two case study countries Malawi and Zambia.

that systems which have a clear SMD component produce results that are more similar to fully fledged SMD countries, than to countries with PR systems. However, to better understand how the electoral system type affects the conveyor belt mechanism, it is necessary to also investigate the congruence between the electoral system type at the national and local level (incl. potential interaction effects) – something that is beyond the scope of this study.

9.5 Political parties as conveyor-belts and the literature

Having briefly reviewed the main argument and findings of this dissertation, I now turn to situating the study within the broader social science literature. The first contribution this dissertation makes is to the literature on African political parties, where it joins a growing number of studies that focus explicitly on the organisational structures, and their subnational variation in Africa (e.g., Brierley and Nathan (2021a, 2021b), Choi (2018), Lockwood et al. (2021), Kwayu (2022), Paget (2022), Sulley (2022)).

By focusing on two key actors within political parties – party activists and MPs – this study provides one of the first explicitly cross-national analyses of multiple groups of party representatives in Africa. In addition to highlighting the importance of African parties, this dissertation also contributes to the growing literature on party brokers in the Global South.

Conceptually, I build on work by Bob-Milliar (2012, 2019), as well as Brierley and Nathan (2021b), who broaden our understanding of the roles party workers take on in their communities (e.g., problem solvers, foot soldiers, etc.). Going beyond the African context, my findings also complement, extend, and occasionally challenge conceptualizations of party workers in India and Latin America (e.g., Auerbach 2019, Auerbach and Thachil 2018, Bussell 2019, Kruks-Wisner 2018, Rizzo 2020, Thachil 2016, Stokes et al., 2013). As the preceding chapters have shown, my work also breaks new empirical ground by documenting the density of party worker networks, as well as their effectiveness in improving service delivery under various structural conditions across Africa.

Regarding previous research of African elected representatives, I provide unique cross-national data from the point of view of MPs. Thus, this work differs from most of the existing literature by systematically testing the influence of country-level variables

such as the electoral system type on MPs attitudes and behaviours.[110] Moreover, by showing that variation in whether and how MPs engage with constituents has substantive implications for citizens' satisfaction, I contribute to a nascent literature which takes the exchange of information between citizens and African elected representatives seriously (e.g., Jablonski & Seim 2023).

The second major contribution this dissertation makes is to recalibrate our perception of clientelism in Africa by providing systematic evidence on the work of party representatives as advocates, ambassadors, and problem solvers. Party activists and MPs spend most of their time serving their communities or constituencies, rather than responding to individuals' demands for patronage, or clientelist goods and services. By focusing on the consequences of parties' capacity to engage with both citizens and the state, this work also challenges the conventional wisdom that African parties are organisationally weak. In doing so, I shed new light on the extent to which intra-party communication takes place between elections, and how parties transmit information between different external stakeholders. Two previously underappreciated functions of African parties.

Thirdly, this work also adds to the literature on democracy and state capacity in at least two ways. On the one hand, I add to the democracy advantage literature by investigating the connection between citizens, political parties, and bureaucrats. Rather than just focusing on two of the three main stakeholders as is the case for most of the existing literature, I map the relationships between all three at the sub-national as well as the cross-national level, inviting deeper consideration of when and how political parties matter for service delivery.

On the other hand, most previous studies focus on specific elements along the service delivery chain (i.e., input, output, or outcome) for individual public services (e.g., education, or health care), often making contradictory findings. This dissertation highlights the importance of the last stage of the service delivery chain – citizen satisfaction – and provides a novel argument about why the physical service infrastructure matters less for education and health care, than for electricity, water, and sanitation.

[110] *For more cross-national work on the relationship between African citizens and their MPs using the same data, see Mattes and Mozaffar (2016).*

9.6 Conclusion

The conditions under which political parties improve citizens' satisfaction with service delivery vary. As Chapters 4, 7 and 8 have shown, parties' incentives to build strong and effective conveyor-belts of information are significantly influenced by the composition of the party landscape, as well as the electoral system type. However, there is no reason to believe that these are the only factors that shape the effectiveness of the conveyor-belt mechanism of ruling and opposition parties. Indeed, as Tavits (2013) demonstrated in the case of post-communist countries, party leaders ability to build effective organisational structures can have important consequences for intra-party politics and the endurance of a party across multiple electoral cycles. Future research could, therefore, pay greater attention to how the effectiveness of the conveyor-belt mechanism varies as parties change their personnel at the top.

Similarly, while the focus of this dissertation has been primarily on cross-national comparisons at particular points in time (between 2008 and 2012 for MPs, and around 2014/2015 for party activists), detailed longitudinal comparisons of how party activists and elected representatives (incl. local councillors) contribute to the conveyor-belt mechanism would improve our understanding of how electoral turnover shapes intra-party dynamics, and ultimately democratic accountability around basic service delivery. Such research could also provide important additional insights into whether MPs adapt their behaviour and increase their focus on conveyor-belt related activities as their electoral prospects change.

Relatedly, because I was unable to conduct in-depth qualitative fieldwork with party activists and elected representatives (due to Covid-19 fieldwork restrictions) future research could compensate for some of the inherent shortcomings of survey-based research by, for example, shadowing stakeholders ranging from party activists, MPs, and party leadership to local bureaucrats, or analysing informal archives (e.g., unmapped non-systematized notes from community meetings, photographs of public events, petitions for public services, etc.) - methods and resources that have produced valuable insights in other contexts already.

Finally, future work could also fruitfully explore the micro-foundations of the conveyor-belt mechanism more fully by including experiments with party activists and MPs. These could shed new light on why party representatives chose a

conveyor-belt related activity over other tasks, or when they choose to prioritise their work as problem solver over their role as an advocate or ambassador. Equally, experiments with citizens about the effect of direct contact with different party representatives, versus indirect dissemination of information (e.g., via neighbours, or mass communication) would be able to teach us more about the trade-offs parties need to make on a regular basis, and often while facing a myriad of political and material resource constraints.

These are just a few suggestions for further research. Each of these extensions, however, has the potential to improve our understanding of the conditions under which African political parties make service delivery - and ultimately democracy - work for ordinary citizens.

Bibliography

Acheampong, M. (2021). Legislators' Pathway to Power in Ghana: Intra-Party Competition, Clientelism and Legislator – Constituents' Relationship. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *27*(2), 300–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2020.1814514

African National Congress. (2007). *ANC Organizational Report Presented to the 52nd National Conference in Polokwane by Kgalema Motlanthe Secretary General of the ANC*. African National Congress.

Ahlborg, H., Boräng, F., Jagers, S. C., & Söderholm, P. (2015). Provision of Electricity to African Households: The Importance of Democracy and Institutional Quality. *Energy Policy*, *87*, 125–135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2015.09.002

Ahmed, K. (2021, August 12). Zambia's Democracy at 'Tipping Point' as Army Deployed on Polling Day. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/12/zambias-democracy-at-tipping-point-as-army-deployed-on-polling-day

Amnesty International. (2021, June 28). *Zambia: Killings and Brutal Crackdown Against Dissent Set the Tone for August Election*. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/zambia-killings-and-brutal-crackdown-against-dissent-set-the-tone-for-august-election/

ANC. (2012). *ANC Organizational Report presented to the 53rd National Congress in Mangaung. By Gwede Mantashe secreatary general of the ANC*. African National Congress.

André, A., & Depauw, S. (2013). District Magnitude and Home Styles of Representation in European Democracies. *West European Politics*, *36*(5), 986–1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2013.796183

Arriola, L. R. (2013). Capital and Opposition in Africa: Coalition Building in Multiethnic Societies. *World Politics*, *65*(02), 233–272. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887113000051

Arriola, L. R., Choi, D. D., Davis, J. M., Phillips, M. L., & Rakner, L. (2022). Paying to Party: Candidate Resources and Party Switching in New Democracies. *Party Politics*, *28*(3), 507–520. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068821989563

Asante, K. P., Brobbey, V., & Ofosu, G. (2011). Responding to Constituent's Demands: Survival Strategies of Legislators in Ghana's Fourth Republic. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2353296

Asunka, J., & Afulani, P. A. (2018). Politics and Public Service Provision in Africa's New Democracies. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *31*(3), 207–227. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-017-9260-z

Auerbach, A. M. (2016). Clients and Communities: The Political Economy of Party Network Organization and Development in India's Urban Slums. *World Politics*, *68*(1), 111–148. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887115000313

Auerbach, A. M. (2018). Informal Archives: Historical Narratives and the Preservation of Paper in India's Urban Slums. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *53*(3), 343–364. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-018-9270-5

Auerbach, A. M. (2019). *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108649377

Auerbach, A. M., & Thachil, T. (2018). How Clients Select Brokers: Competition and Choice in India's Slums. *American Political Science Review*, *112*(4), 775–791. https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541800028X

Auerbach, A. M., & Thachil, T. (2020). Cultivating Clients: Reputation, Responsiveness, and Ethnic Indifference in India's Slums. *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(3), 471–487. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12468

Auyero, J. (2000). The Logic of Clientelism in Argentina: An Ethnographic Account. *Latin American Research Review*, *35*(3), 55–81.

Baldwin, K. (2013). Why Vote with the Chief? Political Connections and Public Goods Provision in Zambia. *American Journal of Political Science*, *57*(4), 794–809.

Baldwin, K. (2015). *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316422335

Barkan, J. D. (1979). Bringing Home the Pork: Legislator Behavior, Rural Development, and Political Change in East Africa. In J. Smith & L. D. Musolf (Eds.), *Legislatures in Development* (pp. 265–288). Duke University Press.

Barkan, J. D., & Mattes, R. (2014). Why CDFs in Africa? Representation vs. Constituency Service. In M. Baskin & M. L. Mezey (Eds.), *Distributive Politics in Developing Countries: Almost Pork* (pp. 27–48). Lexington Books.

Barkan, J. D., Mattes, R., Mozaffar, S., & Smiddy, K. (2010). *The African Legislatures Project: First Findings*. University of Cape Town. http://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/19858

Barkan, J. D., & Okumu, J. J. (1974). *Political Linkage in Kenya: Citizens, Local Elites, and Legislators* (Comparative Legislative Research Center). University of Iowa.

Basedau, M., & Stroh, A. (2008). *Measuring Party Institutionalization in Developing Countries: A New Research Instrument Applied to 28 African Political Parties*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1119203

Baskin, M., & Mezey, M. L. (Eds.). (2014). *Distributive Politics in Developing Countries: Almost Pork*. Lexington Books.

Bates, R. H. (1983). Modernization, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa. In D. Rothchild & V. A. Olorunsola (Eds.), *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (pp. 152–171). Westview Press.

Beardsworth, N. (2020). From a "Regional Party" to the Gates of State House: The Resurgence of the UPND. In *Democracy and Electoral Politics in Zambia* (pp. 34–68). Brill.

Beardsworth, N., & Krönke, M. (2022). Pary Cadres Threaten Peaceful Elections and Everyday Life in Urban Africa: Lessons From the 2021 Zambian Elections. *The Program on Governance and Local Development Policy Brief*, 9.

Berenschot, W. (2019). Informal Democratization: Brokers, Access to Public Services and Democratic Accountability in Indonesia and India. *Democratization*, *26*(2), 208–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1512590

Besley, T., & Kudamatsu, M. (2006). Health and Democracy. *American Economic Review*, 96(2), 313–318. https://doi.org/10.1257/000282806777212053

Bilstein, H. (1970). Zur Soziologie der Politischen Parteien: Wähler oder Mitgliederparteien. *Gegenwartkunde*, *19*(1), 71–72.

Blair, H. (2000). Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries. *World Development*, *28*(1), 21–39.

Blais, A., & Dobrzynska, A. (1998). Turnout in Electoral Democracies. *European Journal of Political Research*, *33*(2), 239–261.

Bleck, J., & van de Walle, N. (2013). Valence Issues in African Elections: Navigating Uncertainty and the Weight of the Past. *Comparative Political Studies*, *46*(11), 1394–1421. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453448

Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2012). Political Party Activism in Ghana: Factors Influencing the Decision of the Politically Active to Join a Political Party. *Democratization*, *19*(4), 668–689. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.605998

Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2019). Place and Party Organizations: Party Activism Inside Party-Branded Sheds at the Grassroots in Northern Ghana. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, *7*(4), 474–493. https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2018.1503091

Boräng, F., Grimes, M., & Ahlborg, H. (2022). Community Driven Development and Local Collective Action Capacity. *QoG Working Paper Series*, *8*.

Bowler, S., & Farrell, D. M. (1993). Legislator Shirking and Voter Monitoring: Impacts of European Parliament Electoral Systems Upon Legislator-Voter Relationship. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *31*, 45–69.

Bratton, M. (2008). Vote Buying and Violence in Nigerian Election Campaigns. *Electoral Studies*, *27*(4), 621–632. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2008.04.013

Bratton, M. (2009). Are You Being Served? Popular Satisfaction with Health and Education Services in Africa. In *Democratic Deficits: Addressing Challenges to Sustainability and Consolidation Around the World* (pp. 37–66). Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Brierley, S., & Kramon, E. (2020). Party Campaign Strategies in Ghana: Rallies, Canvassing and Handouts. *African Affairs*, *119*(477), 587–603. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa024

Brierley, S., Kramon, E., & Ofosu, G. K. (2020). The Moderating Effect of Debates on Political Attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(1), 19–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12458

Brierley, S., & Nathan, N. L. (2021a). Motivating the Machine: Which Brokers Do Parties Pay? *Journal of Politics*, *58*.

Brierley, S., & Nathan, N. L. (2021b). The Connections of Party Brokers. *Journal of Politics*, *forthcoming*.

Brinkerhoff, D. W., Wetterberg, A., & Wibbels, E. (2018). Distance, Services, and Citizen Perceptions of the State in Rural Africa. *Governance*, *31*(1), 103–124. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12271

Brown, D. S. (1999). Reading, Writing, and Regime Type: Democracy's Impact on Primary School Enrollment. *Political Research Quarterly*, *52*(4), 681–707. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/449181

Bussell, J. (2019). *Clients and Constituents: Political Responsiveness in Patronage Democracies*. Oxford University Press.

Bussell, J. (2020). Shadowing as a Tool for Studying Political Elites. *Political Analysis*, *28*(4), 469–486. https://doi.org/10.1017/pan.2020.14

Butler, D. M., & Broockman, D. E. (2011). Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators. *American Journal of Political Science*, *55*(3), 463–477. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00515.x

Cain, B. E., Ferejohn, J. A., & Fiorina, M. P. (1984). The Constituency Service Basis of the Personal Vote for U.S. Representatives and British Members of Parliament. *The American Political Science Review*, *78*(1), 110–125. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961252

Cain, B., Ferejohn, J., & Fiorina, M. (1987). *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Harvard University Press.

Callen, M., Gulzar, S., Hasanain, S. A., & Khan, M. Y. (2016). *The Political Economy of Public Sector Absence: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan* (No. w22340; p. w22340). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/w22340

Calvo, E., & Murillo, M. V. (2013). When Parties Meet Voters: Assessing Political Linkages Through Partisan Networks and Distributive Expectations in Argentina and Chile. *Comparative Political Studies*, *46*(7), 851–882. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012463882

Camp, E. (2015). Cultivating Effective Brokers: A Party Leader's Dilemma. *British Journal of Political Science*, *47*(3), 521–543. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123415000411

Carey, J. M., & Shugart, M. S. (1995). Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas. *Electoral Studies*, *14*(4), 417–439.

Carlson, E., & Seim, B. (2020). Honor Among Chiefs: An Experiment on Monitoring and Diversion Among Traditional Leaders in Malawi. *The Journal of Development Studies*, *56*(8), 1541–1557. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1703955

Carr, A. (2021). *Adam Carr's Election Archive*. http://psephos.adam-carr.net/

Cassani, A., & Carbone, G. (2016). Citizen Wellbeing in African Competitive Authoritarian Regimes. *Zeitschrift Für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, *10*(S1), 191–214. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12286-015-0256-7

Cheeseman, N., & Hinfelaar, M. (2010). Parties, Platforms, and Political Mobilization: The Zambian Presidential Election of 2008. *African Affairs*, *109*(434), 51–76. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adp070

Choi, D.-H. (2018). *Severed Connections: Political Parties and Democratic Responsiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa* [University of California, Berkeley]. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3388n6qr

Clayton, A., Josefsson, C., Mattes, R., & Mozaffar, S. (2019). In Whose Interest? Gender and Mass–Elite Priority Congruence in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, *52*(1), 69–101. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758767

Conroy-Krutz, J., & Logan, C. (2012). Museveni and the 2011 Ugandan Election: Did the Money Matter? *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *50*(4), 625–655.

Costa, M. (2017). How Responsive are Political Elites? A Meta-Analysis of Experiments on Public Officials. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, *4*(3), 241–254. https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2017.14

Crisp, B. F., & Simoneau, W. M. (2018). Chapter 17 Electoral Systems and Constituency Service. In E. S. Herron, R. J. Pekkanen, & M. S. Shugart (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* (pp. 345–363). Oxford University Press.

Demarest, L. (2021). Elite Clientelism in Nigeria: The Role of Parties in Weakening Legislator-Voter Ties. *Party Politics*, 13540688211030220. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211030219

Driscoll, A., Cepaluni, G., Guimarães, F. de S., & Spada, P. (2018). Prejudice, Strategic Discrimination, and the Electoral Connection: Evidence from a Pair of Field Experiments in Brazil. *American Journal of Political Science*, *62*(4), 781–795. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12371

du Plessis, C. (2021, August 14). *President Edgar Lungu Worked Around Covid-19 Rules to Campaign Ahead of Zambia Poll*. Daily Maverick. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-14-president-edgar-lungu-worked-around-covid-19-rules-to-campaign-ahead-of-zambia-poll/

Eggers, A. C., & Hainmueller, J. (2009). MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics. *American Political Science Review*, *103*(4), 513–533. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409990190

Ejdemyr, S., Kramon, E., & Robinson, A. L. (2018). Segregation, Ethnic Favoritism, and the Strategic Targeting of Local Public Goods. *Comparative Political Studies*, *51*(9), 1111–1143. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017730079

Ekeh, P. P. (1975). Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *17*(1), 91–112. JSTOR.

Elischer, S. (2013). *Political Parties in Africa: Ethnicity and Party Formation*. Cambridge University Press.

Erdmann, G. (2004). Party Research: Western European Bias and the 'African labyrinth.' *Democratization*, *11*(3), 63–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/1351034042000238176

Fenno, R. (1973). *Congressmen in Committees*. Little Brown.

Fenno, R. (1978). *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. HarperCollins.

Fisman, R., Schulz, F., & Vig, V. (2014). The Private Returns to Public Office. *Journal of Political Economy*, *122*(4), 806–862. https://doi.org/10.1086/676334

Frye, T., Reuter, O. J., & Szakonyi, D. (2014). Political Machines at Work Voter Mobilization and Electoral Subversion in the Workplace. *World Politics*, *66*(2), 195–228. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004388711400001X

Fujimura, N. (2016). Re-Election isn't Everything: Legislators' Goal-Seeking and Committee Activity in Japan. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *22*(2), 153–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2016.1164437

Gaikwad, N., & Nellis, G. (2021). Do Politicians Discriminate Against Internal Migrants? Evidence from Nationwide Field Experiments in India. *American Journal of Political Science*, *65*(4), 790–806. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12548

Gallagher, M. (2019). *Election Indices Dataset*. http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/michael_gallagher/ElSystems/index.php, accessed

Gans-Morse, J., Mazzuca, S., & Nichter, S. (2014). Varieties of Clientelism: Machine Politics during Elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, *58*(2), 415–432. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12058

Gerring, J., Thacker, S. C., & Alfaro, R. (2012). Democracy and Human Development. *The Journal of Politics*, *74*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381611001113

Giger, N., Lanz, S., & Vries, C. de. (2020). The Motivational Basis of Constituency Work: How Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations Interact. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *8*(3), 493–508. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2019.19

Giliomee, H., & Simkins, C. E. W. (1999). *The Awkward Embrace: One-party Domination and Democracy*. Taylor & Francis.

Gosnell, H. F. (1930). *Why Europe Votes*. University of Chicago.

Greene, K. F. (2007). *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511509803

Greene, Z., & Rauschenbach, M. (2018, December 10). *In Search of Programmatic Competition? Evidence for a Rural-Urban Divide in African Party Manifestos and Voting Behavior*. Political Parties in Africa Conference, Cape Town.

Grossman, G., & Slough, T. (2022). Government Responsiveness in Developing Countries. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *25*, 131–153.

Gulzar, S., & Pasquale, B. J. (2017). Politicians, Bureaucrats, and Development: Evidence from India. *American Political Science Review*, *111*(1), 162–183. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000502

Gyampo, R. E. (2017). Assessing the Quality of Parliamentary Representation in Ghana. *The African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, *44*(2), 68–82.

Hallink, C., & Siachiwena, H. (2023). Political Party Ideology in Zambia: Comparing the PF and the UPND on Social Welfare. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *forthcoming*.

Halperin, M., Siegle, J., & Weinstein, M. (2010). *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace*. Routledge. http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/the-democracy-advantage-how-democracies-promote-prosperity-and-peace/

Harding, R. (2020a). *Rural Democracy: Elections and Development in Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Harding, R. (2020b). Who is Democracy Good For? Elections, Rural Bias, and Health and Education Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Politics*, *82*(1), 241–254.

Harding, R., & Stasavage, D. (2014). What Democracy Does (and Doesn't Do) for Basic Services: School Fees, School Inputs, and African Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *76*(1), 229–245. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613001254

Harris, A. S. (2018). Moving from Race- to Performance-Based Politics: Swing Voters in South Africa's 2016 Local Elections. *The Program on Governance and Local Development*, *2018*(18).

Harris, A. S., & Hern, E. (2019). Taking to the Streets: Protest as an Expression of Political Preference in Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, *52*(8), 1169–1199. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018806540

Harris, J. A., & Posner, D. N. (2019). (Under What Conditions) Do Politicians Reward Their Supporters? Evidence from Kenya's Constituencies Development Fund. *American Political Science Review*, *113*(1), 123–139. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000709

Hecock, R. D. (2006). Electoral Competition, Globalization, and Subnational Education Spending in Mexico, 1999–2004. *American Journal of Political Science*, *50*(4), 950–961. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00226.x

Hern, E. A. (2019). *Developing States, Shaping Citizenship: Service Delivery and Political Participation in Zambia*. University of Michigan Press.

Hicken, A., Kollman, K., & Simmons, J. W. (2016). Party System Nationalization and the Provision of Public Health Services. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *4*(3), 573–594. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.41

Hicken, A., & Nathan, N. L. (2020). Clientelism's Red Herrings: Dead Ends and New Directions in the Study of Nonprogrammatic Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *23*(1), 277–294. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-032657

Hiskey, J. T. (2003). Demand-Based Development and Local Electoral Environments in Mexico. *Comparative Politics*, *36*(1), 41–59. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/4150159

Holland, A. C., & Palmer-Rubin, B. (2015). Beyond the Machine: Clientelist Brokers and Interest Organizations in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, *48*(9), 1186–1223. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015574883

Ibrahim, R., & Friesen, P. (2022). *Avenues of Political Access: How Political Institutions Influence Constituency Services on the African Continent*. 24.

Ichino, N., & Nathan, N. L. (2017). *Primary Elections in New Democracies: The Evolution of Candidate Selection Methods in Ghana*. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/308e/62253da5f71abc57d90d8b31189b990aec0a.pdf

Ichino, N., & Nathan, N. L. (2022). Democratizing the Party: The Effects of Primary Election Reforms in Ghana. *British Journal of Political Science*, *52*(3), 1168–1185. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000028

Jablonski, R. S., & Seim, B. (2023). What Politicians don't Know Can Hurt You: The Effects of Information on Politicians' Spending Decisions. *American Journal of Political Science*, *Conditionally accepted*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4045726

Joseph, R. A. (1987). *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.

Judge-Lord, D., Grimmer, J., & Powell, E. N. (2018). How Legislators Actually Invest Their Time. *Working Paper*, 20.

Kalua, P. (2011). The Extent of Political Party Institutionalization in Malawi: The Case of United Democratic Front (UDF) and Malawi Congress Party (MCP). *Forum for Development Studies*, *38*(1), 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2010.548078

Kao, K., Lust, E., & Rakner, L. (2017). Money Machine: Do the Poor Demand Clientelism? *The Program on Governance and Local Development*, *2017*(14).

Keefer, P. (2015). Organizing for Prosperity: Collective Action, Political Parties, and the Political Economy of Development. In C. Lancaster & N. van de Walle (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Politics of Development* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199845156.013.5

Keefer, P., & Khemani, S. (2009). When Do Legislators Pass on Pork? The Role of Political Parties in Determining Legislator Effort. *American Political Science Review*, *103*(1), 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090054

Kim, C. L., Barkan, J. D., Turan, I., & Jewell, M. E. (1984). *The Legislative Connection: The Politics of Representation in Kenya, Korea, and Turkey*. Duke University Press.

Kitschelt, H. (2013). *Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project*. Duke University.

Koter, D. (2013). King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa. *World Politics*, *65*(02), 187–232. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004388711300004X

Koter, D. (2017). Costly Electoral Campaigns and the Changing Composition and Quality of Parliament: Evidence from Benin. *African Affairs*, *116*(465), 573–596. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adx022

Kramon, E. (2017). *Money for Votes: The Causes and Consequences of Electoral Clientelism in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108149839

Krishna, A. (2011). Gaining Access to Public Services and the Democratic State in India: Institutions in the Middle. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *46*(1), 98–117. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-010-9080-x

Krönke, M., & Kakumba, R. M. (2022a). More, not Better? As Local Government Councils Proliferate, Ugandans Voice Growing Dissatisfaction with Councillors. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper*, *83*.

Krönke, M., & Kakumba, R. M. (2022b). Unresponsive and Corrupt? Ugandan MPs Hold Key to How Citizens Perceive Them. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper*, *81*.

Krönke, M., & Lockwood, S. J. (2021). Organizing for Success: The Effect of Intra-Party Democracy on Local Level Party Presence. *Working Paper*.

Krönke, M., Lockwood, S. J., & Mattes, R. (2022). Party Footprints in Africa: Measuring Local Party Presence Across the Continent. *Party Politics*, *28*(2), 208–222.

Krönke, M., Mattes, R., & Naidoo, V. (2022). Mapping State Capacity in Africa: Professionalism and Reach. *Afrobarometer Working Paper*, *190*.

Kroth, V., Larcinese, V., & Wehner, J. (2016). A Better Life for All? Democratization and Electrification in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *The Journal of Politics*, *78*(3), 774–791. https://doi.org/10.1086/685451

Kruks-Wisner, G. (2018). *Claiming the State: Active Citizenship and Social Welfare in Rural India*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108185899

Kuenzi, M., & Lambright, G. M. S. (2007). Voter Turnout in Africa's Multiparty Regimes. *Comparative Political Studies*, *40*(6), 665–690. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006288969

Kwayu, A. C. (2022). Determinants of a Political Party's Social Media Strategy: A Comparative Analysis of Tanzania's Opposition Political Parties' Twitter Practices. *Party Politics*, *28*(2), 236–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211041039

Lake, D. A., & Baum, M. A. (2001). The Invisible Hand of Democracy Political Control and the Provision of Public Services. *Comparative Political Studies*, *34*(6), 587–621.

Larreguy, H., Montiel Olea, C. E., & Querubin, P. (2017). Political Brokers: Partisans or Agents? Evidence from the Mexican Teachers' Union: *American Journal of Political Science*, *61*(4), 877–891. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12322

LeBas, A. (2011). *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Levitsky, S. (2003). *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Lieberman, E. S. (2015). The Comparative Politics of Service Delivery in Developing Countries. In C. Lancaster & N. van de Walle (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Politics of Development* (pp. 480–498). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199845156.013.7

Lindberg, S. I. (2003). "It's Our Time to 'Chop'": Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism Rather Than Counter-Act It? *Democratization*, *10*(2), 121–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/714000118

Lindberg, S. I. (2010). What Accountability Pressures Do MPs in Africa Face and How Do They Respond? Evidence From Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *48*(1), 117–142. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X09990243

Lindberg, S. I., & Morrison, M. K. C. (2008). Are African Voters Really Ethnic or Clientelistic? Survey Evidence from Ghana. *Political Science Quarterly*, *123*(1), 95–122.

Lockwood, S. J. (2019). *Making Protest Work: Protest Brokers and the Technology of Mobilization* [PhD Thesis]. Harvard University.

Lockwood, S. J. (2022). Protest Brokers and the Technology of Mobilization: Evidence from South Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, *55*(4), 628–656. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211024285

Lockwood, S. J., & Krönke, M. (2022). Do Electoral Systems Affect How Citizens Hold Their Government Accountable? Evidence from Africa. *Democratization*, *28*(3), 583–603. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1840556

Lockwood, S. J., Krönke, M., & Mattes, R. (2021). Party Structures and Organization Building in Africa. *Party Politics*.

Logan, C. (2013). The Roots of Resilience: Exploring Popular Support for African Traditional Authorities. *African Affairs*, *112*(448), 353–376. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adt025

Lührmann, A., Düpont, N., Higashijima, M., Berker Kavasoglu, Y., Marquardt, K. L., Bernhard, M., Döring, H., Hicken, A., Laebens, M. G., Lindberg, S. I., Medzihorsky, J., Neundorf, A., Reuter, O. J., Ruth-Lovell, S., Weghorst, K. R., Wiesehomeier, N., Wright, J., Alizada, N., Bederke, P., … Seim, B. (2020). *Codebook Varieties of Party Identity and Organization (V-Party) V1*. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vpartydsv1

Lust, E., Beardsworth, N., Krönke, M., Seekings, J., & Wahman, M. (2021). *The Zambia Election Panel Survey Rounds 1-3*. The Program on Governance and Local Development / University of Cape Town.

Lust, E., Beardsworth, N., Krönke, M., Seekings, J., & Wahman, M. (2022). *Zambia Election Panel Survey Dataset* [Data set]. Harvard Dataverse. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VGFQZI

Mac Giollabhuí, S. (2013). How Things Fall Apart: Candidate Selection and the Cohesion of Dominant Parties in South Africa and Namibia. *Party Politics*, *19*(4), 577–600. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068811407599

Magaloni, B., Diaz-Cayeros, A., & Estévez, F. (2007). Clientelism and Portfolio Diversification: A Model of Electoral Investment with Applications to Mexico. In H. Kitschelt & S. I. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (pp. 182–205). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511585869.008

Maiden, E., Guzman, D. B., & Bleck, J. (2021). Who Leads? Village Development Committees and Local Governance in Southern Malawi. *Governance*, *34*(3), 855–873. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12544

Mattes, R. (2008). The Material and Political Bases of Lived Poverty in Africa: Insights from the Afrobarometer. *Barometers of Quality of Life Around the Globe*, 161–185. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8686-1_7

Mattes, R. (2020). Lived Poverty on the Rrise: Decade of Living-Standard Gains Ends in Africa. *Afrobarometer Policy Paper*, *62*.

Mattes, R., & Krönke, M. (2020). The Consequences of Partisanship in Africa: Cognitive Lens or Tribal Straitjacket? In *Research Handbook on Political Partisanship* (pp. 368–380). Edward Elgar Publishers.

Mattes, R., Krönke, M., & Mozaffar, S. (2022, July 30). *Explaining Issue Representation in Africa*. 7th Conference of the ECPR Standing Group on Parliaments, Paris.

Mattes, R., & Mozaffar, S. (2010). *Education, Legislators and Legislatures in Africa*. Centre for Higher Education Transformation.

Mattes, R., & Mozaffar, S. (2016). Legislatures and Democratic Development in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *59*(3), 201–215.

Mattes, R., & Piombo, J. (2001). Opposition Parties and the Voters in South Africa's General Election of 1999. *Democratization*, *8*(3), 101–118.

Mayhew, D. R. (1987). The Electoral Connection and Congress. In M. D. McCubins & T. Sullivan (Eds.), *Congress: Structure and Policy* (pp. 18–29). Cambridge University Press. https://calgara.github.io/Pol1_Fall2017/Mayhew%201974.pdf

McClendon, G. H. (2016). Race and Responsiveness: An Experiment with South African Politicians*. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, *3*(1), 60–74. https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2015.10

McGuire, J. W. (2010). *Wealth, Health, and Democracy in East Asia and Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

McLellan, R. (2020). *The Politics of Local Control in Electoral Autocracies*. Princeton University.

Metheney, E. A., & Lust, E. (2023). Zambian Election Panel Survey: Dataset of Responses Before, Near, and after 2021 elections. *Data in Brief*, *48*, 109073. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2023.109073

Min, B. (2015). *Power and the Vote: Elections and Electricity in the Developing World*. Cambridge University Press.

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. (2019). *Guidebook on Local Government System in Malawi*. https://localgovt.gov.mw/publications/resources/43-guidebook-on-local-government-system-in-malawi-revised-2019/file

Mueller, L. (2018). Personal Politics without Clientelism? Interpreting Citizen-Politician Contact in Africa. *African Studies Review*, *61*(2), 28–54.

Nath, A. (2016). Bureaucrats and Politicians: *Working Paper*, 72.

Nathan, N. L. (2019). *Electoral Politics and Africa's Urban Transition: Class and Ethnicity in Ghana*. Cambridge University Press.

Nichter, S. (2014). Conceptualizing Vote Buying. *Electoral Studies*, *35*, 315–327. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2014.02.008

Nichter, S. (2018). *Votes for Survival: Relational Clientelism in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

Nichter, S., & Peress, M. (2017). Request Fulfilling: When Citizens Demand Clientelist Benefits. *Comparative Political Studies*, *50*(8), 1086–1117. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414016666838

Norris, P. (1997). The Puzzle of Constituency Service. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *3*(2), 29–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572339708420508

Norton, P. (1994). The Growth of the Constituency Role of the MP. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *47*(4), 705–721.

Norton, P. (1997). Roles and Behaviour of British MPs. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *3*(1), 17–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572339708420497

Novaes, L. M. (2018). Disloyal Brokers and Weak Parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, *62*(1), 84–98. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12331

Ofosu, G. K. (2023). What Do African Voters Want From Their Legislators? Evidence From a Choice Experiment in Ghana. *Working Paper*.

O'Neil, T., & Cammack, D. (2014). Fragmented Governance and Local Service Delivery in Malawi. *Overseas Development Institute*, 92.

Opalo, K. O. (2019). *Legislative Development in Africa: Politics and Postcolonial Legacies*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108684651

Opalo, K. O. (2022). Formalizing Clientelism in Kenya: From Harambee to the Constituency Development Fund. *World Development*, *152*. https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2021/087-0

Osei, A. (2016). Formal Party Organisation and Informal Relations in African Parties: Evidence From Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *54*(01), 37–66. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X15000981

Paget, D. (2019). The Rally-Intensive Campaign: A Distinct Form of Electioneering in Sub-Saharan Africa and Beyond. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 1940161219847952. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219847952

Paget, D. (2022). Lone Organizers: Opposition party-building in hostile places in Tanzania. *Party Politics*, *28*(2), 223–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211041034

Paller, J. W. (2019). *Democracy in Ghana: Everyday Politics in Urban Africa*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108578721

Papp, Z. (2020). Constituency Service: Incentives and Consequences. *Research Handbook on Political Representation*, 266–275.

Pitkin, H. F. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. University of California Press.

Ponce, A. F., & Scarrow, S. E. (2016). Which members? Using cross-national surveys to study party membership. *Party Politics*, *22*(6), 679–690. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068814550435

Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M. E., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press.

Rakner, L., & van de Walle, N. (2009). Democratization by Elections? Opposition Weakness in Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, *20*(3), 108–121. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0096

Randall, V., & Svåsand, L. (2002). Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Africa. *Democratization*, *9*(3), 30–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/714000266

Resnick, D. (2013). *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*. Cambridge University Press. http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/politics-international-relations/comparative-politics/urban-poverty-and-party-populism-african-democracies

Richardson, L. E., & Freeman, P. K. (1995). Gender Differences in Constituency Service Among State Legislators. *Political Research Quarterly*, *48*(1), 169–179. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299504800110

Riedl, R. B. (2014). *Authoritarian Origins of Democratic Party Systems in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Ringo, C. J., & Lekorwe, M. H. (2013). *Citizen-Leader Contact Apathy In Botswana And Tanzania: Examining Its Implications For Good Governance Practices*. *4*(13), 11.

Rizzo, T. (2015). *Motivated Brokers* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2619843). Social Science Research Network. https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2619843

Rizzo, T. (2020). *Intermediaries of the State: Bureaucratic Transaction Costs of Claiming Welfare in Mexico*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rogger, D. (2018). The Consequences of Political Interference in Bureaucratic Decision Making: Evidence from Nigeria. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, *8554*. https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3238398

Saidou, A. K., & Bertrand, E. (2022). Security as a Campaign Issue: Programmatic Mobilization in Burkina Faso's 2020 Elections. *Democratization*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2066652

Samuels, D. J., & Zucco, C. (2016). Party-Building in Brazil: The Rise of the PT in Perspective. In S. Levitsky, J. Loxton, B. Van Dyck, & J. I. Dominguez (Eds.), *Challenges of Party Building in Latin America* (pp. 331–355). Cambridge University Press.

Samuels, D., & Zucco, C. (2015). Crafting Mass Partisanship at the Grass Roots. *British Journal of Political Science*, *45*(4), 755–775. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123413000549

Scarrow, S. E. (1994). The 'Paradox of Enrolment': Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Party Memberships. *European Journal of Political Research*, *25*(1), 41–60. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1994.tb01200.x

Scarrow, S. E., Webb, P. D., & Poguntke, T. (2022). *Political Party Database Round 2 v4*. Harvard Dataverse. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0JVUM8

Seekings, J., Lust, E., Wahman, M., Beardsworth, N., & Krönke, M. (2021). *Great Challenges, High Hopes*. The Program on Governance and Local Development at the University of Gothenburg.

Shugart, M. S., Valdini, M. E., & Suominen, K. (2005). Looking for Locals: Voter Information Demands and Personal Vote-Earning Attributes of Legislators under Proportional Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, *49*(2), 437–449. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.00133.x

Siefken, S. T., & Costa, O. (2018). Available, Accessible and Ready to Listen: MPs' District Work. In O. W. Gabriel, E. Kerrouche, & S. S. Schüttemeyer (Eds.), *Political Representation in France and Germany: Attitudes and Activities of Citizens and MPs* (pp. 87–115). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72029-6_3

Southall, R. (2016). *Liberation Movements in Power: Party and State in Southern Africa*. James Currey.

Stasavage, D. (2005). Democracy and Education Spending in Africa. *American Journal of Political Science*, *49*(2), 343. https://doi.org/10.2307/3647681

Stokes, S. C. (2005). Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina. *The American Political Science Review*, *99*(3), 315–325.

Stokes, S. C., Dunning, T., Nazareno, M., & Brusco, V. (2013). *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107324909

Storm, L. (2013). *Party Politics and the Prospects for Democracy in North Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Stroh, A. (2014). *Erfolgsbedingungen Politischer Parteien im Frankophonen Afrika: Benin und Burkina Faso seit der Rückkehr zum Mehrparteiensystem*. Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Strøm, K. (1997). Rules, Reasons and Routines: Legislative Roles in Parliamentary Democracies. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *3*(1), 155–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572339708420504

Sulley, C. R. (2022). Democracy Within Parties: Electoral Consequences of Candidate Selection Methods in Tanzania. *Party Politics*, *28*(2), 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211041042

Szwarcberg, M. (2015). *Mobilizing Poor Voters: Machine Politics, Clientelism, and Social Networks in Argentina*. Cambridge University Press.

Tavits, M. (2013). *Post-Communist Democracies and Party Organisation*. Cambridge University Press.

Thachil, T. (2016). *Elite Parties, Poor Voters: How Social Services Win Votes in India*. Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, M. A., & Sissokho, O. (2005). Liaison Legislature: The Role of the National Assembly in Senegal. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *43*(1), 97–117. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X04000631

Thomas, S. (1992). The Effects of Race and Gender on Constituency Service. *The Western Political Quarterly*, *45*(1), 169–180. https://doi.org/10.2307/448769

Thomsen, D. M., & Sanders, B. K. (2020). Gender Differences in Legislator Responsiveness. *Perspectives on Politics*, *18*(4), 1017–1030. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719003414

Trotter, P. A. (2016). Rural Electrification, electrification Inequality and Democratic Institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Energy for Sustainable Development*, *34*, 111–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esd.2016.07.008

van de Walle, N. (2001). *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. Cambridge University Press.

van de Walle, N. (2007). Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientelism in Africa. In H. Kitschelt & S. I. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (pp. 50–67). Cambridge University Press.

van de Walle, N., & Butler, K. S. (1999). Political Parties and Party Systems in Africa's Illiberal Democracies. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *13*(1), 14–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557579908400269

Wahman, M. (2017). Nationalized Incumbents and Regional Challengers: Opposition- and Incumbent-Party Nationalization in Africa. *Party Politics*, *23*(3), 309–322. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815596515

Wahman, M., & Seeberg, M. (2021). Paying to Play: How Parliamentary Candidates Fund Ruling Party Campaigns in Malawi. *Comparative Politics*, *55*. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041522X16436471926538

Wantchekon, L. (2003). Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin. *World Politics*, *55*(3), 399–422. https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2003.0018

Warren, S. S. (2019). *Candidate Selection and Political Accountability in African Legislative Elections*. New York University.

Warren, S. S. (2022). Democratizing Candidate Selection: Controlled Turnover in Botswana's Bulela Ditswe Primaries. *Party Politics*, *28*(2), 248–260. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211041035

Weghorst, K. R. (2022). *Activist Origins of Political Ambition: Opposition Candidacy in Africa's Electoral Authoritarian Regimes*. Cambridge University Press.

Weghorst, K. R., & Lindberg, S. I. (2011). Effective Opposition Strategies: Collective Goods or Clientelism? *Democratization*, *18*(5), 1193–1214. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.603483

Weingrod, A. (1968). Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *10*(4), 377–400.

Yıldırım, K., & Kitschelt, H. (2020). Analytical Perspectives on Varieties of Clientelism. *Democratization*, *27*(1), 20–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1641798

York, E. (2020). Votes for Effort: Constituency Service and Opposition Support under Autocracy. *Belfer Centre Working Paper*. https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/York%20Final%20Paper.pdf

Young, D. J. (2009). Is Clientelism at Work in African Elections? A Study of Voting Behavior in Kenya and Zambia. *Afrobarometer Working Paper*, *106*.

Zarazaga, R. (2014). Brokers Beyond Clientelism: A New Perspective Through the Argentine Case. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *56*(3), 23–45.

Appendix

Appendix A: Surveys and indices

For basic information about each of the surveys, please see Section 1.7 (Data sources), as well as Table 1.4.

Original Survey data

This section provides a brief overview of the sampling procedures for the Party Elite Survey as well as the Bureaucratic Elite Survey which I conducted in Malawi in 2021. For additional information on Zambia Election Panel Survey, please consult (Metheney & Lust, 2023)as well as the technical report in (Lust et al., 2022). To access more detailed information about the GLD survey of Malawian MPs, the African Legislatures' MP survey, as well as the Afrobarometer surveys please contact the respective institutions:

- **African Legislatures Project**: Robert Mattes (University of Strathclyde / University of Cape Town)
- **Afrobarometer**: https://www.afrobarometer.org/surveys-and-methods/sampling/
- **GLD**: http://gld.gu.se/

Party Elite Survey (Malawi)

Telephone interviews were conducted with district-level party elites from each district and across the four largest parties (MCP, DDP, UDF, and UTM). The survey is designed to investigate the relationship between political parties, bureaucrats and how both influence citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery. Therefore, this survey aims to cover several types of basic services (education, health care, water/sanitation) across all 28 districts of Malawi. The initial goal was to interview three respondents per party per district (N=12/district). Using the official party structures as outlined in party constitutions as a point of departure, the selection procedure within each district and for each party followed a convenience sample that was drawn from the following pools (and their replacement options):

MCP:

- At least 2 from this category: Chairperson, 1st Deputy chairperson, 2nd Deputy chairperson, Secretary, 1st Deputy secretary, Treasurer, 1st Deputy Treasurer, MPs of the district (if applicable).
- The remainder can be selected from this category: The organizing Secretary, Publicity Secretary, Director of Political Affairs, Director of Women's affairs, Director of Youth, Director of Elections, Director of Economic Affairs, Director of International Affairs, Director of Public Relations, Director of Strategic Planning, Director of Research, Director of Social Services, Director of Recruitment, or their 1st or 2nd deputies.

DPP:

- Party positions are not specified in detail in the constitution. Thus, any member of the district committee is eligible, including MPs in the district.

UDF:

- At least 2 from this category: District Governor, Deputy District Governor, District Secretary, Deputy District Secretary, District Treasurer, Deputy District Treasurer, District Director of Research, Deputy District Director of Research, District Organizing Secretary, Deputy District Organizing Secretary, District Campaign Director, Deputy District Campaign Director. MPs of the district (if applicable).
- The remainder can be selected from this category: District Publicity Secretary, Deputy District Publicity Secretary, District Director of Elections, District Director of Political Affairs, Deputy District Director of Political Affairs, District Director fo Protocol & Public Relations, Deputy District Director of Protocol & Public Relations, District Director fo Disabilities, Deputy District Director of Disabilities, District Director of Religious Affairs, Deputy District Director of Religious Affairs, Chairpersons of all Constituency Committees in the District (ex-officio members)
- If available, the Women's Wing, or Youth Wing equivalents of the above positions for the District Level.

UTM:

- At least 2 from this category: District Governor, Deputy District Governor, District Secretary, Deputy District Secretary, District Treasurer, Deputy District Treasurer, District Director of Research, Deputy District Director of Research, District Organizing Secretary, Deputy District Organizing Secretary, District Campaign Director, Deputy District Campaign Director, District Director of Elections, Deputy District Director of Elections. MPs of the district (if applicable).
- If available, the Women's Wing, or Youth Wing equivalents of the above positions for the District Level.

The survey questionnaire can be requested from the author. Basic sample statistics are displayed in Table A.1.

Table A.0.1: Malawi Party Elite Survey |Sample statistics

District	N	Party ID				Age (mean)	% primary residence in district	Years in district (mean)
		DPP	MCP	UDF	UTM			
Balaka	18	6	5	3	4	96	100%	58
Blantyre	22	9	5	4	4	50	100%	58
Blantyre City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chikwawa	15	7	4	2	2	177	100%	182
Chiradzulu	9	2	3	4	0	50	100%	56
Chitipa	11	5	4	0	2	36	100%	42
Dedza	16	6	5	2	3	43	100%	54
Dowa	16	6	5	1	4	45	100%	52
Karonga	9	5	2	0	2	36	100%	46
Kasungu	17	5	5	4	3	35	100%	49
Likoma	6	0	3	0	3	48	100%	55
Lilongwe	19	7	6	4	2	44	100%	52
Lilongwe City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Machinga	13	5	4	2	2	37	100%	47
Mangochi	20	8	6	3	3	40	100%	46
Mchinji	10	0	4	3	3	41	100%	51
Mulanje	21	9	5	4	3	51	100%	56
Mwanza	12	1	5	4	2	33	100%	51
Mzimba	21	8	8	3	2	41	100%	50
Mzuzu City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neno	12	0	6	3	3	38	100%	48
NkhataBay	13	4	6	0	3	44	100%	54
Nkhotakota	14	2	5	3	4	42	100%	56
Nsanje	7	0	1	2	4	33	100%	49
Ntcheu	11	3	6	2	0	42	100%	50
Ntchisi	13	2	5	4	2	40	100%	53
Phalombe	17	6	4	3	4	45	100%	51
Rumphi	12	6	3	1	2	40	100%	47
Salima	15	6	2	4	3	30	100%	49
Thyolo	21	8	5	4	4	49	100%	54
Zomba	18	7	5	3	3	42	100%	47
Zomba City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average	14,6	4,8	4,5	2,6	2,7	48,2	100%	55,8

Source: Party Elite Survey

Bureaucratic Elite Survey (Malawi)

Telephone interviews were conducted with district-level elites from different government departments across all 28 districts. The questionnaire is designed to understand the relationship between bureaucrats, political parties and how both influence citizens' satisfaction with basic service delivery. Therefore, this survey aimed to cover several types of basic services (education, health care, electricity, water/sanitation). The initial target was to interview three respondents per service and district (N=12/district). The selection procedure within each district and for each service followed a convenience sample which was drawn from the following pools:

Education:

- District Education Manager
- District Education Office
- (For secondary education, employee at regional office)

Health Care

- District Health officer
- District Health Office

Water/Sanitation:

- Director of Development and Planning
- Department of Development and planning employees (esp. water/sanitation office)

Where the quota for the services was not met, the remaining number of respondents was drawn from the following positions:

- Director of Finance
- Members of the District Commissioner Accounts Team
- Additional respondents from Education/Health Care/Water & Sanitation offices

The survey questionnaire can be requested from the author. Basic sample statistics are displayed in Table A.2.

Table A.0.2: Malawi Bureaucratic Elite Survey | Sample statistics

District	N	District office (N)					Age (mean)	% primary residence in district	Years in district (mean)
		Edu	*Finance*	*Health*	*Pub works*	*P & D*			
Balaka	7	6	0	0	0	1	51	71%	26
Blantyre	14	8	0	4	0	2	43	36%	28
Blantyre City	7	2	0	3	1	1	45	14%	59
Chikwawa	7	4	0	0	0	3	41	29%	28
Chiradzulu	12	6	0	0	0	6	43	58%	35
Chitipa	14	3	0	7	0	4	42	57%	30
Dedza	14	5	0	5	0	4	43	43%	30
Dowa	5	0	0	1	0	4	39	0%	-
Karonga	19	7	0	7	0	5	44	53%	35
Kasungu	11	6	0	0	0	5	48	18%	41
Likoma	13	4	0	5	0	4	41	38%	22
Lilongwe	10	5	0	1	4*	0	48	60%	34
Lilongwe City	3	0	0	2	0	1	43	0%	-
Machinga	11	7	0	0	0	4	51	18%	49
Mangochi	14	6	0	0	0	8	41	29%	37
Mchinji	17	5	0	9	0	3	43	6%	18
Mulanje	7	3	0	1	0	3	47	43%	28
Mwanza	8	5	0	0	0	3	42	25%	33
Mzimba	11	5	0	0	0	6	49	55%	37
Mzuzu City	10	6	0	1	0	3	49	10%	25
Neno	13	4	0	5	0	4	41	15%	46
Nkhata Bay	8	3	0	0	0	5	42	13%	17
Nkhotakota	15	3	0	4	0	8	41	20%	17
Nsanje	13	4	0	6	0	3	41	23%	39
Ntcheu	8	6	0	0	0	2	44	25%	33
Ntchisi	9	6	0	1	0	2	43	44%	25
Phalombe	9	3	0	2	0	4	43	22%	15
Rumphi	15	6	0	4	0	5	43	60%	30
Salima	9	5	0	0	0	4	47	11%	35
Thyolo	6	2	0	2	0	2	47	17%	48
Zomba	12	9	0	0	0	3	45	42%	46
Zomba City	16	5	0	6	0	5	41	25%	19
Average	*10,8*	*4,6*	*0*	*2,4*	*0,1*	*3,7*	*44*	*0,3*	*32*

Source: Bureaucratic Elite Survey (In the case of Lilongwe 4 respondents from the agriculture department were-categorised to public works)

Party Presence Index

The Party Presence Index (PPI) is a survey-based measure of party's local organizational presence and ability to engage with citizens. I co-developed this measure with Sarah Lockwood and Robert Mattes (2022) in "*Party footprints in Africa: Measuring local party presence across the continent*". To calculate the PPI, we combine the responses to four survey questions to create an index that estimates party presence as the proportion of citizens engaged with a political party in any one of the four ways. The four questions are: 1) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you attend a campaign rally?; 2) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff?; 3) Thinking about the last national election in [YEAR], did you work for a candidate or party?; 4) During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views – A political party official?

To create the PPI at the national level, we simply calculate the percentage of respondents who said "Yes" to at least one of the four questions. The same can also be done for sub-national administrative units such as provinces (e.g., see Chapter 1 & 5), or urban and rural areas (e.g., Chapter 3). Moreover, the PPI can be created for individual parties. This can be achieved by sub-setting the survey samples using the "close to which party" variable in Afrobarometer.

In addition to the above, the PPI has another key advantage. Because the approach is based on a nationally representative survey sample, PPI scores are automatically adjusted for the population density in each country. That is, they are not only whether parties are able to engage with citizens in each province, but also whether they are able to engage with citizens through local representatives equally, whether they are in a densely populated metropole, or a rural area. This is particularly useful feature when trying to predict citizen opinion and behaviour as in this dissertation.

In the journal article, we validate the PPI by 1) conducting factor analysis; 2) comparing data over time and with other data sets that include similar questions; 3) comparing it to party branch data; and 4) correlating it with expert evaluations from the V-Party dataset.

State Reach and Professionalism Indices

Similar to the Party Presence Index above, the State Reach and Professionalism indices are survey-based measure. Capturing two crucial dimensions of state capacity – geographic reach of physical state infrastructure, and bureaucratic professionalism – the two indices focus on the same set of community (education and health care) and household level services (water, sewerage, and electricity) that are at the centre of this dissertation. I co-developed the measures with Robert Mattes and Vinothan Naidoo (2022) in "*Mapping State Capacity in Africa: Professionalism and Reach*". Rather than relying on expert evaluations from academics and practitioners, or official government data on state capacity, we treat survey enumerators and respondents as local experts who can tell us about the physical presence and bureaucratic professionalism of the state in 150-300 randomly selected locations in each country.[111] For a more detailed discussion on the advantages of this approach vis-à-vis other measures, please consult Krönke et al. (2022).

I calculate the State Reach index by drawing on two types of survey data. First, I rely on Afrobarometer fieldworkers for observations of the presence (or absence) of local health clinics and schools in the areas in which they conducted interviews. Specifically, I examine whether fieldworkers observed a school, or health clinic, "in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area (EA) or in easy walking distance."[112] This closely matches with my conceptualization of community-level services. Second, I rely on respondents' answers in the same surveys as to whether they have a working toilet, piped water, and an electricity connection on their property or compound. While I could have also captured the availability of the latter at the EA-level, capturing the water, sanitation and electricity connections at the household level is more in line with how I conceptualize the delivery of these services. Each service is weighted equally, and except for Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1, I always calculate the reach dimension separately for community-and household level services.

---

[111] *Afrobarometer surveys between 1200 and 2400 respondents in each country. These respondents are clustered in 150 and 300 enumerator areas respectively. Each sample is nationally representative. Additional information about the sampling protocol can be found here.*

[112] *The exact question phrasing in the enumerator questionnaire is as follows: Are the following facilities present in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area or within easy walking distance: School? Health clinic? (EA_FAC_B-C)*
The citizen questionnaire included these questions: Please tell me whether each of the following are available inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound: Your main source of water for household use? A toilet or latrine? (Q93A-B). Do you have an electric connection to your home from the mains? (Q94)
Recodes: For water and sewerage, if available inside the house or compound, service infrastructure is coded as present. For electricity, if hook-up to house, service infrastructure is coded as present. Otherwise coded as zero.

For the second dimension – bureaucratic professionalism – I rely on a battery of questions that was only asked to survey respondents who had contact with the state. This measure covers the same functional areas that are used to measure reach: education, health care, and household services (electricity, water, and sanitation). The measure is composed of two sets of questions. The first begins by asking respondents whether they attempted to secure help or services from a local school, or a public health clinic or hospital, or water, sanitation, or electric services from a state agency in the previous 12 months. If they did, respondents were then asked to evaluate how easy or difficult it was for them to obtain these services. The second set of questions asks respondents whether they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for an official to access any of the above services, and if so, how often. [113]

To measure the professionalism of the overall civil service, either nationally or sub-nationally, a slightly different method of aggregation than with regard to reach in applied. First, using the reports of respondents who actually used the service in the past year, we create separate professionalism scores for each of the services (the average of the two items on the ease of obtaining services and on the payment of bribes). We then average the four service specific national or provincial scores. Because Afrobarometer asks about electricity, water, and sanitation via a single "household" question, we adjust the weight for this question to make it equivalent to the reach score.

Theoretically, I could have split the professionalism scores into community and household level services as well. However, given that the number of respondents who had contact with the different services varied across services, I decided to rather create an aggregate professionalism score for all services to arrive at a more robust score. It is worth noting that additional robustness checks with separate indices for community and household level services produced substantively similar results.

[113] *The exact question phrasing in the citizen questionnaire was as follows: In the past 12 months have you 1) had contact with a public school; 2) had contact with a public clinic or hospital; 3) tried to get water, sanitation, or electric services from government; [If yes:] How easy or difficult was it to obtain the services you needed? (Q55 A, C, G)*
And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a 1) teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the school; 2) health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed; 3) government official in order to get the document you needed; (Q55B, F, H)
Recodes: No contact (7), "Don't know" (9), and "Refused to answer" (98) were excluded from the aggregation.

Appendix B: Robustness checks PPI and satisfaction with service delivery

Ruling Party PPI

The regression analysis in Table B.1 is based on Models 2 and 4 in the main analysis (Table 4.1), but this time, I replace the measure for overall levels of party presence with a version of the PPI that only captures the density of ruling party networks. Figure 4.5 in the main analysis is based on the regression results in Table B.1.

Based on the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 4, we would expect that where ruling parties have denser party networks, citizens would be more satisfied with service delivery. The results from Table B.1 show that similar to the overall PPI measure, the effect of the ruling party PPI is higher for satisfaction with community-level than household level- services. The effects of the other predictors remain substantively the same as in the previous models in Table 4.1. The results in models.

Table 00.0.3: Fixed-effects OLS regression results for party presence (ruling parties), and community and household level services

	Satisfaction with community-level services	**Satisfaction with household-level services**
	Model 1	*Model 2*
(Intercept)	0.99 ***	0.67 ***
	(0.07)	(0.07)
PPI	0.56 ***	0.30 ***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
State reach (community)	0.02	
	(0.01)	
State reach (household)		0.25 ***
		(0.02)
State professionalism (community/household)	-0.08	0.18 **
	(0.07)	(0.06)
Elec rep listen	0.13 ***	0.12 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Months to closest election	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Quality of election	0.17 ***	0.13 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Close to ruling party	0.15 ***	0.14 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)

Age	-0.02 ***	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender (ref=female)	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Location (ref=rural)	0.03 ***	-0.06 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Lived poverty index	-0.14 ***	-0.18 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Engage in politics	0.02	0.04 **
	(0.01)	(0.01)
N	36524	36034
N (Country)	32	32
AIC	86149.51	81976.98
BIC	86285.60	82112.85
R2 (fixed)	0.09	0.11
R2 (total)	0.17	0.20

Source: Afrobarometer; Note: All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
**** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

Individual level version of the PPI

This section presents the results of a robustness check for Models 2 and 4 displayed in Table 4.1. In the original analysis, I use the PPI to capture local party presence to predict citizen satisfaction with service delivery. This raises the possibility of an ecological fallacy. Although individuals in areas with higher PPI scores tend to be more satisfied with their basic services, it is not inevitable that individuals who themselves have engaged more with parties are more satisfied with service delivery.

To address this issue, I constructed an individual-level measure of citizen-party interaction. It ranges from 0 (citizens did not contact a party official, attend a rally, or meeting, and did not work for a candidate) to 4 (citizens scored 1 on each of the four items). As can be seen in the results in Table B.2, even though the effect size is small, the correlation between the citizen-party contact variable and the satisfaction scores is statistically significant for both community and household-level services. This increases the confidence in the original PPI measure.

Table 00.0.4: Fixed-effects OLS regression results for party presence (individual-level), and community and household level services

	Satisfaction with community-level services	**Satisfaction with household-level services**
	Model 1	*Model 2*
(Intercept)	1.04 ***	0.80 ***
	(0.10)	(0.09)
Citizen-party contact (individual-level, 0-4)	0.01 ***	0.01 **
	(0.00)	(0.00)
State reach (community)	0.02	
	(0.01)	
State reach (household)		0.24 ***
		(0.01)
State professionalism (community/household)	-0.00	0.23 ***
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Elec rep listen	0.13 ***	0.12 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Months to closest election	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Quality of election	0.18 ***	0.14 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Close to ruling party	0.18 ***	0.15 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	-0.02 ***	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender (ref=female)	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Location (ref=rural)	0.05 ***	-0.05 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Lived poverty index	-0.14 ***	-0.18 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Engage in politics	0.01	0.04 **
	(0.01)	(0.01)
N	36691	36212
N (Country)	32	32

AIC	86631.56	82369.00
BIC	86767.72	82504.96
R2 (fixed)	0.08	0.11
R2 (total)	0.16	0.19

Source: Afrobarometer; Note: All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation.
**** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

Appendix C: Citizen-perceptions of MPs

Tables C.1 and C.2 display the inter-item correlations of the five MP related variables.

Table 00.0.5: Citizen-perceptions of MPs: Inter-item correlations | 17 countries | 2008/2009

	Identify MP	Contact MP	MPs listen	Make MPs listen
Contact MP	**.15*** **			
MPs listen	**.05*** **	**.14*** **		
Make MPs listen	**.10*** **	**.21*** **	**.19*** **	
Voice heard between elec.	.00	**.05*** **	**.12*** **	**.11*** **

***Note**: *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed). Bold=correlation is significant and in the expected direction.*

Table 000.0.6: Citizen-perceptions of MPs: Inter-item correlations | Mixed and PR systems | 17 countries | 2008/2009

	Identify MP	Contact MP	MPs listen	Make MPs listen
Contact MP	**.09*** **			
MPs listen	**.03** **	**.14*** **		
Make MPs listen	**.05*** **	**.22*** **	**.20*** **	
Voice heard between elec.	.01	**.07*** **	**.12*** **	**.12*** **

***Note**: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed). Bold=correlation is significant and in the expected direction.*

Appendix D: Citizen-perceptions of MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery

The figures are based on Models 1 to 4 in **Table 8.5** (Citizen-perceptions of MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery). Please note that the effects in the figure are standardised.

Table 0000.0.7: Citizen-perceptions of MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery | all MP variables | split by electoral system type | 17 countries | 2008/2009

	Satisfaction with community level services		**Satisfaction with household level services**	
	Model 1	*Model 3*	*Model 2*	*Model 4*
	SMD	Non-SMD	SMD	Non-SMD
(Intercept)	1.62 ***	0.77	1.18 ***	1.05 **
	(0.17)	(0.35)	(0.15)	(0.22)
Identify MP	-0.02	0.04	-0.03	-0.04
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Contact MP	**-0.04 ***	0.05	0.02	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Citizen voice heard between election	**0.10 ***	-0.02	**0.06 ***	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
MP listen	**0.11 ***	**0.11 ***	**0.14 ***	**0.18 ***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Citizens make MP listen	**0.12 ***	**0.11 ***	**0.11 ***	**0.15 ***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
State reach (community-level)	**0.10 ***	**0.06 ***		
	(0.02)	(0.03)		
State reach (household-level)			**0.36 ***	**0.40 ***
			(0.03)	(0.04)
Free and fair election	**0.16 ***	**0.19 ***	**0.12 ***	**0.14 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Close to ruling party	**0.12 ***	**0.12 ***	**0.11 ***	**0.10 ***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age	-0.02	-0.00	-0.01	-0.02

	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender (ref: female)	-0.01	-0.00	0.03 *	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Location (ref: urban)	0.03	-0.02	0.00	**-0.08 *** **
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Lived poverty	**-0.11 *** **	**-0.10 *** **	**-0.14 *** **	**-0.14 *** **
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Education	-0.01	**-0.02 ***	-0.00	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Engaged in politics	0.03	0.01	0.03	-0.00
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Months to closest election	**-0.02 ***	0.00	-0.03	-0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
N	13117	8406	12612	8140
N (Country)	10	7	10	7
AIC	30086.86	20549.74	28327.17	19399.25
BIC	30221.53	20676.40	28461.13	19525.33
R2 (fixed)	0.12	0.07	0.14	0.15
R2 (total)	0.19	0.18	0.20	0.19

*Source: Afrobarometer; Note: *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.*

Appendix E: Robustness checks MPs and satisfaction with basic service delivery

To increase the confidence in our results, I conducted several robustness checks. I used the four models that included the five MP-related variables described in **Table 8.5** and changed the specifications as indicated below. In all of these, the main results hold and remain significant. That is, at least the *MP listen* and *Make MP listen* variables remain statistically significant in the expected direction, and with similar effect sizes. In several cases, the *Citizen voice heard between elections* also turned out to be statistically significant in the expected direction.

Table 00000.0.8: Robustness checks

Level of analysis	Variable change	Sample		
		Full sample	*SMD sample*	*Non-SMD sample*
Country-level	Ethnic fractionalisation (PREG)	(N/N)	(N/N)	(N/N)
	Ethnic fractionalisation (Alesina)	(N/N)	(N/N)	(N/N)
	CDFs	(N/N)	(N/N)	(N/N)
	Effective number of parties at the legislative level (ENP)	(N/N)	(N/N)	(N/N)
Individual-level	State reach (community and household-level combined)	(Y/Y)	(Y/Y)	(Y/Y)
	Local councillors listen	(Y/N)	(Y/Y)	(Y/N)†
	Traditional leaders listen	(Y/Y)	(Y/N)	(Y/Y)

Note: Y=variable was statistically significant, N=variable was not statistically significant in model; (community level / household level). †= In this case, the MP listen variable was no longer significant for the community level services.

"Roof Squad, The Squad That's On The Roof!"