



URBAN INFORMALITY IN LAGOS

Ayomide Okunlola
University of Detroit Mercy
Masters Thesis 2018- 2019

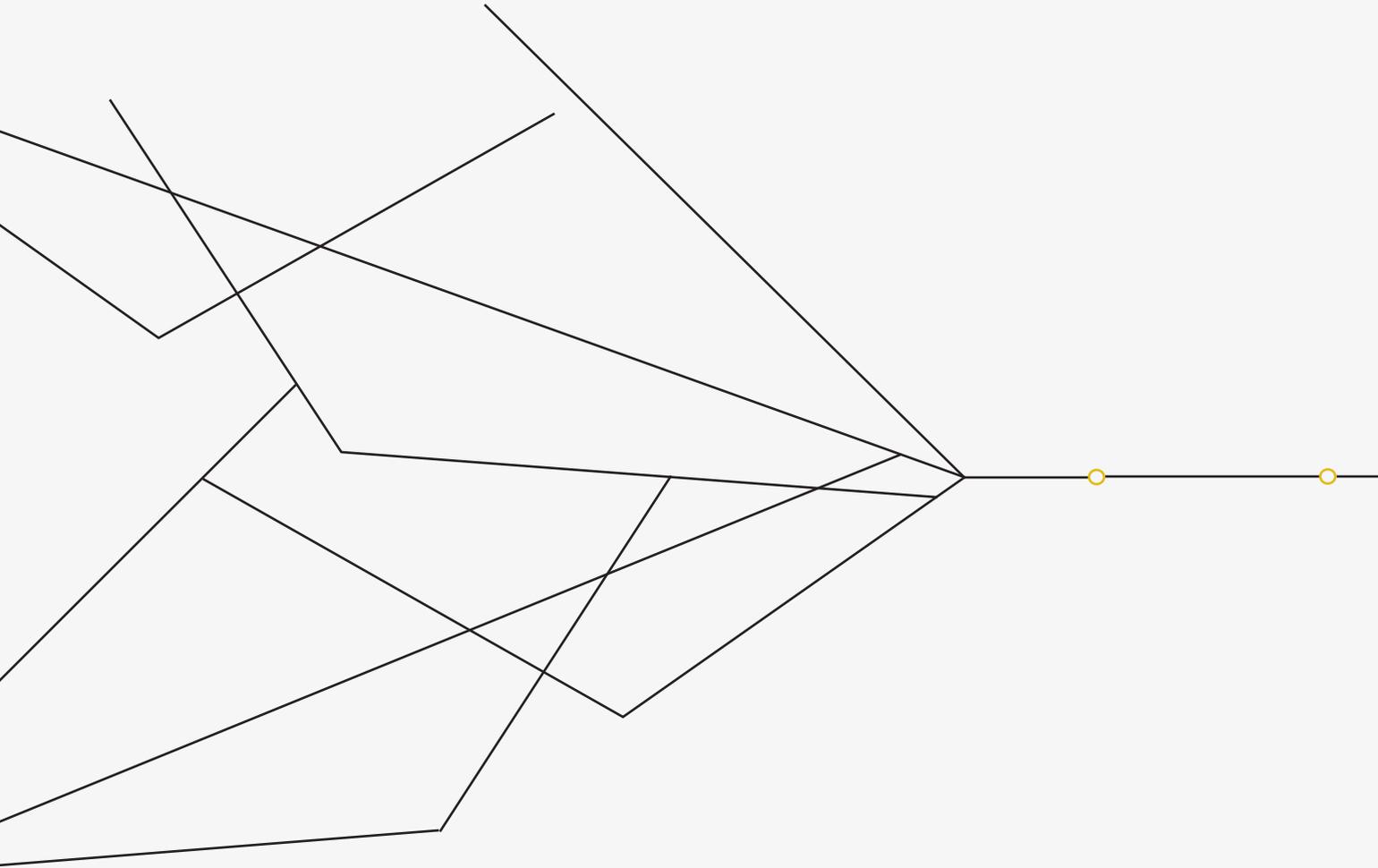


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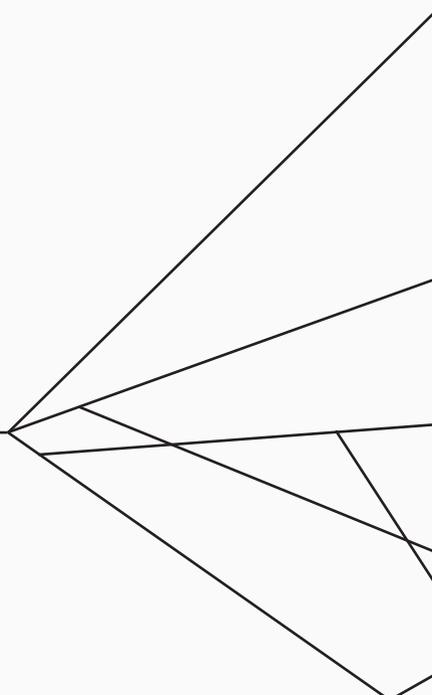
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A.01

ABSTRACT

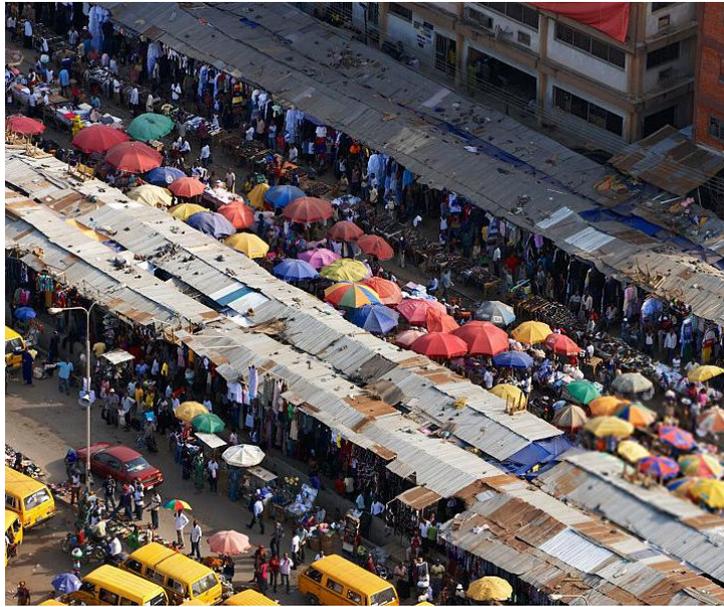


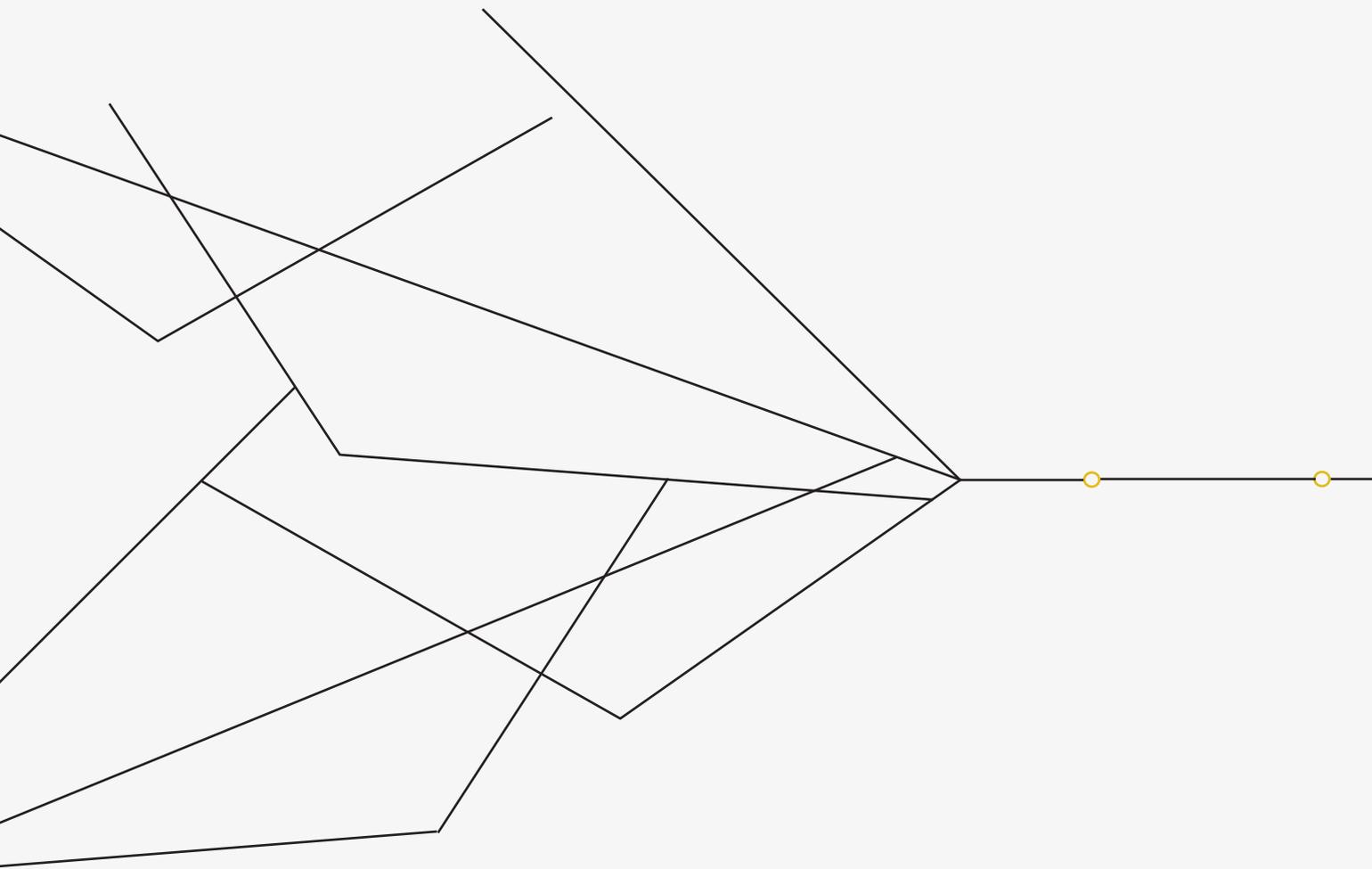
Lagos. A city of many complex structures. A city where dreams start and stop faster than a morning commute. A city where hustle and hard work does not guarantee a day's earning. A city that never sleeps, a city of passion and cultural heritage. A city that represents almost all 300 tribes in Nigeria and connects places, tradition and ideas. Nigeria's wealth capital. There is no place like Lagos, Nigeria. From colonization to civilization, to an era of undisputed excellence, Lagos combines the Western influences with the hustle of Nigerians. Lagos. The city where the horns of danfos and keke napeps make soothing melodies because it is a daily constant. The city of big dreams and long commuting hours. The city that has indirectly trained its citizens in resiliency and independence. Resiliency? "Nepa has taken light again" - a phrase I grew up on. This simply means that the authorities in charge of distributing electricity regularly withhold power from neighborhoods. Numerous black outs that lead to avertible crimes, local inventions, street gatherings, community interventions, markets and ideas. Independence? Lagosians know that the government will not help them. They understand that they need to survive in the midst of their situations and their country cannot provide any form of social security. That is where my interest in Lagos lies. In the ability of its citizens to turn bad situations around for their benefit, their grit, their passion, their heart, their dedication and most of all, the sense of cultural identity.

"Eko o ni baje" = Lagos will not spoil.

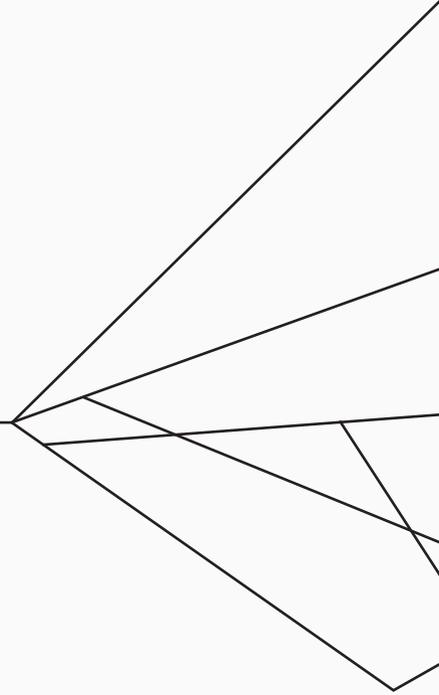
The aim of this thesis is to investigate the urban structure of mobility in Lagos from the perspective of the non-vehicular commuter and informal spaces. The mega-city has experienced extreme rapid growth in population over the past twenty years. This growth mixed with the disorganized planning of Lagos has resulted in severe over-congestion, negligent transit systems and dangerous streets. The issue that Lagos faces is one of a very complex nature and it can be viewed from multiple perspectives such as from a historical, cultural, social, socio-economic and urban viewpoints. The intent of this thesis investigation is to study the social & urban perspective of informality and to propose three intervention sites that responds to the needs of the community as well as suggest strategies for community empowerment.







A.02 PRINCIPLES



GLOBALIZATION

Globalization can be thought as a combination of different economies into one global market. Its a process that involves the reconfiguration of economies, culture and politics. Globalization has a greater effect on mega-cities especially emerging cities in the global south. Lagos in particular presents a unique condition of rapid urbanization from other cities in the Western country, Nigeria. Over the past 50 years, globalization has been a major factor in the increase of population density in Lagos as people migrate to the city for better opportunities in employment, standard of living and exposure to multiple industries and economies. Urbanization can be defined as the migration of people from rural areas to urban areas. It can also be defined as the rise in population density in cities due to factors such as globalization, proximity to infrastructure & employment opportunities according to World Bank.

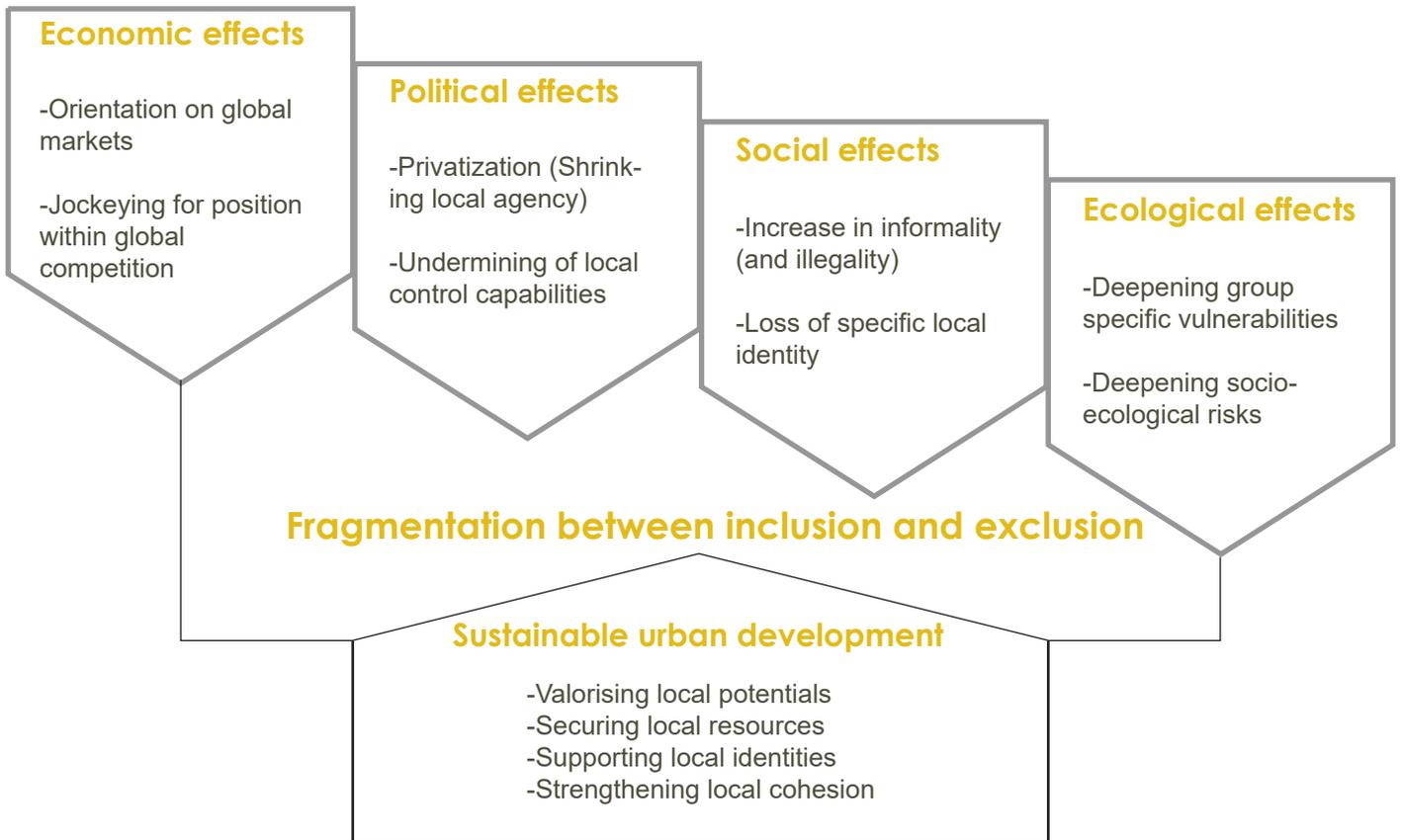


Fig. 1 Effects of globalization on megacities (design: Martin Coy)

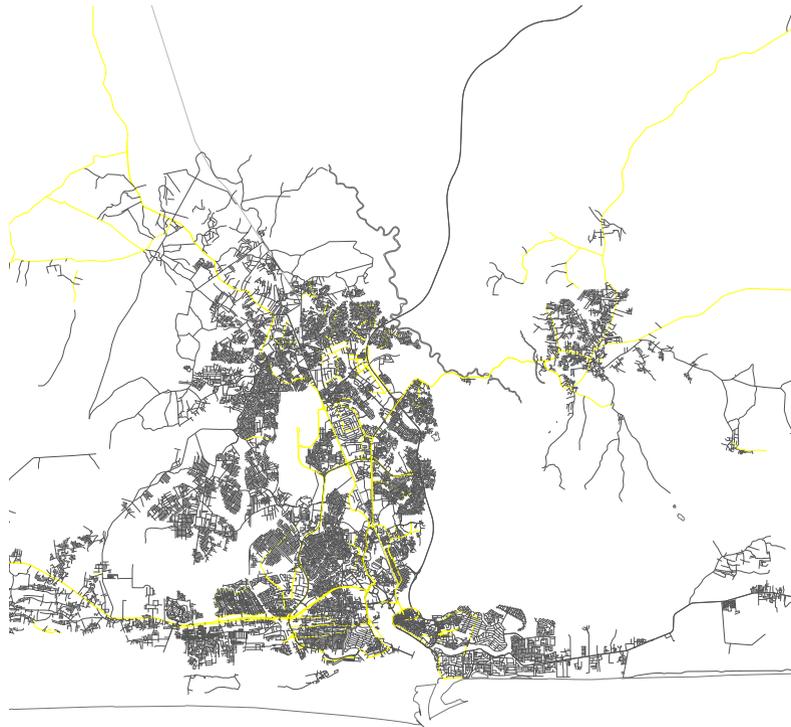
SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social Inclusion can be defined as the “process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity” according to World Bank Group. In Lagos, there are two types of public spaces- a public space that has been monetized or controlled by a higher class of people and public space that is not controlled but displaced and not accessible by people. In both spaces there is no economic participation, interaction and fulfilling of societal roles. Social Inclusion happens in the markets, community centers, on the streets, on the side roads, churches, compounds and social exclusion happens in most waterfront areas, streets, public plazas, government areas. A true public space is accessible, safe, flexible and is a place where anyone is socially included and contributing to the development of the societies growth.



MOBILITY-CENTERED DESIGN

Imagine a city where there was integration with all formal and informal mobility options. A city where moving from point A to B was easy. In Lagos, traveling in the city requires patience and tough skin as the city was grown by self-organization which means that there are disjointed & unconnected networks of roads, alleys, buildings and open space. Mobility-centered design aims to achieve walkability and accessibility throughout the city by designing networks of experience and activities for each mode of transit. In Lagos, one may think that such a system already exists because of the active streets and multiple mobility options in dense population. However, planning in Lagos developed as the citizens grew and majority of the city is self-organized. This has its advantages, being a unique phenomenon in regards to the use of space, and disadvantages as there is organized chaos that leads to over-congestion and longer travel times.



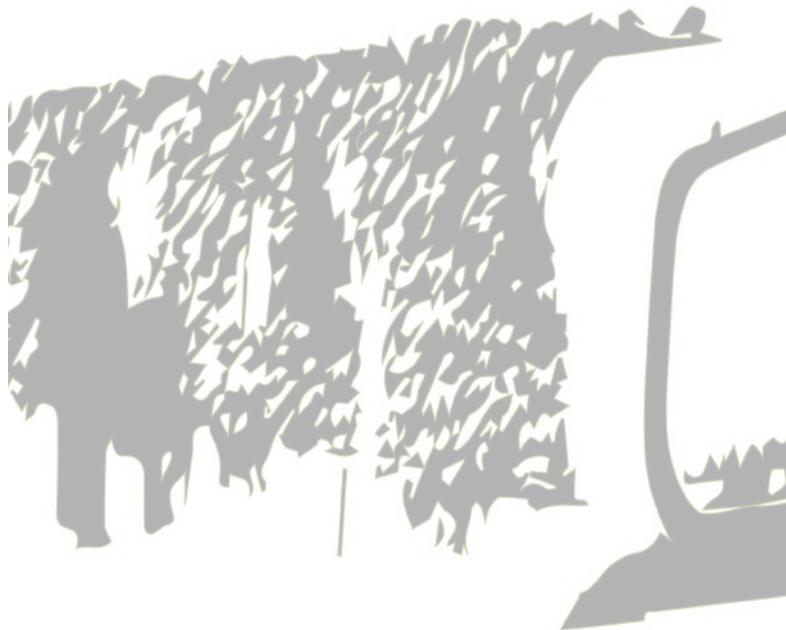
URBAN INFORMALITY

Urban Informality is a term that has been associated with cities in the global south such as Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Nairobi, Kampala, Accra, Nakuru, Mumbai, Dar es Salaam, Kigali. These cities all in have in common characteristics of urban spaces used in informal, reactive, unplanned and some times called “illegal” ways of occupying urban environments. To understand urban informality, one must look at a major driver of informality which is the informal economy. Hernando De Soto, the author of the *Mystery of the Capital* defines the “informal economy as the people’s spontaneous and creative response to the state’s incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses”(14). Urban informality is a reaction to the informal economy which has it’s advantages & disadvantages. The informal economy boosts the formal economy but also lead to issues such as over-congestion in cities like Lagos.

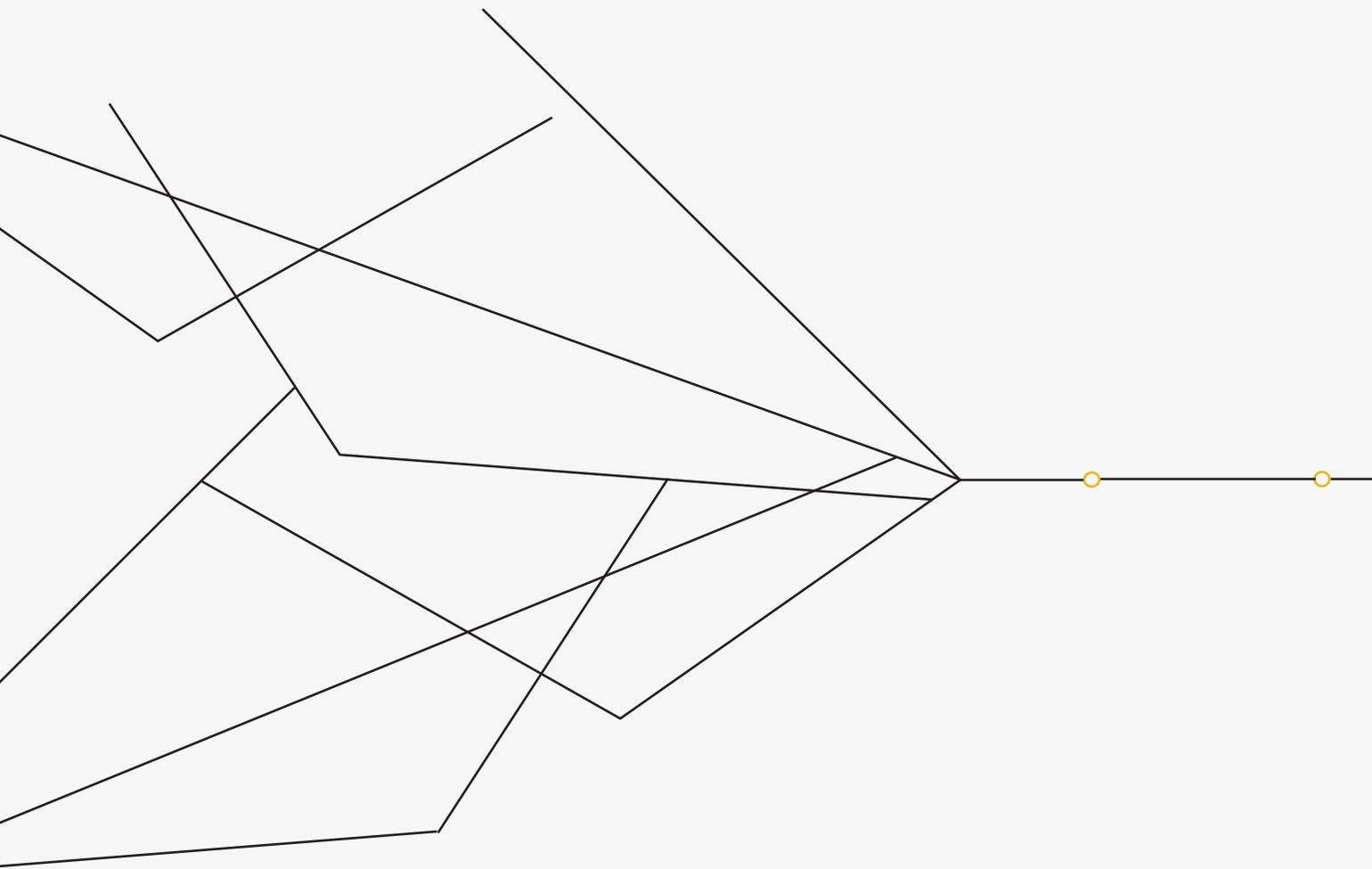


TACTICAL URBANISM

TACTICAL URBANISM is a citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using low-cost, temporary changes, and scalable interventions to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places, also known as D.I.Y Urbanism based on the tactical urbanism guide. This method of urban intervention focuses on people in the community collaborating to improve conditions in their community using materials that are easily attainable and affordable. It stems from the idea that “short term action” generates “long-term change”It was devised by an urban planner named Mike Lydon. These solutions present a low risk to the communities, foster relationships, social inclusion and capital while generating economic value of the community. Tactical Urbanism deals with the bottom-up approach where the drivers of change are the citizens, community groups and organizations.

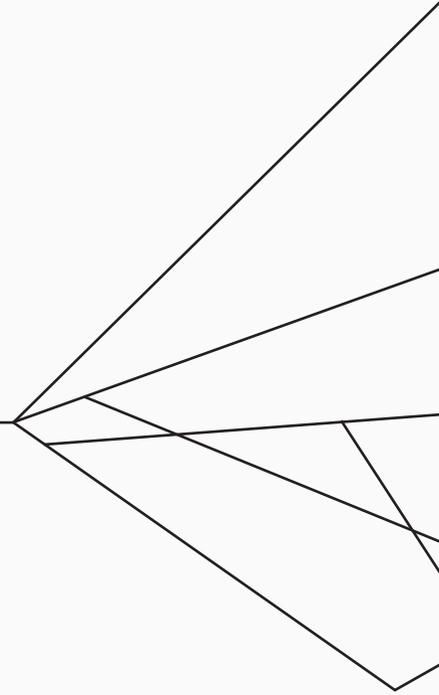


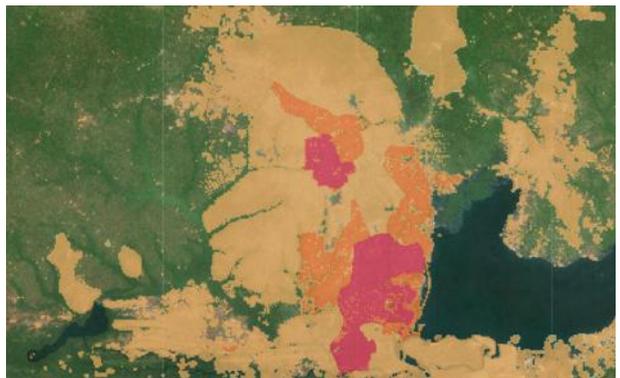
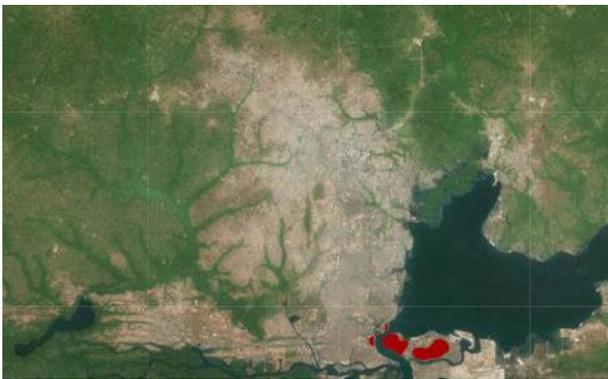




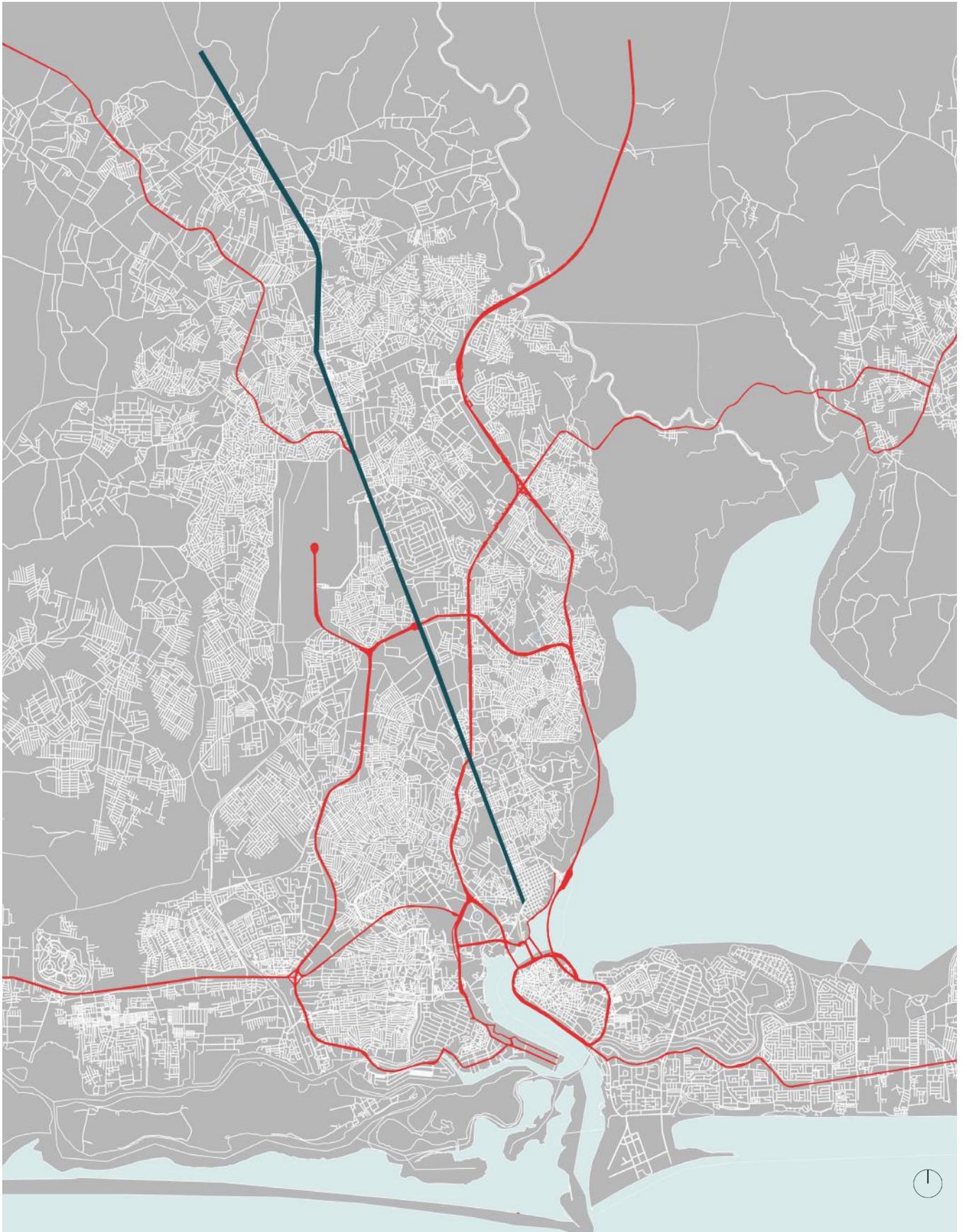
A.03

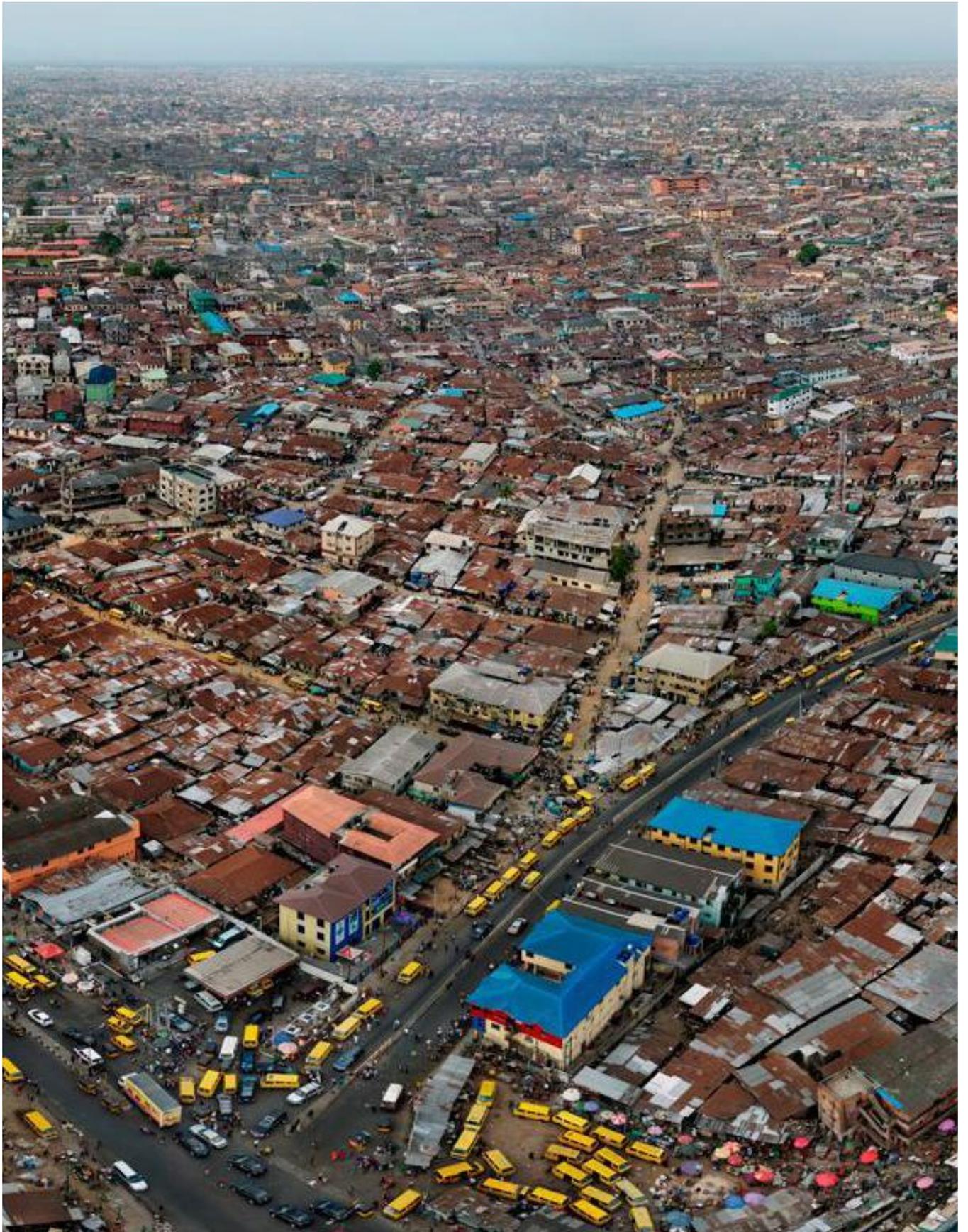
LAGOS I





Extent of Urban Growth in Lagos Nigeria
Source- storymaps.esri





GROWTH IN LAGOS

Lagos “the center of excellence”, is Nigeria’s hub for business, arts, culture, infrastructure and so many activities that led to the city’s number one problem, over-congestion. The city’s hyper-growth stems from people migrating from other parts of Nigeria in search of means to improve standard of living by engaging in trades, formal education and vocational skills. One third of Nigeria’s population lives in Lagos and the city is still growing. Currently with a population of over 21 million people, moving through the city requires patience and cautiousness as everyone moves quickly in a hurry to arrive at their destinations in the congested and active streets. The graphics above show the urban extent of Lagos from 1900-2015.

ORGANIZED CHAOS

As populated as Lagos is, there exists a form of organization that is uncommon in Western cities and although the unconventional nature, it has sustained Lagos for the past sixty years. Rem Koolhaas, visited Lagos to understand this relationship and left the city realizing that the strength of Lagos is its informal character. It is the self-organizing ability of the city and citizens to design, curate and occupy space based on their immediate need. As inclusive and community-oriented as Lagos sounds, there is so much exclusion and privatization that is a result of the self-organizing condition when moving through the city and it is important to ask how can you design the mobility experience to support social inclusion & boost creativity & productivity?

POLICY

The importance of policy in the urban development of Lagos requires a great deal of sensitivity primarily because of the nature, character and presence of the informal in the city. Heavily characterized with informal uses of spaces as a means to survive, citizens rely on the spaces that do not have any policy or regulation to conduct business, occupy, change, dominate and to dwell on daily basis. The lifestyle is so informal that it changes everyday and space in the city is for everyone based on earliest time of occupancy. With such frequent and dynamic change occurring in the city, the question for communities, urban planners and architects should be how can one balance informality with new regulations of formality?

MOBILITY IN LAGOS

There are numerous ways of mobility in Lagos—from formal modes of transit such as cars, rail, BRT’s to informal modes such as Danfo’s (yellow buses), Keke Napeps (tricycles), Okadas (motorcycles). Currently the demand for trips in Lagos by both formal and informal modes of transit is eighteen million trip per day. Over 7 million public transport passenger trips per day according LAMATA. By 2025, daily demand for public transportation will increase to 15 million trips at the rate of Lagos’s growth. About 47 percent of Lagosians prefer to travel with a bus, 20 percent prefer traveling in a car, 15 percent prefer Keke Napeps. Inherently, with the various modes of mobility and congested streets, long travel times, are part of a Lagosian’s reality.



Isale Eko- Broad Street 1950



Isale Eko- Broad Street 1950

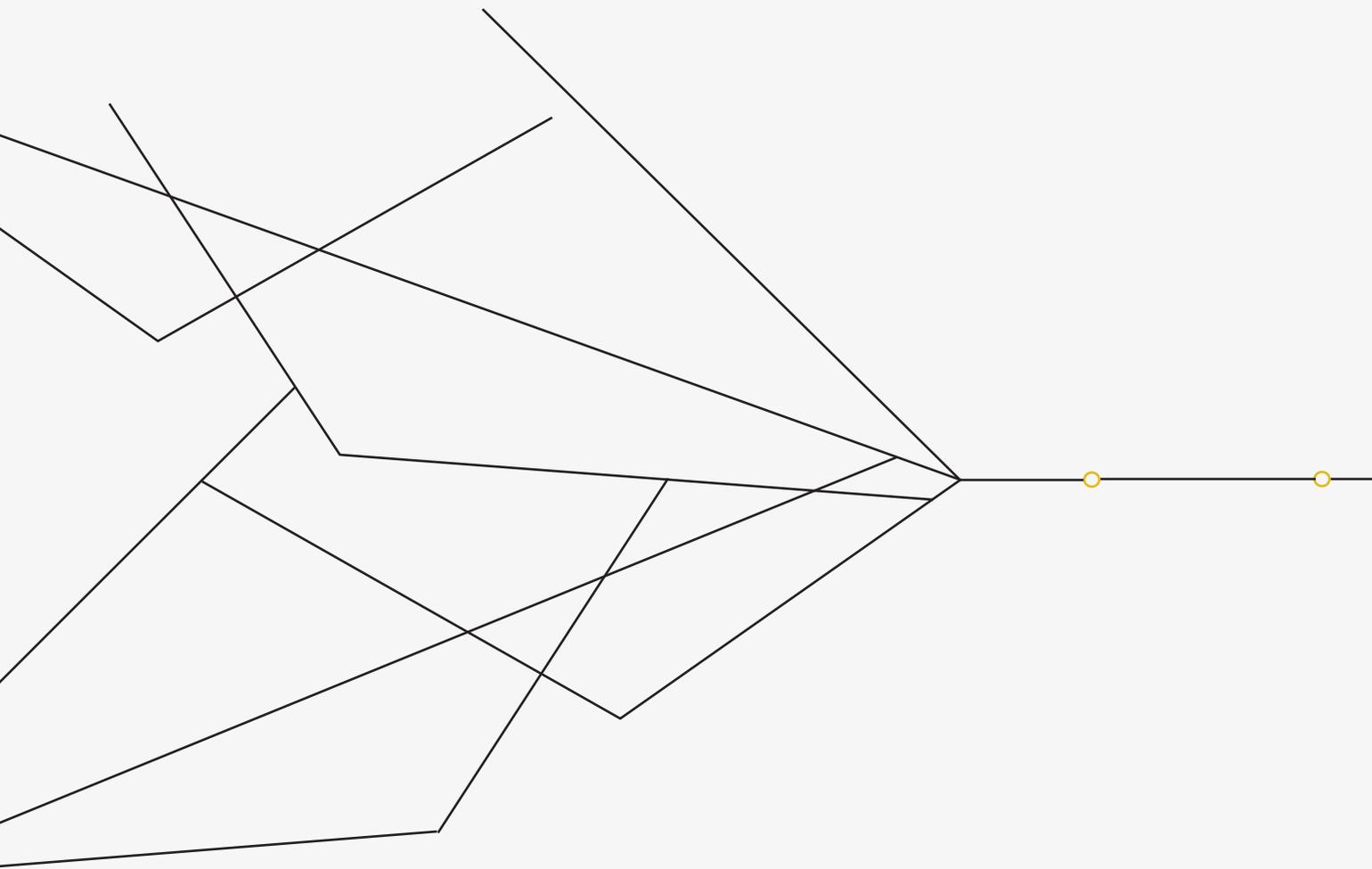


Isale Eko- Broad Street Church 1960

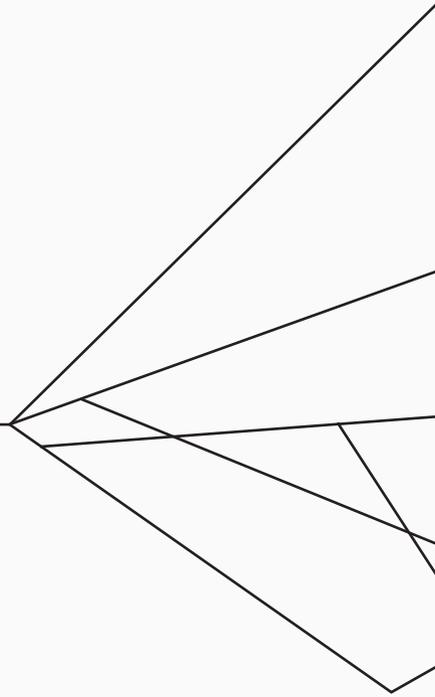




Isale- Eko Broad Street 2015



A.04 CASE STUDIES



SHANGHAI

POPULATION 24,151,500

LAND AREA 2,448
square miles

POPULATION DENSITY 9,865
per sq mile



LOS ANGELES

POPULATION 3,884,307

LAND AREA 469
square miles

POPULATION DENSITY 7,544
per sq mile

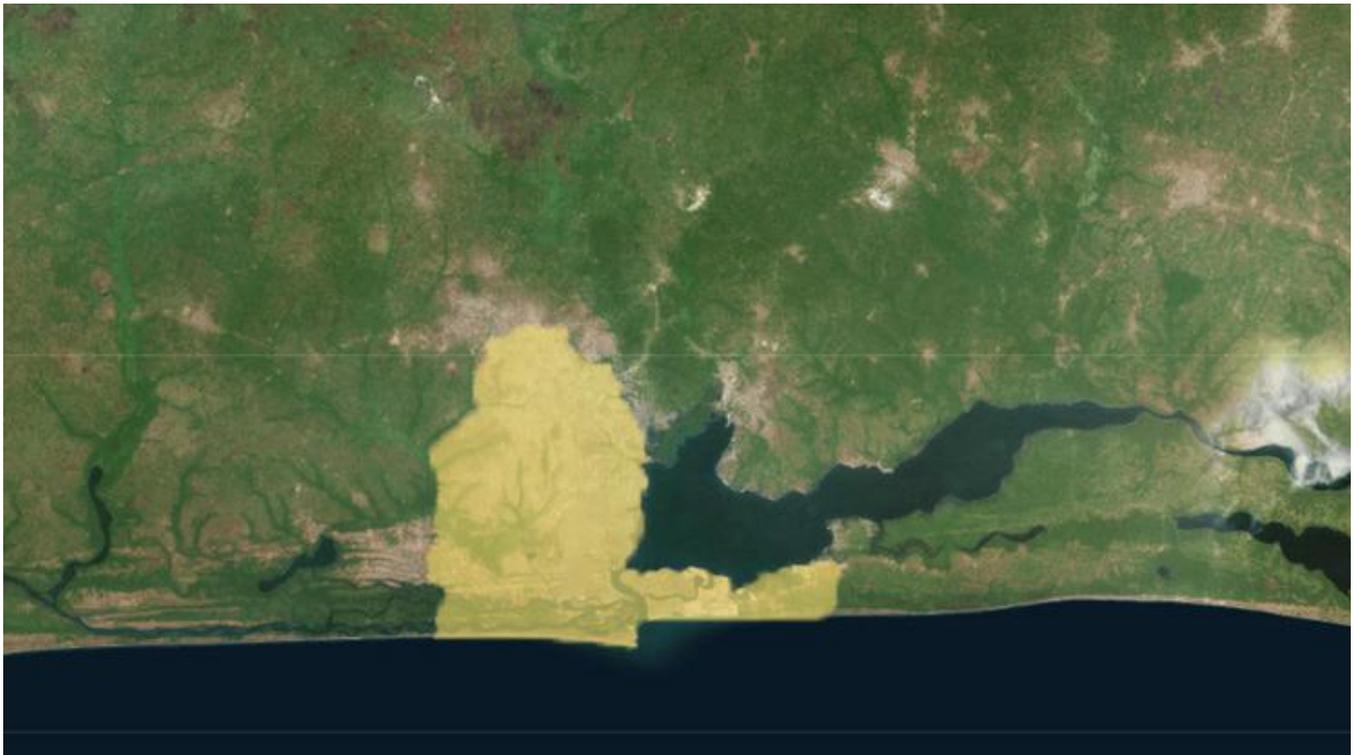


LAGOS

POPULATION 21,000,000

LAND AREA 1,381
square miles

POPULATION DENSITY 15,206
per sq mile





REM KOOLHAS

“Lagos is a city of huge contrasts. It has elements of a modern city — skyscrapers, roads — but also a strong presence of the informal. We are fascinated by the **self-organizing** entities of Lagos, like the Alaba International Electronics Market”

Lagos is a city that’s very anxious. **Everyone is always in a hurry.** Everyone needs to get ahead of the other”



LIZ OGBU

“We need to move to a place where the **needs and desires** within communities generate the ideas for solutions, which has a better chance of success. We are **co-collaborators** with the community exploring ways to solve a small component of a larger issue ”

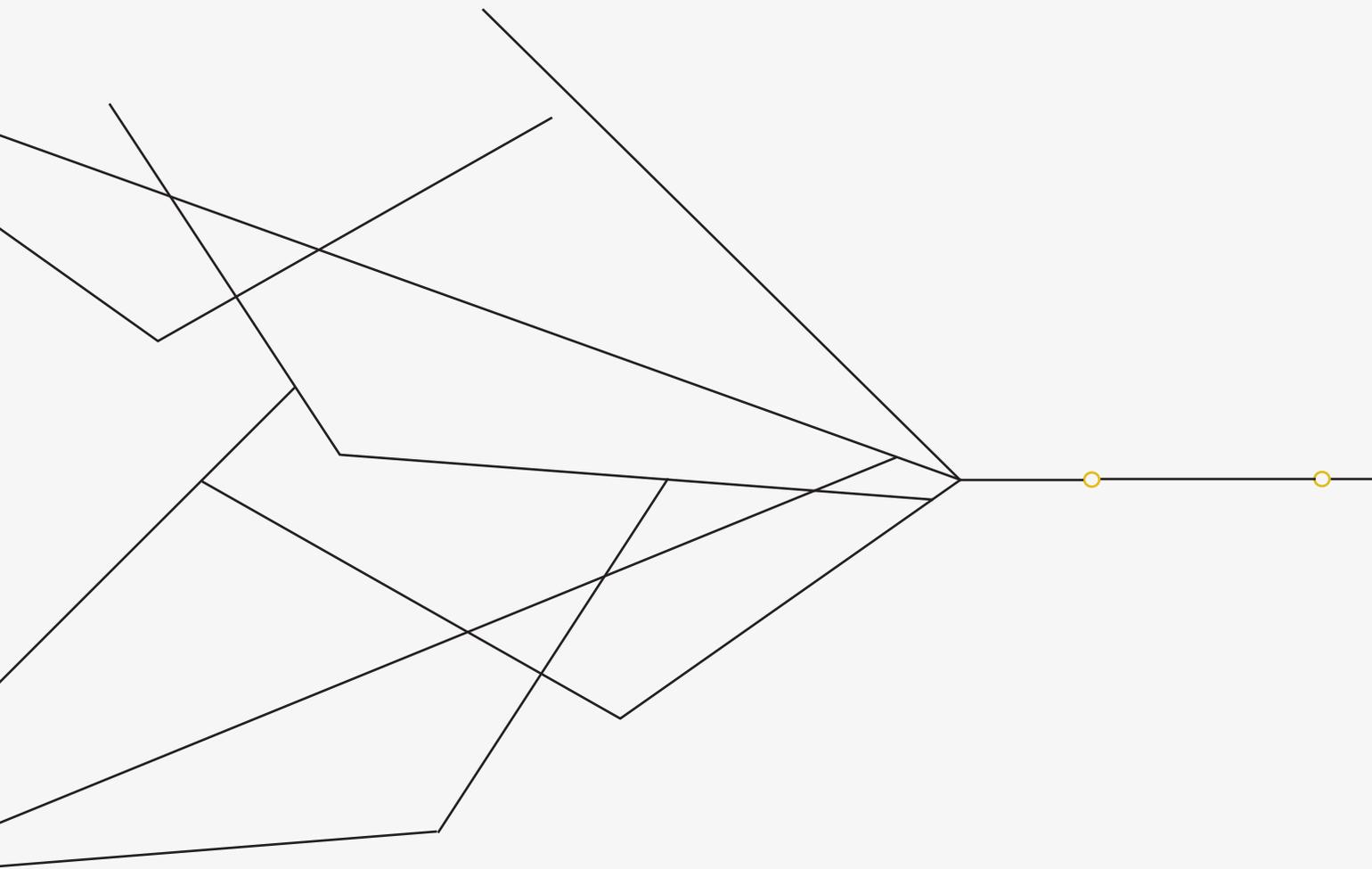
“There has to be the idea that we are **honoring what is there** in terms of the physical assets, social networks, and cultural history; Place keeping”



KUNLE ADEYEMI

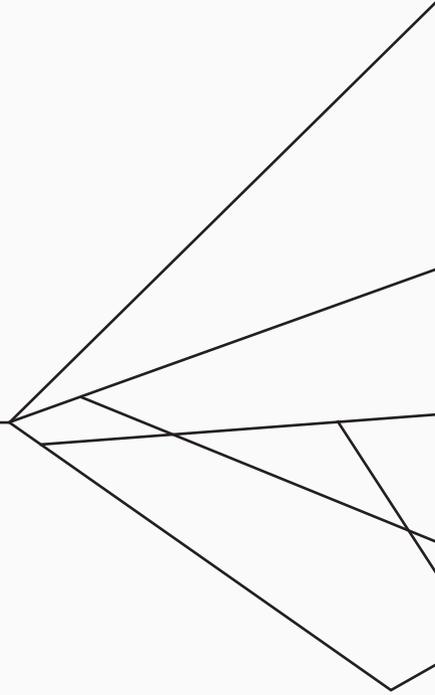
“We had to consider what kind of spaces the **local people would need**. For example, they didn’t want a swimming pool, they wanted a radio station. Music is a large part of their **culture**, and it is their place to have a voice and communicate

“The goal is to bridge critical gaps in infrastructure and urban development by creating **coherent networks** and global exchanges that work **for people**”



A.05

LAGOS II



Ayo: Can you tell me about your day-to-day routine in terms of going to & fro from work & your house?

Demi: I live in Akowonjo and work in Ikoyi. On the weekdays I stay at Isale-Eko with a friend and I go back home on the weekend. I just started this but I can tell you that it is so convenient and stress-free. Prior to this arrangement, I would have to leave by house at 4am to get to work at 9am. Most times, I enjoy the experience of traveling with Lagosians, but you should always expect to encounter a few problems that cause major delays & elongate your travel time”

Ayo: So how long approximately does your morning commute take?

Demi: Almost 5 hours most days

Ayo: What! How long would it take if there wasn't so much traffic

Demi: About 2 hours, when there's a public holiday and people driving.

Ayo: What would you say is a major problem with mobility in Lagos from your perspective?

Demi: No sense of community. Everyone feels like they have to make it on their own, which means that they occupy however amount of space and time as they wish.

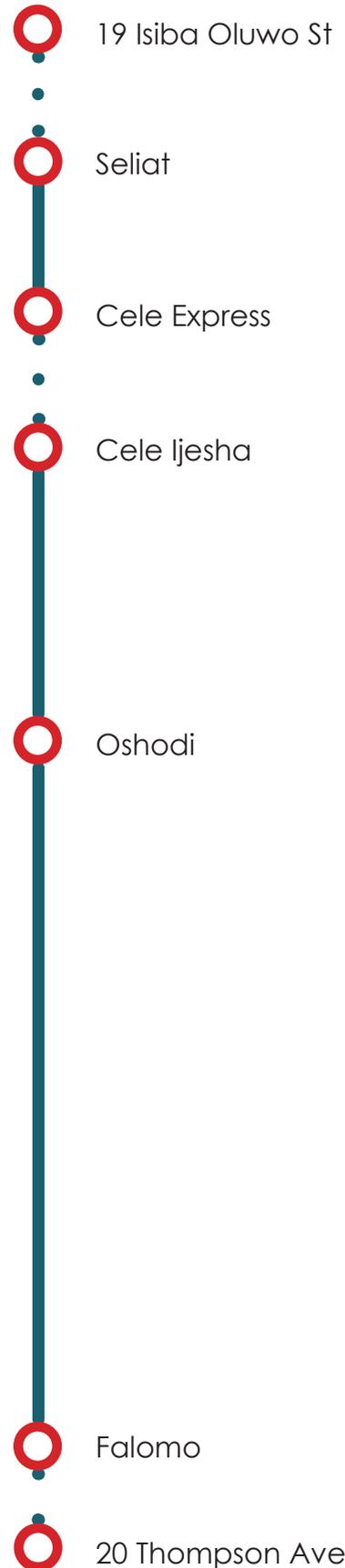
Ayo: If there was one thing you could change about your commute, what would it be?

Demi: I think Lagos needs rail transit or a quicker way to move through the city. I also think that we need to make the best of what we have.

Ayo: Can you explain what you mean by that?

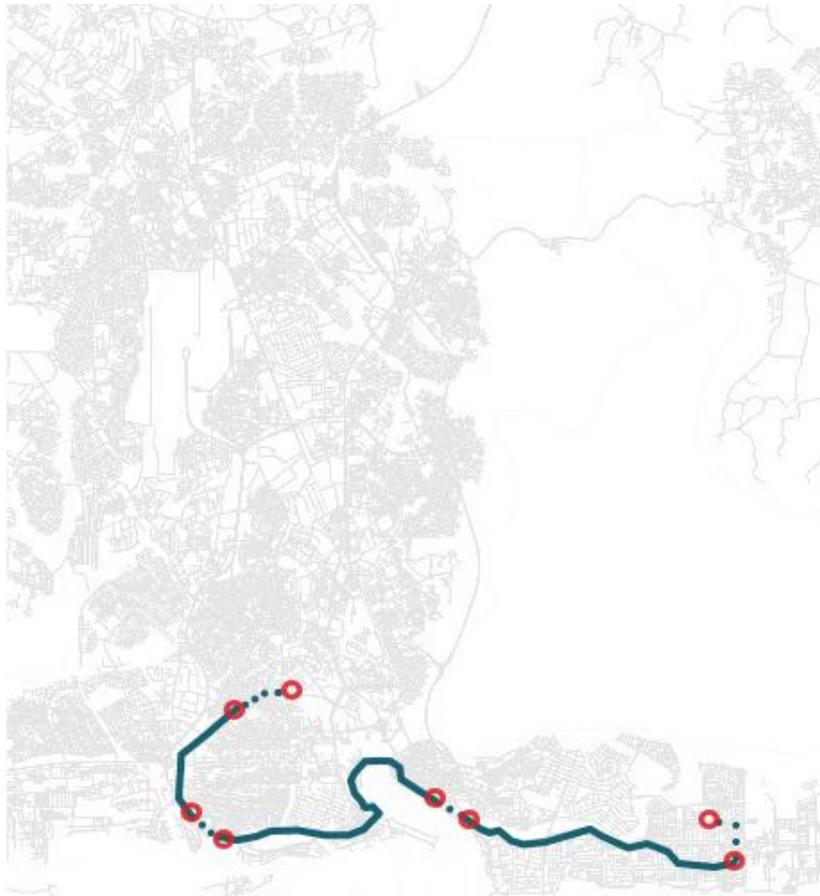
Demi: Well, we can improve the bus system, and the experience of traveling by providing productivity elements as a person travels. It will be nice to have a charging station or public restrooms at the bus-stop.

Total Time Commute 4h 16min





Tobi's Journey



Age 25

Occupation Model & Artist

Lives Surulere

Works Lekki

FINDINGS

**DISORDERLY TRANSIT SYSTEM
PRIVATIZING PUBLIC SPACES
OVERCROWDED**

Ayo: Can you tell me about your day-to-day routine in terms of going to & fro from work & your house?

Tobi: I have three stops that I have walk to because we don't have a good system of planning the routes. It takes my longer walking because there too may obstructions on the road- from the trailers, to the cars, market women, danfos, keke napeps - it is impossible to be alone in the street in this city.

Ayo: So how long approximately does your morning commute take?

Tobi: 3 hours and a few minutes

Ayo: How long would it take if there wasn't so much traffic

Tobi: An hour thirty minutes.

Ayo: What would you say is a major problem with mobility in Lagos from your perspective?

Tobi: The worst part about our transit system is that there is no order. The buses come anytime they want to, and make "private" stops along the way. I've never been in a city where there is such disregard for the law. That is our problem, corruption everywhere.

Ayo: If there was one thing you could change about your commute, what would it be?

Tobi: I would make some type of app that helps commuters know when the bus is running late or is going off its designated path of travel

Ayo: If you can't do that, what's another thing you'll improve?

Tobi: The experience, we need to be exposed to more art, culture so we always remember our culture and identity,

 4 Bode Thomas

 Orile

 Alaba Express

 AmuwoOdofin

 CMS

 ELF Bus stop

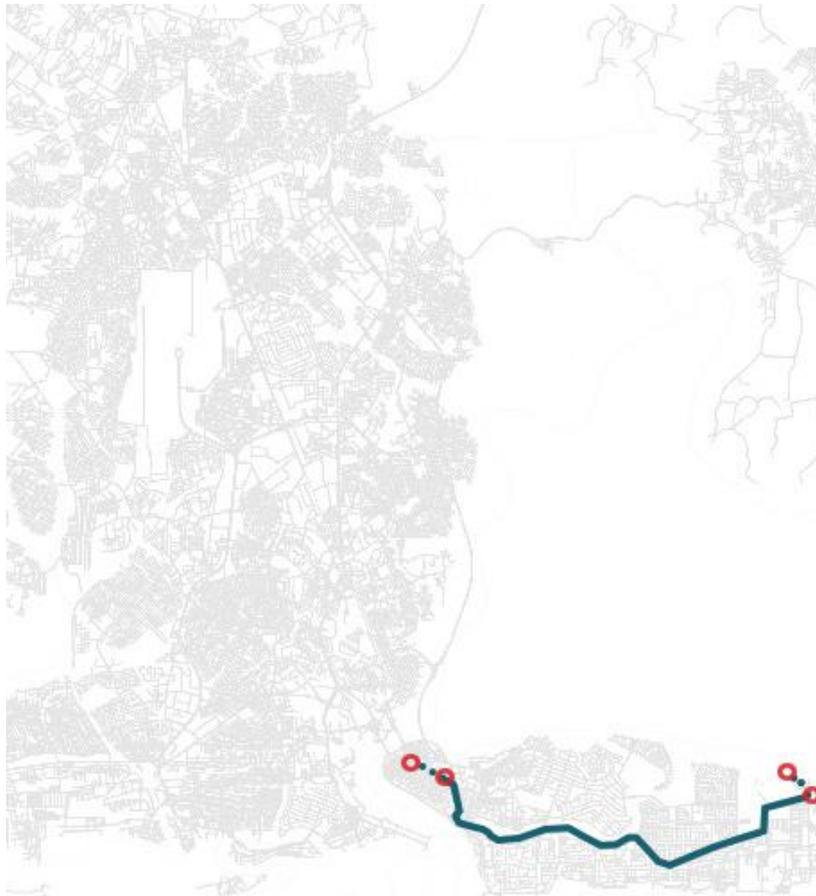
 38 Emma Abimbola Cole

Total Time
Commute

2 h 43 min



Bolu's Journey



Age	23
Occupation	Banker
Lives	Ajah
Works	Isale Eko

FINDINGS

**INFORMAL MODES OF TRANSIT
LONG BOARDING HOURS
OVERCROWDED**

Ayo: Can you tell me about your day-to-day routine in terms of going to & fro from work & your house?

Bolu: Of course, I start my day at 5:30am. By 6am I'm out of the house. The nearest bus stop to my house is a 10 minute walk. It takes so long to load the bus, we call it the go slow rush because even if you're early, it seems like you're going very slow. It takes even longer to actually start moving because the buses don't move until they are full with passengers. There are just too many people & other modes on transit on the street so expect to double your travel time. I usually arrive at work at 9:00am.

Ayo: So how long approximately does your morning commute take?

Bolu: Roughly about 2 hours.

Ayo: Woah, how long would it take if there wasn't so much traffic

Bolu: About 50 minutes, that's why I love Sunday mornings. The roads are clear & you can actually see the streets.

Ayo: What would you say is a major problem with mobility in Lagos from your perspective?

Bolu: I think the most important issue is that all the different transit systems do not integrate and this causes major confusion on the streets. We also need proper structure & maintainance of our roads in order to have a smooth journey.

Ayo: If there was one thing you could change about your commute, what would it be?

Bolu: I need to be able to change more than one thing. Can I change three things?

Ayo: Of course

Bolu: I would fix the bad roads, create a structure where one could tell when the bus comes & leaves, and create sections throughout the city dedicated for safely loading & unloading from public transit.

 21 Addo Rd

 Ajah

 Broad Street

 19 Tinubu St

Total Time Commute 2 hours

To understand the mobility, social and cultural context, three interviews were conducted with daily users of transit in Lagos. The interviews revealed important characteristics of the mobility options, particularly passenger buses called "Danfo". Some of the findings include the informal operations of the bus in regards to the privatization of public spaces and amenities, the interaction with other informal activities while on the bus and the conditions that occurred on the streets. The streets are used for various activities. From boarding the bus to alighting from the bus, there are multiple uses of space while moving through Lagos. This series of images show the different ways Lagosians use their surrounding to buy, sell, wait from the perspective of commuting with a bus- the most preferred mode of mobility in Lagos. **A** series captures the use of space from boarding a bus (long waiting lines), while on the bus (waiting to move) and at drop off locations (passengers waiting on the street). **B** series captures the adjacent activities from boarding a bus (informal modes of mobility), while on the bus (street trading) and at drop off locations (passengers waiting till the buses fill up). **C** series captures the interactions on the bus when boarding a bus (communicating with the conductor), while on the bus (buying and selling) and at drop off locations (the conductor calling for more passengers). This series of images shows the informal relationship of Lagosians adapting to their context and the self-sustaining character of the urban environment and the intent of this study is to capture the character and use of space throughout a person's mobility experience. Findings from this study suggested that informality lies not just with mobility options but with the use of space and the reaction of citizens to their social context. Conditions and experiences from the interviews were also solidified such as waiting for the buses to reach full capacity before moving.).

Boarding



On the Bus



Drop-Off



A

Boarding



On the Bus



Drop-Off



B

Adjacent Activities

Boarding



On the Bus



Drop-Off



C

Interaction on the bus

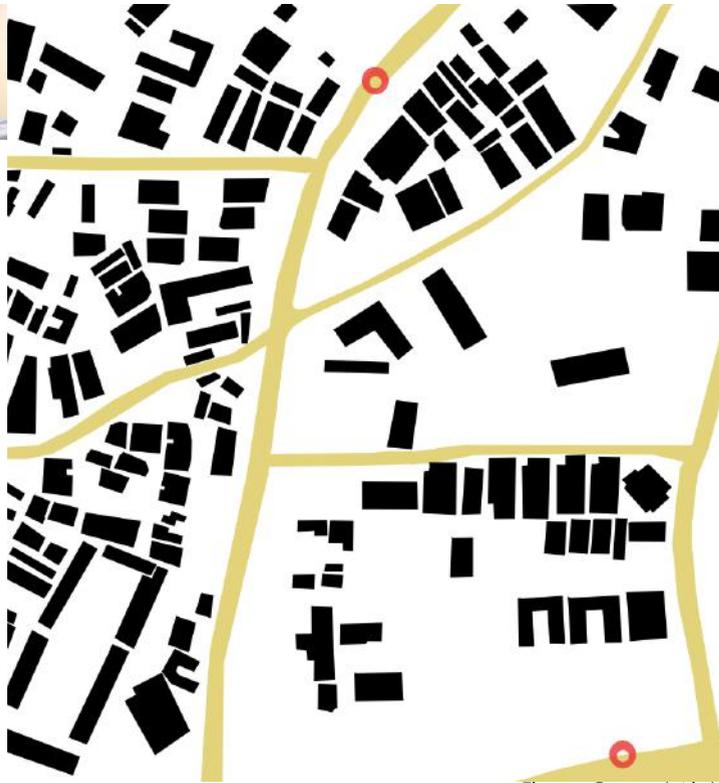


Figure Ground Ajah

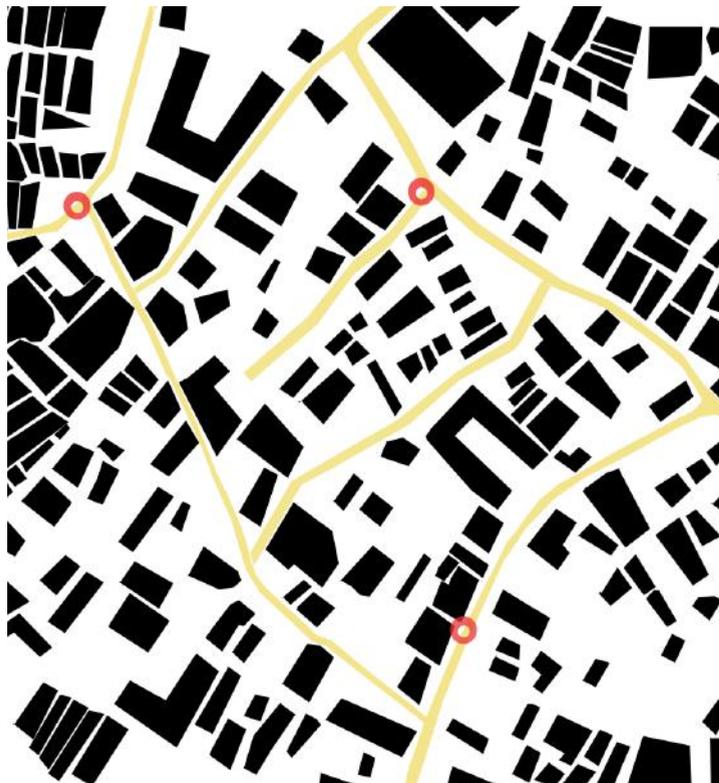


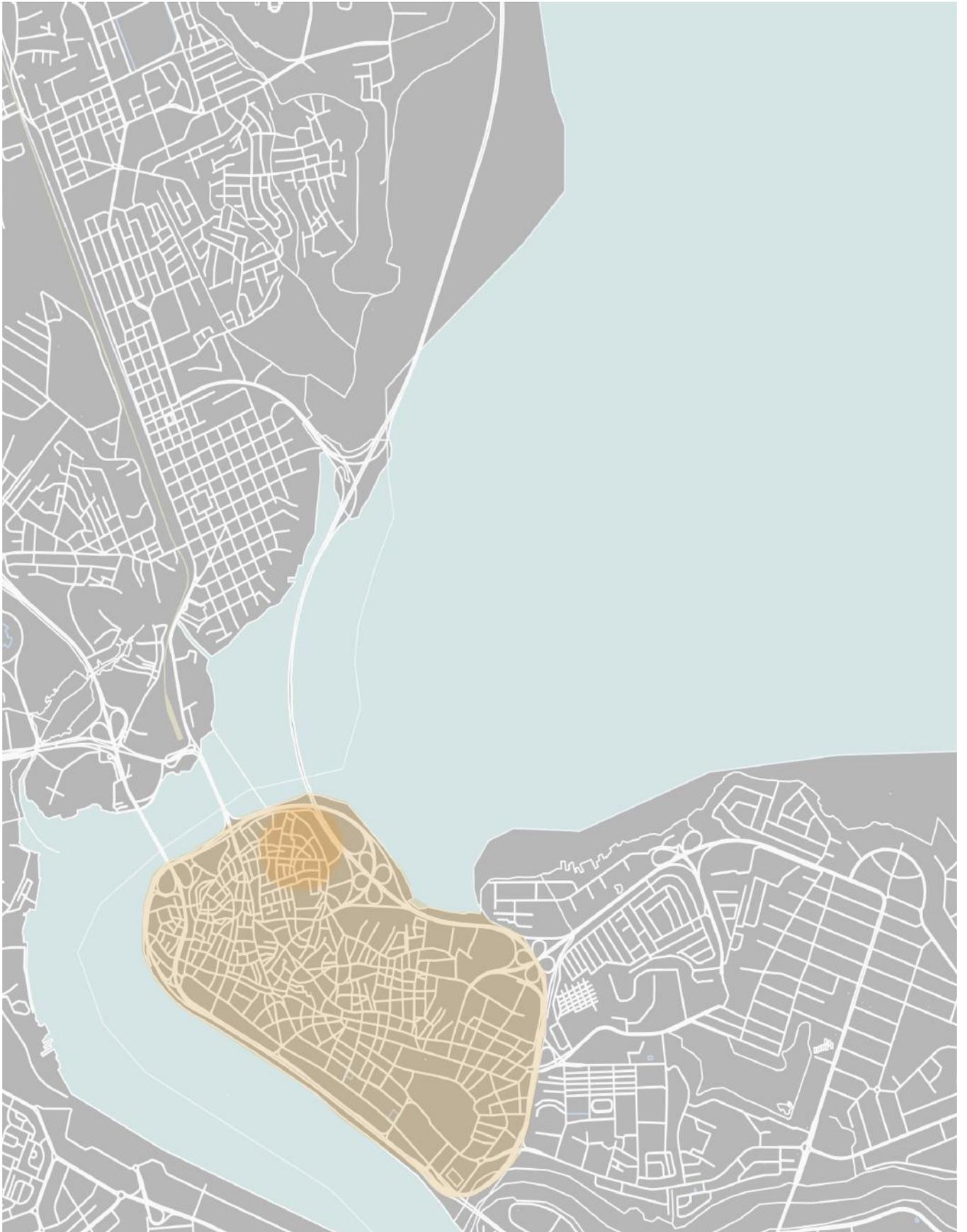
Figure Ground Isale-Eko



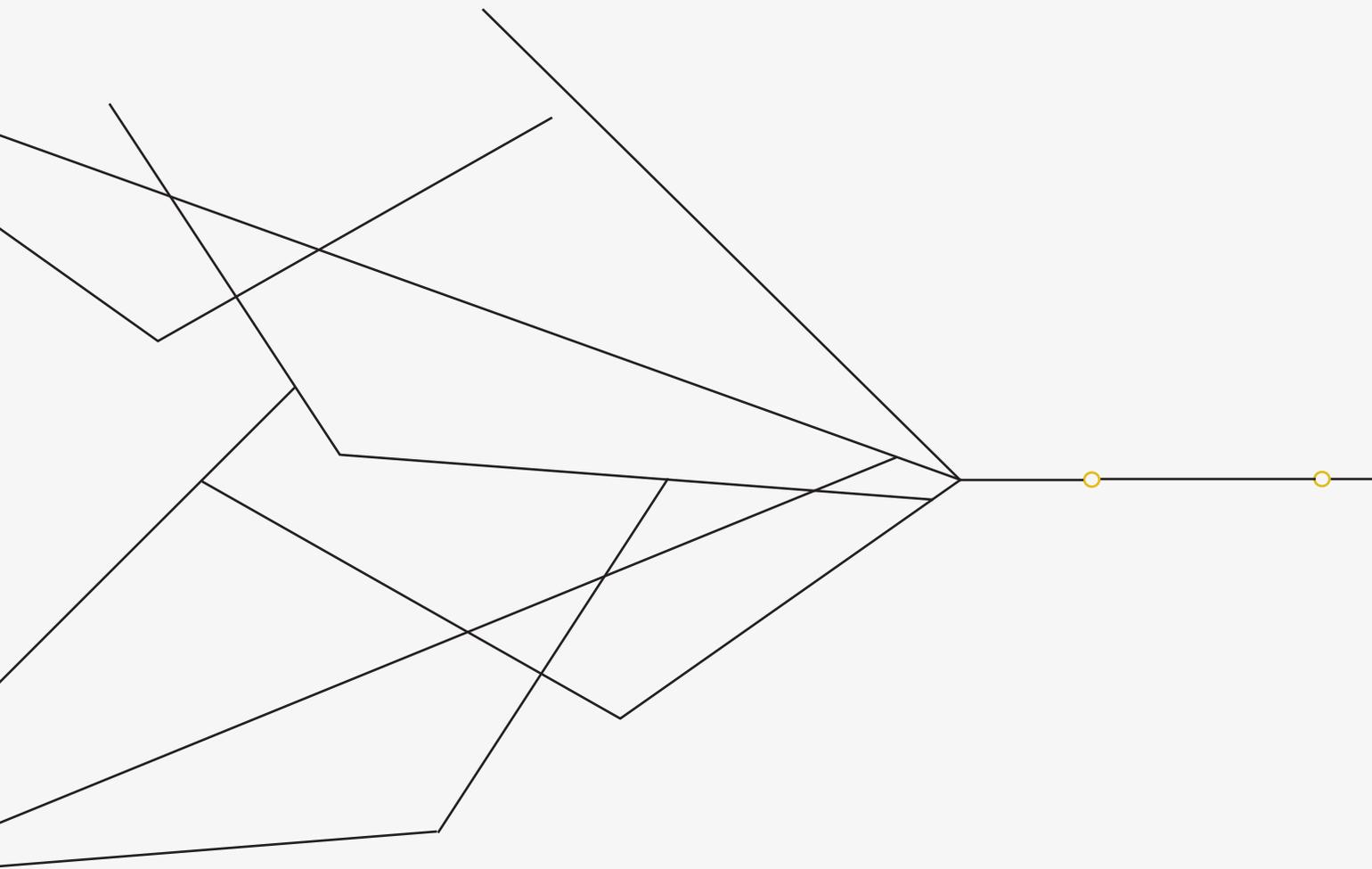
Section Ajah



Section Isale-Eko

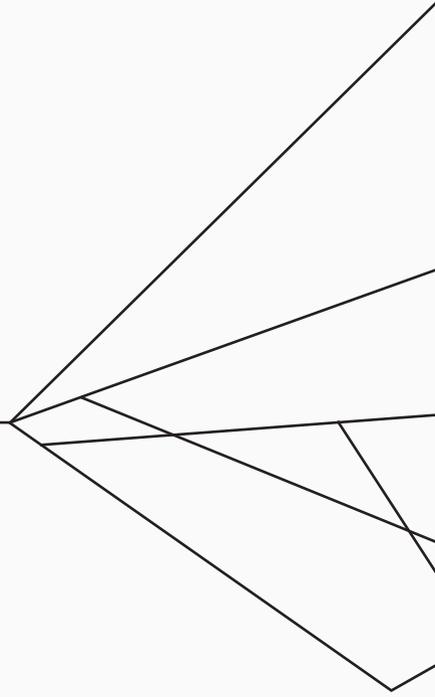






A.06

LAGOS III



CORRIDOR SELECTION

Studying Lagos from the city-wide scale offered understanding of the mobility networks and the self-organizing growth of the city. However to study the principles of social inclusion, tactical urbanism, use of informal spaces, a smaller neighborhood scale was the best strategy to understand in detail the moves and patterns that occurred around and on the selected site. The selected corridor is a business, food and entertainment hub in the Isale-Eko neighborhood. The streets are heavily packed with early morning traders till late hours of the night hence attracting visitors to the neighborhood. There are three bus stops along the corridor, a major trade institutions, multiple stalls (formal & informal) and residential properties and a few abandoned buildings.

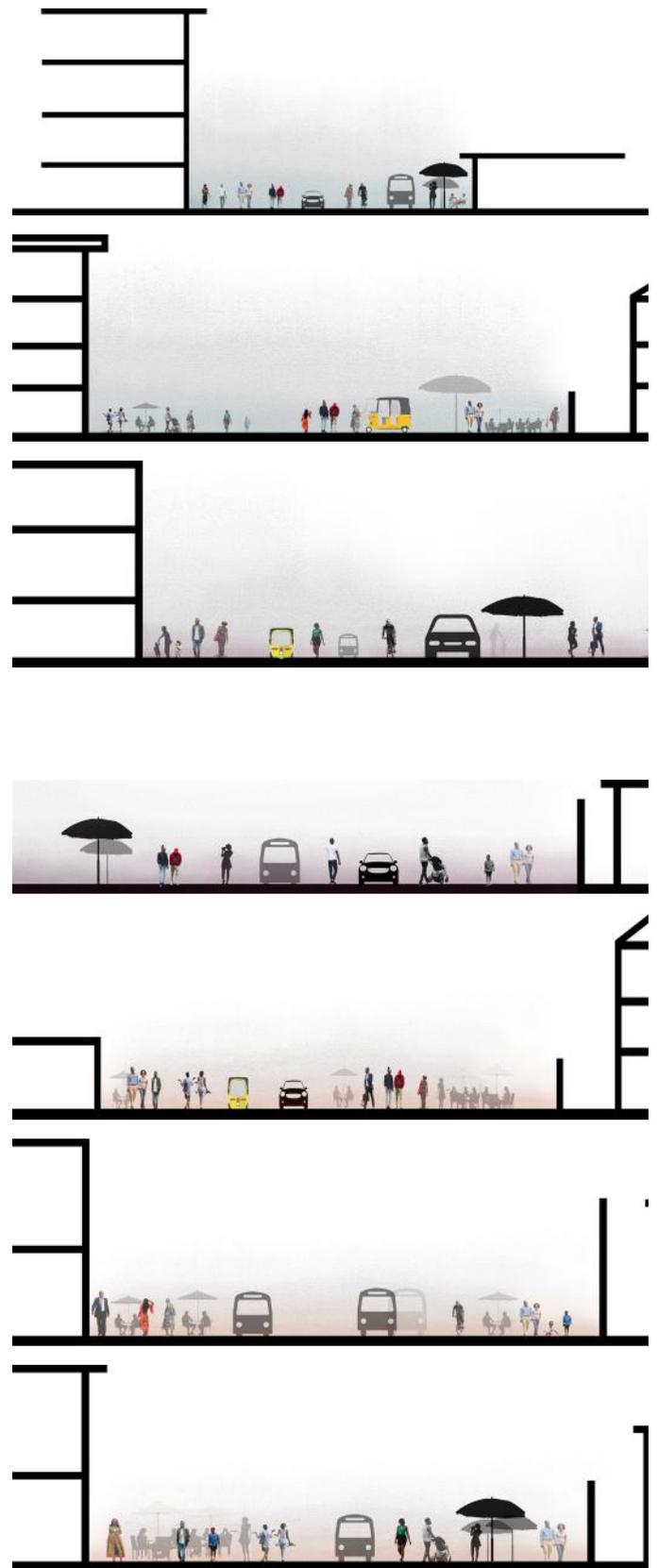
DESIGN INTERVENTION

Along the chosen corridor, three sites were selected based on the activities around the site, the vacancy of the site and the proximity to a mobility center (bus stop). The first intervention focuses on enhancing accessibility through connective pedestrian networks, socially inclusive spaces, and using locally sourced materials. In a survey that involved residents & business owners in the corridor, a play and relaxation area was an opportunity to bring the community's needs to reality. Based on the tactical urbanism guide, such a solution would be tested as a demonstration project and based on the feedback and use of the intervention, it would advance to the pilot phase. The second intervention focuses on enhancing local economic and social impact in the neighborhood by providing different storage, safekeeping and product visibility elements for the sellers, as well as shaded areas. In a survey that involved residents & business owners in the corridor, enhancing the work environment was an immediate need that majority of the users identified. Based on the tactical urbanism guide, such a solution would be tested at an interim phase based on the need and priority level. The third intervention focuses on enhancing green infrastructure elements that can increase productivity and inclusive activities for community gathering. In a survey that involved residents & business owners in the corridor, seating and gathering elements for community meetings, neighborhood parties and street events was a need in the neighborhood. Based on the tactical urbanism guide, this intervention would be in a demonstration phase to allow the community make additions and subtractions to the intervention. All proposals involve taking from the site, locally sourced materials and flexible interpretations based on the communities needs.



US STOP

TRAINING CENTERS/SCHOOLS





The street is used for multiple activities and in this image cars are parked on the left, right outside the building. On the right, there are canopies and a keke-napep wait-and-park area. There are mini-umbrellas with a person selling recharge cards and street pastries. There is a mini-restaurant and cafe under the canopy and there is no designation of sidewalk vs road.



The street is used for multiple activities and in this image there is an outdoor market where food items are sold. The vendors are selling out of wheelbarrow, crates and bags. There is a storefront right outside of where they are stationed but the vendors obstruct entry into the building. To the right of the image are similar activities with car, keke-napep and bus parking

The street is used for multiple activities and in this image there are informal vendors to the left selling from their bags and on the right is a bus-stop that its railings are used to hang clothes. There are also numerous umbrellas and vendors next to the stop with keke-napeps and danfo's obstructing the pedestrian flow by parking anywhere along the street.



The street is used for multiple activities and in this image cars there are umbrellas on the left for selling little goods. There is a car-wash station to the right as-well as a community water tank. On the right is also where the built-in stalls begin in the corridor with clothing items and entertainment goods for sale. Cars and danfo's also parked on the right side of the street.



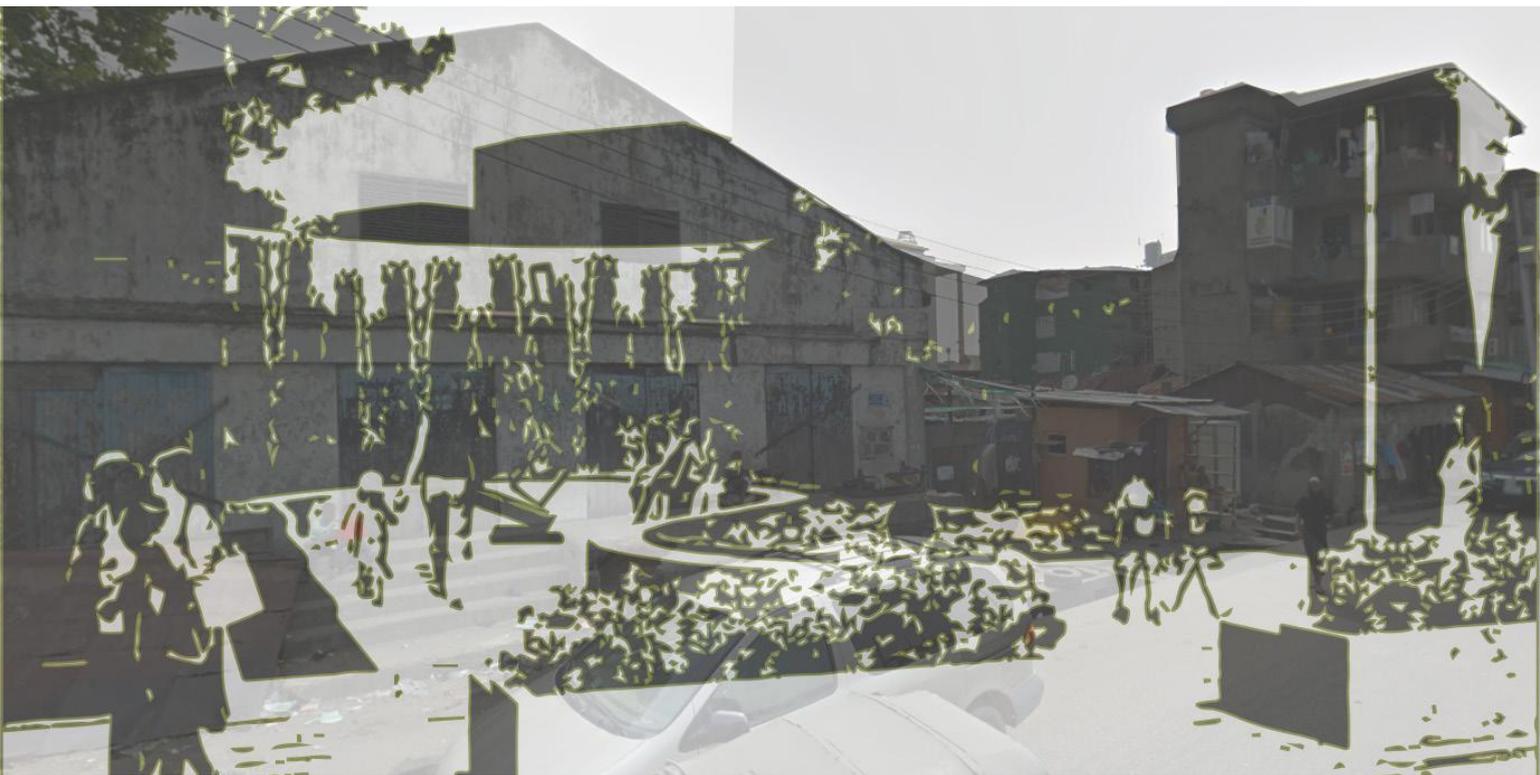
PROPOSAL ONE

ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL USERS

goal

Connective Pedestrian
Mobility
Ease of Access to Public Transit
Socially Inclusive Spaces
Locally Sourced Materials

tactics



Initial Layering Study



P L A Y



Goal

Play & Relaxation Area

Project Type

Demonstration & Pilot

Materials

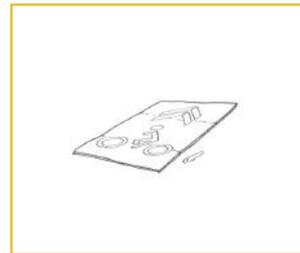
Listed Above; Wood Palettes

Tools

Tape Measure, Table Saw

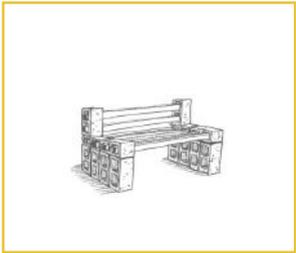
Estimated Cost

Free from shipping company or \$13/N4,500 for 48 palettes





Site Image



Materials Palette
Image Credit: Tactical Urbanism Guide

“We **play anywhere** we can and with **anything we see around**, it depends on what space is free at that time, and we have to leave if someone wants to use the space to sell” - Community Member

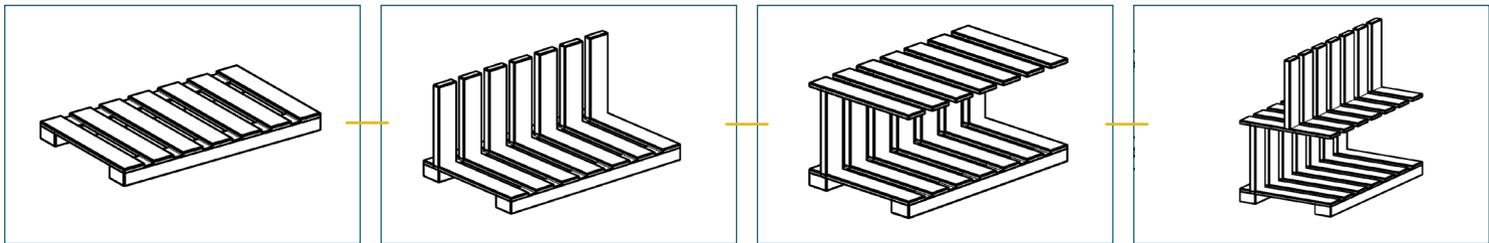


“It would be nice to have a space to **relax** after a long days work, in my community there is **no public area** for relaxation & peace, the noise in this area is so much because of the markets” - Kofi





Intervention Site



PROPOSAL TWO

ENHANCE LOCAL ECONOMIC & SOCIAL IMPACT goal

Inclusive Public Activities
Storage & Safekeeping
Elements
Shaded Areas
Product Visibility

tactics



Initial Layering Study



W O R K



Goal

Community & Market Space

Project Type

Interim (1-5 years)

Materials

Listed Above; Blocks, Crates, Wood Palettes

Tools

Tape Measure, Cardboard, Table Saw

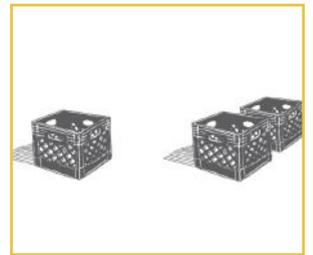
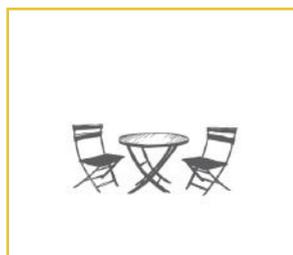
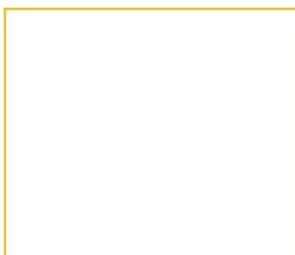
Estimated Cost

Free (Donated) \$4.75/unit or N1700/unit





Site Image



Materials Palette
Image Credit: Tactical Urbanism Guide

“The most challenging thing about my physical environment is the bad condition of the roads and the surrounding environment. There is no place to **store** my goods so I have to bring just enough” - Madam Grace

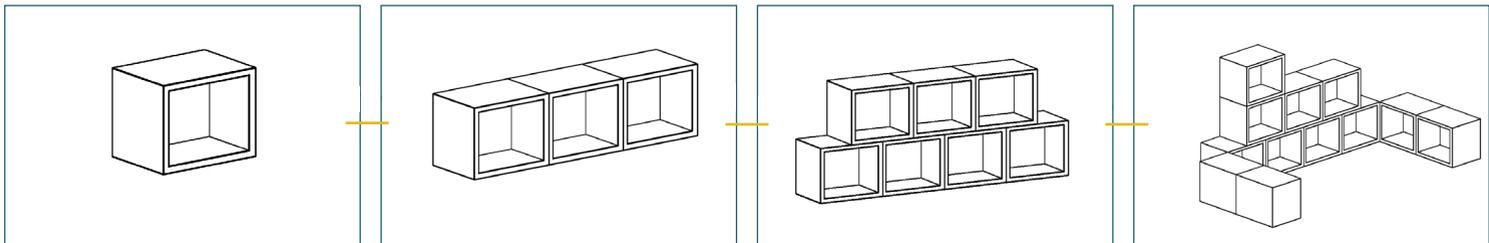


“When people come to buy okrika (second-hand clothes), they find it **hard** to locate what they are looking for because I have very **little space** to show my goods” - Sheila





Intervention Site



PROPOSAL THREE

ENHANCE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENTS

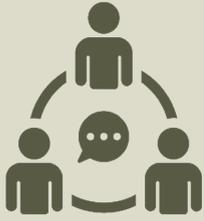
goal

Seating & Productivity
Elements
Self-Sustaining Structure
Shaded Area
Inclusive Activities

tactics



Initial Layering Study



GATHER



Goal

Community Meeting Space

Project Type

Demonstration/Plot- Interim

Materials

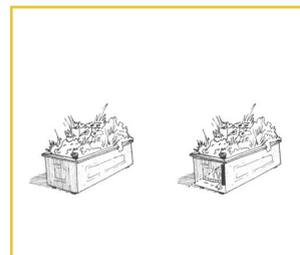
Listed Above; Blocks, Crates, Wood Palettes

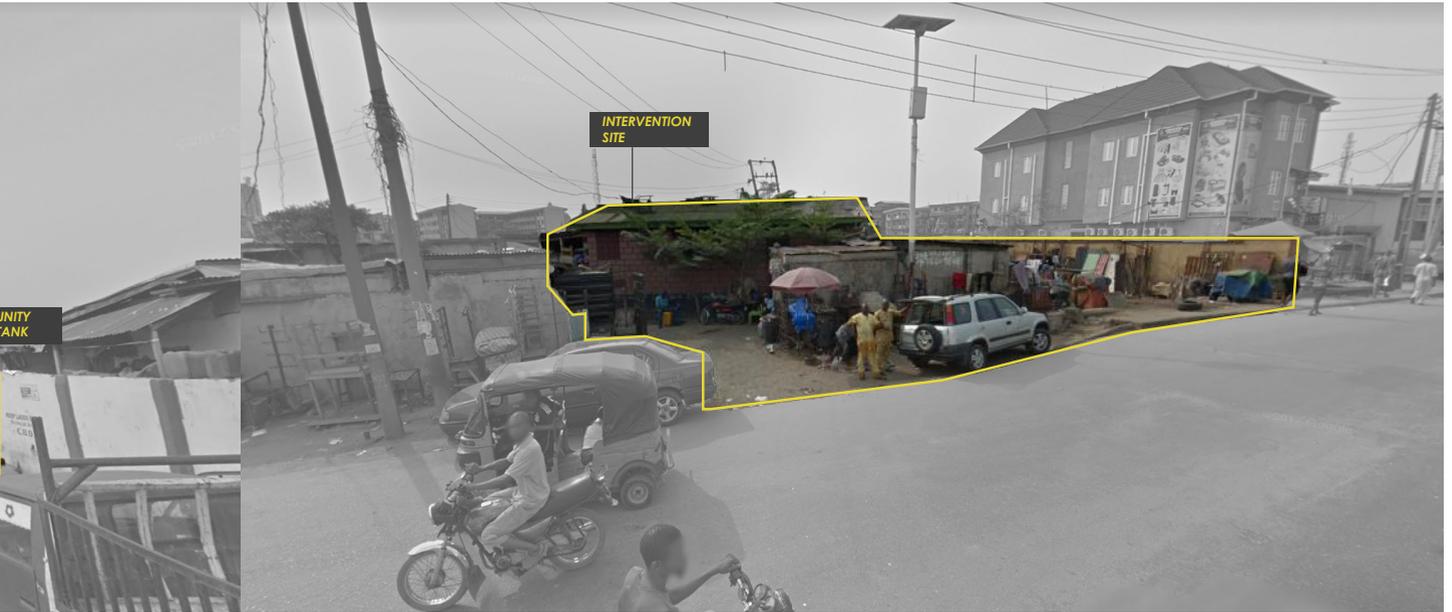
Tools

Tape Measure, Cardboard, Table Saw

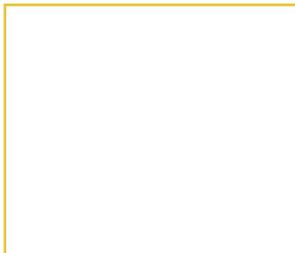
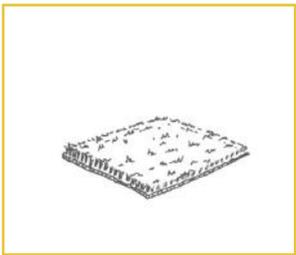
Estimated Cost

Free (Donated) \$25/N9,100 per plant





Site Image



Materials Palette
Image Credit: Tactical Urbanism Guide

“Our meetings are held in my house, on the **street** (when it is less busy) or in the empty lot. The meeting is where we come together to discuss how we can **improve** our community” - Chairlady Isale-Eko Market Women Association

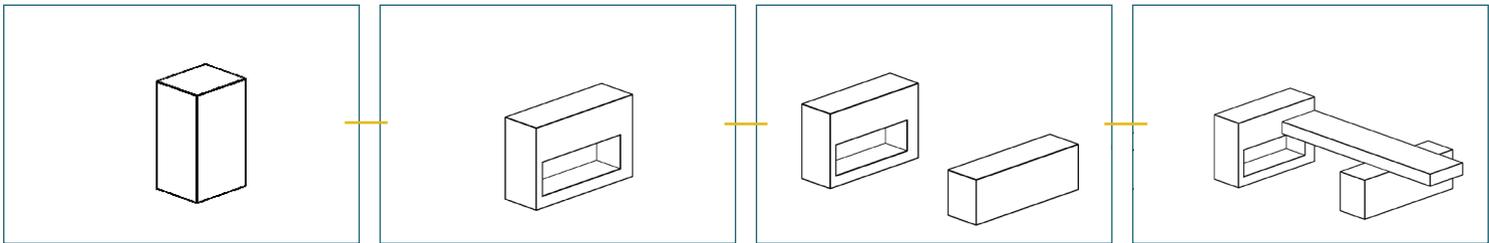


“The children do not have **safe** spaces to learn or play. The neighborhood has a trade school but children from here do not go there because of money or time issues” - Mrs Okafor (resident)





Intervention Site



This thesis exploration began with one question in mind- How do you reduce traffic in Lagos? I am amazed at how this question has led to the understanding of different principles and studies that are in many ways unrelated yet related to the initial topic/question. Over the past nine months, researching Lagos, its character and conditions have opened up my mind to design methods that are very relevant to the future of architecture and urban planning. This thesis process revealed to me the importance of taking from place and the sensitivity required as architects when dealing with unconventional informal communities. At the end of this process, I realize that the traffic issue in Lagos might not be solved. However, a new set of thinking about mobility, inclusion, informality, need-based interventions and the role of architecture have been brought to light as smaller steps to solve a big issue. This thinking is not only relevant in the architectural profession but also in other disciplines as a way of tackling larger problems. I would like to thank Arc. Lanre Okunlola, Dr Temitope Okunlola, Mariam Okunlola, David & Daniel Okunlola, Charles Cross, Rebecca Willis and Claudia Bernasconi for all the advise along the way. To the future of thoughtful architectural interventions in Lagos and the beginning of human-centered inclusive design in under-represented communities, I hope this thesis research & book provides insights on urban informality in Lagos and approaches for bottom-up design thinking.

Ayomide Okunlola, Assoc. AIA
M. Arch 2019

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