Connivance and coercion: Spatial networks of state enforcement in Lagos, Nigeria*

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Abstract

Why do states often fail to enforce their own policies, especially those governing the poor and vulnerable? This paper argues that state actors can use forbearance coercively, in order to produce precarity in vulnerable populations and expose them to exploitation. I provide a conceptual framework which shows how this strategy of *connivance* is advantageous for state actors insofar as it empowers non-state allies who profit off of the vulnerability of regulated populations. These allies aid ruling parties, including by mobilizing voters and perpetrating election violence and interference. I focus on the role of transport unions in Lagos, Nigeria—extractive actors who extort drivers, and work as purveyors of electoral interference and violence for the ruling party—in determining state enforcement of a ban on okada motorcycle taxis in the state. First, using evidence from several months fieldwork in Lagos; as well as an original networked data on the Lagos transport union, I show how the Lagos State Government's selective enforcement of its ban on motorcycle taxis was preceded by clashes between operators and union members. Second, I use original geocoded data on enforcement locations, union territory, and traffic patterns along the Lagos road network to show how the political geography of the ban's enforcement displaced riders into areas controlled by the union. Third and finally, I exploit the timing of a surprising election result to show how a shock to state reliance on the union affects enforcement patterns. This paper not only explores how states can exploit an understudied 'enforcement lever' to and redistribute to their allies, but how powerful—but not necessarily criminal—groups can trade extralegal violence for such redistribution.

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Why do states often fail to completely enforce their own policies, especially those governing the poor and vulnerable? All over the world, state actors propose, debate, and pass laws targeting informal economies and populations: including bans on hawking, squatting, driving an unregistered taxi, or crossing borders without documentation. However, enforcement of these policies often varies significantly over time and space—even from one week to the next, even within a single city. Most scholarship chalks up gaps in policy enforcement to gaps in state capacity; more recent work on *forbearance*,[1] proposes welfarist motives for state nonenforcement of the poor.

However, incomplete enforcement cannot always be attributed to state failure, or to state sympathy with its most vulnerable populations. In many cases, offenders are not key to the selectorate: undocumented migrants for example, who cannot vote for or against the incumbent and have few allies among registered voters. And while forbearance is often described as benevolent, incomplete enforcement is not always for the offenders' benefit. When a politician blackmails Romani workers about tax nonpayment in direct exchange for votes—as described by Mares and Young (2019)—the state is extending not a favor, but a threat. When U.S. police across the Jim Crow South declined to enforce racist laws, only for lawbreakers to be attacked by extrajudicial militias, the state was not *conceding* anything to Black populations.[2]

In this paper, I argue that strategic gaps in enforcement can 'produce precarity' in offenders and facilitate their exploitation, a strategy I refer to as *connivance*. I argue that enabling this exploitation can be advantageous for states insofar as it empowers their non-state allies who profit from the vulnerability of those being regulated. In other words, forbearance against the poor can be used as payment to third-party allies of the state. I add to existing conceptualizations of forbearance by integrating theories of repression, and describe how selective enforcement can act

[1] Defined as "intentional and revocable government leniency towards violations of the law" (Holland, 2016, 233)

[2] One such example occurred during nonviolent sit-ins by Black college students at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee in 1960. Several days into the demonstration, on February 27 of that year, the police began to engage—not just with arrests, but by standing aside as violent proxies attacked protesters. One demonstrator Bernard Layfayette noted that on that day "we were told in advance... that they are gonna allow the hoodlums to beat us up, and *then* the police were gonna arrest us." Once the sit-in began, "as predicted, the police held back for the first fifteen minutes," resulting in severe violence against the Black students. For more, see (York, 1999, minutes 0:35:22–0:36:22).

as a strategy of political control (Hassan et al., 2021) and consolidate relationships between state agents and exploitative, often coercive third-party actors who serve state actors by (among other things) perpetrating election interference and violence.

I elucidate the concept of connivance against the backdrop of the informal transport industry in Nigeria. Specifically, I analyze the 2022 selective enforcement of a ban on 'okada' motorcycle taxis in Lagos, Africa's largest metropolitan area. Okada operators are usually economically displaced persons from the north of Nigeria, often fleeing climate-induced land scarcity and political violence (Grasse and Pavlik, 2025). While the Lagos okada ban applied to all major roads in the state, it was enforced only across select bridges, intersections, streets, and neighborhoods. Capacity-based explanations do not explain the ban's uneven enforcement; Lagos streets are heavily policed by at least a half a dozen branches of law enforcement. The ban's partial enforcement also drew operator outrage, calling into question any benevolent motivation by the reticent state.

I use original micro-level geospatial data on enforcement and extortion points on the Lagos roadways, informal transport density, as well as qualitative data both from fieldwork and archival news reports, to show that selective enforcement of the okada ban was a strategy of connivance by the Lagos State Government. The ban's incomplete enforcement was not for the purpose of redistribution to vulnerable operators, but to ease their extortion by extralegal violence entrepreneurs—in this case, the Lagos branch of the country's largest transport union: a mafia-like organization that behaves as a key source of thugs-for-hire for Lagos's leading political party. Selective enforcement of the ban acted as payment to the union. Drawing from participant observation on Lagos roadways and amongst union members and okada operators, 75 stakeholder interviews, and a near-comprehensive collection of local newspaper reports spanning decades of union activity, I describe how enforcement timing corresponded with operator resistance to union extortion, prompting state intervention on the union's behalf. Using a 'randomization inference' simulation technique on the Lagos road network, I demonstrate that the geography of enforcement displaced operators into areas controlled by the union, increasing its ability to exploit operators during this tumultuous period. I show that spatial

patterns of ban enforcement do not cleanly vary with other potential explanations, such as variation in state capacity or traffic congestion. Finally, I exploit a surprising election result from the year following the ban, which served as a shock to the state government's perception of union reliability. Using fine-grained satellite-based measurements of commercial transport presence, I find that when state reliance on the union is shaken, enforcement diminishes.

This paper contributes to several substantive agendas in the study of politics. I add to an increasingly common focus on spatial economics in urban centers of low-income countries (Bryan, Frye and Morten, 2025), especially the informal transport sector and traffic politics (Agbiboa, 2022; Goodfellow, 2015; Fourchard, 2023) as well as road networks and their disruptions (Nathan, 2023; Schouten, 2022; Dell, 2015; Sánchez De La Sierra et al., 2024). While many studies examine roads and their construction,[3] modern laws *governing* the roads get less attention.[4] In what follows, I show how states can use instruments as seemingly anodyne as traffic policy enforcement to advance the interests of exploitative third parties and alter a city's political geography. In doing so, I build on work by Xu (2023) and others on how spatial externalities foster inequality in such contexts.

Moreover, I add to existing work on the role of non-state actors in weakly-institutionalized democracies; bridging the gap between work on civil society groups like unions (Dean, 2022; Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent, 2022) and violence entrepreneurs including gangs, mafias, and political militias (Carey, Mitchell and Scharpf, 2022; Tapscott, 2021; Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2009). Indeed, in this context they are one and the same. With this focus, I also shed light on the supply-side dynamics of election interference and violence by non-state groups (Turnbull, 2021). Rather than focusing primarily on the state's role or interest in cultivating interference (Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2009), I examine how these third-party groups behave strategically and negotiate concessions from their state allies, and how state actors pay their debts. I focus on what

[3] See works on colonial expansion (Cowen, 2020), conflict dynamics (Zhukov, 2012), and large-scale infrastructure corruption (Williams, 2017) for examples.

[4] This is despite the fact that in urban areas worldwide, parking tickets, traffic fines, and checkpoints are among the most frequent ways in which citizens directly interact with the state. There are notable exceptions, however: See Su and Buerger (2024) and Ben-Menachem and Morris (2023) for two examples in the U.S. context; and Sánchez De La Sierra et al. (2024) for a detailed dive into the Congo's traffic agency.

we might call the 'day jobs' of political thugs,emphasizing how these actors exist within—and influence—politics even between elections.

Most fundamentally, I expand our understanding of the concept of forbearance by exploring how non-enforcement against precarious populations can counterintuitively be a tool of political control, rather than a form of benevolent redistribution. Studies of repression still largely assume the strategy to be a function of a state's capacity to enforce its own repressive policies.[5] As such, studies of repression have incompletely grappled with the coercion produced where the state selectively does *not* engage in enforcement. I show how in some contexts, uneven governance and policing patterns should be interpreted not as lapses in capacity to enforce the law, but as purposeful tactics used to enable their exploitation of the vulnerable. These findings not only elaborate on existing scholarly accounts on policing (Eck, Conrad and Crabtree, 2021) and strategic non-enforcement (Holland, 2017), but have significant implications for our understanding of a state's willingness to concede its monopoly on violence (Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2009; Carey, Mitchell and Scharpf, 2022). In doing so, this paper answers a call by Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent (2022) to expand considerations of state repression "beyond capacity to also consider intent" (Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent, 2022, 157).

This paper proceeds as follows. In Section 1 I outline connivance as a strategy of coercive forbearance by states, in particular to serve their relationships with third-party actors. Section 2 describes the Nigerian transport industry, and outlines my argument in the context of this case. After discussing the difficulties of collecting *direct* evidence of intention, Section 3 lays out the combination of strategies and data I use to test this argument. I organize the evidence across three sections: first, in Section 4 I trace the dynamics between three actors in the lead-up to the ban: the Lagos State Government, the union and transport operators. Second, in Section 5 I address spatial

[5]Most studies of repression focus on the state's ability to inflict physical violence (Thachil, 2020), maintain high levels of censorship and control over speech (Sullivan and Davenport, 2018), or even actively engage in distribution for coercive purposes (Albertus, Fenner and Slater, 2018; Pan, 2020). Although the study of how states inflict violence has recently expanded to include subtler modes of political control (Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent, 2022), though the latter still focuses on the key dimension of state capacity.

variation in the ban's enforcement, and show how uneven state enforcement displaced operators into union territory. Third and finally, in Section 6 I interrogate temporal variation in the ban's enforcement, showing how a shock to the state government's confidence in the union impacted this displacement. I conclude in Section 7 with a discussion of the implications of my findings, especially for our understanding of how governing actors—even in democracies—produce precarity in their most vulnerable populations.

1 Connivance

1.1 When forbearance is coercive

Why do agents of the state[6] enforce certain policies and not others, and what explains vast variation in enforcement across time and space? Most work blames enforcement gaps on a lack of state capacity, a concept at the center of explaining both how states form and how they operate—especially how they utilize and build their coercive power (Tilly et al., 1992). [7] However, the concept of state capacity often bundles distinct qualities of bureaucratic performance and policy implementation, leading to over-generalized theories which do not account for idiosyncratic constraints and incentives (Williams, 2021). In response, scholars have increasingly explored cases where governments are able, but unwilling, to comprehensively enforce a policy—refusing to use the capacity they possess. These efforts have resulted in alternative 'agent-based' approaches, which theorize that enforcement will vary not just with state capacity, but with interests.[8]

[6]Throughout this section I use the term 'state' as a catch-all term for governing institutions, for the sake of theoretical parsimony. In general however, states are not unitary, homogeneous actors; they are made up of a wide variety of individuals, organizations, and institutions (Williams, 2021). My hope is that taking this simplifying liberty clarifies, rather than obscures, the concept. I define the state actors in more specific terms in Section 2.

[7]In fact, the concept of state capacity is often defined explicitly in terms of the state's ability to enforce its laws; including by monopolizing coercive power (Weber, 1978) and expending resources to regulate relationships (Migdal, 1988). In a recent review of the concept, (Hanson and Sigman, 2021) define a state's capacity as a function of its power, or in terms of Dahl's pluralist 'first face,' the ability of the state to get its citizens to do things they would not otherwise do—the power to enforce its preferences (Hanson and Sigman, 2021; Dahl, 2007). See Cingolani (2013) for a detailed review of the intellectual history of the concept of state capacity. For a recent example of a study linking capacity with enforcement, see Cook and Fortunato (2023) on state legislative capacity and the enforcement of data provision laws.

[8]For instance, where non-enforcement is popularly preferred; One example finds that enforcement of traffic violations falls dramatically in the lead-up to sheriff's races in the U.S.(Su and Buerger, 2024).

These agent-based explanations largely attribute incomplete enforcement to state incentives to appease the population breaking the law. In other words, when offenders are key allies or members of the selectorate, state agents may refrain from enforcement in order to retain this population's support: a *concessional* logic of non-enforcement. The literature has considered two varieties of this phenomenon. Contingent non-enforcement occurs in exchange for favors from the infringing population, as detailed in the extensive literatures on corrupt and clientelistic exchanges. However in her seminal book Holland (2017) shows how politicians decline to *broadly* enforce certain policies targeting the poor in order to purposefully engage in "welfarist" forbearance (Holland, 2016). In the context of Latin America, Holland (2017) shows how forbearance towards squatting and street-vending violations depends on the importance of poor voters to the ruling party. However, not all forbearance is so benevolent. In a more sobering example, Wilkinson (2006) describes how Hindu politicians in India decline to call in law enforcement to suppress militia violence against Muslim protesters during elections.[9] Forbearance can also be conceptualized in terms of regulatory capture[10] on the enforcement lever, rather than the policymaking lever.

Building on these existing explanations for incomplete state enforcement, I use the term *connivance* to describe the selective enforcement of law-breaking through which the state intentionally 'produces precarity'[11] in the infringing population and renders it vulnerable to exploitation.[12] Connivance occurs when the state is within its legal right (and obligation) to enforce a law, but instead alters enforcement patterns for the purpose of exacerbating offender vulnerability to exploitation. Connivance offers a framework for integrating the concept of forbearance with the vulnerability imposed on offenders through the selective enforcement of *de jure* policies. A core characteristic of

[9]Concessional forbearance is not exclusively tied to electoral considerations, as in these cases. In highly industrialized countries of Western Europe,Dewey and Di Carlo (2022) shows how states engage in 'regulatory' forbearance as a form of industrial policy, declining to enforce firm tax violations as a way to shape markets.

[10]Dal Bó (2006) defines regulatory capture broadly as "the process through which special interests affect state intervention in any of its forms" (Dal Bó, 2006)[203]

[11]Precarity refers to "a situation lacking in predictability, security or material and social welfare" (A. et al., 2022)

[12]While this paper focuses on how the state's relationships with third-party allies influence enforcement to both their benefit (see Section 1.2), connivance may also be used to facilitate exploitation by the state itself.

forbearance is that it is revocable.[13] In concessional forbearance, revocability solves the credibility problem of non-contingent clientelistic exchanges (Holland, 2016, 236). But this characteristic not only "cements political dependency" to the forbearing politician (Holland, 2016, 236) but cements precarity in the population violating the policy. This precarity is *not* revocable. And while one of its advantages is its existence outside the formal lawmaking system (Holland, 2016, 236), forbearance does first require that a ban pass through this very system. Revoking the precarity produced by non-enforcement therefore requires a shift in policy, not enforcement—meaning this vulnerability is integral to a strategy of forbearance.

Connivance, then, is when forbearance is strategically wielded to weaponize this vulnerability, manufactured by the gap between law passage and enforcement. These paired conditions of an existing law and the choice to not enforce it create a dynamic closely captured by the concept of domination, combining close dependency and the arbitrary wielding of power (Lovett, 2001). It invokes a type of state power beyond its 'first face' (Lukes, 2021) and invites parallels with the concept of coercive control in literature on domestic violence.[14] Mann (1984) distinguishes between the state's power to impose mandates (despotic power) and to penetrate territory and implement policies (infrastructural power) (Mann, 1984, 190). Many studies of coercion reference only the former; indeed Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent (2022) explicitly define political control in terms of despotic state power. Connivance instead focuses on how power is exerted through selective and instrumental use of the state's infrastructural power, in the presence of despotic mandates.

Crucially, connivance requires intention to produce precarity in infringing populations such that it can be exploited by the state or (as is the focus here) by its allies. An extensive literature shows how non-enforcement can empower criminal groups (Sobering and Auyero, 2019; Dewey, 2012; Wilkinson, 2006), enable mass inefficiencies (Mahadevan, 2024), and produce negative externalities such

[13] That is, a policy forbids the offending behavior, the state has the right to enforce it, and offenders believe that sanctions are possible (Holland, 2016, 234)

[14] The concept of *coercive control* represents attempt to broaden understandings of domestic abuse beyond those of physical violence, and has been defined by Stark (2007, 228) as combined coercion—"force or threats [used] to compel or dispel a particular response" and control—"structural forms of deprivation, exploitation, and command that compel obedience indirectly" (Stark, 2007, 229) resulting in "a condition of unfreedom" and entrapment (Stark, 2007, 205).

Table 1: Types of State Assistance to Allies

	Direct beneficiary	*Indirect beneficiary*
Expenditure	**Support**	**Burdening**
	(i.e., clientelism, bribery)	(i.e., regulation of competitors)
Withdrawal	**Leniency**	**Connivance**
	(i.e., concessional forbearance)	(i.e., coercive forbearance)

Columns describe the ally' role in transactions, and clarify whether the allocation is targeted towards them (as a direct beneficiary), or towards other actors such as their competitors (making them an indirect beneficiary). Rows characterize the type of inducement provided by the state, whether the strategy involves an extension of resources (expenditure) or a removal of resources (withdrawal).

as environmental degradation (Dipoppa and Gulzar, 2023; Harding et al., 2024).[15] But connivance does not simply imply forbearance against 'bad' actors or with 'bad' consequences. It requires that the state purposefully look away, not from criminal co-conspirators or key constituencies, but from populations in whose vulnerability the state or its allies have a vested interest.

1.2 Cui Bono? Third parties as profiteers of precarity

If connivance is used to produce precarity and facilitate predation, it begs the question: Predation by whom? Who benefits ('*Cui bono*') from this coercive forbearance? The majority of studies of forbearance focus on the relationship between the state and the population being enforced (or not).[16] in many cases it requires evaluating the incentives and distributional consequences for more than just the infringing population and the state. I focus on the role of 'third party' actors, other than the state or the population directly affected, who are nevertheless interested in a law's enforcement. One straightforward example is those who profit off the illicit labor of lawbreakers, such as mafias (Dipoppa, 2025), militias (Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2009), or exploitative employers. How can ruling parties effectively foster and maintain relationships with such third parties? Table 1 presents two dimensions along which state support to non-state allies can vary. Rows represent

[15] Or, as when not enforcing mafia waste dumps on Italian farmland, all three (Walters, 2013; D'Alisa et al., 2010)

[16] Connivance may not necessarily involve a third-party actor. Such is the case of 'blackmail' as described by Mares and Young (2019), in which state actors fail to enforce tax nonpayment by traveller populations in Hungary and Romania. While on its face a concession, these same state actors make a point to remind workers of their nonpayment in the lead-up to elections. In this case then, forbearance is not concessional but coercive. Its purpose is not conciliatory, but to foster vulnerability that can be exploited to gain votes.

whether the inducement is a positive expenditure (e.g., providing cash or contracts) or a negative withdrawal of resources (e.g., revoking overburdensome regulations). Columns represent the target beneficiary—whether it is an explicit allocation towards the ally in question, or is targeted towards other, related actors such as the ally's competitors, labor pool, or consumers.[17]

A great deal of work in the social sciences focuses on column 1, in particular direct *support* from the state in the form of a targeted transfer. However recent work from Holland (2017); Cunningham and Owens (2020); Harding et al. (2024) and others focus on strategic *leniency*, where state actors support non-state allies by declining to enforce their myriad offenses; respectively poor voters (engaged in squatting), specific sectors and firms (engaged in tax evasion), construction contractors (engaged in deforestation). With some groups however, states have an incentive to avoid explicit favoritism, especially when they are engaged in extralegal violence (Carey, Mitchell and Scharpf, 2022). In such instances, the state may opt for indirect forms of support. A positive but indirect strategy of 'burdening,' could include targeting rivals with excess regulation or repression. Finally, *connivance* refers to state assistance characterized by a negative expenditure targeted towards an indirect beneficiary. It is a coercive forbearance, where the state facilitates exploitation—through inaction—at the behest of its non-state allies (see Figure 1). I contend that connivance becomes an especially viable strategy when states heavily rely on just such actors.

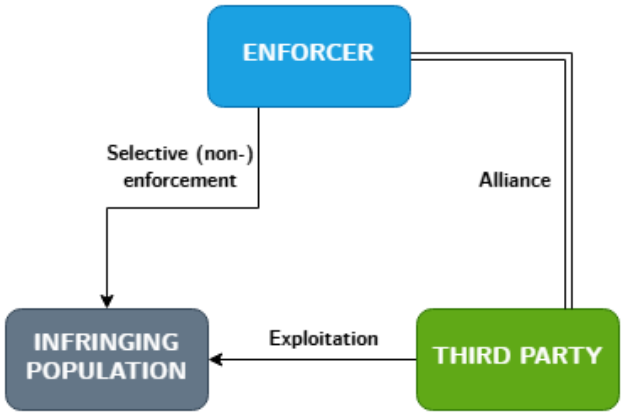


Figure 1: Relationships between key actors in connivance

[17]For a discussion of how to map connivance onto Holland's own typology of forbearance, see SI §B.1.

Four (stylized) potential examples of connivance are laid out in Table 2. It is beyond the scope of this article to lay out each case in its full complexity, but a few points are instructive. To begin with, there is important variation between cases. The examples are drawn both from generally high-capacity and income contexts such as the U.S. and Spain and middle- and lower-income states such as Colombia and Kenya. The third-party allies vary from industrial farms and urban developers, to armed groups and landlords. The ignored infraction varies as well, encompassing illicit electricity hookups, border crossings, informal settlements and artisanal mining.

What remains consistent is the nature of the relationships between the three primary actors featured in each case, summarized in Figure 1. Connivance requires that the enforcing actor actively restrains from enforcement, in part or in total; a feature it shares with more traditional ideas of forbearance. The key distinguishing feature of connivance is that the intended distributional benefits are not for offenders, but for those who stand to gain from offender precarity. In many cases this is a 'third-party' ally with its own relationships to the enforcer (through the provision of votes, bribes, etc.) and to the infringing population (through exploitation). It is this exploitative relationship which makes connivance a potent tool for state actors seeking to assist allies.

There are other commonalities between the cases which help elucidate the advantages of connivance either as a substitute or complement to other strategies of state support (see Table 1). It is notable for example that each of these stylized cases take place in democratic contexts. This is not necessarily a strict scope condition, and it is beyond this article to definitively state democracy's role in enabling connivance as a strategy. However, democracy may foster the relationship between the state and third parties which is itself a common feature of connivance. When the state is not all-encompassing or autocratic, parties and politicians may increase their reliance on non-state allies in gaining and maintaining power. Moreover, democracy discourage state actors from publicly favoring specific third parties over others, making connivance—an indirect and 'negative' strategy, as described in Table 1—attractive. This is especially true in contexts where the ally is itself violent or illicit (Carey, Mitchell and Scharpf, 2022).

Table 2: Empirical examples of connivance

The Example	*The Policy*	*The Actors*	*Connivance*
In the midst of an ongoing crackdown on undocumented immigrants, the U.S. federal government directed enforcement agencies to selectively pause raids and arrests; specifically targeting the agricultural industry.	A January 20, 2025 Executive Order by President Donald Trump "Protecting the American People Against Invasion" (The White House, 2025); Immigration & Nationality Act (INA).	**Enforcer**: The U.S. federal government; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); local enforcement partners **Infringing population**: Undocumented and unregistered immigrants in the U.S. **Third party**: U.S. agricultural employers	The abrupt shift of the U.S. administration's ongoing mass deportation campaign towards *selective non-enforcement* of undocumented immigrants working on farms was aimed at avoiding "hurting industries...[President Trump] does not want to lose" (Aleaziz and Kanno-Youngs, 2025). President Trump himself acknowledged this in a social media post: "Our great Farmers...have been stating that our very aggressive policy on immigration is taking...workers away from them, with those jobs being almost impossible to replace" (Aleaziz and Kanno-Youngs, 2025). In lobbying for this position, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins reportedly explained that "farmers rely on immigrants to work long hours"(Pager et al., 2025), because they "cannot find Americans willing to do the physically onerous work" (Pager et al., 2025). By exercising forbearance only selectively, against immigrant farmworkers, the Trump administration has engaged in connivance—consolidating the vulnerability of undocumented workers in the interest of agricultural employers who rely on the "cheap and disposable labor" (Ngai, 2014, 3) made possible by these workers' precarious legal position. While enforcement writ large continues, selective non-enforcement was exercised against the populations on whose labor Trump's allies exploit.
Despite laws against settling on public land, officials in Nairobi, Kenya have selectively declined to enforce laws against the habitation of slums and sub-standard shacks and tenement buildings which proliferate in the city's periphery.	Kenya's Land Act of 2017 requires that authorities "shall issue a notice to the unlawful occupiers of public land to vacate the land" and evict tenants (Government of Kenya, 2017, Part VIII Section 64.(1), 2612)	**Enforcer**: Politicians, chiefs, and officials responsible for enforcing land grabs in Nairobi, Kenya **Infringing population**: Informal settlers on Nairobi's public land **Third party**: Well-connected landlords overseeing construction and habitation in these informal slums	Urban land markets in Nairobi are "heavily influenced by what the local government does (or fails to do)...and the extent to which these rules are applied and for whom they are enforced" (Earle and Grant, 2019, 2). Landlords in Nairobi profit enormously from illicit settlements erected on public land: as noted by (Mwau and Sverdlik, 2020, 487), "hazardous informal shelter in Nairobi can be highly lucrative," with up to four times higher returns than middle- and high-income housing. Kenyan authorities selectively engage in a "a lack of approval or enforcement...a "silent" policy of enabling tenement production," (Mwau and Sverdlik, 2020, 495) which enables landlords and structure owners to extract from the city's most vulnerable communities in the form of from informal rent, illicitly collected. Political appointees, including chiefs, have private interests which "can mean some criminal activity is tolerated due to the income it generates" (Price et al., 2016, 15). In addition to corrupt kickbacks, tenants often maintain coercive patronage relationships with structure-owners and landlords in which tenants are expected to support "the political interests of the latter" (Rigon, 2015, 2768). A strategy of connivance by local officials towards residents of informal areas run by their allies benefits these specific landlords and structure-owners, who both pass on profits and votes to (non-)enforcers.

The Example	*The Policy*	*The Actors*	*Connivance*
The Colombian government has failed to consistently enforce artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) of gold along the pacific coast, especially in territory populated by indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.	Decree 2235 in 2012 instructed police to destroy untitled mining operations, effectively criminalizing long-informal ASM operations (Mindefensa, 2012).	**Enforcer**: Colombian law enforcement agencies **Infringing population**: Informal, small-scale subsistence gold miners (*barequeros*) **Third party**: Armed actors including Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)	Between 80% and 90% of gold in Colombia comes from seldom-enforced ASM (Massé and Munevar', 2017). This "uneven and insufficient" enforcement (Martínez-Fernández, 2019, 7) is not due to an inability to locate mines, which often operate in full view of authorities (Massé and Munevar', 2017; ABColombia, 2012). Instead, it is a function of the selective complicity of local authorities towards armed groups who extort illicit mining operations for profit (Massé and Munevar', 2017). A common complaint is that "all the world sees [them] coming and going...except public officials" (Translated by author; Massé and Camargo', 2012, 41), and security forces have been accused of withholding protection of miners in order to facilitate their extortion (Massé and Munevar', 2017, 17). Gold has surpassed cocaine as the main source of armed group revenues in Colombia (Berg, Ziemer and Kohan, 2021), and the ELN in particular relies on its highly profitable extortion—not operation—of illegal mines (Massé and Munevar', 2017; Martínez-Fernández, 2019). These Colombian authorities are engaged in connivance: perpetuating, through selective non-enforcement, the vulnerability of local miners in order to enable their exploitation by armed groups in return for kickbacks.
City officials in Madrid, Spain failed to enforce extensive illicit electricity hookups by residents of a specific area of the city: Cañada Real, often called "Europe's largest shantytown" (Gil, 2022), a 15km strip of informal housing on public land to the city's Southeast.	Spain's Criminal Code Chapter VI Subchapter 3 Article 255 prohibits illegal connections to the electrical grid, and provides precise guidelines for penalties and enforcement of the offense (Ministerio de Justicia, 2016)	**Enforcer**: Law enforcement officials in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, Spain **Infringing population**: Residents of Cañada Real informal settlements with illicit connections to the electrical grid (the majority) **Third party**: Commercial real estate developers in Madrid	In 2020, electricity supplier Naturgy cut off electricity supply to Cañada Real, forcing most residents—largely migrants, most of whom are children—to abandon their powerless homes (Jones, 2021). At the time of the shutdown, only 4 out of 1,800 total connections to the electrical grid in the settlement were legal (Duran, 2021). The state's restraint cannot be attributed to lack of capacity (EFE, 2021), popular will or ignorance of the situation (EFE, 2020), ambiguous jurisdiction (Sánchez, 2022) and certainly not a desire to appease the population of the neighborhood (Bradock, 2021; Quesada, 2023). A representative for Cañada Real argued in a complaint that the state's restraint was a form of "direct coercion for the most vulnerable to abandon their homes ... [with the purpose of benefiting] the urban developments of southeast" Madrid (Marín, 2022). The beneficiaries of this state restraint certainly included urban real estate developers, whose sprawling developments in eyesight of the settlement have been continually stalled due to complaints from residents (Montaner, 2021). Benefiting too is Madrid Community President Isabela Dìaz Ayuso's administration, whose reelection campaign proposed ambitious urban development projects and expansions to Madrid's Metro System southeast, in the area surrounding the settlement (Comunidad de Madrid, 2022). In declining to enforce its own policies, her administration engaged in connivance, ultimately passively displacing the population in order to benefit its own political agenda.

Another similarity is the scope, if not the nature, of the infringement—all of these are vast informal enterprises which are likely difficult to entirely enforce. The ability to plausibly disguise enforcement gaps as state capacity gaps may make it easier to portray these patterns as benign.[18] And just as concessional forbearance is cheaper than welfare through official state programs such as social security (Holland, 2017), connivance is cheaper than bribes, physical repression, crackdowns, or evictions. Finally, when the offending population is an already vulnerable outgroup—as is true in every case described above—connivance can, in a phrase, 'kill two birds with one stone:'both assist their allies and increase control over suspect populations, all with little risk of backlash.

The remainder of this article explores a fifth example: connivance by the state government of Lagos, Nigeria through selective enforcement of a ban on motorcycle taxis.

2 Connivance in the Lagos transport sector

In what follows, I argue that the state government of Lagos, Nigeria engaged in a strategy of *connivance* on behalf of the Lagos transport union with its selective enforcement of a ban on 'okada' motorcycle taxis starting mid-2022. As illustrated in Figure 2, the state (enforcer)[19] chose to enforce the ban at such a time—and in such a way—so as to increase the vulnerability of okada operators (infringing population) and ease their exploitation by a key ally of the state: The Lagos transport union (third party). This union operates a complex system of coerced taxation through controlling motorparks along Lagos roadways, where they extort passing informal commercial transit operators. Around elections, the union also mobilizes voters and commits violence in support of Lagos's ruling party. With an election six months away, and okada operators in the midst of mobilizing against union extortion, the state acted. The strategic timing and geography of the ban's enforcement not

[18] Perceptions of capacity matter for deterrence in a positive sense; Cingano and Tonello (2020) show that when local governments suspected of Mafia infiltration in Italy are dismissed, the resulting fall in petty crimes is due less to high capacity for enforcement, but to perceptions that the state is more powerful than it is. This mechanism may work in the other direction as well, meaning perceptions of state capacity challenges may help states 'get away with' connivance.

[19] While previously I referred to 'the state' as a conceptually broad actor, as I move into the case my discussion of this 'enforcing' actor becomes more precise, and specifically consists of the Lagos State Government and its officials, and of the party that rules it—The All Progressives Congress (APC), run by (former Lagos governor, now) President Bola Tinubu.

only dulled the existential threat okada operators posed to the union, but forced operators into motorpark-laden areas and therefore increased the union's opportunities to exploit them.

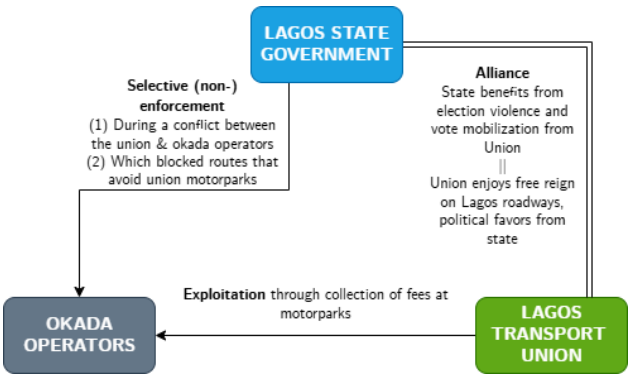


Figure 2: Relationships between key actors in connivance: The case of the Lagos okada ban

2.1 'Eko traffic' and the okada ban

Lagos is Nigeria's (and Africa's) largest city, and the center of power in the southwest of the country—almost the furthest southwest you can get without crossing the border into Benin, or wading into the Gulf of Guinea (see Figure B.3a and B.3b in SI §B.2). Lagos houses 10% of the country's massive and rapidly growing population, crammed into only 0.5% of its physical landmass. And though it is no longer the federal capital[20] it remains a crucial economic and social powerhouse. Like the country, there are strong and evident political geographies in Lagos. And like the country, Lagos wealth and (formal) employment is densely concentrated in the south, especially on small islands near the port. Meanwhile the vast majority of residents live on the mainland. As in many major cities, the residents of Lagos generally live and work in geographically separate areas.

As a result, there is a never-ending need for the road transport of millions throughout the city on a daily basis. Lagos's economic geography means that Lagos traffic is infamous; a trip of ten kilometers can easily take two or three hours, and sometimes up to eight.[21] Public transportation

[20]Negotiations between the country's highly disparate north (the country's most populous and poorest region, largely Muslim and Fulani or Hausa) and South (largely Christian and Igbo in the Southeast, and Yoruba in the Southwest) in the early 1990s moved the capital to the more centrally located and neutral planned city of Abuja

[21]'Eko Traffic' (Lagos Traffic) is the name of a cocktail I enjoyed at three different bars across three different neighborhoods of Lagos in the summer of 2023, it is so ubiquitous of a joke. While the precise recipe differed from place to place, its strength did not.

options are limited and unreliable. Roads are overburdened and not always in good repair. The result is a multifaceted landscape of informal transit options, and a near-universal reliance on them (Agbiboa, 2020): these include bright yellow mini-buses ('danfo'), tuk-tuk-like tricycles ('keke papep' or 'keke marwa'), and okada motorcycles. Until recently okada motorbikes were one of the most commonly used transport options for many Lagosians. Okada weave in and out of traffic jams with a dangerous deftness. Because of their ability to navigate road congestion, as well as much lower fuel requirements and costs, many thousands okada have generally been in operation across the state, ready to be hailed both from inner residential roads and major highways (see Figure 3a).

However on May 18, 2022 Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu held a press conference in which he announced that starting on June 1, his administration would begin enforcing a ban on okada motorcycle taxis originally passed in 2018 (Adelagun, 2022; Osazuwa, 2017). The announcement of the ban's enforcement provoked high anxiety across Lagos, as individuals feared its effect on their already intolerably long and expensive commutes (Enimola and Joseph, 2022; Ige, 2022; Mosadioluwa, 2022; Enimola, 2022). However, the state government stood firm; according to Governor Sanwo-Olu and various spokespersons, the ban was necessary for crime prevention (Adelagun, 2022; Reporters, 2022), traffic control (Adekoya, 2022), and for reducing environmental degradation across the state (Badmus, 2022). But there was one curious aspect of the 2022 Lagos okada ban's enforcement: namely, its selectivity. While the ban being enforced technically applied to all major roads across Lagos State (Lagos State of Nigeria, 2018), the government in 2022 detailed a specific list of areas in which it intended to enforce the ban (Reuters, 2022).[22] This left many parts of Lagos under the letter of the law, but outside the scope of proposed enforcement.

The okada ban is a prime example of a traffic restriction which maps neatly onto pre-existing socio-political cleavages. Many okada operators are from Muslim and Hausa or Fulani-majority northern states who have traveled to Lagos in search of work, often as a result of conflict and climate change in the country's north. In particular, there exist differences in ethnic group, region,

[22] See SI §B.5 for more details on the technicalities of this ban, as well as on the history of okada bans within and beyond Lagos.

(a) Photo: Okada operators, Lagos. Sourced from *The Punch*

(b) Photo: Lagos motorpark (July 10, 2023)

Figure 3: Photos of Lagos Informal Transport

language, and religion between native Lagosians and many okada operators, which adds a communal dimension to the ban's enactment. News reports on the ban tend to be tinged with inter-ethnic suspicion, often conflating okada operators with perpetrators of jihadist violence in the north such as Boko Haram (Odunsi, 2022), as well as crime writ large (Mosadioluwa, 2022; Tribune Online, 2022). Riding an okada is an extremely vulnerable occupation and is viewed with hostility and suspicion by many Nigerians, even as they make daily use of the services these operators offer.

2.2 The third party: Touts and transit policy in Lagos

In the late 1970s, as the population grew and Lagos traffic steadily became more congested, the burgeoning informal transport industry began to organize. Given the rising transportation needs of the city, the sector became a primary growth industry—but also one where extractive actors stood to make enormous profit and gain enormous power.

Today, transport unions are commonplace: extractors from commercial drivers, rather than representative unions *of* drivers. Transport unions set up shop along the Lagos road network, in areas called 'motorparks,' where they charge every commercial driver that passes a ticket for usage of the road. The money unions collect from drivers does not go towards the improvement of public infrastructure, or to the state at all, and Lagos drivers and operators see no assistance or benefits from 'their' union. The unions monitor, manipulate, tax, and coerce commercial drivers of all

types of vehicles on a daily basis; in this way, it is perhaps as accurate to describe Lagos transport *mafias*, as it is to describe transport *unions*. It is estimated the unions bring in many billions of naira every year through their extraction from drivers,[23] and over its roughly 50-year existence, these unions have become some of the most powerful players in Lagos politics. This is in part because ground-level 'bureaucrats' of the unions—also referred to as 'touts,' 'agberos,'[24] or 'area boys'[25]—are crucial tools for politicians around election time(Fourchard, 2023). Agbiboa (2022) provides a succinct summary of the most powerful branch of the transport unions:

> "Consider the NURTW branch in Lagos. Founded in 1978, the NURTW constitutes the primary support base for the Lagos state governor during election campaigns. The state is often unwilling or unable to rein in the union's predatory treatment of its workers. The union routinely engages in patronage politics and voter mobilization to support various parties and candidates in return for permission to levy taxes on informal transport operators in public spaces." (Agbiboa, 2022, 179)

During elections, union touts—at the behest of their powerful, well-connected chairmen—block voting places, beat voters of the opposition party, participate in rallies, and perform other services for the dominant All Progressives Congress (APC) political party.[26] The rest of the time, they set up fiefdoms in motorparks and adjacent bus terminals, their primary points of extraction, where they collect their daily wares from informal commercial transport operators (see Figure 3b). union touts are a source of constant strife for many commercial transport operators, who find themselves at the whim of these henchmen on a day-to-day basis (see Section 4 for more).

Lagos transport unions do not fit neatly into the categories social scientists have offered

[23] See investigative reports from the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) Nigeria, including Odinaka Anudu's "Money for the boys: How 'agberos' pocket billions of Lagos transport revenue." ICIR.

[24] The word *agberos* comes from Yoruba and the literal translation refers to someone who beckons or herds (agbo) a group of passengers onto a bus (akero)

[25] 'Omo Area' (Area boy) culture is a distinct Southwestern Nigeria phenomenon, sharing some similarities with gang culture. It connotes the thousands of (mostly young, mostly male) individuals crowding motorparks demanding money from, cajoling, and harassing commercial transportation drivers, often violently—the foot-soldiers of transport unions. I use these terms interchangeably for the sake of simplicity; but there are some subtle differences in their local use. In particular, 'agberos' sometimes implies the area boys who have 'made it.'

[26] See SI §B.2 for more on the APC and the political context of Lagos and Nigeria.

describing non-state actors in politics. They are a union in both name and technically in function. They are sector-constrained interest groups; they don uniforms, collect dues, and any litigation by or against them is handled by the industrial courts of Nigeria. Like many unions before them, this union uses strategic violence, especially in its relations with the political machine of Lagos. However, they are largely unrepresentative of their workers; and do not engage in collective bargaining with employers on behalf of transport operators. For these reasons, and because of their engagement in violence, the transport unions are also close in type to criminal organizations and gangs in the context of Latin America (Lessing, 2024; Arias, 2017; Blattman et al., 2025; Feldmann and Luna, 2022) or the mafias of southern Europe (Dipoppa, 2025; Calderoni, 2011). Lagos transport unions exert occasional fatal violence and frequent extortive violence over civilian actors, and maintain control over particular industries and pockets of urban territory. However, their main source of income is not from protection rackets, drug smuggling, human trafficking, illicit natural resource extraction, or any other inherently criminal enterprise. They also share some similarities with paramilitary groups and pro-government militias (Carey, Mitchell and Scharpf, 2022; Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2009), in that they can and do influence elections through interference and violence, and maintain a symbiotic relationship with politicians. However unlike paramilitaries, these groups' primary function is not the perpetration of political violence, and they are not, in fact, generally 'armed.'[27] Lagos transport unions are formally recognized interest groups whose income comes from the collection of dues and ticket sales—higher and more frequent fees than necessary perhaps, but not illegal. I continue to refer to them as a union, with these caveats in mind.

2.3 Argument and hypotheses

My principal assertion is that the Lagos State Government varies enforcement of the ban in order to 'produce precarity' in okada operators on behalf of the Lagos transport union. My contention is that the selective enforcement of the Lagos okada ban over both time and space is an example

[27] It would be highly atypical for the vast majority of members to carry a firearm.

of *connivance*, and its patterns are motivated by the interests not of the lawbreakers themselves (okada operators) but of exploitative non-state allies (Lagos transport unions) on whom the enforcer (Lagos State Government/APC) relies. I argue the Lagos State Government selectively enforced this policy in order to ease operator exploitation by the union, the government's third-party ally. With the okada ban, as with many laws, enforcement is not all or nothing: there was neither a completely absent nor a completely comprehensive enforcement regime. In fact, I contend that there is strategic variation in enforcement which neatly aligns with union interests. Specifically, my theory predicts that enforcement patterns will vary *spatially* according to where union extraction takes place (H1), and *temporally* according to the government's reliance on the union to maintain power (H2):

H1. The state follows enforcement patterns that benefit the union.

H2. When perceived union reliability decreases, the state follows enforcement patterns which benefit the union less.

3 Empirical Strategy

I probe these hypotheses across the three subsequent sections. Following the suggestion of Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent (2022) to consider that "the reason why a state implements a policy is analytically distinct from why that policy succeeds or fails, and it deserves its own study" (157), I aim to cast light on the *intentionality* of the Lagos State Government and its ruling party in the passage and (selective) enforcement of a ban on informal transport. It is empirically challenging to identify intent or purpose; absent an explicit confession from state officials, most evidence is necessarily circumstantial. It is therefore through a combination of tests that I empirically evaluate my claims. To this end, in Section 4, I trace the lead-up to the law's enforcement with data from primary sources, participant observation, and field interviews. I find that the lead-up to enforcement was fraught with tension between the government's preferred union faction and sub-unions representing two and three-wheeled vehicle operators.

In Section 5 I test H1, or the *spatial* variation of the state's selective enforcement. I count okada motorbikes on individual road segments across multiple dates both before and after the ban's proposed enforcement. I show that not only did the number of okada decrease in enforced areas after June 2022, but it increased substantially where there are motorparks. I then transform maps of the Lagos road system into a connected spatial network and simulate routes between random points on the network. I show that blocking segments enforced by the state disproportionately drives operators into union territory. I then collect data on potential *counterfactual* enforcement areas, based on Lagos State Government statements motivating the ban, including traffic congestion, pollution, and income. Re-running simulated routes under these counterfactual constraints, I find that none of them have the same effect of pushing okada operators into motorparks.

Finally, in Section 6, I address H2, or *temporal* variation in state enforcement. I utilize an unexpected and close election result in the Lagos presidential elections of 2023, in which former Lagos State Governor—and primary union patron—Bola Tinubu of the APC lost in his home state to an upstart challenger. I argue this close election acted as a signal to the APC and the Lagos State Government, reducing their confidence in the union's ability to sway elections on their behalf. While the union turned this around with rejuvenated efforts during the Gubernatorial election about a month later,[28] I show that this inter-election period was marked by a significant decrease in the number of okada present in motorparks. I treat the elections as shocks to the state's interest in fostering operators' precarity on behalf of the unions, and argue that resulting changes during the inter-election period were the result of perceived union defection during the Presidential election.

Before presenting this evidence, I detail the original data collection supporting these efforts.

3.1 Geolocated data along the Lagos road network

Locations of ban enforcement I consult policy documents to code the areas in which the okada ban was selectively enforced in the period following June 2022. The government announced

[28] See SI §D.4 for analyses of these elections.

ahead of time the areas of the state and city that it would actively enforce.[29] The ban's (selective) enforcement went into effect on 1 June 2022. The state listed roughly 60 stretches of road, highway, or specific bridges or flyovers; as well as over a dozen local government areas and specific councils and neighborhoods, in which the government would enforce the ban. I hand-code these individually and merge this dataset with geospatial road data in Lagos[30] to get a full universe of areas in which the state could choose to enforce, with an indicator of where they announced their intention to. I refer to these areas as 'intention to enforce' or ITE areas. I these data to map cross-sectional state enforcement (see Figure4 for a map of ITE areas, marked with $\times$).

Motorpark locations in Lagos Measuring the geographic presence of motorpark operations is slightly more complicated; motorparks are largely informal, but they are palpably visible (see Figure 3b). They are also mostly permanent; while new parks sometimes do crop up, change hands, or split, the general locations of most parks have mostly stayed the same over the decades. I utilize a list in an appendix of a transport statistics report produced by former Lagos Governor Ambode's administration in 2019.[31] This strategy avoids post-treatment bias. I am left with a list of roughly 100 motorparks, which represent the primary locations of union extortion in Lagos. Figure 4 shows maps these park locations represented by red bus icons.

Satellite and Streetview-based informal transport density estimates Where are informal commercial transport operators—particularly okada operators—located? My primary measure of this is constructed through analysis of very high resolution (VHR) remote-sensing imagery. I use primarily commercially available imagery from Airbus and Maxar VHR satellite images, which have a spatial resolution of 30-50cm—meaning each pixel in the resulting geo-located image measures less than half a meter. [32] At this resolution, it is possible to distinguish individual commercial vehicles, including okada motorcycles, and therefore to measure of okada presence over space and

[29] See SI §B.5 a table of example ITE areas as announced by the ban.
[30] Data available at `https://data.humdata.org/dataset/hotosm_nga_roads?`
[31] Available here: https://mepb.lagosstate.gov.ng/
[32] See §C.3 for more details

time on the Lagos roadway. I utilize both manual coding and computer vision models to count of the number of motorcycles present per segment of road. My VHR data consist of roughly 5-10 observations per road segment between 2021 and 2023, covering a continuous 75km^2 stretch of Lagos; including roughly a quarter of banned areas and motorparks in the state.

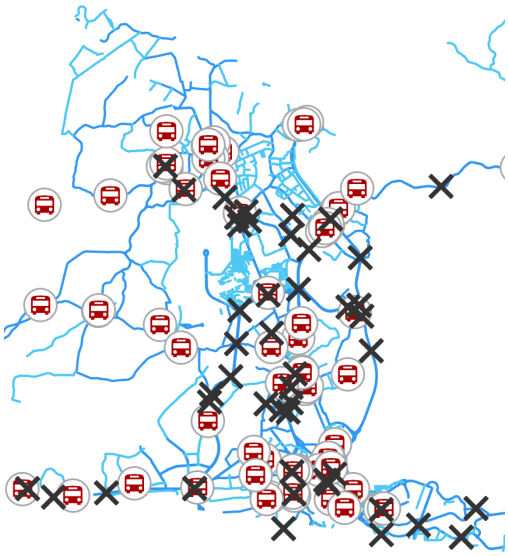


Figure 4: Motorpark and ITE locations in Lagos, Nigeria. Motorpark (red bus) and ITE ($\times$) mapped by author.

Type	Number
State and law enforcement officials	10
NURTW union officials (all factions)	17
Okada operators	38
Other transport operators	10
Total	*75*

Table 3: List of interviews with stakeholders between June 1, 2023 and the present.

3.2 Interviews, participant observation, newspaper archives

Fieldwork and interviews I spent about 6 months observing the aftermath of the ban while living in Lagos.[33] My fieldwork[34] encompassed participant observation; as well as semi-structured and unstructured interviews with 75 stakeholders. Participant observation focused on engaging with the Lagos transportation system as a curious passenger. I conservatively estimate that I took 400 separate trips through Lagos traffic, to all corners of the city, including via taxis and Uber, informal transit and public transit. I also spent time sitting in or walking through busy bus stops, markets,

[33] Being a white, foreign, female researcher, this research setting had its challenges and its opportunities (see SI §A).

[34] Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol #2000035418. See more on fieldwork strategy in SI §C.2 and ethical considerations in SI §A.

and motorparks; observing the behavior of informal transport operators, touts, and law enforcement. Beyond my participant observation, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with multiple types of relevant stakeholders. Interviews largely took place in person, at locations ranging from government offices, in quiet corners of motorparks or unregistered watering holes down the road, and in the lobbies of immaculate hotels. Roughly half of these interviews were with okada operators themselves. The other half were divided between union officials across the organization's complex hierarchy (about half), high-ranking policy and law enforcement officials, and other informal transit drivers, private operators or logistics business owners and entrepreneurs (see Table 3).

Newspaper and social media archives Utilizing archives of mostly English-language Nigerian newspapers over the past half-century,social media, official documents, and other primary source material, I create a localized network dataset for Lagos, which combines and links information on hundreds of relevant actors, places, and events and covers the passage and enforcement of relevant laws, factional battles, and interpersonal rivalries. These Transport Operator & Union Tracking (TOUT) data allow me to analyze trends in the political dynamics between the union, the Lagos State Government, and informal commercial transport operators qualitatively.[35]

4 Evidence: The role of the union

In what follows, I analyze interactions between three actors: the Lagos State Government, the union, and informal transport operators in Lagos, particularly okada operators. Figure 5 plots okada presence over time in Lagos. This section deals with the lead-up to the ban's enforcement and lays the groundwork for testing its spatial (H1 in Section 5) and temporal (H2 in Section 6) implications.

4.1 Politicking with gangsters: Motorparks and the power of a union

The Lagos informal transport sector is extremely lucrative, and transport unions have over the years developed rigorous hierarchies and distinct organizational cultures (Fourchard, 2023; Agbiboa,

[35] See SI §C.1 for more on the record-gathering process.

Figure 5: Okada presence over time. Plots the number of okada per road segment over time, via VHR remote sensing imagery. The unit of analysis is a road segment-date. Red represents road segments which feature a motorpark, blue ITE segments. The first vertical dotted line represents the date the ban enforcement commenced; the second the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Elections, and the third the 2023 Lagos Gubernatorial race.

2022). The national level union presides over state-level chapters, themselves affiliated with sub-unions which represent particular types of transport workers. For example, affiliated with NURTW are the Tricycle Owners and Operators Association of Nigeria (TOOAN) which manages tricycle ('keke') operators, and the Motorcycle Operators Association of Lagos (MOALS) which manages okada operators. The precise nature of the relationship between TOOAN, MOALS, and NURTW chapters at the state level has been the source of considerable strife.

The foot soldiers of the union are the touts working in the motorparks. Touts are there to bring some level of organization to the chaos, mainly via collecting ticket fees from commercial drivers who pass through— fees which have steadily increased in price over the last couple of years.[36] Union-led motorparks are thriving centers of commerce and chaos. Some are gated tracts of land

[36]Interviews with author, including July 22, 2023

along the side of a road; others are less officially delineated, and consist largely of the people and vehicles stretching across the roads and spilling over the side. Usually parks and their personnel stretch across multiple lanes of a road, slowing traffic. Agberos make their way in and out of lines of traffic to ensure that every commercial vehicle passing through the park that day purchases a ticket. The conglomeration of passengers boarding and alighting, drivers passing through, and touts milling about collecting their dues means that motorparks are packed with people. The masses in turn attract street vendors and hawkers, so many motorparks also feature makeshift stalls selling grilled maize, apparel, or gin in small hot sauce-like packets. There are often representatives of various branches of law enforcement 'hanging out' in the park, chatting to touts, admonishing drivers, or simply surveying the scene. At one motorpark on the mainland, I was struck when I noticed a small group of Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) agency officials—obvious in their yellow, red-trimmed uniforms—laughing and looking on as a tout, yelling over the chaos of the park, chased after a slow-moving danfo mini-bus, whipping the already-cracked windows with a long wooden rod, a wad of apparently not-enough cash clutched in his other fist. Touts' jobs are violent and often dangerous; though they are also important community members. More than once, an agbero kindly helped direct me when I was lost.

Touts are presided over by 'unit' chairmen who rule over a particular junction, intersection, or park. They in turn are directed by 'area' chairmen, who are directed by zonal chairmen; meanwhile the chairman of the state-level chapter of the union exerts authority over the whole operation. The work of chairmen at all levels is very political, dangerous, and delicate. When I interviewed one unit chairman representing tricycle operators on the mainland, he spent 15 minutes (in Yoruba) at the beginning of the interview interrogating my colleague, a Nigerian, about his background and purpose for being there, in order to make sure that he was not a spy for another faction or for rivals who sought the chairman's coveted position. "Chairman work is very dangerous," he explained to me apologetically afterwards, "we have many enemies".[37] There are often clashes, as rival factions

[37]Author interview, July 14, 2024

fight over control of particularly hotly contested motorparks.[38]

However, the dangerous political maneuverings of union leadership only escalate as they ascend the ladder, and as the stakes get correspondingly higher. The chairman of the NURTW Lagos branch (as of 2019) MC Oluomo is a longstanding ally of President (as of 2023) Bola Tinubu, the first governor of Lagos after the fall of military rule. Tinubu has long exercised control over the state politics of Lagos as a sort of "godfather." Tinubu's unique hold on formal institutions in Lagos has its roots in his earlier life and in his Lagos governorship, in which he cultivated and strengthened ties with informal networks of power such as the union (Whiteman, 2013). Most relevant for our purposes, Tinubu and MC Oluomo were both reportedly area boys in their youth (Momoh, 2000, 188). During his governorship of Lagos, Tinubu was frequently referred to as the "Area Boy Governor," and is quoted by prominent journalist Kaye Whiteman as saying of the area boys "These are my boys; I care for them." (Whiteman, 2013, 217)

MC Oluomo's rise to power in the union was riddled with violence and with interference from Tinubu, though this is not to understate his vast and loyal following. In particular, he has historically been in conflict with drivers of keke and okada, and publicly rivals with the leaders of two- and three-wheeler operations. When he took over as Lagos NURTW Chairman in 2019, then leader of TOOAN (tricycle union) Fatai Adeshina[39] was also vying for the top spot in the Lagos NURTW chapter. Reports suggest Tinubu personally called him and demanded he cede the nomination.[40]

He fared better than his MOALS (okada union) colleague, however, who crossed paths with MC Oluomo two years earlier. Rasaq Bello, who was rumored to support a different APC faction than MC—and who operated in the same neighborhood, Oshodi—was shot to death in 2017, almost certainly by MC's men (Akinkuotu, 2019*a*; Akinsanmi, 2017; Odesola, 2022). The assassination caused then Lagos State Governor Ambode to temporarily suspend NURTW from operating in

[38]Indeed once, after one long afternoon of chatting to reticent touts in the back of a beat-up minibus parked in a motorpark in the north, a battle for supremacy over the park broke out between loyalists of the park's general chairman and rival foot soldiers in a nearby neighborhood. About twenty minutes after I had vacated the park, the entire stretch of road leading to the roundabout was deserted, as touts battled with guns, cutlasses, bottles and stones.

[39]Interviewed by author, July 10, 2023

[40]See SI §B.3 for a chart mapping these changes.

Lagos (Bankole, 2017; Akinsanmi, 2017), leading to an ambitious transport sector reform law which attempted to regain state control over the industry (Infrastructure News, 2017; Olawoyin, 2017).[41] Shortly thereafter, Tinubu, then leader of the APC, refused to allow the party to nominate Governor Ambode for a second term (Akinsanmi, 2018; Abiodun, 2019), earning public support from MC Oluomo on social media. Ambode's reputation amongst people I spoke with remains one of a man who got too close to disrupting big corruption, and whose second term candidacy Tinubu halted as a result (Abiodun, 2019). MC Oluomo's role in this rearrangement of Lagos politics—albeit in a way that suited him quite well—is less clear. What is clear is that at least some Ambode supporters connected the dots. During an APC rally for Sanwo-Olu, the *new* nominee for governor to replace Ambode (and Lagos's current governor, reelected in 2023), MC Oluomo was stabbed by an assailant who reportedly blamed him for Ambode's ruined political fortunes (Egbas, 2019). MC's political allies allegedly ensured he got medical treatment abroad (Elezuo, 2019). When MC recovered, Tinubu ushered him into the union's top spot, over the incumbent chairman, an Ambode loyalist (Akinkuotu, 2019*b*; Inyang, 2019; Oyero, 2022*b*; Society Now, 2019).

As is evidenced throughout the decades, the relationship between Tinubu's APC and Oluomo's union has been integral to the success of both. The union is not just thugs on demand for the APC, and the APC is not just the political pawn of the union. Theirs is a complex, dynamic relationship; the internal politics of the APC are intricately related to the internal politics of the union, and the political success of particular factions. They have separate but overlapping goals, and their power depends on each other—and, in the union's case, on drivers whom they extort for billions.

4.2 The lead-up to the ban's enforcement

Shortly after MC Oluomo overtook leadership of the union, he made moves to integrate okada and keke operators directly under his control, usurping their existing unions—which had previously operated independently, if under the same umbrella (Oboagwina, 2022). As a result, okada and keke

[41] It was Ambode who then, in fact, passed the 2018 okada ban in the first place, in his effort to consolidate state control of the industry and chip away at the union's source of power ().

operators began to publicly complain about the rise in extortion at Lagos motorparks (Daily Trust, 2022*b*; Edema, 2022). In late 2021, this culminated in the then leader of TOOAN[42] announcing that excessive extortion from MC Oluomo's NURTW meant that he was looking to form an alternative union of these operators, outside the purview of NURTW (Premium Times, 2022). He then went over MC Oluomo's head, directly to the national NURTW president, to complain of the extortion from MC's regime (Olaoluwa, 2022). The National President of NURTW demanded MC Oluomo work to prevent extortion of these operators (Olanrewaju, 2022). MC Oluomo refused (Faith, 2022; Balogun, 2022). On March 9, 2022, the National NURTW umbrella suspended MC Oluomo as chairman of the Lagos State NURTW Branch (Olaoluwa, 2022), and appointed in his stead Fatai Adeshina, former TOOAN leader and MC Oluomo rival.[43]

A rapid series of developments occurred in quick succession—in fact, all on the same day. MC Olumo withdrew his membership from the national union, and announced that not only was he still head of Lagos chapter, but that the chapter was breaking away from the national union entirely (Akoni, 2022). That evening, Lagos Governor Sanwo-Olu announced that all parks and garage management would now be under the purview of MC Oluomo's union—now to be dubbed Lagos State Parks and Garage Management (LASPG) (Alilyu, 2022; Society Now, 2022; Oyero, 2022*b*). They also announced that it was suspending the activity of the national union from the state entirely (Oyero, 2022*a*); leaving MC Oluomo's faction as the only one operating with the state's blessing.

These developments did not unfold without protest. NGOs and rights organizations publicly called out the role of the LSG in manipulating the law over the course of the leadership tussle; one organization claimed that over 1,000 of these operators' vehicles were vandalized by union members over the course of one week in April (Sahara Reporters, 2022). Multiple motorparks were forcibly overtaken (Oyero, 2022*c*; Daily Trust, 2022*a*), extortion by touts continued (Agha and Aliyu, 2022), and violence erupted between area boys and okada operators that resulted in multiple fatalities (Oyeleke, 2022; Lambo, 2022). And on May 8, a Justice of the Federal High Court in

[42] Interview with author August 28, 2023

[43] See SI §B.3 for a chart mapping these changes.

Lagos ruled that MC Oluomo and his union stop levying fees against operators (Titlola, 2022).

After having promised MC's men that he would "act on [their] grievances" (The Nation, 2022), Governor Sanwo-Olu announced a week later that his government would pursue imminent—and selective—enforcement of an okada ban, originally passed in 2018 by reformist Governor Ambode.[44] Okada operators and their tricycle-riding counterparts had long been a thorn in MC's side, and they bore the brunt of the extortion from a union that they did not feel they were members of. They had begun the protesting excessive extortion in motorparks across the city, and in fact were at the root of MC Oluomo's—one of the most powerful and connected men in Lagos—ongoing beleaguerment.

5 Evidence: The political geography of enforcement

My theory requires that selective enforcement of the ban will vary in ways that benefit the union; allowing them to more effectively exert control over (and profit from) recalcitrant okada operators. Therefore we should expect *spatial* variation in the ban's enforcement according to Hypothesis 1:

H1 The state follows enforcement patterns that benefit the union.

Hypothesis 1 implies two component hypotheses. First, that enforcement along ITE areas causes more okada to be present at motorparks after enforcement commences:

H1(a) After enforcement commences, the number of okada in motorparks *increases* compared to before the ban.

I test this assertion using a panel of satellite-based measures along road segments before and after the ban. I show that okada density shifted in the aftermath of the ban; and that it shifted differentially for (i) ITE areas vs. non-ITE areas; and (ii) for motorparks vs. non-motorparks. Second, it implies that this choice of ITE areas is driven, at least in part, *in order to bring about* this result:

[44] See SI §B.5 for more on the ban and other okda bans across Lagos history.

H1(b) Actual ITE areas will increase okada density in motorparks *more* compared to counterfactual enforcement areas.

I use randomization inference and simulations on the Lagos road network to not only show that enforcement along ITE areas increases okada presence in motorparks, but that it does so significantly more than other plausible counterfactual enforcement patterns. These propositions were validated by some news reports (Olasupo, 2022), as well as by many of the conversations I had with okada operators throughout Lagos. When I asked operators specifically whether the union, allegedly their representatives, were troubled by the ban, I got more than one laugh of derision. One operator said:

> "The ban ... did not disturb [the union] much. Why? Because if you cannot go [on enforced routes], you go to the streets. That is where they collect their dues ... so while you struggle, you still give them their dues." (Okada operator, Badagry, 20 July 2023)

Every operator I spoke to opined about the union's increased collection, even though what they were collecting on was technically an illegal activity. They often cited the union's collusion with the state. In Ikorodu, northeast Lagos, one operator stated "... all money they are collecting is illegal ... they know that Lagos state has stopped bike. They stop okada. And they are *still* selling ticket, and Lagos State did not stop them ... they are selling it, and we are buying it."[45] Other operators confirmed the increased fees and interaction with the union faced after the ban:

> "The problem is the ticket[s you must buy to pass through the motorparks]. You buy one, 200 naira. You buy another, 200... [Now] you have to buy four, five, six tickets. You cannot now ride bike [without passing a park]...So you have to go more, more, more—but then you pass more and pay more." (Okada operator, Mile 2, 23 June 2023)

Some operators noted that their union membership ID card no longer exempted them from paying ticket fees.[46] Moreover, many operators mentioned how many new okada operators had been

[45] Interview with author on June 12, 2023
[46] Interview with author July 27, 2024

crowded into pockets where okada riding was relatively safe from state enforcement, resulting in increased competition and rate depression.[47]

5.1 Okada presence before and after ban enforcement

H1(a) After the ban, the number of okada in motorparks *increases* compared to before the ban.

I test H1(a) directly I by investigating the ban's differential effect, if any, on motorparks: I run a standard two-way fixed effects model with two-periods, which estimates the *differential* effect of the ban between areas with and without motorparks. The outcome Okada_{it} is the number of okada counted in satellite imagery from date t on road segment i. I regress this count on an interaction between Motorpark, which represents whether i road segment features a motorpark (1) or not (0), and Post_t, which accounts for whether whether t is before (0) or after (1) the ban's announced enforcement date. I include time-period t and road segment i fixed effects for (respectively) time-invariant, road segment specific characteristics and space-invariant, date-specific shocks. Given that each date represents a different satellite image, time period fixed effects also act as a control for image-specific variation such as percentage cloud cover. Errors are clustered by a 0.25×0.25 degree grid squares to account for possible spatial autocorrelation. To account for time-shifting traffic trends (especially workweek "rush hour" traffic patterns affecting some types of roads more than others), I include a separate term accounting for whether the observation was captured on a weekend, and allow that the term to vary according to class of road (e.g., highway, residential). My preferred specification also includes fixed effects for grid-square linear time trends to account for (linear) shifts over time clustered in space.

I first establish that the ban was enforced as intended; namely by estimating the ban's differential effect across enforced (ITE) areas, and non-enforced areas and substituting ITE_i (whether a road segment i is listed as an enforcement area) for Motorpark_i.

Unsurprisingly, and as shown in Model (1) of Table 4, the presence of okada significantly

[47] Interview with author on August 15, 2024

Table 4: Post-enforcement trends in motorbike density

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
ITE × Post	-1.84^{**}	-2.28^{***}		
	(0.82)	(0.78)		
Motorpark × Post			3.13^{***}	4.24^{***}
			(1.46)	(1.52)
Observations	29,071	26,061	29,071	26,061
Segment FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time Period FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grid Linear Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grid Quadratic Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓
Weekend × Road Class FE		✓		✓
R^2 (full model)	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.48

Units are individual road segments. Models 1 and 2 consider presence in ITE areas, Models 3 and 4 in motorparks. All models include segment and date fixed effects and 0.25 × 0.25 degree grid square linear and quadratic time trends. Models 2 and 4 also include differing intercepts for weekends versus weekdays which vary by class of road. Errors are clustered by time period and grid square. $^{***}p < 0.01$,$^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

decreases after June 1, 20222 in areas where there is stated enforcement, by about 2 okada per road segment when accounting for localized time trends. Meanwhile, and in line with H1(a), the number of okada significantly increase after the ban on road segments which feature motorparks, by about four okada per segment (see Model 4). This is consistent with okada being displaced after the ban's enforcement to areas controlled by the union.

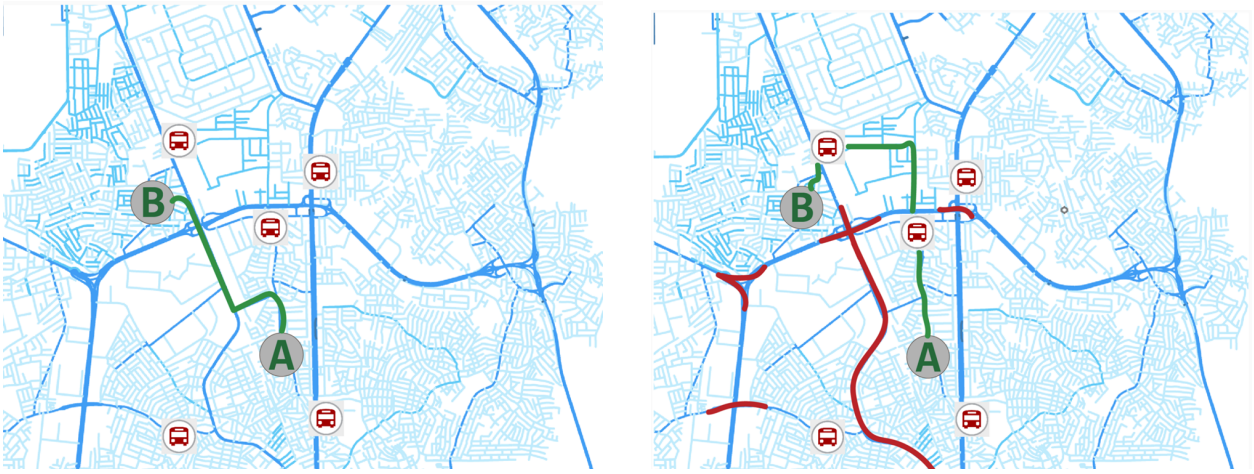
5.2 Randomization on a road network

H1(b) Actual ITE areas will increase okada density in motorparks *more* compared to counterfactual enforcement areas.

Above, I show that the number of okada increased around motorparks after the ban's enforcement. Next, I contend that this was the result of a purposeful strategy of displacement by the state (H1(b)). Figure 6 lays out a simplified example of the process by which this may occur.[48] Panel (a) shows an abstracted road map of a particular neighborhood of Lagos, with two points marked *A* and *B*.

[48]Based, incidentally, on the route I took from my residence (A) to the supermarket (B) during fieldwork.

Union-run motorparks are marked with red buses. Before the ban, if one attempted to travel via okada from point A to point B along the road network, the quickest route goes straight north and east (marked in green). Notice on this route, no motorparks are passed.



(a) Example okada route (in green) from point A to point B, before okada ban enforcement. Union-led motorparks represented by red bus symbols. The route outlined passes no motorparks.

(b) Example okada route (in green) from point A to point B, after okada ban enforcement. Union-led motorparks represented by red bus symbols. The route outlined passes two motorparks.

Figure 6: Example of affected route.

In panel (b), areas enforced during the okada ban—bridges, streets, and intersections—are denoted with red lines. These represent areas which, after the ban, are untraversable by okada operators. Adapting to avoid the enforced areas, the green line in this bottom panel shows the new shortest route from *A* to *B*. Not only is the route longer and more circuitous, but the okada is now forced to pass two motorparks. This figure represents the type of displacement I suggest occurred on a systematic scale after the okada ban. It demonstrates that while okada can still traverse through many areas, even in a neighborhoods directly affected by the ban's enforcement, the risk of arrest and bike confiscation at key points on the road network forces operators to alter their routes, landing them in the hands of touts who can exploit their precarity to extort them.

To investigate whether the chosen enforcement areas have this systematic effect, I use Open Street Maps (OSM) geospatial road data to construct a networked dataset, where roads ('edges') are

connected by intersections ('nodes'). This allows me to flexibly simulate travel through the Lagos road network under a variety of circumstances—including before and after the ban took place.[49] I merge the network with above-described motorpark and ITE locationd data. I use this networked dataset to calculate features of the paths traversed by operators between points.[50]

Results from 30,000 simulations provide suggestive evidence that the specific geography of the okada ban enforcement served the union's interests by displacing okada routes into areas in which the union runs motorparks. Okada operators face curtailed freedom of movement as a result of ban enforcement in ITE areas; just under $\frac{1}{4}$ of randomly selected routes become intraversable after the okada ban; that is, the okada ban prohibits passage from point A to point B at all, by any route. Moreover, enforcement in these areas results in a significant increase in cost, on average NGN 1,192.48 more after enforcement than before, either because of added mileage from circumventing ITE areas, or because of passing extra motorparks.[51] While no routes will see a *decrease* in cost,[52] the scale of the increase is significant.

While it is evident that the okada ban's enforcement resulted in significant costs to okada operators, my primary analysis concerns the degree to which the union benefited from the displacement of okada operators prompted by this selective enforcement. Indeed, simulations suggest that the union would have benefited enormously. The majority of okada routes pass at least one additional motorpark after the okada ban prior to before.[53] Less than 2% of routes pass fewer motorparks after the ban than before (see Figure 7a). The total portion of routes which pass a motorpark before the ban's enforcement is also significantly less. Before ban enforcement on ITE areas, only 3% of simulated routes pass motorparks. In contrast, after ban enforcement, nearly 61% of the

[49] For more details on the technical approach, see SI §C.4.

[50] SI §C.4.2 contains extensive details of this analysis process.

[51] Cost here is a straightforward function of a routes length, and the number of motorparks passed. I estimate with insight from fieldwork that each km of road traveled costs roughly NGN 100 (wear and tear, petrol costs), and with tickets each motorpark costs an addition NGN 500. See SI §C.4 for more on cost calculations

[52] Mechanically, the shortest route between points A and B after barriers will either remain unaffected or get longer.

[53] Importantly, the increase in 'motorparks passed' holds *even* when extending the sample to all routes traversable in the pre-period. That is to say, even across $\frac{1}{4}$ *fewer* rides, the number of motorparks passed increases nearly 5.5 times after the enforcement of the ban on ITE areas.

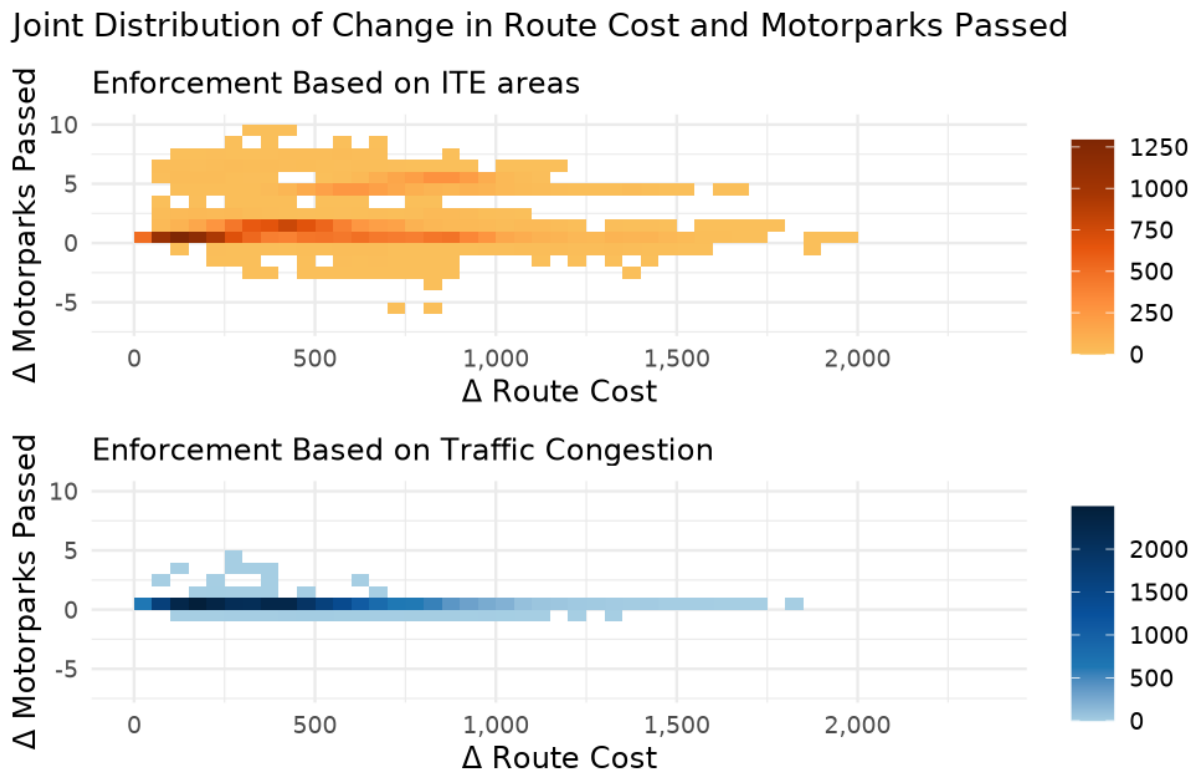


Figure 7: Density plots of road network simulations. The y-axis is the change in the number of motorparks passed on a given route, compared to no ban enforcement/roadway impediments. The x-axis is the approximate difference in 'cost' of the route in NGN. The darkness of the shaded area indicates frequency of cost/motorpark difference combinations. Inspiration for this plot comes from Artes et al. (2025).

traversable routes pass motorparks. This large difference attests to the significant displacement of okada operators into areas where the union can take advantage of the ban's enforcement to extort from them.[54]

Are these effects unique?

H1(b) Actual ITE areas will increase okada density in motorparks *more* compared to counterfactual enforcement areas.

The previous analysis makes clear that the ban's enforcement along ITE routes serves to displace

[54]This trend holds *even* considering the larger sample of all routes, including those intraversable after the ban; over all simulated routes, less than 10% pass motorparks before the ban is enforced, compared to 36% afterwards.

okada operators into motorpark-laden areas, increasing the power wielded by the union over these operators. However, this alone does not imply that these ITE routes were chosen (at least in part) in order to produce this effect. I now turn to additional analyses which make use of *counterfactual* ITE areas which could have—given the purported goals of the ban—reasonably been chosen as enforcement locations instead. There are a variety of potential logics which *could* have guided the government's choice of enforcement priorities, including those drawn directly from stated reasons for the ban in first place; such as easing traffic congestion, preventing road accidents, or reducing pollution. There are also alternative logics less likely to have been stated in so many words by state agents, such as enforcing the 'eyesore' of okada operators in the richest areas of the city, or prioritizing places where law enforcement had the highest pre-existing capacity.

I then construct *counterfactual* ITE areas based on these logics by selecting approximately 60 areas of the road network chosen from appropriately-weighted distributions, then re-run simulations under these hypothetical constraints. My goal with this exercise is to determine whether these counterfactual configurations have effects similar to the actual ITE areas chosen by the state. I suggest that choosing enforcement areas in these ways would have benefited the union substantially *less* than actually enforced areas.

The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 5. The effects of the okada ban's enforcement along ITE routes is substantively unique. For example, 'traffic-driven' hypothetical enforcement areas make more routes intraversable to operators, more efficiently curtailing okada use with identical capacity. Most crucially is the difference in the effect on motorparks passed. The 'true' ITE configuration prompts operators to pass roughly one additional motorpark per journey on average. Meanwhile, a traffic-driven hypothetical ban have the opposite effect, and in fact *reduce* the number of motorparks okada pass on their routes; the majority of routes pass fewer motorparks under this enforcement logic. This analysis confirms not only that most counterfactual enforcement patterns fail to benefit the union, but also that the actual enforcement patterns followed by the LSG *uniquely* benefit the union amidst a variety of plausible alternatives. This lends some credibility to

Table 5: Counterfactual enforcement patterns and their effects.

Enforcement logic	*Justification*	*Operationalization*	*Effects*
Actual ITE areas	Actual LSG enforced areas	Coded from policy announcement	75% routes traversable; 87 more motorparks
High traffic congestion	Ease traffic flow	Highest traffic incident density (via 96.1FM data)	35% routes traversable; 21 fewer motorparks
High state capacity	Utilize existing capacity	Closet to police stations (via OSM)	61% routes traversable; same number of motorparks
High offense areas	Target areas of high-okada density	Highest pre-ban okada level (via Streetview)	55% routes traversable; 4 more motorparks
High income areas	Appease wealthy constituents	Highest nightlight density (via EOG)	91% routes traversable; 8 fewer motorparks
High priority areas	Prioritize public safety	Closest to primary schools	84% routes traversable; 51 fewer motorparks
High pollution areas	Reduce pollution by okada	Highest particulate matter density (via NASA)	54% routes traversable; 23 fewer motorparks
Most efficienct areas	Maximize enforcement efficiency	Areas with highest betweenness centrality on Lagos road network	27% routes traversable; 12 more motorparks

Results are based on 30,000 simulated different start and end points randomly chosen from a uniform distribution across the Lagos road network. Number of motorparks passed is per 100 simulated routes, compared to pre-ban counts. I test additional counterfactuals, including conessions to commuters and road condition constraints, in SI §C.4.2.

my assertion that the enforcement patterns of the ban were intended, at least in part, to prop up the union's ability to exert coerce rebellious operators.

6 Evidence: Sudden disillusionment as a shock

In previous sections, I described the peculiar political circumstances surrounding the conflict between operators and the union in the lead-up to an announcement of the ban's enforcement (Section 4), and demonstrate, consistent with H1, that spatial variation in the ban's enforcement served to displace operators into areas where the union can extort them (Section 5.1). I show that this

pattern is not replicated when considering counterfactual enforcement areas based on traffic report density, law enforcement presence, or other potential motivations for enforcement configurations (Section 5.2). I now turn to an analysis of *temporal* variation in ban enforcement:

H2 When perceived union reliability decreases, the state follows enforcement patterns which benefit the union less

The evidence for this hypothesis comes from exploiting a shift in the state's reliance on the union, stemming from a surprising national election result at the state level. The Nigerian Presidential and Gubernatorial elections of 2023, held about six months after enforcement of the ban began, did not happen simultaneously. Federal elections—including for the President—were held on 25 February 2023. Meanwhile Lagos state elections—including for the governor, as well as for seats in the state assembly—were held about a month later, on 18 March 2023.

The national election results were in one sense unsurprising; the incumbent APC's candidate Bola Tinubu was elected against rivals Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP), the upstart populist candidate who captivated young Nigerian voters in particular. The APC's stronghold is in the southwest, especially in Lagos where the party has won every election it has ever stood. Therefore, one unexpected result of the 2023 presidential election was that the people of Lagos state voted on masse not for their former governor Tinibu, but for the charismatic and populist LP candidate Obi. While the Lagos results did not sway the election in Obi's favor, they nevertheless shocked the political elite of the state, who had been expecting a comfortable APC victory, guaranteed (as usual) by the efforts of the union. A former Lagos commissioner of transport under the APC asked me: "Did you see the election? The union didn't deliver. Their days are numbered." [55] I contend that the national election provided a shock to Lagos state leadership's perception of the union's reliability in guaranteeing an election victory for the incumbent APC, and therefore a shock to their willingness to cater to union demands. As with H1, H2 can be broken into two component observational implications:

[55] Interview with author on June 18, 2023

H2a Okada density *decreases* after the Presidential election around motorparks.

H2b Okada density *increases* after the Gubernatorial election around motorparks.

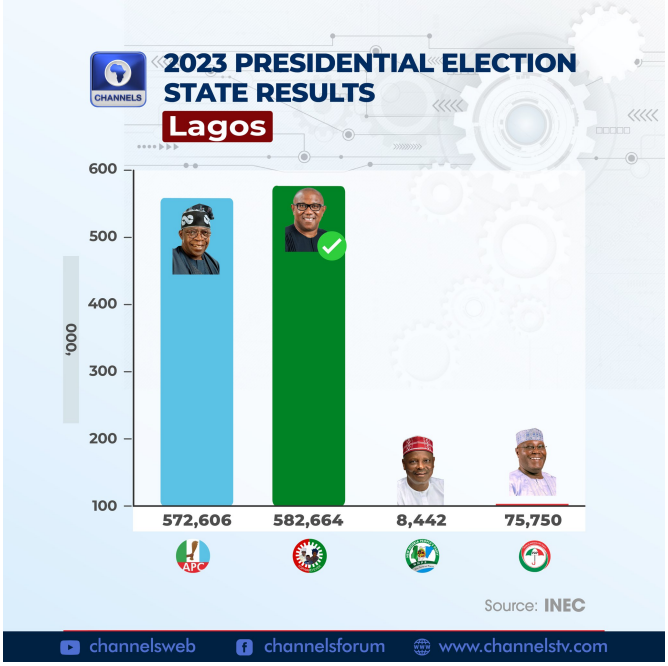


Figure 8: 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election Results for Lagos State

I test whether okada density changed after the national election, in the lead-up to the Gubernatorial election a month later. If the government is selectively enforcing the ban for the union, we should expect a shock to the state's trust in the union to serve as a signal of unreliability and enforcement patterns to shift accordingly. Interviews, including with okada operators, substantiate this strategy. Several (unprompted) brought up abrupt changes in enforcement between the elections.[56]

I define InterElec_t as $\text{PresElec}_t - \text{GovElec}_t$.The variable PresElec_t takes the value of 1 when t is after the date of the Nigerian Presidential Election, and GovElec_t when t is after the date of the Lagos Gubernatorial election.$\text{PresElec}_t - \text{GovElec}_t = 1$ if t denotes a time period between the presidential and gubernatorial elections. I measure the change during the inter-election period because, as I analyze further in SI §D.4), the union's behavior changed significantly during the gubernatorial

[56]Interviews with author, including 15 June, 2023

election. After the ire from their patron expressed after the presidential election, the union increased its election interference and mobilization, meaning that I expect the enforcement dynamic to return to pre-Presidential election patterns after the gubernatorial election is complete. Importantly, I truncate the sample to only observations which follow the okada ban's initial enforcement, so as to isolate the disruption in the inter-election period from effects of the ban's enforcement writ large. I estimate a two-way fixed effects linear model in the same fashion as above, where $(\text{Motorpark}_i \times \text{InterElec}_t)$ denotes whether a given i,t is a road segment with a motorpark in the inter-election period.[57]

Results are given in Table 6. There was a general decrease in okada presence across the road network across all categories in the inter-election period, as can be seen in Figure 5 in Section 4. However, not all road segments saw uniform decreases during this time. The estimate of the coefficient for ITE is positive (p = 0.06), though not consistently significantly different from the trend downward experienced by most road segments during this period. However, the number of okada in *motorparks* during the inter-election period decreased substantially, at a significantly lower rate than that of other types of road segments. These trends lend credence to my theory that the state reacted to the union's failure to sway the election for the APC by reducing selective enforcement.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, I argue that states can selectively enforce policies aimed at vulnerable populations in order to ease their exploitation by important third-party groups. I examine the case of uneven enforcement of a ban on specific types of informal commercial transport in Africa's largest city, and provide evidence that uneven enforcement of this ban is in the interest of appeasing powerful transport unions, political allies of the regime who are relied upon around election time to provide political violence on demand in favor of the ruling party. I demonstrate first, that the period before enforcement was rift with intra-union politics, and specifically unrest from commercial drivers fighting back against their exploitation by the union. Next, I demonstrate that variation in okada ban

[57] As before, I replicate analysis with ITE_i in place of Motorpark_i. See SI §D.2 for additional specifications.

Table 6: Inter-election trends in okada density

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
ITE × Inter-election	0.54	2.01*		
	(1.22)	(1.08)		
Motorpark × Inter-election			−8.28***	−8.34***
			(2.89)	(2.96)
Observations	21,717	21,714	21,717	21,714
Segment FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time Period FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grid Linear Time Trend	✓	✓	✓	✓
Weekend × Road Class FE		✓		✓
R^2 (full model)	0.71	0.71	0.72	0.73
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.50	0.50	0.53	0.53

Units are individual road segments. Models 1 and 2 consider presence in ITE areas, Models 3 and 4 in motorparks. All models include fixed effects for road segment, date, and 0.25×0.25 degree grid-square linear and quadratic time trends. Models 2 and 4 also include fixed effects for weekends versus weekdays which vary by class of road. Errors are clustered at the grid square and time period level. $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

ITE areas *systematically* and *uniquely* alters okada operator routes towards union-led motorparks, where they face increased exploitation and extortion. Finally, I use VHR remote-sensing and Streetview data to count the number of okada motorcycles present on road segments over time, specifically in the lead-up to and in the immediate aftermath of a shocking Lagos-level result in the Presidential election. I find that okada presence *increases* in areas enforced by the ban (and decreases in areas with motorparks) in the period after the Presidential and before the Gubernatorial elections, a period of immense tension between the Lagos State Government and the unions.

This project, while focusing on the micro-level dynamics of a single policy enacted in a single city, has implications far beyond the streets of Lagos. My findings underline the necessity of integrating third parties—beyond state agents and directly regulated populations—into our understandings of why states pursue certain policies and their enforcement (Artabe et al., 2023; Albertus, Fenner and Slater, 2018). I build upon prevailing understandings of repression and forbearance by integrating them into a broader framework of how states assist their non-state allies. My focus on *connivance* as a strategy emphasizes how governments may aid allies not

only through direct concessions, but through manipulating enforcement to produce vulnerability in populations challenging these allies' power, or whose exploitation underwrites that power—or both. Moreover, my focus on these third-party state allies shows the 'flipside' of a phenomenon of great interest to the study of politics: election violence. I examine the supply-side dynamics of election interference and violence by non-state groups, clarifying the independent motivations, incentive structures, and interests of such groups. Moreover I provide a portrait of the 'day jobs' of election thugs, emphasizing how these actors exist within—and influence—political structures even between elections. In doing so, I highlight the need for research on the relationships between governments and allied 'violence entrepreneurs' in the years and months before potential flashpoints. Finally, I contend that even nominally benign policies (and their level of enforcement) are motivated by complex, and often corrupt, political arrangements. Like Holland (2016), I caution against interpreting a particular policy's lack of enforcement as necessarily implying an *inability* to enforce. As I reinforce above, a government's reticence may instead be strategic; and—crucially—is often coercive. Future work should take these lessons to heart, especially in probing why governments tolerate illicit and informal industries; or engage only halfheartedly in enforcing violations such as irregular migration. Such light-handedness is not always out of benevolence.

Policy enforcement—like its passage—is highly political with distinct distributive consequences. And indeed, enforcement is often the policy stage in which many citizens first convey their demands and interact with the state, especially in the Global South (Scott, 1969, 1142). This article deepens our understanding of how democracies might use this 'enforcement lever' to contribute to the oppression of vulnerable populations, and to the empowerment of exploitative third parties.

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Supplemental Information

Table of Contents

A ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration of this project's ethical ramifications has been an integral part of the research process over its entire course. This project was approved by Yale Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol #2000035418. There are five primary areas which require additional discussion.

Positionality

This project entailed going into spaces where I was not only an outsider, but quite an obvious outsider. I am a young, white, female, Western, and economically privileged researcher venturing into environments primarily dominated by Nigerian men working in a dangerous and precarious industry. In some ways, this positionality presented opportunities. I found that my appearance often meant that when alone, I was perceived as apolitical, uninformed, or non-threatening. Some respondents were more candid when I approached them on my own than when I approached them accompanied by (male) Nigerian colleagues. However, my outsider status also imposed limits: I was often excluded from key conversations, surveilled by authorities or gatekeepers, or otherwise constrained in my movement. I was often mistaken for a foreign journalist of some kind. It was impossible to go unnoticed. I have sought to remain reflexive about the extractive dynamics that can accompany international fieldwork, especially when the topic concerns illegalized and marginalized livelihoods. Throughout the project, I relied on local research assistants and collaborators, especially when language barriers made this practice necessary, and I practiced discretion in how I recorded and shared fiel dnotes, as outlined by my IRB.

Semi-structured interviews

Apart from the general issues arising from interviewing vulnerable or politically exposed individuals, there were additional considerations unique to this project. Some interviewees were members of organizations implicated in coercion or extortion; others were informal workers operating outside legal protections. In both cases, I was careful to avoid questions that could compromise their

safety or trigger suspicion. All interviewees were provided with a clear explanation of the research and verbally consented to participate. I did not record interviews unless explicitly permitted, and anonymized responses immediately afterward to minimize risk. I was the only person to have access to recordings (unless of course, as occasionally happened, interviewees made their own recordings of the interview). I often stopped recording on the request of the interviewee when a particularly delicate matter arose; especially when it came to political relationships and leadership at the top. I also refrained from asking about criminal behavior directly, instead focusing on institutional relationships, everyday practices, and subjective perceptions of the informal transit industry in the state.

Participant observation

Participant observation was especially valuable for understanding the dynamics and routines of informal transport hubs. However, it also presented challenges. I sometimes had to choose between participating in conversations and writing real-time notes, or between observing closely and avoiding drawing attention to myself (already a very obvious outsider). I never concealed my identity if asked or recorded anyone's likeness without their permission, but my presence and purpose may still raise concerns regarding power and reciprocity. I maintained an ongoing dialogue with local contacts as to the nature and locations of my research activities, and allowed myself to be guided by them and by my growing experience in the selection of field sites and the strategies followed once there. More than once I refrained from visiting field sites on the recommendation of Nigerian colleagues.

TOUT data and social networks

My analysis of transport union (TOUT) presence and influence relies on multiple data sources, including public records, newspaper articles, social media and public forums, informal accounts and anecdotes. In mapping the social networks of the actors involved in the transport industry, I took care to focus where possible on those whose names or positions were already in the public

domain. I have refrained from sharing this collection of data, and from publishing or disclosing any data that could be used to target individuals or localities, especially geo-referenced data.

High-resolution data

Finally, some of my quantitative data sources—most notably Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite imagery—present ethical considerations worth mentioning. In this project, I study an industry made illicit. My use of VHR imagery allowed me to detect activity patterns in otherwise hard-to-reach (or at least hard-to-measure) and sometimes sensitive spaces. However, the power of these data stems from the very qualities which give rise to ethical concerns about its use: its precision, permanence, and invisibility to those being observed. I have mitigated these by aggregating spatial results to avoid pinpointing individuals or vehicles, and by avoiding direct identification of informal operators; I have not published or shared any fine-grained geolocated and georeferenced data. I have also refrained from sharing raw imagery or training data that could be repurposed for enforcement or repression. Indeed, sharing raw imagery is prohibited by my access agreement. These decisions reflect a broader commitment to ensuring that the research does not increase the visibility or vulnerability of people already under informal or formal surveillance.

B BACKGROUND APPENDIX

B.1 On forbearance and connivance

I conceive of 'connivance' as a type of forbearance that is characterized by the intent to foster vulnerability in offenders. The 2×2 provided in this paper (Table 1 in Section 1; replicated below as Figure B.1) contextualizes connivance (and other varieties of forbearance) within a typology of ways state actors may distribute to non-state allies. Holland (2016, Figure 2, 235) also provides a 2×2 to elucidate her concept of welfarist forbearance [58], focusing on whether law exemptions are provided to wealthy individuals, or to poor, and whether the law exemptions are contingent or non-contingent (see Figure B.2).

	Direct beneficiary	*Indirect beneficiary*
Expenditure	**Support** (i.e., clientelism, bribery)	**Burdening** (i.e., regulation of competitors)
Withdrawal	**Leniency** (i.e., concessional forbearance)	**Connivance** (i.e., coercive forbearance)

Columns describe the ally' role in transactions, and clarify whether the allocation is targeted towards them (as a direct beneficiary), or towards other actors such as their competitors (making them an indirect beneficiary). Rows characterize the type of inducement provided by the state, whether the strategy involves an extension of resources (expenditure) or a removal of resources (withdrawal).

Figure B.1: Types of state assistance to allies

	Economic Incidence	
Mode of Distribution	Regressive	Progressive
Contingent	**Corrupt**	**Clientelistic**
Non Contingent	**Plutocratic**	**Welfarist**

Figure B.2: Holland (2016, Figure 2, 235)

[58] A similar figure appears in (Holland, 2017, Figure 1.2, 22)

In Table B.1 and in the main text I am not classifying *types* of non-enforcement, but whether the intended beneficiary of its distributive gains is the *direct* or *indirect* target of the law exemption. Holland (2017)'s typology assumes the target of the law exemption (for example, squatters) is the population the forbearance is intended to benefit, whereas I allow the possibility that a third party is the intended beneficiary of the distributive consequences of forbearance. Incomplete enforcement of immigration, for example, would to Holland be "progressive" because of whom the law exemption applies to. And indeed, if this enforcement pattern was intended to benefit undocumented populations themselves, I would consider this example of *leniency* (akin with Holland's welfarist forbearance), not connivance. However, this assumes that undocumented immigrants are the 'ally' the state is intending to assist with this policy (in which case they are the direct beneficiary of the withdrawal of state resources). If this incomplete enforcement were, instead, intended to benefit agricultural employers who exploit undocumented immigrants' "illegality" for cheap labor, the distributive winner is not the target of the law, and the relevant third-party here—agricultural employers—are the indirect beneficiary of *connivance*.

Connivance does not necessitate that exploitation be produced *on behalf of* third-party actors. In some cases the intended 'beneficiary' might be the state itself. However, third-parties are a common feature of many of examples of connivance, including that examined in the Nigerian transport industry and in each case outlined in Table 2 in the main text. An Appendix in Holland (2016) briefly outlines what the author calls 'economic incidence,' by which she means the secondary and tertiary reverberations of the initial act of forbearance. I meanwhile make *central* the intentional winners of the distributional act of forbearance, taking seriously that 'economic incidence' can be central to enforcement, rather than an unintentional if inevitable after-effect.

B.2 Primer on Nigerian and Lagos politics

Table B.1: List of acronyms

APC	All Progressives' Congress
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission (*of Nigeria*)
LASPG	Lagos State Parks and Garages
LP	Labour Party
LSG	Lagos State Government
MOALS	Motorcycle Owners and Operators Association of Lagos State
NIC	National Industrial Court *(of Nigeria)*
NLC	National Labour Congress
NGN	Nigerian Naira
NURTW	National Union of Road and Transport Workers
PDP	People's Democratic Party
RTEAN	Road Transport Employers' Association of Nigeria
TOOAN	Tricycle Owners and Operators Association of Nigeria
TUC	Trade Union Congress

Nigeria is the 6^{th} most populous country on earth, with more than 230 million people who speak over 500 different languages. It is a weakly institutionalized democracy with high inequality and extensive corruption across all levels of government. It features a federal system in which states hold immense power, and in which local-level politics often 'trickle upward,' making salient overlapping regional, ethnic, religious, and linguistic divides. This is especially so between the rural, poorer, more populous North—largely Muslim, and Hausa or Fulani—and the richer South, primarily Igbo in the Southeast and Yoruba to the Southwest. Though it has a long history of elections, Nigeria's democracy remains exceptionally violent and corrupt. Beyond the high-profile episodes of violence perpetrated by armed groups, Nigerians also face daily exploitation, coercion, and repression at the hands of non-state actors who use force to exert power and extract profit, permeating everyday life with extortion and violence. In Nigeria, the advent of democratic institutions has not effectively protected the country's most vulnerable from victimization by such groups.—one that saw over 3,000 civilians killed in 2024 by myriad rebel groups, communal and political militias, and the

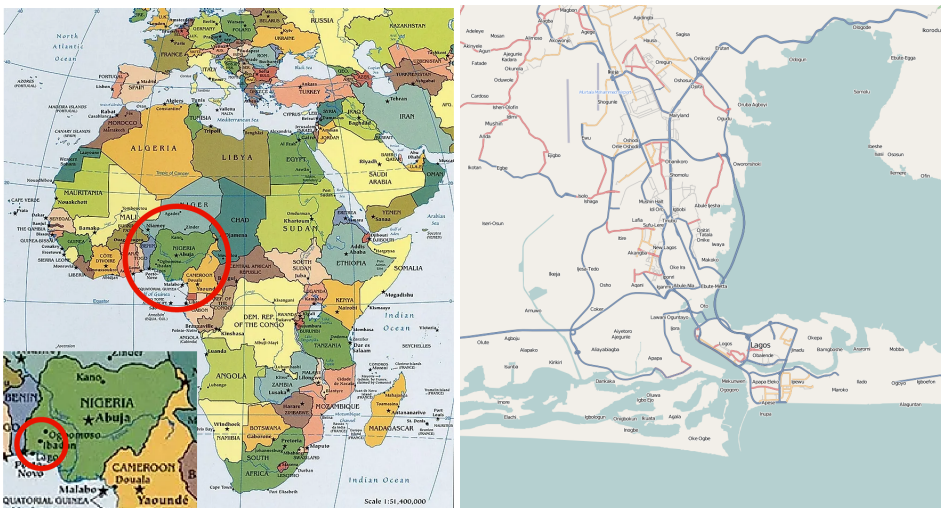
state.[59]

Nigeria has seen long and varied periods of military rule, oscillating with short-lived democracies and brutal civil wars. The current iteration, the Fourth Nigerian Republic, began in 1999. Nevertheless, Nigeria's first President to be voted out of office only stepped down in 2015, when the All Progressives Congress (APC) unseated the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria's first – and so far only – peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party. The APC, at the time a newly formed coalition merging several opposition parties and PDP defectors, remains in power to this day– led former governor of Lagos Bola Tinubu who was elected president in the most recent 2023 general election. President Tinubu was inaugurated two days before my arrival in Lagos for fieldwork; the 2023 election was the first in the country in which one of the major candidates was *not* a former military ruler.

President Tinubu's reign makes especially evident the key role of Lagos politics in the national political scene. President Bola Tinubu is a native Lagosian, and indeed was born to the family of a traditional leader (chief) of the Yoruba people in Lagos, the *ìyálòrún* (a title his daughter now controversially occupies). Tinubu was governor of Lagos for two terms in the immediate aftermath of the transition to the fourth republic, and it is thought that he amassed most of his significant wealth through his near-total control of the state during this time. He has since played the role of 'kingmaker' or 'godfather' of Lagos politics. Lagos has been firmly in the APC's hands since its founding (in which Tinubu played a part) and Tinubu has hand-selected every governor of the state since his own rule ended.

Lagos is both a state and a city; Lagos *state* is broken up into 20 local government areas (LGAs) and 37 local council development areas (LCDAs), while the Lagos metropolitan area encompasses 13 of these LGAs grouped in the center, generally considered the heart of the *city* of Lagos. In keeping with general colloquialisms, and in the interest of parsimony, my references to Lagos are to the state writ large. Lagos is the commercial and cultural center of Nigeria as well as the most

[59] Analysis conducted by author using ACLED data.



(a) Nigeria, West Africa **(b)** (Central) Lagos, Nigeria

Figure B.3: Maps of Nigeria and Lagos

populous city in the country and the continent, and it is growing daily. Its dominant cultural group is Yoruba, with prominent Muslim and Christian contingents, but because of its mega-city status and perceived economic opportunity, it attracts settlers from all over Nigeria, and even from elsewhere in West Africa. The Governor of Lagos at the time of writing (2025), Sanwo-Olu was—like his predecessors before him—likely hand-picked by President Tinubu. He was Tinubu's selection after his direct predecessor Governor Ambode displeased Tinubu during his first term.

B.3 Primer on (Transport) Union Politics in Nigeria

B.3.1 Unions in Nigeria The right to a union is one that is protected directly by the Nigerian constitution, and members of unions are afforded certain rights and distinctions under Nigerian law: for example, union disputes are settled in the National Industrial Court (NIC) of Nigeria. Today, there are two broad 'umbrella' unions in the country: the National Labour Congress (NLC) which generally represents *employees* across industries, and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) which generally represents *employers* across industries.

Unions began to emerge as formidable political players in Nigeria during industrialization in the first half of the 20th century and played a large role in Nigeria's successful bid for independence from the British in 1960 (Sokunbi, Jeminiwa and Onaeko, 1996; Adewumi, 1997). In the period between decolonization and the adoption of its current system in 1999, Nigeria oscillated between military rule and short-lived democratic projects. Because of a concerted effort by both the British and by post-independence regimes to repress, reorganize, and split unions among ethnic lines—and because regional divisions overlap significantly with occupational patterns—the landscape of labor and sociocultural organizations in Nigeria is dense and highly localized (Adewumi, 1997; Sokunbi, Jeminiwa and Onaeko, 1996). Especially after the advent of presidential federalism in 1978, individual chapters, informal community-based advocacy networks, and breakaway factions established varying levels of presence and power across Nigeria's highly disparate regions. And a perhaps surprising number of these organizations act not only as advocates for their members' interests in bargains with employers and with the state, but also as what we might call 'violence entrepreneurs;' non-state brokers who use and sell violence, extortion, or exploitation to achieve political and economic ends.[60]

Literature on trade union activism in developing democracies largely focuses on the combative

[60]For example, the infamous Bakassi boys of Southeast Nigeria, eventually a militia group wanted for mass extrajudicial killings, was originally organized by the Shoemakers Industrial Union as a means of protecting Ariaria Market in Aba from criminal elements (Ukiwo, 2002).

and repressive relationship between the government and trade unions (Dean, 2022); or on state infiltration into unions as a form of political control (Hassan, Mattingly and Nugent, 2022). While umbrella unions in Nigeria often call general strikes or publicly protest against government policies at the national level, this paper illuminates how localized factions of labor unions can also act as strategic partners to local parties, often in open defiance to parent labor organizations.

B.3.2 The Transport Unions of the Southwest The transport unions of Lagos have been powerful political players for half a century, organizations older than Nigeria's current republic. Transportation in Lagos for many years was a public enterprise run by the Lagos State Transport Corporation (LSTC), begun in 1958. Today, there are two major transport unions, each affiliated with one of the umbrella labor organizations of Nigeria. The first is the National Union of Transport and Road Workers (NURTW) associated with the NLC, and the second is the Road Transport Employers' Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) associated with the TUC. Both are national unions with state chapters across the country, especially in the southwest, and *especially* in Lagos. NURTW[61] and RTEAN Lagos state chapters coexist, but their operations are not divvied up as might be suggested by their umbrella organization. Their membership pools are rather idiosyncratically assigned; sometimes based on this division, sometimes based on location. The transport unions are rigorously hierarchical: Figures B.4 and B.5 show stylized organizational charts of the unions and within state chapters.

B.4 Union-state relations and elections

The transport unions are are highly involved in [politics and elections in Lagos. They engage in widespread electoral interference, by which I mean a combination of strategies which include violence (e.g., beating members of opposition parties) physical intimidation (e.g., standing outside voting places) verbal intimidation (e.g. telling Igbo voters not to come out to vote), ballot-box snatching, ballot-box stuffing, and also pure mobilization efforts such as rallies in the lead-up to

[61]The more powerful of these unions tends to be NURTW, and when I say 'the union,' I refer to the Lagos branch of NURTW.

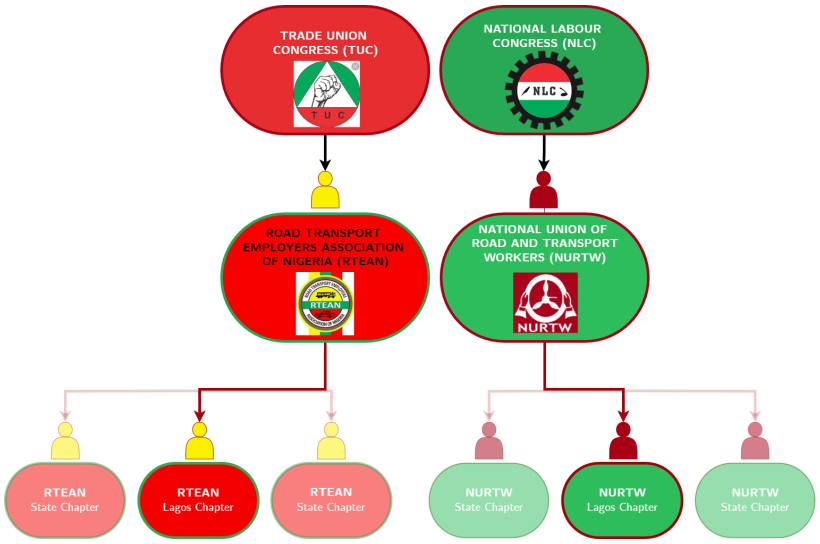


Figure B.4: Transport union organizational chart

elections, and encouraging (and insisting) that members vote for a particular candidate. Internal factions of the union are united with different factions of the APC. These alliances often produce assassinations and violence, as described in the main text.

The union is by no means the only organization, either in civil society or in the universe of violence entrepreneurs, that assist the APC in mobilization in Lagos. Some of the power of the transport union in particular stems from the fact that it is both. Excellent work by Turnbull (2021) speaks to other violent militias who undertake election violence in Nigeria generally and Lagos in particular. The association of market women and other types of organizations are also highly involved in advocating for Tinubu in Lagos. Currently the head of this organization is Tinubu's daughter. It is difficult to know who was fully to blame among the groups that worked to secure a win for Bola Tinubu in Lagos. It is possible that other steps were taken to address failures by other organizations in Lagos. This is beyond the scope of this paper, but is an important lane of further inquiry.

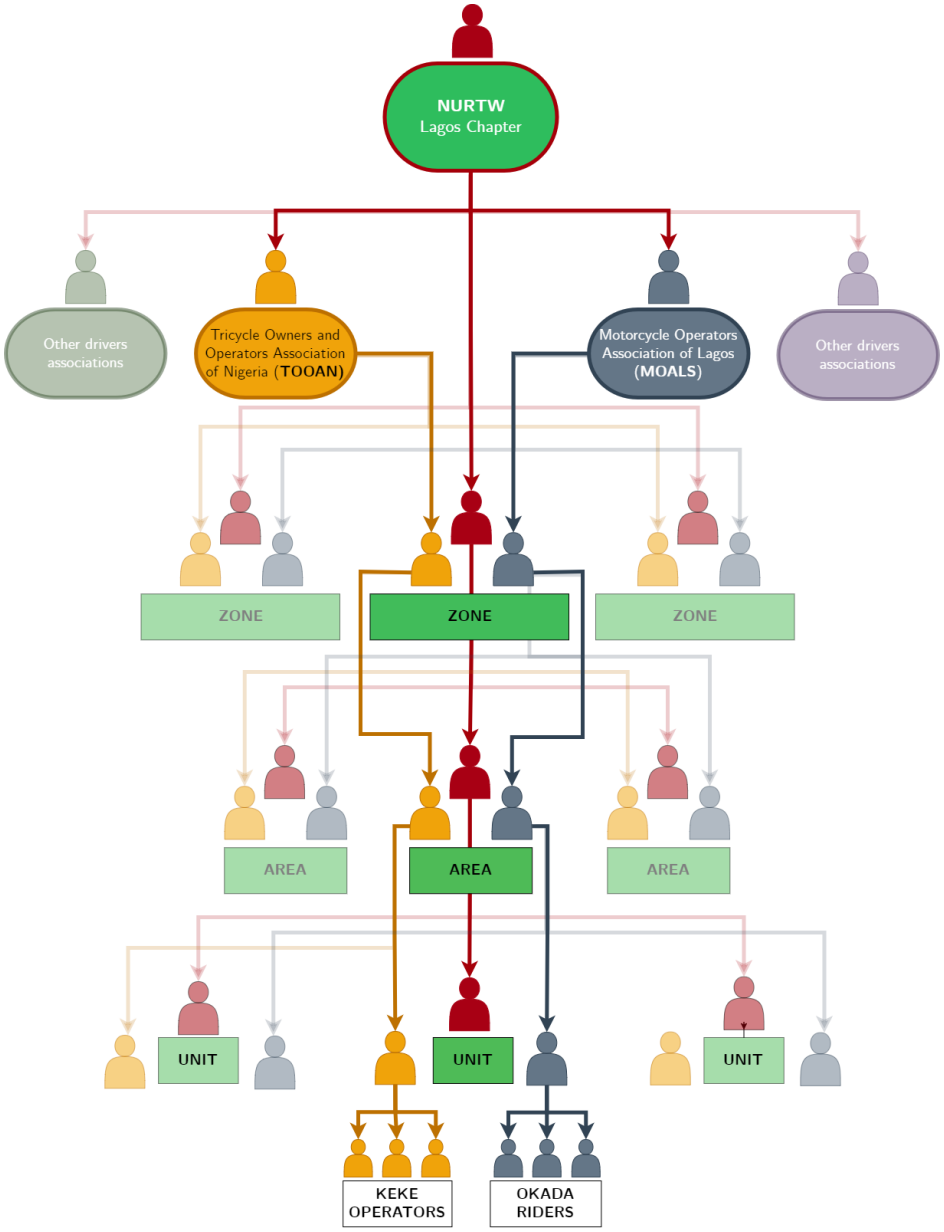


Figure B.5: Union chapter organizational chart. Each Union chapter is led by a chairman, who resides over zonal chairmen of both the parent organization (NURTW) and sub-unions (TOOAN, MOALS). Zonal chairmen exert authority over 'area' chairmen, and area chairmen over 'unit' chairmen, who rule a particular junction, intersection, or park.

B.5 Okada and bans within and beyond Lagos

B.5.1 Okada riding and riders Okada riders in Lagos are often from the north of the country. After the ban's enforcement was announced, a Hausa[62] leader in Lagos threatened that the APC might lose the Hausa vote after the ban; but the low official reports of Hausa populations in Lagos mean that this population is likely underrepresented among voting Lagosians.

Okada are often viewed with hostility by Lagosians and associated with crime in general, and sometimes jihadist violence in the north. In the recent 2023 election, it was big news when one newly elected member of the parliament admitted during his campaign that he had at one point been 'an okada man.' Many Lagosians I spoke to claimed that the okada riders are "not even Nigerians," but foreigners from Niger and the Sahel who fled past Nigeria's porous borders to make their way to Lagos.[63] It is all but impossible to verify this claim. Nevertheless, its omnipresence speaks to the general disdain the riders face from the population they serve.

Typically, okada operators do not own the bikes they ride, but instead borrow in exchange for a portion of their daily earnings. The various fees associated with moving throughout the city mean that okada riders make a meager living, and are offered no social protection or security. In general, their wages by the end of the day will last them only that day.[64]

B.5.2 Banning okada Okada bans are not unique to Lagos; other states in Nigeria have adopted or considered adopting similar bans. Okada bans began in the north, as motorbikes were a key means of transport for early members of Boko Haram. This association is part of the reason okada riders in the South are sometimes associated with the group. Okada bans have been experimented with in Lagos in particular multiple times. The most recent ban was enacted by Lagos Governor Ambode in 2018 as part of his ambitious transport sector reform law pursued in order to regain state

[62] As detailed earlier, Hausa is one of the main ethnicities of individuals in Northern Nigeria in particular, along with Fulani. Many transport operators in general, and okada riders in particular, are Hausa or Fulani and come from the North of the country.

[63] Interviews with author; including on June 14, 2023

[64] Interviews with author, including July 7, 2023

control of the industry after union assassinations disrupted the city for several days.

The current ban being enforced is this 2018 ban. However, not all areas covered by the original ban are being enforced. See Figure B.6 for examples of ITE areas for the current ban.

Examples of enforced areas announced by Lagos State Government 2022

Agege Motor Road/Oshodi Loop, Oshodi, Ikeja/Mushin Local Government
Mushin/Isolo Link Bridge, Mushin Oshodi Local Government
Dorman Long Bridge Surulere/Lagos Mainland Local Government
Ojuelegba Bridge, Surulere/Lagos Mainland Local Government
National Stadium Flyover, Surulere Local Government
Iganmu/Funsho Williams Bridge Surulere Local Government

Figure B.6: Selection of ITE areas

C DATA APPENDIX

C.1 Transport Operators Union Tracking (TOUT) data

Searching online archives of mostly English-language Nigerian daily newspapers over the past decades, as well as social media content, official press releases and documents, and other archival and primary material; I collect over 2,500 articles and reports regarding the politics of the Union and its allies, and hundreds more pieces of primary material and documentary evidence. Using these sources, I build a localized event and network dataset for Lagos, which combines and links information on hundreds of relevant actors, places, and events, covering both recent internal political dynamics of the union and events such as passage and enforcement of the okada ban, protests by vehicle operators, battles between rival union factions, and interpersonal rivalries and relationships. These data allow me to analyze trends in the political dynamics between the union, the Lagos State Government, and informal commercial transport operators qualitatively.

A number of major newspapers, especially Nigerian dailies, were used in the construction of this dataset. These include (but are not limited to): *PM News, This Day, Daily Independent, The Nation, The Will, The Punch, The Nation, Nigerian Trbune, Weekly Trust, International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), Naija News, Daily Post, Times Watch, The Guardian, Sahara Reporters, TBI Africa, The Independent, The Premium Times, Peoples Gazette, Foundation for Investigative Journalism, Vanguard, The Daily Trust, News Agency of Nigeria, The Guild, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, and *Echo News*. A selection of old newspapers before their digital publication were accessed via `https://archivi.ng/`, a non-profit dedicated to digitizing Nigerian newspapers. Many sources were obtained through targeted boolean searches on LexisNexis.[65] Others were provided by interview subjects or obtained during fieldwork, such as videos or photographs of union attacks on transport operators, or tickets provided to operators from the union. I also obtained some data from social media posts by both the union's official social

[65] E.g., `‘‘lagos’’ AND ‘‘okada’’ OR ’’motorbike‘‘ OR ‘‘motorcycle’’`

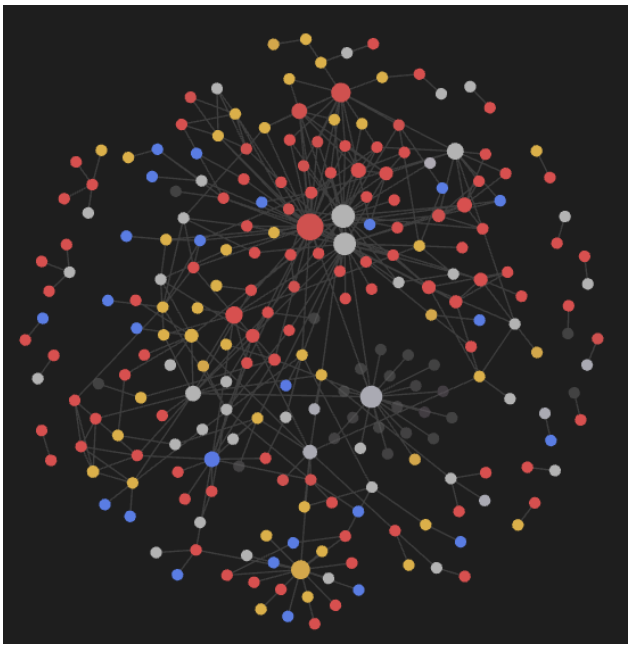


Figure C.1: A section of the networked TOUT dataset. Yellow dots represent events; blue places; red people; and white, groups.

media channels and from Union leadership; including through occasional live-streamed meetings and ceremonies for which I was in (virtual) attendance.

C.2 Interviews and fieldwork data

Qualitative interviews about the political geography of Lagos lend sharp focus to the data described in the main text. Beyond that, interviews allow me to ask affected actors directly about their preferences, concerns, and perceptions surrounding the ban and traffic politics in Lagos in general. Interviews come from directly contacting relevant individuals via email, WhatsApp, and other means; as well as from interacting with individuals over the course of their day-to-day life. My time in Lagos yielded hundreds of anecdotes and observations, as well as informal conversations with scores of individuals affected by the okada ban and transport issues more broadly in Lagos, from commuters at bus stops to traffic enforcement officials at intersections.

Many of my most meaningful conversations were with drivers as we were in transit, whether to the local supermarket or to a far-flung motorpark. My sampling strategy for participant observation was partly based on convenience—where I believed I could safely go, or had a connection—but purposefully spanned the entire geography of Lagos, from the northern border with Ogun state, to the marina on the Gulf of Guinea, and from Ikorodu in the far northeast of the city to Badagry in the far southwest.

C.3 Remote-sensed data

C.3.1 Imagery details I purchased VHR satellite images as listed in Table C.1.

Image	Area	Satellite	Date
1	Area 1	WV3	2022-06-13
2	Area 1	WV3	2023-03-24
3	Area 1	WV2 HD	2023-01-04
4	Area 1	PNEO	2023-12-18
5	Area 1	WV3	2022-04-30
6	Area 1	WV3	2021-05-23
7	Area 2	WV2 HD	2023-02-2
8	Area 2	WV3	2023-03-24
9	Area 2	WV3	2023-03-17
10	Area 2	PNEO	2022-06-02
11	Area 2	WV3	2021-05-23
12	Area 2	PNEO	2023-12-13
13	Area 2	PNEO	2023-06-25
14	Area 2	PNEO	2023-04-20

Table C.1: Satellite images obtained (as of August 2025). Eight additional images are pending processing and analysis.

The majority of the images are less than 5% obscured by cloud cover; a few outlier images have higher cloud cover. These images are included, despite some missing data, because of other key features such as the date they were collected. In analyses, I drop any road segments where there is significant cloud cover. All images have 30cm spatial resolution either at baseline or after HD enhancement.

C.3.2 Manual coding procedure Counting motorcycles on the road is a challenging exercise. There are several things I do to make sure that, in initial manual coding, we limit both 'Type I' and 'Type II' errors in identification.

First, okada are on the roads and just off them, limiting the coding scope to only to road segments rather than the whole image. Moreover, the size of the features is key. The typical motorcycle in Nigeria measures measures 2-3m long. Given that the images pictured are 30cm per pixel,

the okada objects are roughly 6 pixels long. This distinguishes okada from other 'dots on the road.' Additionally, other vehicles in the motorpark are all larger and more easily identified. The comparison helps clarify which features are indeed okada as opposed to other modes of informal transit potentially located in the same area.

Additionally, fieldwork participant observation provided me with on-the-ground information about how okada riders position themselves around the road network, and where in specific areas the 'okada zone' is. Okada often form distinctive 'clumps' in particular areas of the road, including along highway dividers and at intersections. These qualities help distinguish features that are likely okada during manual coding, from other features likely not okada. Okada also are common around areas with other types of informal transport, such as minibuses and keke, which are easier to spot—being larger, and bright yellow. I use this hand-coded dataset to train a computer vision model to conduct object-based image recognition of motorcycles in the rest of the images.

C.3.3 Computer vision I adapt a computer vision model to recognize features as okada automatically based on the training set manually coded above.

First, I take my road network dataset, which as described in Section 5 consists of Open Street Map data separated into road segments according to junctions in the road. I 'buffer' this line data into polygons, meaning that each road segment 'edge' becomes a polygon which spans five meters out each side of the road. This represents a pre-processing segmentation step, to avoid difficulties that can arise from models incorrectly placing okada on areas that are not roads. Because okada are so small and coding them is such a context-dependent procedure—they look at first glance like ants on the road—this step is necessary for ensuring that other similar shapes in the satellite imagery are not falsely coded as okada despite not being on road segments. I then overlay these polygons on satellite imagery. Purchased satellite imagery are in 'raster' format, meaning they are detailed geo-coded mosaic images with several 'bands' merged together to create an image. I take these images and split them into smaller individual images, each associated with a specific road segment. These steps are all done in ArcGIS with ArcPy python code. Each of these individual

images represent then a (literal) snapshot of a particular road segment on the date the satellite image was taken.

Second, using Label Studio, an open-source image annotation software, I manually circle okada on a sample of the road segments collected. I use this manually coded sample to train a detectron2 model to code the rest of the road segment images for that date. Because each satellite image has different qualities, including different times, reflectance, and resolution, images have slightly different qualities which may affect the model's ability to interpret the image. All satellite analysis includes image/date fixed effects to account for any differences that arise in this regard. .

C.4 Road network data

C.4.1 Constructing the road network I take data from Open Street Maps (OSM) open source geospatial road data, and transform these data into a road network.[66] OSM data provide information on the geography of roads of all types – from major highways to tertiary trails and footpaths – in the form of spatial files of polyline data, one line (row) for each road. OSM also provides information about each road, including classifications according to road type (primary, footway, path, motorway, etc.), road name, and other characteristics, including whether the road is a tunnel or a bridge, and whether traffic is bidirectional or one-way.

I utilize these latter three characteristics in particular to construct a spatial road network.[67] Namely, I abstract the map of roads in Lagos into a network of edges, representing the roads themselves, which are connected by nodes – in this case, placeholders for intersections and the ends and beginnings of particular streets. The network is determined entirely by geospatial characteristics: that is, the length of a road 'edge' between two intersection 'nodes' is simply the length of the road. Figure C.2 illustrates this process of segmenting the Lagos road network into edges and nodes.

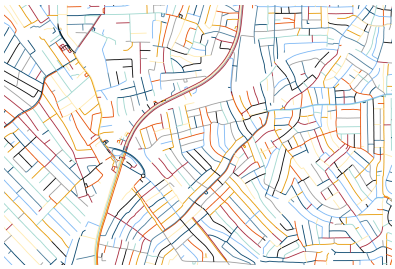
However, the process of transforming OSM data into a network requires several discrete steps. Simply taking OSM data as they are and segmenting each road, at every place where they intersect or overlap, is insufficient. To see why, Figure C.3a shows this same 10km^2 OSM data displayed in Figure C.2, overlaid on a graphical representation of this road network. For the sake of clarity, the second image zooms in further, to one particular intersection in mainland Lagos.

A naive division of the road data into edges and nodes would split roads at every location they

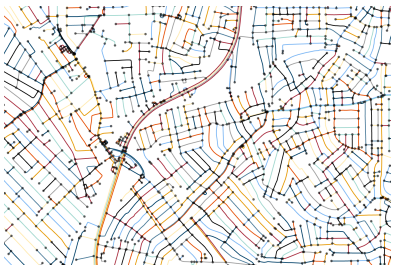
[66] The building process is adapted from Karduni, Kermanshah and Derrible (2016)'s protocol in ArcGIS which creates an arc.py network dataset based on OSM street data.

[67] By 'road network,' I mean an abstraction of the road polylines into 'edges,' connected to each other through 'nodes.' In a traditional network (or 'graph') set-up, nodes are objects of interest – for example, members of a community – and edges are connections between nodes – for example, relationships between community members. Both nodes and edges have characteristics which can be analyzed. For example, the edge between the nodes representing a parent *A* and child *B* might be short, indicating a very close relationship; while the edge between *A* and the local banker *C* might be longer, indicating a more distant connection. Nodes can also be connected to each other through other nodes; that is, the relationship between *A* and a second cousin *D* passes through another node: a shared great grandparent. Of course, networks are not always between people, and in what follows, the network I construct and examine is a spatial one.

(a) Road data, features abstracted, containing a multitude of separate roads connected through intersections.



(b) This same road data, where separate roads are differently colored. Each separate road segment represents an 'edge.'



(c) This same road data where 'nodes' are added for each location where edges start, end, or intersect with each other.

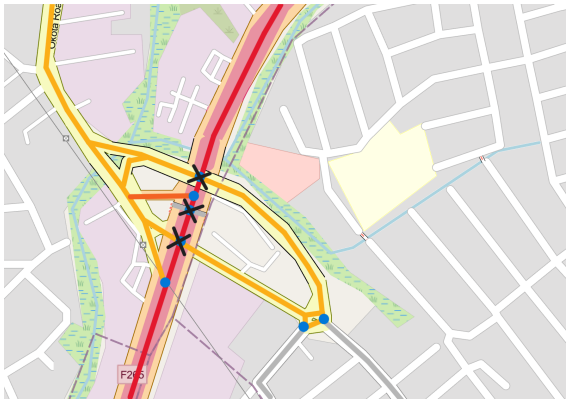
Figure C.2: Random selection of OSM road data in Lagos, Nigeria (roughly 10km^2), through the process of being constructed into a road network.

intersect with other roads. Figure C.3b shows the results of such a naive division, with nodes drawn in blue. Such a division presents problems for analysis (Karduni, Kermanshah and Derrible, 2016). For example, take the node drawn furthest to top the top of the figure, drawn at the intersection between the yellow road and the red road. If abstracted into a network, the creation of this node would artificially create a connection between the red and yellow roads at this point, allowing travel on the network directly from the yellow road to the red road at this points. Figure C.3c shows this example, where the black line with arrows demonstrates how a traveler along the network could move between the roads at this node. In reality, a traveler along the network could not pursue the route represented in C.3c without jumping off the yellow bridge, and onto the red road below. This node therefore falsely creates a direct path between these roads when in fact, none exist. In reality, a traveler would have to take a much more roundabout route in order to move from this node on the yellow bridge, to the red road below. C.3d $\times$s out these types of nodes, which are inappropriately created at several points. As such, transforming OSM data into a road network requires differentiating between genuine intersections in which roads are connected to each other, and 'false' intersections. Like Karduni, Kermanshah and Derrible (2016) I separate OSM data according to road classifications as bridges and tunnels. I then transform each class of road into nodes and edges separately, before combining (based on OSM locally-constructed 'layer' data to

(a) Lagos roads with OSM basemap, zoomed in to one intersection.

(b) Roads marked with where they intersect other roads (marked with blue dots)

(c) Example route if considering all intersections (blue dots) as 'nodes' in the road network



(d) Intersections (blue dots) *x*ed out if they should not be considered 'nodes' in the road network.

Figure C.3: Combining roads into a network

ensure only genuine intersections) into one interconnected network dataset, resulting in a network which does not include such 'false intersections.'

I also take into account one-way streets. Networks can be either 'directed' or 'undirected': 'Undirected' networks imply that edges between nodes operate in both directions, and that a traveler along the network can move from point A to point B via the same route as from point B to point A, while 'directed' networks imply that each edge has a start node and an end node, and cannot be traversed in the opposite direction. Road networks are by their nature, complex, containing both directed edges (namely, one-way streets) and undirected (two-way). I take this complexity

into account by duplicating all edges that represent two-way streets, reversing start and end nodes, allowing for the creation of a 'directed' graph in which bidirectional travel is allowed for two-way roads through the creation of pairs of edges.

C.4.2 Road network randomization My measurement strategy calculates the change in routes along the road network between pairs of points before and after the okada ban, if simulating shortest distances between these points. I propose that the ban will displace riders from non-motorpark areas to motorparks, as well as curtail freedom of movement generally and increase the cost of the average ride. I pursue measurement in several steps.

The first step is to establish baseline routes undertaken by okada riders before the ban. To this end, I select a random pair of discrete points from a uniform distribution along the road network, simply meaning that every point on the road network has equal chance of being selected. This initial uniform distribution assumption is not necessarily problematic; indeed, one of the points of okada is that they were commonly available all over the city to go all sorts of distances. However, additional sets of simulations relax this uniformity assumption in order to more closely mimic actual traffic and travel throughout Lagos (see SI §

These points represent a potential 'start point' (i) and 'end point' (k) of an okada's journey, between which okada riders may be hired to take passengers. I utilize network analysis tools to evaluate the shortest path[68] that can be taken between each of these start and end points for an okada rider along the road network. I calculate the *cost* of each route, a function of both the length in meters of the route, and the number of motorparks passed, as demonstrated below in Equation (1):

$$\text{Cost}_{i,k}^{pre} = \min_{P \in \mathscr{P}_{i,k}} \left(\sum_{e \in P} \ell(e) \times r + \sum_{e \in P \cap m} f \right) \tag{1}$$

Here, $\text{Cost}_{i,k}$ is the cost of traversing from point i to point k and $\mathscr{P}_{i,k}$ represents the set of all possible paths between point i and point k, where each path $\mathscr{P}$ is made up of multiple edges e. $\ell(e)$

[68] Specifically, I use `shortest paths` and `distances` functions from R package `igraph`.

is the length, in meters, of a given edge. Simply, the formula clarifies that the *cost* of a journey from point i to point k on the road network is the path which minimizes the length of the edges traversed. An assumption here is that the cost to an okada rider of a particular route determined by how far they have to travel along the road network. This cost-per-kilometer is represented by 'rate' variable r. If $e \in m$, this simply means that that edge houses a motorpark. For every edge which passes a motorpark in a given path P, an extra cost is incurred represented by 'fee' variable f. Based on extensive interviews with okada riders, as well as rides on okada, I estimate the approximate cost-per-kilometer traveled r at NGN (₦) 100. As of 23 April 2023 the exchange rate was approximately NGN 1,282.00 to USD 1.00. While the price of tickets f also vary over time, interviews suggest they seem to hover around NGN 500 per motorpark. This allows me to take into account the incentive okada riders have to avoid passage through motorparks, even if they lie on the shortest possible route between points.

The second step of my analysis takes explicit account of the okada ban. I rerun shortest distance calculations between these same random points i and k; however this time I account for areas which are enforced during the course of the ban. Equation (2) simply states that in calculating the shortest possible path between points i,k after the ban, I discard paths in which any edges e are in the set b, where b is enforced areas ($e \notin b$).

$$\text{Cost}_{i,k}^{post} = \min_{P \in \mathscr{P}_{i,k}} \left\{ \left(\sum_{e \in P} \ell(e) \times r + \sum_{e \in P \cap m} f \right) : e \notin b \, \forall e \in P \right\} \tag{2}$$

Finally, I count the number of motorparks passed for each route i,k as demonstrated in (3).

$$\text{Count}_{i,k}^{pre(post)}(m) = \min_{P \in \mathscr{P}_{i,k}} \left(\sum_{e \in P \cap m} 1 \right) \tag{3}$$

I conduct the above analysis across 30,000 simulated routes between different start and end points on the road network of Lagos, which allows me to compare several telling route characteristics between the period prior to and after the okada ban enforcement. Most simply, I can calculate

the cost of the okada ban for riders, represented by (4), by simply taking the difference between the costs after the ban and the costs before the ban. This takes into account both the extra cost of additional motorpark tickets incurred by riders, and the extra mileage required to circumvent enforced areas.

$$\text{Cost of Okada Ban} = \sum_{i,k} \left(\text{Cost}_{i,k}^{post} - \text{Cost}_{i,k}^{pre} \right) \tag{4}$$

More precisely related to my hypothesis, I calculate the difference in the number of motorparks passed post-ban from pre-ban (Equation (5)), as well as the share of all shortest routes between all points i,k that pass at least one motorpark before and after the ban enforcement (Equation (6)).

$$\text{Difference in motorparks passed after ban} m = \sum_{i,k} \left(\text{Count}_{i,k}^{post}(m) - \text{Count}_{i,k}^{pre}(m) \right) \tag{5}$$

$$\text{Prop}^{pre(post)} = \frac{\sum_{i,k} \min_{P \in \mathscr{P}_{i,k}} \left(\mathbf{1}_{\{|P \cap m| > 0\}} \right)}{\sum_{i,k} 1} \tag{6}$$

I also provide additional descriptive statistics, including the number of routes displaced entirely by ban enforcement (i.e., a start and end point which one cannot travel between without passing an enforced area), and geographic displacement of riders.

C.4.3 Constructing counterfactuals I complete these simulations using the actual locations of the okada ban, allowing me to compute the ultimate effects of selective enforcement on okada rider welfare and union profit. However, these results do not necessarily imply that the areas of okada ban enforcement were selected *in order to* benefit the union; it is possible that any positive results for the union are an incidental consequence of enforcement locations that were chosen for other reasons. Along with other tests for possible alternative explanations, I guard against this possibility by re-running this road network analysis, substituting for actual enforcement areas *hypothetical* possible locations of enforcement.

More precisely, I select (for each iteration) the top 50 areas on the road network in which the okada ban could have been – but was not – enforced. I then re-run the above analysis *as if* these areas were those enforced, in order to see whether other areas of enforcement result in the same effects on okada riders. This allows me to calculate whether the areas in which the ban was *actually* enforced *uniquely* benefit the union, compared to other hypothetical enforcement areas. This approach is analogous to one of 'randomization inference,' in which hypothetical treatment assignments are systematically shuffled among all units in a study to robustly assess the causal impact of the actual treatment. This technique helps in isolating the unique contribution of the treatment by comparing outcomes under real and randomized enforcement scenarios, thereby enhancing the validity of the inferences drawn from the analysis.

One valid concern is whether this exercise—a complicated technical endeavor—is really representative of the decision-making process of state agents when working through the okada ban. Certainly I do not expect that lawmakers utilized this exact method to decide where to enforce the ban. Indeed; I do not even claim that such considerations were the *only* reasons for the particular areas chosen by the state. And despite my interviews with state agents and transportation officials, I do not have 'smoking gun' evidence from individuals involved that this was the logic they followed—nor did I expect to receive such confirmation, even from officials speaking to me off the record. Such a statement would be tantamount to admitting the power the Union holds over operational decision-making by the state. Instead, my contention is that state agents considered a variety of factors, including the presence of motorparks, in deciding where and where not to enforce the okada ban. It also doesn't take as much computational power to construct enforcement patterns that have this effect as one might expect. Most motorparks are located off highways, including underneath major bridges and intersections, on parallel thoroughfares and following off-ramps from major roads. Banning okada primarily on a given bridge, for example, which has a motorpark beneath it, will obviously push riders from that bridge to the parallel side-street on which motorparks are located.

C.5 Additional datasets

C.5.1 Polling-unit level election data I use a sample of polling-unit level election results from the 2023 Presidential and Gubernatorial elections in Lagos to show how the Union increased election interference after facing its dissatisfied patron; resulting in differentially higher vote shares for the APC during the Gubernatorial election in areas closest to Union territory.

Election results in Nigeria are collated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The 2023 elections introduced new technology to that data collation process. In particular, INEC introduced a system by which individual polling stations (of which there are only 13,000 in Lagos alone) could upload signed PDFs of the final vote tallies for that polling station, which were read in using OCR and collated automatically.

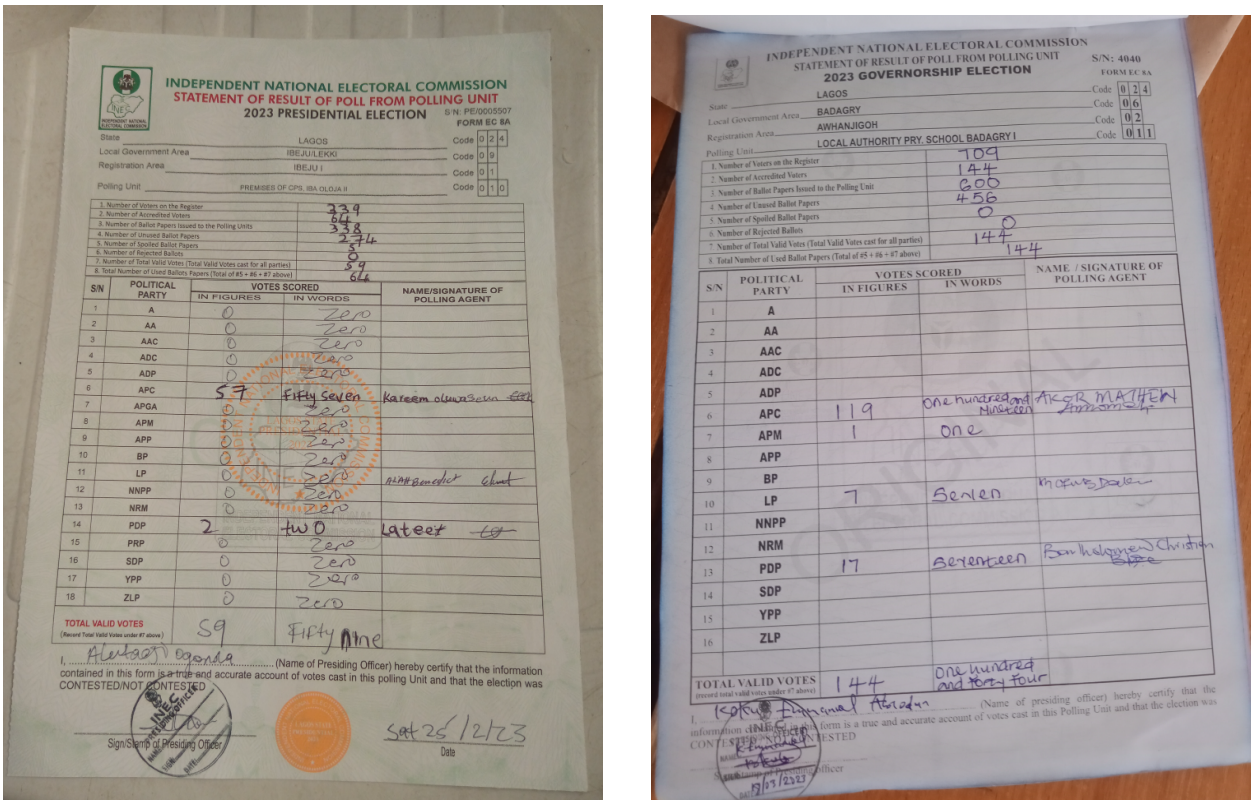


Figure C.4: Example of polling unit-level results

These original PDF receipts were accessible to the public and to INEC commissioners. As

with any new technological rollout, there were extensive issues during the Presidential election in January 2023 and afterwards, and all polling-unit result reports have been sine rendered publicly inaccessible on INEC's website. Election observers and eager citizens did a great deal of work in the aftermath of the Presidential election in January to collate polling-unit observations for the election; and in many previously uploaded polling-unit level PDFs are available through internet archives.

However, polling unit-level data on Lagos governorship election, which took place on March 18 2023, are more difficult to access comprehensively. While some images appear to have been captured by web crawlers from original uploads, no systematic collection seems to exist. I therefore resort to idiosyncratic collection of governorship election results for those polling units I can find online. This includes collection through internet archives, cached pages, old news reports, and social media for any images portraying polling-unit level results. I find polling unit level results for roughtly 150 polling units , across every local government area in Lagos and almost 70 separate voting wards. I compare these to the polling-unit level results from the Presidential race a month earlier. I add polling station information (and results) to the Lagos road network dataset described above.

C.5.2 Twitter traffic data These are real-time reports on traffic incidents and actor presence through geo-coded text from the tweets of Lagos Traffic Radio, 96.1 FM in the Lagos metropolitan area. The station began broadcasting in 2012—the first radio station of its kind in West Africa—with the intention of alleviating heavy road congestion and expanding access to traffic updates to commuters across the state. As of 2020, the station began utilizing a Twitter handle in which it tweeted dozens of times per day with specific information about traffic, impediments, and presence on Lagos roadways.[69] I scraped this data to create a universe of traffic-related incidents and reports on Lagos roadways from 2020 through 2023. I match phrases and terms in these time-stamped tweets with geo-located features and roads in Lagos. These data also provide a way to measure which

[69] See `https://x.com/lagostraffic961?lang=en`

roads and areas are most densely frequented by commuters, and other tweet-level information—such as reporting an accident involving okada riders—provides information on actor presence across the Lagos road network.

C.5.3 Income levels Income levels are approximated using remote-sensed nightlight data. I use the VIIRS (Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite) nighttime lights dataset, produced by the Earth Observation Group at NOAA/NGDC. These data provide monthly composites of light intensity at the 15 arc-second (approx. 500m) grid-cell level, which are widely used as a proxy for local economic activity and household income. See `https://eogdata.mines.edu/nighttime_light/`.

C.5.4 Pollution Pollution is measured at the $0.25^\circ \times 0.25^\circ$ grid-cell level using NASAâs Global Annual $PM_{2.5}$ Surface dataset, which provides satellite-derived estimates of fine particulate matter concentrations worldwide. These data combine remote sensing with chemical transport models and ground-based observations. See `https://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/data/set/sdei-global-annual-gwr-pm2-5-modis-misr-seawifs-aod`.

C.5.5 Okada density Pre-enforcement okada density is measured by averaging the presence of okada (motorcycle taxis) per road segment in Lagos before the ban. Counts are derived from very high-resolution (VHR) satellite imagery (e.g., Airbus Pleiades Neo, Maxar WorldView-3). These are measured at the road-segment level along Lagosâs network. These data are described in detail in SI §C.3.

C.5.6 Informality I use Google Street View data to measure informal markets along Lagos roadways as a proxy for local informality. Street View provides ground-level panoramic images collected by Google mapping vehicles. Coverage in Lagos is incomplete and temporally uneven, but many areas have imagery across multiple years. I train a computer vision model to detect informal marketplaces, roadside stands, and transport activity from these images. There are advantages and disadvantages to Streetview data as a source. For one, Streetview requires Google staff to drive

a car with a camera down every road, recording panorama images as it goes. This requires that Google's vehicle can make it down the road; and that conditions are such that this is reasonably possible. This eliminates some roads non-randomly from the sample; namely those which are smaller, in worse repair, or peripheral. Moreover, in part due to these restrictive scope conditions, Google Streetview routes are not recorded often. Most locations in Lagos have at least two or three images associated from them, as much as ten years apart. While the data is rich in terms of spatial granularity; it is sparse temporally. What Streetview fails to provide in terms of comprehensiveness, it makes up for in the richness of data it can provide at a hyper-granular spatial unit of analysis. Seehttps://www.google.com/streetview/.

C.5.7 Political violence Political violence data come from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). I use the Nigeria country file, subset to events with precise geographic coordinates. I include all types of political violence and protest, aggregated to the $0.25^{\circ} \times 0.25^{\circ}$ grid-cell level over time. See https://acleddata.com/.

C.5.8 Police Stations Geolocated data on police stations are sourced from OpenStreetMapâs "Points of Interest" (POI) dataset. These data include tagged facilities such as police stations and posts, measured at the facility level with lat/long coordinates. See https://www.openstreetmap.org/.

C.5.9 Schools Geolocated data on schools come from the World Bank's Nigeria Education Management Information System (EMIS) and harmonized global datasets such as the Global Education Facilities (GED) database hosted by the Humanitarian Data Exchange. These provide lat/long coordinates of primary and secondary schools across Nigeria. See https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search/dataset/0039597 and https://data.humdata.org/dataset/global-school-locations.

D ANALYSIS APPENDIX

D.1 Characteristics and Correlations

Figure D.1 shows correlations between a road segment characteristics. All correlations are close to zero, indicating weak *linear* relationships between variables.

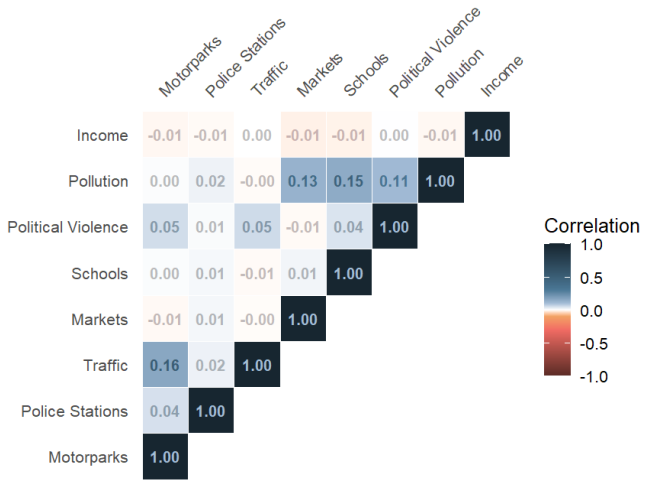


Figure D.1: Correlations between road segment characteristics

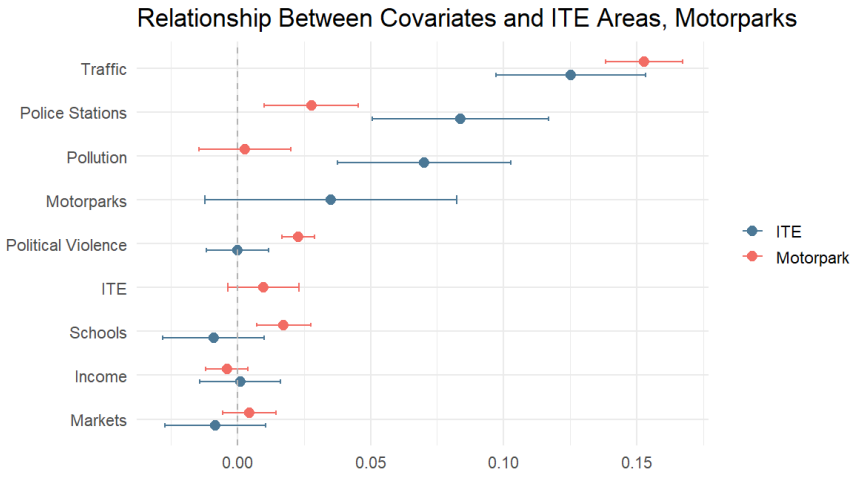


Figure D.2: Coefficients of random effects OLS models regressing variable (Y-axis) on either Motorpark presence (red) or classification as an ITE area (blue). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

D.2 Enforcement analysis

D.2.1 Covariate interactions

Table D.1: Effect heterogeneity by covariates

	Okada Count							
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Post × Police Station	−1.26							
	(0.75)							
Inter Elec × Police Station		−0.79						
		(0.77)						
Post × Market			0.09					
			(0.39)					
Inter Elec × Market				−0.44				
				(0.63)				
Post × Political violence					0.59			
					(0.36)			
Inter Elec × Political Violence						0.10		
						(0.19)		
Post × Traffic							−0.21	
							(0.68)	
Inter Elec × Traffic								−2.95
								(1.75)
Num. obs.	29061	21714	29061	21714	29061	21714	29061	21714
Road Segment FE	7375	7251	7375	7251	7375	7251	7375	7251
Time period FE	12	9	12	9	12	9	12	9
Grid square linear time trend	1139	837	1139	837	1139	837	1139	837
Grid square quadratic time trend	1139	837	1139	837	1139	837	1139	837
Weekend × Road class	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
R^2 (full model)	0.65	0.71	0.65	0.71	0.65	0.71	0.65	0.71
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.47	0.50	0.47	0.50	0.47	0.50	0.47	0.50

All models include segment and date fixed effects. $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{\cdot}p < 0.1$.

D.2.2 Sub-setting panel In Table D.2 I re-run analyses of the impact of the ban after dropping observations during the inter-election period. Figure D.3 then is showing a world in which the time series were not 'interrupted' by elections, which had their own temporary impact on enforcement.

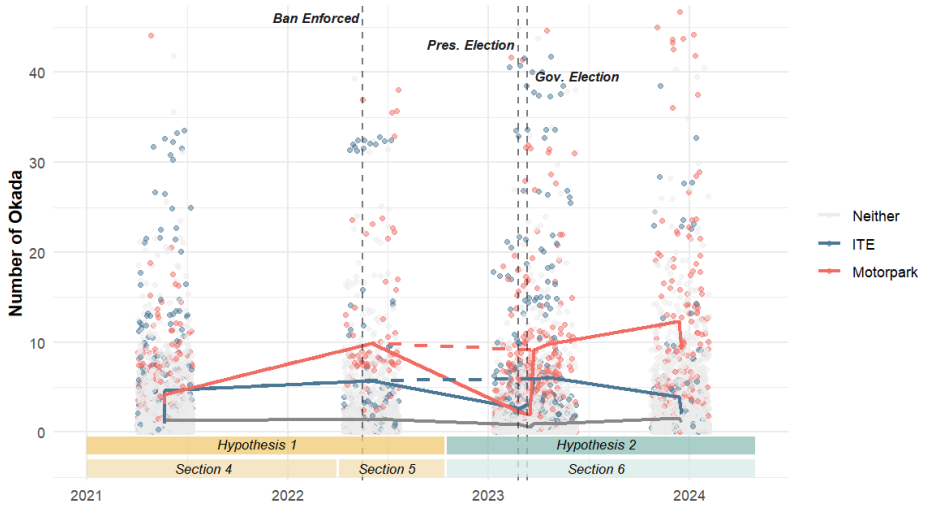


Figure D.3: Okada presence over time; dashed line is shape of trend without the election shock.

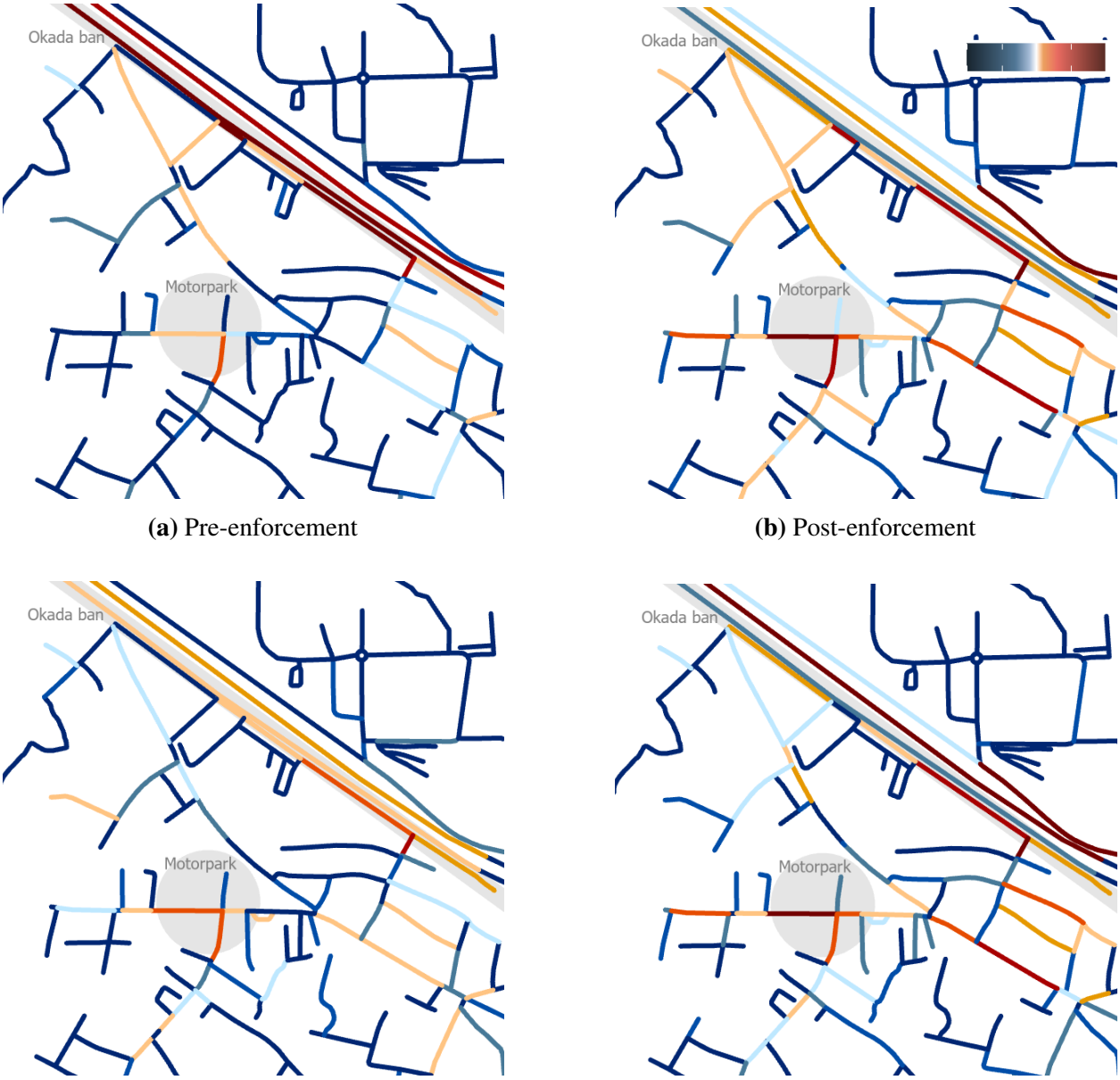
Table D.2: Full vs. subsets

	Okada Count	
	Model 1	Model 2
Post × ITE	−2.04	
	(1.25)	
Post × Motorpark		6.51***
		(1.82)
Num. obs.	22518	22518
Road segment FE	7375	7375
Time period FE	10	10
Grid square linear time trend	881	881
Grid square quadratic time trend	881	881
Weekend × Road class	30	30
R^2 (full model)	0.71	0.72
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.51	0.52

All models include segment and date fixed effects. $^{***}p < 0.001, ^{**}p < 0.01, ^{*}p < 0.05, ^{\cdot}p < 0.1$.

D.2.3 Facet by time heat map

FigureD.4 shows a slice of Lagos over time featuring both a motorpark and ITE areas. Road segments are colored by okada density.



(a) Pre-enforcement

(b) Post-enforcement

(c) Inter-election

(d) After election

Figure D.4: Heatmap of Lagos roads over time.

D.2.4 Interacting with categories Table D.3, instead of running specifications with ITE and Motorpark designations separately, I treat them as mutually exclusive groups and run a single regression. This ensures that road segments that feature a motorpark or ITE designation are not being compared to each other in estimation.

Table D.3: Heterogeneity within categorical variables

	Okada Count	
	Model 1	Model 2
ITE × Post	-1.80^{**}	
	(0.72)	
Motorpark × Post	3.99^{*}	
	(1.91)	
ITE × Inter Elec		−0.02
		(0.82)
Motorpark × Inter Elec		-8.34^{**}
		(2.70)
Segment FE	✓	✓
Time Period FE	✓	✓
Grid Linear Time Trend	✓	✓
Grid Quadratic Time Trend	✓	✓
Weekend × Road Class FE	✓	✓
R^2 (full model)	0.65	0.73
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.51	0.56

Units are individual road segments. All models include fixed effects for road segment, date, 0.25 × 0.25 degree grid-square linear and quadratic time trends, and for weekends versus weekdays which vary by class of road. Errors are clustered at the grid square and time period. $^{***}p < 0.01$,$^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

D.2.5 Alternative clustering strategies

I cluster by electoral ward and by LGA instead of by grid id.

Table D.4: Clustering by ward, LGA

	Okada Count							
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Post × ITE	-1.52^{*}				-1.78^{**}			
	(0.75)				(0.60)			
Post × Motorpark		3.62^{**}				3.84^{*}		
		(1.40)				(1.75)		
Inter-election × ITE			0.00^{***}				0.17^{***}	
			(0.00)				(0.00)	
Inter-election × Motorpark				-7.59^{***}				-8.14^{***}
				(1.06)				(1.22)
Num. obs.	29073	29073	21724	21724	29073	29073	21724	21724
Segment FE	7377	7377	7253	7253	7377	7377	7253	7253
Time period FE	12	12	9	9	12	12	9	9
LGA Linear Time Trend	32	32	21	21				
LGA Quadratic Time Trend	32	32	21	21				
Ward linear time trend					204	204	129	129
Ward quadratic time trend					204	204	129	129
Weekend× Road Class FE	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
R^2 (full model)	0.57	0.58	0.64	0.67	0.59	0.59	0.66	0.68
Adj. R^2 (full model)	0.43	0.43	0.46	0.50	0.44	0.44	0.47	0.50

Units are individual road segments. All models include fixed effects for road segment, date, 0.25 × 0.25 degree grid-square linear and quadratic time trends, and for weekends versus weekdays which vary by class of road. Errors are clustered at the grid square and time period. $^{***}p < 0.01$,$^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

D.3 Road network analysis

D.3.1 Counterfactual enforcement area analysis As described in the main text (Section 5) and elaborated in SI §C.4, I run routing simulations taking into account multiple counterfactual possible enforcement configurations, based on the purported logic of the ban. Figure D.5 illustrates the results per route traversed, compared to no ban enforcement.

D.3.2 Relaxing uniformity of routes and demand-side weighting The main road network analysis comes from analyzing routes along an origin-destination matrix where the origin and destination points on the road network are chosen uniformly, or at random. As explained in SI §C.4, this was done in order to avoid biasing route selection in any way, and is not unrealistic, as okada motorbikes are able to pick up passengers from essentially anywhere on the road network.

However, realistically there are some journeys that are more likely than others. I therefore re-run the simulations described in Section 5 and in SI §C.4.2 with points chosen not at random, but weighted based on the route's likelihood of being taken according to Lagos transport patterns. I use TomTom realtime traffic data (See SI §C) to collect information on traffic across different routes in Lagos throughout August 2024.[70] I use these data construct an origin-destination matrix of 200 Lagos regions (based on operational wards) in order to estimate how common certain trips are compared to others. Figure D.6 for example shows how commonly trips originating in Region 1 (Lagos Mainland) have a destination located in other regions of the city.

I use this information to weight the likelihood of drawing particular origin/destination pairs to construct routes for the simulations. More precisely, instead of randomly choosing a precise origin and destination point from the road network, I instead follow three steps:

1. First, I simultaneously select an origin and destination *region* according to how relatively prevalent routes between these two regions are. For example, if across all trips in August 24

[70] August 2024 was the time period for which the data are freely available from TomTom's API. Future iterations will run similar analysis based on traffic data from the pre-treatment time, if available.

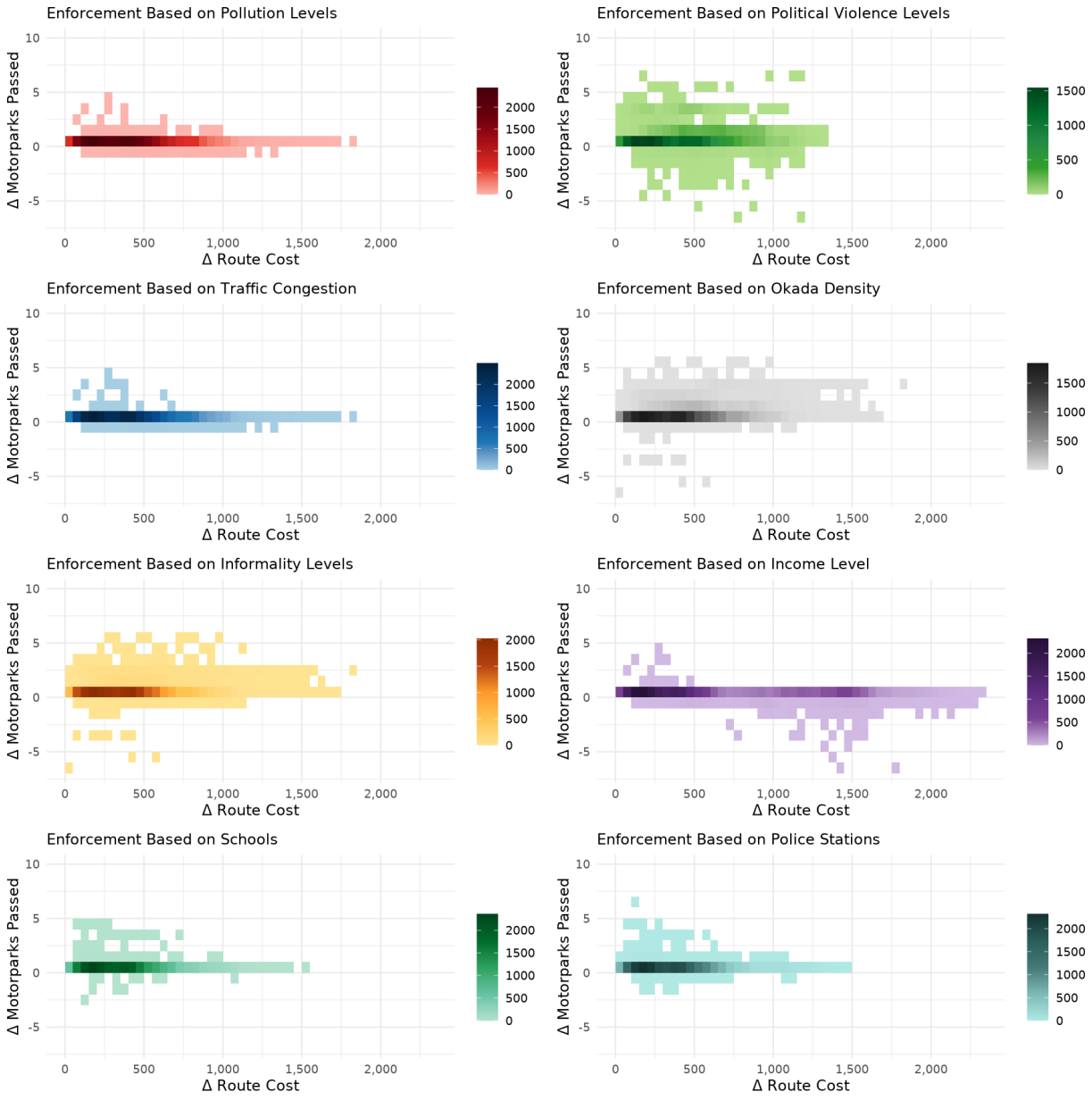


Figure D.5: Counterfactual simulations: Joint distribution of change in and motorparks passed

there was a 0.31% chance the trip was between Region 1 and Region 28, I will select the *pair* "Region 1–Region 28" with 0.31% probability.

2. Next, I randomly choose a point within the Origin region as my starting point

3. Finally, I randomly choose a point within the destination region as my endpoint

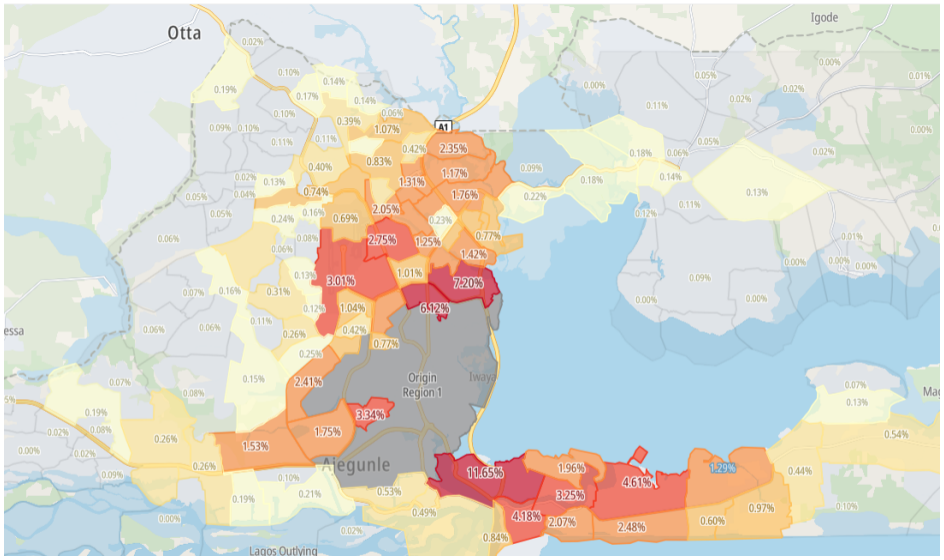


Figure D.6: Map flows from Region 1 to other regions in August, 2024. Image from TomTom.

I repeat this process 10,000 times in order to analyze whether the trends pointed out in the main text hold when accounting for these demand-side weights. I replicate Figures 7 and D.5 with these weighted data in Figure D.7. The main effect of weighting route selection by frequency is to reduce variation in the number of motorparks passed, especially in some counterfactual scenarios based on traffic congestion, pollution, and income levels. ITE areas still have by far the largest impact on number of motorparks passed.

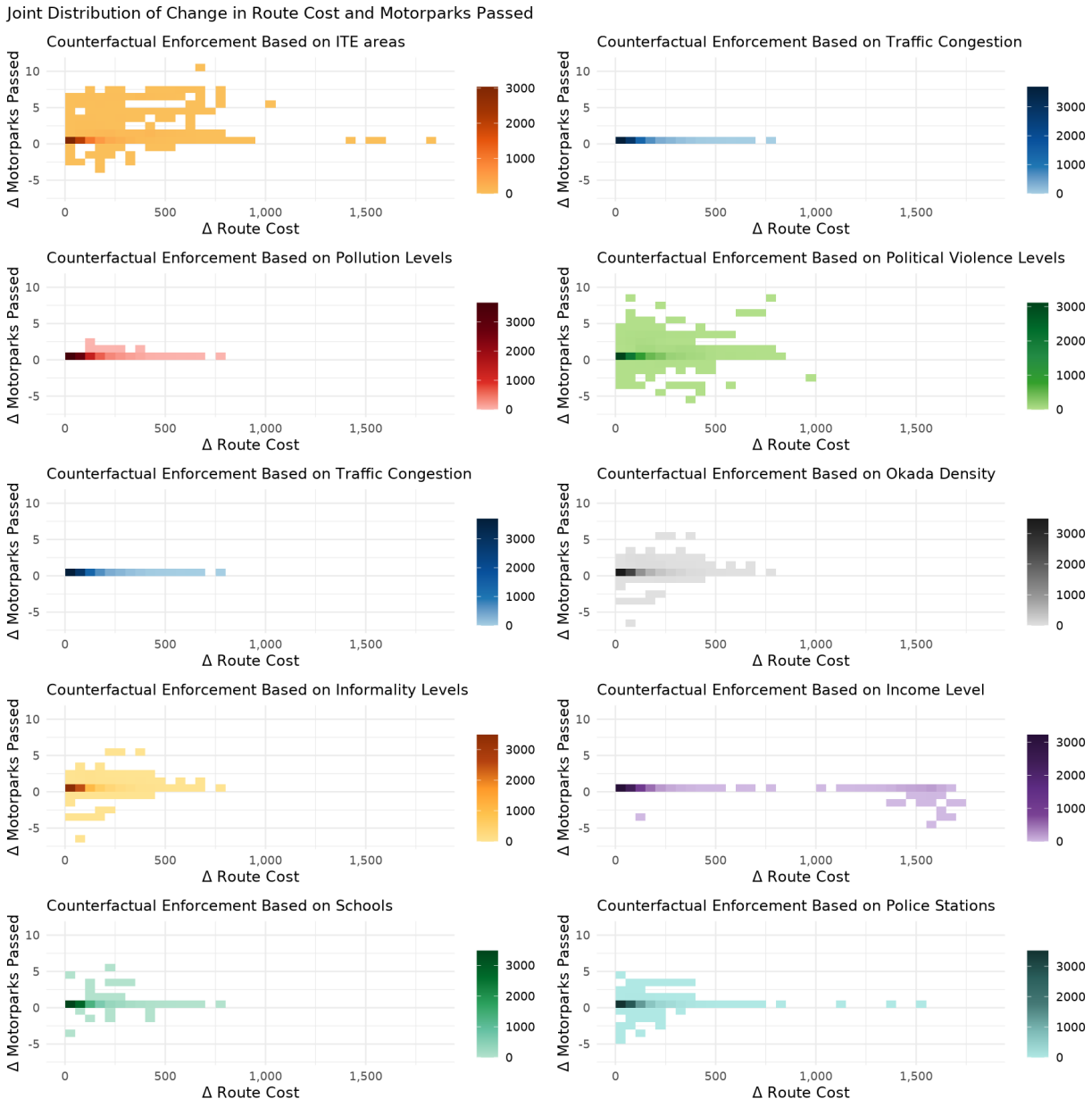


Figure D.7: Counterfactual simulations: Joint distribution of route cost and motorparks passed on 10,000 routes selected from a distribution weighted by route frequency according to traffic patterns

D.4 Election analysis

I also analyze changing electoral patterns across Lagos across two elections in February and March 2023: for President of Nigeria, and for Governor of Lagos. To do so, I rely on polling-unit level election results in the form of PDF images of handwritten result tallies for these two elections. I find polling unit level results for roughly 200 polling units, across every local government area in Lagos and almost 70 separate voting wards. I compare these to the polling-unit level results from the Presidential race a month earlier. I add polling unit results to the Lagos road network dataset described in Section 3 in the main text. I contend that this shift in enforcement patterns was a signal to the Union of the APC's dissatisfaction with its loss in Lagos's Presidential election in February. The rapidly approaching Gubernatorial elections, however, provided an opportunity for course-correction by the Union. Did they take this opportunity?

I use a small subset of polling-unit level electoral results to investigate the impact of differential electoral interference by the Union in the February vs. March elections. All election observers over the course of the elections in 2023 noted a substantial uptick in election interference—violence, ballot-box snatching, and invasion of voting places—in the Gubernatorial as opposed to the Presidential election. Consistent with this story, I see no significant relationship between votes for the most viable opposition party (Labour Party) and distance to a motorpark in the first round of presidential elections in February 2023 (Model 1 in Table D.5). Meanwhile—though statistically insignificant with $p = 0.10$ —Model 2 suggests a different relationship between the distance to a motorpark and votes for the Labour Party in the gubernatorial election. In the March election, the closer a polling unit was to a motorpark, the lower the vote count for Labour.

Finally, I estimate the relationship between a polling unit's distance to a motorpark and the difference between the total number of votes for the Labour Party candidate in the Presidential vs. the Gubernatorial races. These results indicate that as a polling unit gets further away from a motorpark, the number of votes for Labour are more consistent between the Presidential and

Gubernatorial races. Put another way, as a polling unit gets closer to a motorpark, the *difference* between the number of votes cast for the Labour Party in the Presidential vs. Gubernatorial races increases—indicating a significant reduction in Labour votes, concentrated in areas close to motorparks. This analysis corroborates an account where the Union more successfully altered voting behavior in the Gubernatorial elections, in response to backlash from its APC patrons.

Table D.5: Votes for the Labour Party in 2023 and distance to motorpark

	LP Votes (Pres Elec)	LP Votes (Gov Elec)	LP Votes (Pres - Gov)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model
Distance to Motorpark	-0.0011	0.0050	-0.0276**
	(0.0012)	(0.0030)	(0.0126)
LP Votes (Pres Elec)		0.4691***	
		(0.0233)	
Segment FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	197	197	197

Units are individual road segments. All models include segment fixed effects. Errors are clustered by 0.25^2 grid-square. $^{***}p < 0.01$,$^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.