

BOOK REVIEW

'TOO BIG. REBUILD BY DESIGN: A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE'

by *Henk Ovink and Jelte Boeijenga*

*Olabisi Kenku**

■ Too Big Rebuild By Design: A Transformative Approach to Climate Change by Henk Ovink and Jelte Boeijenga should be titled "Collaboration: A study about a country's unconventional response to a monster storm". I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book because it is about a successful venture in government. The book shows that any institution can be disrupted. With my understanding of how government works, having been a government employee for over a decade, I appreciate the difficulties that were overcome for Rebuild by Design to be successful. Ultimately, the biggest achievement was for resiliency.

Ovink, Henk, and Jelte Boeijenga.

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<https://www.naioiosellers.nl/too-big-rebuild-by-design-s-transformative-response-to-climate-change.html>



■ The book narrates the process it took to respond to Superstorm Sandy in a manner that was different from the governments standard of being reactive and rebuilding to existing, nay outdated standards. Sandy was not a standard storm and based on climate change projections, storms of this nature will potentially be more frequent and more intense. Ovink & Boeijenga provide insight into the unique governmental response to the devastating effects of the storm. The response required collaboration that crossed international waters and upended business as usual in the design, research and governmental world. Architecture and Engineering firms, design firms and research institutions were

given the right conditions to collaborate, affected communities were involved in the process from the beginning, the federal government was given access where there usually isn't, and local governments were empowered to speak the language of their constituents, resulting in a competition that birthed innovation.

At various stages, as I read the book I imagined this level of collaboration taking place in the City of Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria. Potentially innovative solutions to the myriad of problems that plague the city would abound. Lagos is the most populous city in Nigeria, and while it does not typically experience major

* **Olabisi Kenku**, Environmental Analyst at New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

storms at the scale of the hurricanes in the United States, flooding from rain events in the wet season are common because of the high percentage of impervious surface coverage area and inadequate drainage system. The region experiences two seasons, the wet season, and the dry season. As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, the intensity of the rains during the wet season will increase, resulting in significant flooding.

The United Nations has projected that 68% of the world’s population will live in urban areas by 2050 compared with 55% today; 90% of the population increase will take place in Asia and Africa. Lagos as the second most populous city in Africa after Cairo, Egypt, is bound to experience a fair amount of that population increase. The city is densely populated and experiences significant flooding which will only get worse with the effects of climate change and the influx of people to the city. In July 2017, the city experienced a severe flooding event due to a torrential downpour that went on for days. The event left residents of Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki and Ajah stranded in their homes, with some residents taking to kayaks and canoes to move about. Estimations of the cost of damage and loss were not provided but can be assumed to have been in the range of millions of dollars as this region is the financial epicenter of the country and is home to the elites.

Solving the flooding issue in Lagos has been challenging for the government. Several drainage enhancement projects have taken place but the flooding situation seems to be getting worse. A replication of the Rebuild by Designs collaborative approach could be beneficial in the region. The process of the asking the teams which comprised of design firms, researchers and Architecture and Engineering firms to research the area and then define the problem to be solved would result in solutions that unique and would have the community’s buy-in. As Dr. Judith Rodin said, “we need to think differently and we need to build processes and expertise around that more integrated way of thinking. It’s central to the future of the planet...” (Ovink & Boeijenga 2018 pp. 90, 93), therefore to be resilient, to achieve sustainability of the planet, we must collaborate to be innovative. ■

■ Stephanie Busari and Osman Mohamed Osman. (July 10, 2017). Lagos floods: Heavy rain, storms cause chaos. In CNN Africa View. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/07/09/africa/lagos-flood-storms/index.html>

■ United Nations. (May 16, 2018). News. In United Nations Department of Public Affairs. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>