



open city Lagos

Resilience

Publication & Symposium
Concept Note for 2017

Resilience / An Urban Phenomenon

The Open City Lagos 2017 Programme

1. Introduction

Open City Lagos is a project developed by the Heinrich Boll Foundation, Nigeria and Nsibidi Institute to explore perspectives and experiences of inclusion in Lagos and other cities across the globe. A city's 'openness' is considered broadly in terms of migration, mobility and access to urban services. Yet 'openness' is not just about access to the city. It also concerns itself with the degrees of responsiveness a city has to the needs and aspirations of those who live in it. As such, OCL explores the relative powers, tools and opportunities that determine a person's sustain a living, influence development and participate in public and civic life.

The key objectives of the project are:

- To explore perspectives and experiences of inclusion and responsiveness in Lagos and other cities through activities that unpack the definitions and implications of openness in a variety of urban processes with input from as broad a range of representative voices as possible
- To expand the conversation on cities, urban development and practice through dynamic, easily understood and accessible products and events, and cultivating a space where thinking and possible solutions can be shared across disciplines
- To facilitate city-to-city exchanges on topical issues and challenges facing fast-growing cities and cities in emerging economies by creating opportunities to share experiences, ideas, lessons and best practices from different parts of the region and the world

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2. Making an Impact

Open City Lagos is an innovative, multi-faceted project that brings different people and perspectives of the city together to learn and exchange ideas in an interactive way. Through multiple publications, workshops, seminars, and events, OCL has become a platform for conversations about inclusive urbanism. OCL is a way for people without professional backgrounds in urban policy or practice to engage with questions about the cities they live in, and to see themselves as active doers and influencers in its making. Since its birth in 2015, the OCL series has facilitated many encounters and exchanges through:

- **A dynamic publication put together in 2015**, with over 15 entries from scholars, activists, photographers and artists from cities around the world
- **A 2-day book launch**, featuring panel discussions, workshops and a film screening, to mark the opening of the OCL 2016 Event Series in March 2016
- **“A Woman’s World” workshop and pop-up panel**, in August and October respectively, which explored the relationship between gender and urbanism, focusing on mobility, public safety and economic empowerment
- **“The City that Prays” panel discussion** which explored the relationship between religion and urbanism in Lagos, and the issues that emerge at this intersection

Now in its third year running, the Open City Lagos shifts its conversation on cities from openness as expressed in how people experience and remake the city to the very nature and transformative capability of cities.

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3. The Year Ahead for OCL 2017

Like many fast-growing cities around the world, Lagos is faced with several daunting challenges. These range from the global forces of urbanization and climate change to more locally expressed issues of economic recession, housing and transport. The city has long grappled with such stresses and drivers of change, coping in ways that are sometimes surprising and contradictory to the conventions of today's planned city. Understanding the nature of resilience in Lagos can open up insights into approaches that work and the possibilities for a city that carries people along as it develops. Giving attention to everyday and reactionary strategies by people, businesses and institutions has great prospects for a more sustainable and inclusive governance for the city. Through a broad and interactive exploration, the OCL 2017 invites researchers, creatives and urbanists across Africa to think critically on a number of questions. How do cities like Lagos decide when and how to be resilient? How can resilience be found and learned from the everyday practices of Lagosians? In what ways are cities reluctant and 'stiff' to developments that mean well for the city? In a globally connected world, what do changes in the thought and political leadership of the West pose for African cities? How can responsiveness be built into local planning and governance such that our policies and processes will be more nuanced and effective?

'Resilience', the central theme of the upcoming year 2017, will be explored through four key areas:

- **Understanding Resilience:** Some of the best innovations have come from times of failure and challenge. This discussion explores some of the greatest risks and the challenges cities and urban communities face in current times. It also expands how we understand urban resilience by studying conditions and mechanisms at play both at the level of the city, and of collectives within the city. In what ways is the city resilient or not? What are the tensions between resilience and change? What can be learned by contrasting experiences of cities like Dhaka, Sao Paulo, New Delhi and Lagos?

“How do cities like Lagos decide when and how to be resilient? How can resilience be found and learned from the everyday practices of Lagosians? ”

- **The Future of African Cities:** The ongoing trans-European wave of migration in the light of a shrinking middle class, has come with tests to the values of multiculturalism, growing economic protectionism, and the rethinking of social welfare. While the politics and trajectory of development in Africa is not locked to the West, what do these fundamental shifts and anti-establishment sentiments mean for the future of African cities? How will local thought leadership and governance practices respond these changes? What role will homegrown strategies play in a world of increased global connectivity?

- **Social Innovation & Adaptive Design:** Whether resulting in a business idea or technology, social innovation and adaptive design reflect and influence our behavior and way of life. Here resilience picks up a new plot as the source and space for new possibilities, where creative solutions to overcome hardship and solve urban problems can be discovered and tested. What is the role of design and social innovation in African cities? How can innovation and design be used to build urban resilience? How can the design process or the use of technology help us achieve social impact and sustainable development?

- **Responsive Planning & Governance:** From where bus-stops are placed to the cost of running water, the institutions and policies that govern a city to a great degree determine what is or is not permitted, scaled up and sustained. This makes the question of whether governance responds to or embodies resilience an important but delicate one. Delicate because this deals with the distribution of powers, and important because governance cultures ultimately affect how our cities develop and sustained over time. How can we address rigidity within institutions that hold on to outdated processes, policies and thinking? What happens where more flexible bottom-up approaches meet their stoic traditions? Where are the channels and spaces for maneuver? How can city planners learn better from collective actions to solve problem at scale?



4. OCL 2017 Activities & Outputs

• Call for Contributors

We'll be issuing a call for papers, presentations and installations relating to one or more of the four sub-themes of the OCL 2017 Resilience. Submissions will be presented or exhibited as part of the mini conference (see below). Local and international contributors of various professions and disciplines are welcome.

• Mini-conference

We'll be hosting a 1-2 day event, where respondents to the call and other selected resource persons will be invited to share their knowledge and ideas through presentations and other events:

- An Interactive Workshop to explore the role and potential for social innovation and design in the city, as part of investigative, experimental and solution-oriented approaches that attempt to address the challenge of governance, service delivery or the quality of life in cities.

- A Symposium that brings together experts, researchers, students, urban practitioners, policymakers, activists and creative professionals in series of presentations and discussions. These will speak to the four sub-themes as well as respond to question of resilience more broadly.

Contributors will mainly be respondents to the call, who will be invited to share their ideas with a view to developing these as submissions for the publication.

- Outdoor activity (under consideration) – such as a transect walk, urban mapping or interactive programming that takes the conversation out into real spaces

• Publication

The second in a running OCL series, this will be an 80-150 page document, with online viewing and high-quality print edition

• PR & Public engagement

Getting the word out will be an important task for the OCL team. This includes using different platforms and channels to share announcements, articles, photographs and films produced to support OCL 2017 activities and content generated from previous years. Our focus is on broadening the conversation and facilitating exchanges beyond OCL events.

5. Core Project Partners

Nsibidi Institute is an independent research organization uniquely positioned to build local research capacity, promote learning and effect critical engagement on societal issues in Nigeria. Recognising the scale and scope of research challenges facing Nigeria, the Nsibidi Institute places high value on knowledge. This priority sits at the crux of their ambition to become the primary point for reliable resources and critical thinking on issues relevant to the formation and development of contemporary Nigerian society. The Institute aspires to be the place and space for the intersection of multidisciplinary discourses; a fora for dialogue and inquiry of issues relevant to the broader Nigerian society.

Heinrich Boll Stiftung (HBS), Nigeria is part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide as a response to the traditional politics of socialism, liberalism, and conservatism. It conducts and supports civic educational activities worldwide. The Heinrich Böll Foundation started its work in Nigeria in 1995. The Foundation's Nigeria Office aims to provide platforms for innovative, fresh and inspiring dialogues that can make a difference, at a time where climate change, rising inequality and insecurity challenge pre-conceived notions of what development means to people.

African Collaborative Institute for Design (ACID) is an interdisciplinary Organization set up with the aim of approaching the dogmatism of design's practice, scholarship and pedagogy from a new perspective. It is a new-age critically evaluating movement for design at various current levels that is mostly anchored in the African context. It also engages connected global issues that duly or apparently intersect a wide array of areas, ideologies and scenarios in Africa.



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