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3 May 2023

ENVS 3999

### Final Reflection: ENVS 3999, RebuildNYC

This semester, I dedicated myself to an independent study with the Climate Corps, and my group worked with the RainproofNYC project to tackle issues with stormwater flooding warnings and the language barrier.

Rebuild By Design and One Architecture collaborated on this project “Toward a Rainproof New York City: Turning the Concrete Jungle into a Sponge in response to Hurricane Ida’s impacts on New York City in 2022. This project was created to analyze possible policies, programs, and practices that could reduce the risk of stormwater to marginalized populations in the city; it’s currently focusing on strategies such as green infrastructure, but equally important in their goals is the disproportionate effect climate change is having on vulnerable non-English speaking populations. The disaster response during Hurricane Ida resulted in deaths of citizens of mostly Asian descent, who spoke limited English and may not have been aware of storm warnings in their area.

To further their understanding of at-risk communities and their issues with storm warning communication, Rebuild reached out to UConn to initiate this collaboration with Climate Corps. Our part in the project was focused on research; we gathered information about stormwater flooding, community demographics, emergency services information, translation services of community board websites, and anything else we could find that would help further the project. While I also focused on the language policies in New York, my groupmates also contacted

NotifyNYC (the primary alert program in New York City) to understand their work and processes more accurately.

This was my first experience working with a real-world issue with impacts like this, and it taught me several things about the field that I had previously never even thought about, but more than that, it changed my way of thinking when approaching a project like this. Learning in the academic system led me to take several things for granted, and it was quite an enlightening experience working to better New York City's emergency notification systems. Primarily: all data and technology has to come from somewhere! My group met with Joshua Rapp, the meteorologist on staff with NYC Emergency Management, and his insight into the system we were working to improve was invaluable. Throughout our research, we had come across issues with finding confidently accurate language, weather, and flooding data; through speaking with Joshua, we realized that technology, too, was a limiting factor in being able to accurately predict the impacts of climate quickly.

The best part of this independent study must have been working collaboratively with an organization working to get things done. I was able to feel good about dedicating so much time to this project, knowing that this more so than any assignment would contribute to something productive and real. I was nervous to meet with them originally, but the collaborative energy that filled the weekly Zoom meetings with RebuildNYC quickly put me at ease and made me excited to work on this project together. I'm so happy to have gotten this opportunity!



