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TITLE PAGE**DISASTER AND THE LIVED POLITICS OF THE RESILIENT CITY**

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DISASTER AND THE LIVED POLITICS OF THE RESILIENT CITY

INTRODUCTION

Originating in engineering and ecological sciences, the idea of resilience can be defined as “...the ability to absorb change and the capacity for re-organization or adaptation in the face of disruption” (Cretney, 2014: 629). In an age of Covid-19, the notion of resilience is poised to become a central component to the pressing question of whether societies can ever return to ‘normal’ after the pandemic, and whether a return to normal is even desirable. The pandemic raises issues around what constitutes an acceptable status quo and what constitutes meaningful change, and can provide an opportunity to revisit previous shocks to social structures. Across different possible articulations of resilience, we are particularly interested in urban resilience, which “...refers to the ability of an urban system – and all its constituent socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales – to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity” (Meerow & Newell, 2016: 45). A discourse around the ‘resilient city’ has recently gained traction, representing a shift from the sustainable city in that “the ‘beyond’ is forever deferred, and crisis is no longer that which is to be warded off, eliminated, or overcome, but that which must be absorbed, attenuated, and survived” (Wakefield & Braun, 2014: 5).

Despite – or perhaps because of – its increasing popularity, the resilient city construct remains rather superficial, particularly with regards to its inherently *political nature* (Vale, 2014). While some versions are enthusiastic about the integrative power of resilience to understand the coping mechanisms and varied performances of cities in the

face of crisis, including the potential for bottom-up change via ‘evolutionary resilience’ (e.g. Davoudi et al, 2013), others are suspicious of the concept’s top-down and even post-political connotations that entrench the pre-existing status quo, detract attention from systemic social problems and neutralize political struggles (e.g. MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013; Leitner et al, 2018). These differences in epistemological gaze open crucial gaps around whether, in the context of the ‘resilient city’, the bottom-up and top-down versions of resilience can be used relationally and co-constitutively rather than separately, moving beyond an ‘all-or-nothing’ approach that eschews resilience entirely or embraces it uncritically.

We can thereby politicize the resilient city by using the underplayed *lived politics of resilience* – that is, resilience-as-experienced, where resilience would be viewed not merely as a system’s traits and reflexes (the abilities to withstand a disturbance) or a set of normative principles (how to boost such abilities), but rather as the actually-experienced politics of conditioning, negotiating and surviving a shock. It is exactly this conversation that is needed to reconcile the theoretical, practical, critical and lived perspectives on (urban) resilience. One way to politicize the lived experiences of the resilient city is through the prism of disaster. There is already a rich literature on how acute events bring “a heightened awareness of dynamics of power and contestation” (Cretney, 2019: 497; Davis, 1998), of how disasters create ‘crises of legitimacy’ that can open up systems to change – or to double down on the pre-disaster status quo.

In this paper, we focus on the lived politics of resilience in the (resilient) city - before, during and after urban disasters, demonstrating *inter alia* how they can *both* reinforce the status quo in terms of a top-down ‘cast-off resilience’, in which vulnerable

places are expected to be resilient with limited state help, *and* sow the seeds for other alternative, tentative and bottom-up initiatives. Our contribution lies in *relating* these opposing views at the heart of the resilient city under disaster conditions. In so doing, we seek to (1) politicize the resilient city in terms of the state holding enormous power over defining and determining urban resilience through its top-down responses and non-responses (Hall & Lamont, 2013), (2) query the parallel, bottom-up agency that vulnerable communities and places have in terms of using resilience or being constrained by it, and (3) test resilience as a political construct under conditions of extreme crisis, across multiple scales of agents (e.g. state, communities, planners) within the confines of particular urban case studies.

In the next sections, we relate the ‘cast-off’ and ‘bottom-up’ versions of resilience. We frame a lived politics of resilience within the contexts of urban disasters. Our very approach to resilience – a politicized and grounded reading of its actual and everyday unfoldings – motivated a desire to choose purposefully disparate case studies that would ensure a complex story of lived resilience: wartime Leningrad during the 1941-44 siege, and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (2005). Both case studies were spatially isolated during the disaster, to the point where they could constitute inadvertent and inhumane ‘experiments’ in social and spatial resilience. The case studies are not strictly comparative since the scales of the disaster were vastly different, particularly in terms of casualties – officially 650,000 (but most likely well over a million people) in Leningrad, versus around 1,000 in New Orleans – and that Leningrad’s emergency and recovery were mixed up during the siege itself, while New Orleans’ stages were more clearcut in time. However, the case studies can be *juxtaposed* (Caldeira, 2017) as each

other's epistemic mirror, as a way of pooling trans-geographical and trans-historical experiences to show a fuller and more complex range of lived resilience that incorporates clearly divergent and convergent mixtures of state-imposed casting off and bottom-up efforts.

A RELATIONAL AND INTERIM POLITICS OF RESILIENCE

In human geography, resilience has emerged as a highly-contested concept (Grove, 2018), centering on “the fear that resilience nullifies transformative action while lacking conceptual rigor...and necessarily props up the dominant system, which today is decidedly neo-liberal in its ideology...reinforc(ing) a hegemonic status quo of dispossessing, predatory capitalism” (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016: 144). As MacKinnon and Derickson (2013, 258) strenuously argue:

resilience is fundamentally about how best to maintain the functioning of an existing system in the face of an externally derived disturbance. Both the ontological nature of “the system” and its normative desirability escape critical scrutiny. As a result, the existence of social divisions and inequalities tend to be glossed over when resilience thinking is extended to society.

Critically for our purposes, resilience can be a pretence for government abandonment and the casting-off of vulnerable places and communities, in that “the vacuous yet ubiquitous notion that communities ought to be ‘resilient’ can be seen as particularly troubling in the context of austerity and reinforced neoliberalism” (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013: 262). This ‘cast-off’ resilience necessarily intersects with state responses to place-based need, in the form of reinforcing a top-down hegemony which frequently involves foreclosure of

choice and an abandonment of impacted communities, of decreasing state involvement to places in need, and of reducing political struggles to mere survivability. As our case studies will show, this tendency was clearly manifested in the sullen disregard for individual-level survival and resilience in both Leningrad and New Orleans.

Yet we reject the ‘all-or-nothing’ stance among many critical human geographers, who see resilience as an ideological construct of (historically-specific) neoliberalism. Instead, we advance an alternative yet critical perspective that accounts for a more heterogeneous and trans-historical reading of resilience. This open approach is also based in the sense that the ‘cast-off’ model is but *one of many* political ontologies that mobilizes resilience. Along these lines, DeVerteuil and Golubchikov (2016: 144) note that “there is nothing inherently negative or positive about resilience, as it is entirely contingent on who is wielding it, and for what political purposes”. This more nuanced and relational reading is anchored by Simon and Randalls (2016), who contend that resilience is inherently multiple, invoking differing spatialities, temporalities and political implications, and that this multiplicity is fundamental to how resilience works in practice. Appreciating resilience as multiple means paying attention to the miscellaneous mobilizations of ‘resilience thinking’, and rejecting any conceit of a unidirectional resilience solely co-opted by neoliberalism. This version opens up new opportunities after the shock, “much less about bouncing back than securing the future, which, of course, can take many forms” (Andres & Round, 2015: 678). As Folke (2006: 259) further argues, resilience provides adaptive capacity, which is not simply about being robust to disturbance, but also “about the opportunities that disturbance opens up in terms of recombination of evolved structures and processes, renewal of the system and emergence

of new trajectories”. In this sense, resilience can be about ‘bouncing forward’, not just ‘bouncing back’. Bridging to the case studies, we will show some aspects of this endemic potential, in terms of creating spaces beyond the state that ensured resilience but also more fundamental transformation.

Within these meta-debates, we promote a more relational understanding of resilience that combines the cast-off with the bottom-up while still holding to notions of positive trajectories and adaptability in the face of a crisis-fueled future. This adaptive capacity suggests that resilience is very much political rather than post-political, very much a site of struggle rather than anodyne, and very much negotiated rather than inherent and inert. Equally, this version of resilience recognizes the abuse of resilience by the powers-that-be. As such, a relational resilience is a way to conceptualize (and manage) the *interim* – as the first line of defense, persistence and recovery – when a more active change is not possible due to power differentials inherent in global capitalism, or the inevitability of natural disasters, or to asymmetrical wars (Katz, 2004). We do not argue that this interim resilience necessarily precludes the pursuit of larger transformational change and sustainability, only that in some cases immediate transformation, resistance or reworking are not realistic for vulnerable actors faced with overwhelming odds. Resilience ensures survival and getting by (Katz, 2004), but also as a platform for a better future, since it preserves agency (individual, collective), memory, knowledge and capacity. Some call this ‘persistent resilience’ (Golubchikov, 2011; Andres and Round, 2015), in which effective resilience does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of negative outcomes, but allows for a proactive renegotiation of everyday life practices and relationships. In the next section, we propose a ‘lived politics’ of resilience

in the face of acute disaster in cities that builds on these co-constituted, relational understandings.

THE RESILIENT CITY, URBAN DISASTER AND THE LIVED POLITICS OF RESILIENCE

One way to flesh out a politicized, co-constituted version of the resilient city is through the notion of the *lived politics of resilience*. This notion recasts resilience from the rhetorical abilities to withstand externally-induced shocks to the real-life manifestations of resilience, ‘resilience-on-the-ground’, including the actual experiences of endurance and socio-political dynamics conditioning these experiences. Here we see the lived politics of resilience as a product of multi-scalar relationships, simultaneously part of larger socio-political orders, circumstances and happenstances, and embodied via private and collective experiences and negotiation of social life at city-wide and individual scales. This resonates with Hall’s (2019) focus on the lived experience of austerity, in that large-scale crises are always felt viscerally as *personal* crises, centering on everyday life and survival as its key arenas. This may be seen in parallel with the Foucauldian conception of power (and bio-politics for that matter), which may be descending or ascending, but crucially circulating through the everyday life as a “capillary form of existence... where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980:39).

Analytically, politicizing the resilient city through this lens necessarily brings to the fore the *relationality* and *agency* of resilience: how resilience is constructed,

negotiated and resourced, at which temporal and spatial scale, with what political antecedents, consequences and power struggles, and how these experiences talk about the nature of society and social change more generally. We can consider both how resilience has been absorbed into the political project around governing uncertain futures and insecurity, spuriously constructing communities as ‘resilient subjects’, stripping their autonomy and agency, and reducing human existence to survivability (Evans and Reid, 2014), *but also* how resilience can allow multiple possibilities, feeding into a ‘politics of possibility’ (Simon and Randalls 2016, Walker and Cooper 2011). This moves us beyond the very basic notion that cities are inherently resilient (Vale & Campanella, 2005) to making the state legible in the process, of ‘seeing’ like a resilient city. This implies the crucial (state) power to set the framework around resilience via the purported administrative ability to socially engineer, but always with limited knowledge and capacity to act (Scott, 1998).

Acute disasters bring to the fore the lived politics of resilience, underlining the ‘who’ of resilience – who determines what is desirable, whose resilience is prioritized, who is included and excluded? (Meerow & Newell, 2016:9). All of these are deeply political questions that involve trade-offs before, during and after the disaster. These questions map onto elements of ‘resilience-as-bare-bones-survival’ (DeVerteuil, 2017; Jordan et al, 2017), including in the situations where the state is not capable to help due to its reduced size or because it is ‘too busy’ with other priorities. With this kind of disaster resilience, responsibility is devolved to the community and the individual “without appropriate resourcing as part of a wider strategy of self-responsibilization and a reduction in the role of the state” (Cretney, 2019: 511).

Conversely, disaster resilience can also allow for evolution. One alternative ontological politics of resilience is articulated by Jon and Purcell (2019), who present a more radical, immanent and bottom-up resilience in the face of post-disaster state abandonment. Using the case of New Orleans, they note that “radical resilience exists when people mobilize their ability to manage their affairs for themselves” (Jon and Purcell, 2019: 235). They locate bottom-up resilience in the cracks, moving beyond contestation and resistance to recover some of the positive characteristics that pervaded the community *before* the disaster, which includes day-to-day survival but also renewal, and even improve upon the pre-disaster conditions. This disaster resilience is more than just stopgap, but an opportunity to gain some freedom orthogonal to the previous status quo (DeVerteuil, 2015), “continually fashioning a new, provisional equilibrium into the future” that “implies a whole different set of planning procedures – less rigid and more adaptable over time – to pursue it” (Jon and Purcell, 2019: 236). However, whether this is occurring across different contexts, and to what extent, remains an unanswered empirical question, one that demands real-world case studies that can capture diverse, complex and empirically rich trajectories.

SITUATING THE STUDIES

We should stress that this is not a typical comparative study. The very scale, nature and context of both tragedies are too different to merit an orthodox comparison, but they do guarantee a complex picture of how resilience unfolds in reality, generating the potential for multiple trajectories that align with a lived approach. The New Orleans tragedy was triggered by a natural disaster and was localized at the scale of the metropolitan area,

damaging 200,000 homes and displacing 800,000 people (Van Holm and Wyczalkowski, 2018). Conversely, Leningrad was on a much larger scale. Hitler's unprovoked invasion in pursuit of *Lebensraum* ('living space') was the most destructive in human history, and an existential threat not only to the Soviet state but also to its citizens. The scale of the ensuing tragedy was enormous, not least given the overall Soviet casualties from the war, which are estimated at 27 million people, two-thirds of whom were civilians and whose perspectives we will adopt during the case study of besieged Leningrad.

The choice of these two dissimilar but potentially instructive case studies is justified via the *juxtaposition of dissimilar cases* approach (Caldeira, 2017) borrowed from ethnography and anthropology. As Caldeira (2017: 3) noted, this approach does not look for the representative, typical, similar, or repetitive. Instead, it proceeds inductively, exploring the differential and internal conditions of cases, looking for a wide range of variation.... The juxtaposition of dissimilar, located, and historicized cases brought together to illuminate one another destabilizes unexamined views and generalizations and opens up new possibilities of understanding.

Thus, the dissimilarities of our own case studies can be exploited to construct a remarkably wide array of examples of how resilience is lived and experienced, opening up new ways of looking at resilience.

Recognizing Caldeira's (2017) emphasis on context and diversity, and to avoid the risks of reducing the empirical complexities and thickness of both tragedies, we focus on talking through the lived experiences and politics of resilience as they actually existed, open to heterogeneous trajectories. Indeed, one critique of resilience has been dealing

with diversity, in that it often becomes secondary in the search for an ideal type of resilience, so that what is produced is “a ‘resilience’ that never actually exists in practice” (Anderson, 2015: 61). While dealing with disasters presents the resilient city framework with a sharp test, the extreme nature of our case studies pushes the resilient city closer to breaking point (and beyond), enabling the full extent of resilience to be shown. Disasters embody a “jarring or disruption of time, momentum, and change: the fracturing, fragility, rupturing, and instability of the current...situation” (Hall, 2019: 480). The value of using such extreme cases is that they refine underlying conditions that may be blurred otherwise – disasters reveal a system’s strengths and weaknesses, and the extent of resilience in terms of how the state potentially reinforced (and enforced) the status quo via a ‘cast-off resilience’ *and* perhaps also sowed the seeds for other alternative, evolutionary and bottom-up initiatives via place-based community resilience.

As ‘tests’ of the resilient city, three phases are presented. The first was the generation of pre-disaster vulnerability, appreciating that catastrophic events “have not occurred in a political and social vacuum” (Cretney, 2014: 633). Both cities were socially eroded even before disaster struck. It has been argued that there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ disaster (Davis, 1998; Klinenberg, 2002; Wisner et al., 2004), which was especially true in New Orleans where the underlying social vulnerabilities of the pre-disaster city interacted with the hurricane and its aftermath. The second phase was the emergency of the disaster itself, which was a week for New Orleans but 872 days for besieged Leningrad. Both disasters are classic examples of ‘emergencies’ (Adey et al, 2015: 9), where “life is reorganized in relation to the emergency that is to come or has just been”, but that this reorganization can be in anticipation of bouncing back, at least

partially, to pre-emergency conditions (or even to exceed them). During this phase, both cities featured woefully unprepared officials and a lethal mixture of denial and disorder, as well as outright state abandonment, that enabled cast-off resilience but also furtive attempts at bottom-up resilience. The third phase was the post-disaster recovery, with a focus on both the initial recovery period for New Orleans and Leningrad but also the much longer reconstruction, which lasted decades in Leningrad and has been ongoing in New Orleans for over 15 years. Ultimately, our goal here is to politicize the resilient city by seeing the range and relationalities, with a focus on state impositions and the individuals and communities directly impacted, of who mattered and who decided ‘on-the-ground’.

The case studies were constructed through a variety of firsthand and secondhand sources. For Leningrad, and given that most of the remaining siege survivors are now in their eighties and nineties (and would have only been children in 1941-44), there is a singular reliance on diaries. These include Ginzburg’s *Notes From the Blockade* (1995) and *A Story of Pity and Cruelty* (2016), and Likhachev’s *Reminiscences* (1995), but also more recent compendiums of diaries by Reid (2011) and Peri (2017), who used 50 and 125 diaries respectively. These diaries are not representative of all Leningraders during the siege, but provide remarkably candid insights into the resilience and social geography of certain (educated) inhabitants, as well as ethnographic observations of the besieged city. Diaries are also useful in that they existed beyond, and sometimes deviated substantially from, the official narrative of the siege that worshipped the ‘New Soviet Person’ of indomitable physical and mental fortitude. In retrospect, Peri (2017: 12) argued that the survivors “...used the diary as a repository of thought, a confessional

space, a site of self-examination, a medium of communicating with far-flung relatives, a historical chronicle, and a coping mechanism”.

For New Orleans, there was a mixture of firsthand and secondhand material. In May 2017, and as part of a larger project on how post-disaster recovery may involve social justice (Sheridan, 2017), a total of 10 interviews were done with local non-profit housing organizations, city planners, international NGOs, and 15 interviews with residents of the Lower Ninth Ward – four of which were living in ‘Make It Right’ houses, the rest long-term residents who had returned post-Katrina. The interview questions focused on how the process of post-disaster recovery could be measured using social justice outcomes of democracy, diversity and equity (Fainstein, 2015), and included notions of the resilience of pre-disaster structures. This was supplemented by material from Wooten (2012), whose extensive qualitative focus on post-Katrina New Orleans involved hundreds of interviews and ethnographic observations, all with a keen focus on five particular neighborhoods: Broadmoor, Hollygrove, Lakeview, the Lower Ninth Ward, and the Village de l’Est in the initial recovery period of 2007-2009.

LENINGRAD 1941-1944

For Leningrad, the siege of 1941-44 must be set within two decades of ambitious efforts to re-engineer society along Communist lines. While the post-revolutionary decades were marked by boosts in most people’s social mobility, literacy, creativity and collective spirit, the Great Terror of 1936-38, with its large-scale repressions of bureaucrats, officials and the intelligentsia, severely corroded societal trust – particularly in the former imperial capital city. A “prostrate civil society” (Scott, 1998: 5) was largely unable to

resist top-down state power; for Hannah Arendt (1970), the Stalinist Soviet system was marked by a permanent state of emergency. As Reid (2011: 2) contended,

any Leningrader aged thirty or over at the start of the siege had already lived through three wars (the First World War, the Civil War between Bolsheviks and Whites that followed it, and the Winter War with Finland in 1939-40), two famines (the first during the Civil War, the second the collectivization of 1932-33, caused by Stalin's violent seizure of peasant farms) and two major waves of political terror. Hardly a household, particularly among the city's ethnic minorities and old middle classes, had not been touched by death, prison or exile as well as impoverishment.... the siege, though unique in the size of its death toll, was less a tragic interlude than one dark passage among many.

Of all the disasters that befell the Soviet Union in the first year of the German invasion, none was as tragic as the siege of Leningrad. The actual disaster was worsened by state unpreparedness; before the siege began in September 1941, barely 25% of the population had been evacuated (Reid, 2011; Peri, 2017). This left over 2.5 million civilians in the city, many of them children and dependents. This situation was complicated by the fact that many people refused to leave or surrender their children, deeply mistrusting the state. This was further compounded by a lack of planning for food supplies; as of October 1941, there was barely a month's worth of provision (Reid, 2011). The food supply was stored centrally in just a few locations, making it a target for German bombing. In the 872 days following, the city remained in a state of emergency, particularly the first winter months, when the majority of siege casualties occurred – of starvation, of cold, and German shelling and bombing.

Just as military unpreparedness had allowed the German army to encircle the city within 3 months of the invasion of the Soviet Union, so too did unpreparedness and cast-off resilience pervade the state's initial response to the first siege winter. The template for survival was very much set by the state-controlled food rationing system and its assumption that civilians could survive on it, despite copious evidence that many would not. In the absence of other formal mechanisms of obtaining food, the ration system ensured hunger and undermined resilience for many as much as it ensured survival for some. This was an intentional outcome, in which the "rationing of food constitutes a calculated yet contradictory policy, namely that food rations represent in material form an inner contradiction of fostering life [for some] and disallowing life [for others]" (Tyner & Rice, 2015: 47). There were essentially four categories: heavy industry workers; service employees; non-working dependents; and children below 12 years old. The system reflected the Soviet hierarchy of labor contribution, an inequality that was also used in the Gulag camps, preserving only just those able to work (DeVerteuil & Andrews, 2007). And yet, the city was also full of refugees from surrounding regions, many of whom remained outside of the official hierarchy of provision, ensuring death (Likhachev, 1995).

In the worst period of December 1941 to February 1942, over 100,000 civilians died each month, the results of inexorable cast-off resilience. To Ginzburg (1995: 20), a siege survivor, daily survival became a 'closed circle' whereby "the elastic substance of life stretches till it can stretch no more". For those winter months, existence narrowed to "one hundred and twenty-five grams [of rationed bread], water from a hole in the frozen Neva, the cold, which never let up, not during sleep, not at meal-times, not at work; the blackness setting in during the day and dispersing late in the morning; corpses in the

gateways, corpses on sledges, lanky and thin – more like mummies than normal human corpses” (Ginzburg, 1995: 29). To her, permanent hunger and emaciated bodies undermined any state-defined notion of stoic resilience, based in a dubious rationing system that she likened to a “fairly well-organized system of under-nourishment” (1995: 38). The system led to inevitable atomization, as the state blamed the victims for not being resilient enough, especially mentally (i.e. eating their ration all at once, or staying in bed). The state essentially framed resilience as an individual choice, of avoiding personal indifference – “the best way to survive the ring was to draw an even tighter ring around oneself” (Peri, 2017: 63; see also DeVerteuil & Andrews, 2007 on surviving the Gulag at the expense of others) – and thereby avoiding being blamed for incompetence and disregard.

While individual and community resilience was inevitably undermined by the ration system and an overall lack of preparedness, the city’s overall resilience still endured - at tremendous personal cost. As Reid (2011: 173) argued:

no rationing system could have saved the whole population of Leningrad: the mouths were simply too many, the food supply too small. Nor was the system a fiasco: food was collected, distributed and queued for, in circumstances which could reasonably have been expected to cause complete social breakdown.

Leningrad wavered but never fell – although the Germans never directly assaulted it either – and eventually, after the first catastrophic winter, much of the population was evacuated through Ladoga Lake. The state did command a certain loyalty: there were no revolts nor anarchy. Reid (2011: 303), echoing the Cold War Sovietologist Merle Fainsod, argued that if “catastrophe and crisis are the severest tests of a political system,

the fact that Leningrad held out suggested that the Soviet apparatus was tough, durable, and capable of sustaining great shocks”. This is, of course, a state-centric perspective, which elides the agency (and mass suffering) of the populace itself. But active anti-government sentiments or desire to surrender the city were indeed minority; even German intelligence acknowledged that “despite individual cases of resistance [against the Soviet government], one cannot expect an organized rebellion... the city is firmly in the hands of the Soviets” (Sobolev, 2017).

The fine art of individual and collective survival could be construed as bottom-up resilience, involving the securing of overlooked resources and articulating strategies that outflanked the anemic state provision of food. This bottom-up resilience was very much in response to, and thus a product of, cast-off resilience. The first line of defense was the family – as Ginzburg (1995: 6-7) argued, “in the circumstances of the siege, the first and closest degree of the social guarantee was the family, the cell of blood and daily life with its inexorable demands for sacrifice”. The institution of the family had already been severely stretched for thirty years by the First World War, the Civil War, the Great Purges and, for people in the countryside, forced collectivization. During the war, however, the family structure was left alone by the state, thus (re)emerging as a key social nexus. The family was the most proximate institution, full of self-sacrifice but also tension, between individual salvation and collective doom – the cornerstone of bottom-up resilience and the pooling of resources but also of disloyalty and strife (Peri, 2017).

All diaries noted the conflicted role of the family, and the collective burdens and resources it introduced. For instance, when one family member died, more food became available to the living if they used the deceased’s ration card. Many therefore did not

report the deceased to the authority. Homegrown resilience involved reverting to old ways of doing things, including scavenging and growing one's own food where it was possible. Dmitry Likhachev (1995), a siege survivor and a foremost Slavist, noted in his memoirs that a family continued to exist as long as there was at least one member able to physically walk to exchange ration cards for food – an extraordinary challenge in the first winter. One diarist said that “I feel very clearly that all the responsibility for my mother's and brother's lives rests with me alone, that no one can help me, that I will not receive any kind of help from anywhere even if I bang my head against the wall....I am completely alone” (Peri, 2017: 96).

The only other institution of resilience that rivaled the family was the workplace. For those civilians who were favored by the system – heavy industrial workers, managers, but also academics and cultural workers – the daily visit to the workplace canteen would prove essential in bottom-up resilience, even if some had no actual work to perform. And yet, cast-off resilience also stretched its arms into this space of survival. Likhachev (1995), who worked as an academic, remembered worst-case scenarios:

The worst nightmare were gradual redundancies [on order from the Academy of Sciences in Moscow]... A redundancy... was equivalent to a death sentence: the dismissed was deprived of food vouchers while to get a new job was impossible... All anthropologists died off. Librarians were badly hit, many mathematicians died – young and talented. But zoologists persisted: many knew how to hunt.

Many of the techniques learned in the first winter were applied to the second winter of the siege (1942-43), enabling those who were not evacuated to survive without the same

mass death. This remarkable bottom-up resilience was literally from zero, given a lack of communal resources, and points to the latent, immanent, and endemic nature of bottom-up resilience. Still, diaries point to the terrible cost in the face of state indifference:

On the radio we're always hearing that the population of Leningrad bravely and heroically bears all hardships. But what does this bravery cost? Every day more and more people die of hunger! Death – that's the end of your bravery. Does the government know how many people are dying? (Reid, 2011: 298).

Leningrad's fate was also intertwined with the larger war effort – it was persistently under-prioritized in favor of Moscow's defense in winter 1941, and then Stalingrad's in 1942. And yet the state – or rather the war-stressed bureaucratic machine – remained *physically present* during the siege, through the rationing system and the secret police, and even extended its capacities by spring 1942. Overall, resilience was built on communal and collective suffering, which led to a feeling of deep guilt for having survived at the expense perhaps of others.

Crucially, the siege provided an opening to become estranged from the all-embracing Soviet system. The wartime period offered an escape from the stifling restrictions of daily life under Stalin, cracks that could lead to a different trajectory. Among the diarists, there was a post-war expectation of more happiness and freedom given the enormous wartime sacrifices. Indeed, the eventual Soviet victory over Hitler and the post-war recovery gave a strong boost to citizenship, civic pride and the sense of community across Soviet space, while the whole country became again exceptionally dynamic, both socially and economically. Millions were on the move, including those who returned or moved to rebuild Leningrad (where a third of the prewar housing stock

was damaged during the siege; Dzeniskevich, 1985). However, the Stalinist state renewed its repression in the immediate post-war period, so that hopes for different political trajectories were largely dashed. The lived politics of resilience had not produced large-scale political transformation, at least not immediately.

NEW ORLEANS 2005

New Orleans is susceptible not only to flooding – only 38% of its citizens reside at sea level or higher – but like many American cities, suffers from deep-seated urban poverty, environmental injustices and racial polarization (Peck, 2006). Poor infrastructure, including insufficient levees in areas most vulnerable to flooding, was compounded by decades-long decline and neglected public institutions (police, education, transportation), with a 25% population drop since the 1960s. All of these deficiencies produced a web of vulnerability that would be especially visible during and immediately after the emergency.

The period of emergency for New Orleans was the week immediately following landfall of Katrina. Most of the population heeded the mandatory evacuation, with some 400,000 out of 480,000 leaving before 29 August 2005 (Wooten, 2012). Inevitably, this left the poorest and least mobile to bear the hurricane's brunt, and their shocking fate in the immediate aftermath was plain to see - 70% of city's housing stock was damaged or destroyed (100% in the Lower Ninth Ward) (Sheridan, 2017), lack of electricity, running water and food, and little policing. All of these pointed to massive state failure in disaster management. The largely absent and ineffective local, regional and national state levels led to a 'fend for yourselves' survival in the immediate aftermath (Fainstein, 2015), but

the lengthy recovery period would eventually enable many community groups to exercise a measure of bottom-up resilience.

We find it instructive to document the sequence of key policies in the recovery period that reinforced a top-down, cast-off resilience. This was in a context where the pace of reconstruction, particularly in the hardest-hit areas of the Lower Ninth Ward, was excruciatingly slow. Residents in 2017 mentioned that after 12 years, “we don’t even have a supermarket” and that even before Katrina, the city had “redlined lower-income communities, failing to aggressively combat the factors that have led supermarkets to disinvest from these neighborhoods” (Perry, 2017: 1). All the recovery projects featured top-down planning models that ensured a more drawn-out recovery period and conflict with impacted communities. A series of redevelopment plans initiated by the local government in concert with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Bring New Orleans Back, the Lambert, and the Unified New Orleans Plan - were all stymied by lack of meaningful community participation and input. The original ‘Green Dot Plan’ (Bring New Orleans Back) ignored existing communities by abandoning certain areas vulnerable to future flooding. In this sense, the desire to avoid a repeat of Katrina “fundamentally ignored the social ties and livelihoods of those who had...lived in the Lower Ninth Ward (and beyond)”, in the words of a longtime resident (Sheridan, 2017: 32). The ‘Road Home Policy’ was similar in that it failed to bring former residents back. From the perspective of a non-profit organization in 2017, “the pre-Katrina neighborhood, of which 98% African-American and 60% living below the average income in the parish, had one of the highest rates of home ownership...however the

return of the black population in the Lower Ninth Ward is (now) only 20%, it is abysmal, it is institutional racism” (Sheridan, 2017: 59).

In 2009, the UN-Habitat criticized the recovery planning, that “every plan thus far had failed to take into account the real issues threatening the city. The land grab and disaster capitalism taking place treated the private sector as its only partner, ignoring the vulnerable and displaced Lower Ninth Ward residents” (Sheridan, 2017: 52). These cast-off policies assumed that communities would take care of their own survival and be self-resilient, but these assumptions only reinforced pre-existing, pre-disaster inequalities. A planner interviewed in 2017 intimated that the City wanted to shrink itself: “so when the City wanted ...to shrink the urban footprint, the Lower Ninth Ward was the first area mentioned. The City closed off the ward and people couldn’t access their homes for three months and then the City said they’d start bulldozing the area and it meant that a legal battle went on for months” (Sheridan, 2017: 44). Citizens were expected to fill in the gaps of an absent state. As a resident from the Lower Ninth Ward explained, “they [the city] don’t have the budget to come and cut the grass in the Lower Nine, I have to do it myself with my volunteers...If I don’t do it, no one else does...” (Sheridan, 2017: 54).

But this power vacuum enabled a bottom-up resilience, and not just surviving the recovery period but striving to obtain more localized and equitable power-sharing. This resilience therefore suggested a different (and perhaps better) trajectory than bouncing back to pre-Katrina conditions. This was firmly based in strong civil society, robust social capital (Aldrich, 2012) and community self-empowerment, one that ensured bottom-up resilience but also produced a certain localism that would stymie attempts at city-wide solutions. In effect, there was evidence that top-down, cast-off resilience not

only produced ‘autotomic’ spaces ignored by the state (Parker et al, 2017), but also *motivated* bottom-up resilience, as neighborhoods mobilized in the recovery period by outflanking city and federal policy. Many communities fought against the Green Dot Plan as it directly threatened their existence, but for the most part communities sought to fill gaps left by an absent, rather than top-down, state (Jon & Purcell, 2019), while using this opportunity to extend their own power and ask for state resources. As Wooten (2012: xv) noted, communities were:

acting out of necessity...operating social service agencies; founding community development corporations to build and renovate houses; opening charter schools; fielding police forces; launching marketing campaigns to spur recovery; debating taxation initiatives; and more. In short, they were taking on tasks that were normally the domain of established nonprofits and city government.

For many communities, taking control over local land use planning and redevelopment was the highest priority, but more mundane matters also took up energy. If the City of New Orleans and FEMA were (physically) absent, it was perhaps better than problematic interventions:

for neighborhood leaders, the worst moments seemed to come when government institutions – city, state and federal – impeded their progress. These exercises of power often seemed inexplicably arbitrary. In Hollygrove, residents still fume about the treatment they received at the hands of their city-council-appointed planner, who off-handedly dismissed the months of planning they had already completed and insisted on starting from scratch (Wooten, 2012: 210).

As part of civil society, the voluntary sector and social enterprises filled in gaps left by the state, but again this created both benefits and burdens for local communities. To the Executive Director of the ‘Lowernine’ nonprofit, Habitat for Humanity destroyed the layers of Black homeownership in what was once the area with the highest rates: “It was found in a federal court of law last year [2016] that the program was discriminatory, so essentially the government sought out to steal people’s homes [indirectly via Habitat for Humanity], they didn’t want these Black areas to return, they wanted the land”. This made recovery even more uneven but also buttressed a highly vigilant community resilience, rebuilding *in situ* in a more sustainable way. In immigrant communities hard-hit by Katrina, especially the Vietnamese, bottom-up resilience was evident in terms of community organizing and planning during the recovery period, as well as making demands on the local state and shoring up social buffers that enabled a quicker rebound, as well as newfound attention from officials. This was akin to what Klinenberg (2002) found during the Chicago heat wave in Latino immigrant areas.

Power over the recovery was very diffuse – not just the state, whose role was ultimately limited - but also nonprofits, residents and commercial developers. No one in New Orleans wanted an absent state, they simply wanted one less neglectful, such that resilience becomes more than about self-reliance and less about top-down planning. A well-known example of cast-off resilience was the case of Tracie Washington, a human rights lawyer with the Louisiana Justice Institute, who argued that the policymakers who lauded the resilience of the city should “stop calling me resilient: because every time you say ‘oh they are resilient’ that means you can do something else to me” (Blythe et al, 2018: 1215). Yet this very notion of a stoic city-wide resilience tolerated by a hands-off

state enabled the emergence of opportunities for communities to get a better recovery deal, and move in directions orthogonal to the pre-disaster period. The lived politics of resilience had led to some inkling of city-wide transformation, moving beyond individual and community survival.

THE LIVED POLITICS OF RESILIENCE

Analytically, we return to the relationality of bottom-up agency and top-down state casting-off that pervaded the politics of lived resilience in the two case studies. Each disaster produced a microcosm of the respective city's pre-existing vulnerability and a penchant for state-imposed cast-off resilience as the first and only option – for New Orleans, a neglectful and incompetent state that was already in 'cast-off' mode before the hurricane, for Leningrad the sullen disregard for individual life that had pervaded the Soviet regime, as well as a lack of social reserve. Yet both would show, in convergent and divergent ways, bottom-up resilience that belied these unpromising starting points. From the combined case studies, we can develop four key arguments around the lived politics of resilient cities, of who mattered and why, of resilience as a political construct under conditions of disaster never entirely owned by the state. Through these arguments, we contribute to a more relational, nuanced and multiple sense of the resilient city within a context of disaster.

The first is that cast-off resilience greatly increases suffering and hidden costs by devolving state responsibility downwards to individuals (Leningrad) and communities (New Orleans). The tradeoffs involved in being resilient without state support (when it was critically essential given the circumstances) included both the human cost as well as

resilience at another's expense. Cast-off resilience can be seen as a sort of high-stakes statecraft, although the Soviet state clearly retained more power than the American one. As with the case of forced collectivization, the Soviet (mis)management of the first year of the siege was an abject human failure but a stunning success in terms of maintaining control over the population to ensure the continuity of Communist rule. From the perspective of the average person who experienced the disaster, however, these political tradeoffs were subordinated to the exigencies of personal self-preservation and bare-bones survival.

The second argument is around the existence of compensating, community bottom-up resilience *above and beyond* its immediate utility to (and abuse by) a casting-off state. Resilience 'on-the-ground' is always messy, especially the cast-off version. States casted off communities to fill gaps but also, in varying degrees, inadvertently enabled the space for stealthy bottom-up resilience and mutual aid. This bottom-up resilience was not some 'perpetual motion machine' but required enormous effort on the part of certain agents. Especially in New Orleans, the disaster opened up new avenues for civil society to deal with the state, outflank it and move beyond it entirely. But just as resilience can be abused, nor should it be romanticized as an ideal solution to disaster – more consistent state support at local, regional and national levels would have made resilience much less painful (see also DeVerteuil et al, 2020). Further, bottom-up resilience was frequently parochial and myopic in New Orleans, but without it, the cost to communities would have been erasure. We cannot help but think that critics of resilience would not want that to happen either, allowing the system to collapse at even greater human cost rather than holding on to the promise of incremental change.

Third, bottom-up resilience created an interesting interim politics that breathed new life into the process of post-disaster recovery, and showed adaptation that moved beyond merely returning to the vulnerabilities of the pre-disaster period. The power to determine ‘who mattered’ was far more diffuse in New Orleans, with a range of competing redevelopment visions enabled by participatory involvement in the planning process, an “interim politics” of the marginalized (Derickson & MacKinnon, 2015: 307). Conversely, the Stalinist state was more of a “biopolitical monster...with complete physical (food rationing) and political (the secret services) control” (Ginzburg, 1995: 118). This was combined with a certain fatalism common to the time, “the conviction that calamities are what make up the normal form of existence” (Ginzburg, 1995: 125). The resilience that comes from this was far from inertial, however, and incorporated an ingenious set of strategies designed for immediate survival but holding out for some kind of subsequent transformation. This ties into the understanding that even totalitarian states allow enough leeway to enable a bottom-up participation in and interpretation of events, rather than seeing the state imposing its omnipotent will upon a powerless populace (Kotkin, 1995; Golubchikov, 2016). Moreover, many who endured the siege were truly loyal to Soviet power – or at least the Russian motherland it embodied at the time – despite its obvious shortcomings, and this goes some way in explaining the flinty refusal to give up the city under any circumstances. Cast-off resilience may be more acceptable to the population if it blames its suffering on outside agents rather than the state itself, or self-blames.

The fourth argument hinges around the tension between individual resilience (saving oneself and family, at enormous cost) versus saving the community, the

neighborhood and perhaps even the entire city. The results crucially suggested that resilience at the individual scale and resilience at the city-wide, systemic scale are essentially co-produced. In effect, individual survival and resilience – the sense that disaster is experienced and lived as a personal crisis as much as a societal crisis (Hall, 2019) - builds up and influences city-wide, systemic resilience, and that the latter also helps ensure the former. To the diarists of Leningrad, citizens might seem to be just martyrs in the city's survival – Ginzburg (1995: 100) herself said “that the enemy wanted to kill me and I was alive, that he wanted to kill the city, but the city lived on and I was an almost unconscious particle of its resistant life”. The resilient city is made of resilient citizens, whose struggles cannot be ignored – in New Orleans, resilience was very much community-based, sometimes without the notion of saving the entire city in mind (Wooten, 2012). Disaster (and resilience) inevitably brings up the issue of citizenship given that both are a struggle over the future (Vale, 2014) but also regarding who belongs, and in what ways, to a political community. The two disasters pressed this question, and the results found that citizenship rights were overlooked, denied and actively undermined. However, and particularly in the case of New Orleans, a more radical sense of citizenship emerged in the recovery period, which articulated the need to shift the path of the overall system. These bottom-up articulations of resilience did not always map on to a politically-aware resilience – for some communities and individuals, resilience was very much myopic and survivalist, while for others it was more far-reaching and transformational, an evolutionary resilience.

This brings us back to the key focus of the paper, consisting of disaster, the urban and a more relational reading of resilience that co-constitutes the top-down and the

bottom-up. In some ways, and despite the obvious bottom-up struggles that suggested adaptation and beyond, both case studies revealed top-down statecraft that sought a rigid bounce-back rather than any negotiated future-making. Once the Green Dot Plan was rejected, much of the rebuilding in New Orleans was in the most vulnerable places to future flooding, albeit with more adapted housing in place. This suggests a rather brittle resilience, of rebuilding with some of the same vulnerabilities (see also Davis, 1998). To a Lower Ninth Ward resident in 2017, rebuilding seemed absurd: “the way I see it, if they argue the Lower Ninth Ward is below sea level so shouldn’t be built back as it’s at risk, the entire city is below sea level so why bother anywhere?” (Sheridan, 2017: 35). In Leningrad, those who wanted a more humane system at the end of the war were sorely disappointed, and would have to wait until Stalin’s death in 1953 for a thaw. In the lived politics of resilience, the state sought consolidation – perhaps even extending its power post-disaster- while individuals and communities aimed for at least some everyday ruptures to their benefit, seeking to shift the pre-disaster status quo.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we traced the political nature of the resilient city. We particularly considered ‘actually-existing-resilience’ via lived politics and past experiences, rather than considering abstract principles or future-proofing. We demonstrated the pre-eminent role of the state in how both disaster and resilience are constructed and (mis)managed, but also how cast-off resilience compels citizens and communities to activate bottom-up agency for negotiating the disaster and recovery. Our contribution to resilience debates centers on grounding a relational and co-constitutive reading of the resilient city under

conditions of disaster, something experienced as both top-down state impositions and bottom-up, autonomous (and autotomic) geographies where coping mechanisms emerge in the “semiformal/informal spaces of everyday life” (Andres and Round, 2015: 676). It is more mundane, rarely institutional, but sometimes also long-term and transformational, what Derickson and MacKinnon (2015) might call ‘interim politics’ within a context of austerity (Szmigin et al, 2020) and renewed concerns around disaster planning in an age of climate change (Jon & Reghezza-Zitt, 2020). So rather than eschewing resilience *tout court* or presenting a reductive version, we articulated a textured, complex and nuanced set of trajectories both empirically and conceptually (for a feminist reading, see MacLeavy et al, forthcoming).

Our emphasis on actually-exiting events and agency does not preclude forward-looking practice-oriented resilience, but it does require a different ontology. As Vale (2014: 199) argued, “resilience-seeking practices will always entail a more continuous process rather than some sort of achieved endpoint... however, if researchers and practitioners cannot be explicit about the equity dimension of the endpoint, the processes will lack a moral compass”. Ziervogel et al. (2017: 127) call for incorporating rights, entitlement and justice in all aspects of resilience planning, which “places emphasis on urban governance, and suggests that a revisioning of governance is required for resilience, not simply a layering of new projects onto existing institutions, practices and mandates”. This can also mean that the conservative connotations of ‘future-proofing’ associated with planning for resilience and adaptation (e.g. Thornbush et al., 2013) can be recast to include a more dynamic, proactive and open-ended adaptation. For example, the purposeful building of adaptive capacity and resourcefulness, as well as participatory

‘future-making’ (Luck, 2018) via future-casting and future-sharing – although, admittedly, the exact future trajectories remain uncertain until the next crisis strikes and reveals the actually experienced politics of resilience. Alongside the future, this paper also underlined the value in reading back into historical instances of resilience, suggesting that resilience is always immanent and latent to the human condition while understandably contingent on existing political and social structures. Extending this point, we can argue that while resilience is always contextual, time- and space-bound, the case studies have shown that the concept can be applied trans-historically and trans-geographically. The cross-cutting nature of resilience and the resilient city enables and justifies the juxtaposition of dissimilar cases and the stories they tell of lived experiences.

Future research ought to focus on less extreme tests for the resilient city, such as the slow-moving structural changes that corrode resilience through attrition. These less spectacular instances of vulnerability should also be approached with a relational sense of resilience that sees cast-off and bottom-up as. Returning to the notion of urban resilience, it is not enough to say that cities are resilient due to surplus and proximity – state impositions and community agency are also needed in times of disaster. This is a crucial part of the Sendai Framework (UNDRR, 2015), which emphasized the need to ‘build back better’ in the recovery period – a proposition that seems particularly relevant to post-Katrina New Orleans – so that resilience is enhanced before the next disaster. The example of Covid-19 brought up in the introduction now provides a new context for how the state and community become visible in crisis (or not) as an immediately social and economic disruption. Finally, future research ought to embrace a potentially more nuanced sense of change, one that preserves the identity, form and function of the larger

system despite changes in the quantitative appearance of the system (Grove, 2018). This topological form of change adds a potentially important layer of complexity in the constitution of a relational resilience.

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