Before 'Resilience'
Surviving in Postwar Berlin, 1945-1950

Avi Sharma

Risk analysis and preparedness have long been core aspects of governance practice across a variety of scales (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Bauman 2007), but in recent decades, this discourse has undergone an important shift. As diverse actors recognize the interconnectedness of risk factors, from pollution and resource use to climate change, the idea of coordinated strategies for managing shared challenges has gained ground. The internationalization of emergency response has also played a role in shifting the perceptions of risk beyond territorial boundaries, with local and regional challenges in distant lands demanding the mobilization of global resources (Deere-Birbeck 2009; Goldin/Mariathasan 2014). None of this is entirely new. Colonial powers have, in some cases, responded to drought or famine in subject territories (Davis 2007; Simonow 2015); central banks were already coordinating policy to impact global financial crises long before the Great Depression (Polanyi 2001 [1944]); and humanitarian relief was deployed to assist refugees during the First World War (Anderson 2007; Balakian 2009). All of these were, however, seen as exceptional situations, rather than everyday events (Gatrell 2013; Ther 2017). In recent decades, international stakeholders – from the United States National Security Council to the leadership of Amnesty International seem increasingly resigned to the fact of perpetual crisis: somewhere in the world, war, natural disaster, climate catastrophe, epidemic or political instability is happening. Crisis is widely seen as an everyday phenomenon, rather than an exceptional circumstance (ARUP/Rockefeller Foundation 2016).

Resilience is a slippery term precisely because it is supposed to enhance the capacity to flexibly respond to a range of challenges, from ecological disruption and natural disasters to climate change, financial crisis to violent conflict and its aftermath (Müller 2011; Taşan-Kok et al. 2013). Resilience thinking can be found in a wide variety of disciplines, from engineering and ecology to disaster management and planning. A range of actors, from NGOs to Foundations and National Security Agencies argue that resilience is about fostering strong local communities and institutions. It is, in this view, about preparedness, innovative response, and empowering individuals to rebuild (Johnson/Blackburn 2014). All of these things may

be true from a policy perspective, but on the most fundamental level, resilience is about surviving profound disruption. It is about survival (Wilson 2014; Wrenn 2014). In my view, it is an extraordinarily pessimistic discourse because it 1) assumes that crisis is the norm and 2) assumes that global actors no longer have the capacity to simultaneously address multiple crises occurring across geographies and scales.

Critics reject both of these assumptions. There is, for example, a vast literature on the cynical ways that 'crisis' discourse is used by state and non-state actors to achieve political and economic ends, and a related critique of TINA ideologies which use claims about state capacity to weaken regulatory regimes to the advantage of corporate and financial interests. Critics argue that 'limited capacity' claims are a fiction conceived to mask ideological and political economic interests (Oosterlynck/González 2013; Mirowski 2014). This critique is powerful, and in many cases, the suspicion of both the 'crisis' and 'capacity' arguments has proven to be justified, as business-interests work to marginalize state and regulatory agencies in pursuit of allegedly free markets.

Critics and advocates of the concept agree on very little, but they do agree that resilience discourse is about surviving disruption, whether on the ecological, systems, individual, community, national, supra-national or species level. So far as I know, though, none of the literature on resilient social systems adequately describes, analyzes, or interprets 'survival' as a lived experience and social category.[1] What does it mean for individuals and groups when development consultants, IGOs or nation state actors ask them to survive a crisis by building resilience or being resilient (Kaika 2017)? What kinds of disruptions – past, present, and future – elicit calls for resilience? Are there scenarios when the 'resilience' approach is justified? Answering these questions can help us to better understand what it means to survive disruption, and to understand how different kinds of disruption affect individual and social lives (Diefendorf 2009).

Answering these questions can also help to distinguish between cases where a so-called crisis is being used to achieve cynical political or economic goals on the one hand (Graham/Marvin 2012; Gotham/Greenberg 2014); and scenarios where we are encountering radically disruptive events (Hansen 2007; Sharma 2015;

1 Survival and trauma have, obviously, been a focus of the psychological research on resilience, and it could be argued that this research has a pedigree that stretches at least to Sigmund Freud (cp. Freud 1965 [1933]). More recent work on trauma also draws attention both to the phenomenology of suffering and the technologies of survival. Here the work of Judith Herman is instructive (cp. Herman 2015 [1992]). For a discussion of more recent approaches to trauma and survival (cp. Southwick et al. 2014). For an extremely moving and also illuminating discussion of the experience of survival and the psychology of survivors (cp. Levi 1996 [1947]).

Bell/Green 2016; Hansen et al. 2016). This is worth exploring, because pronouncements of 'crisis' are so common that they threaten to desensitize both laypersons and experts (Hartman/Squires 2006). Climate change is a particularly powerful example of the kind of intersectional crisis scenario that was produced by human activity but threatens to escape governmental, managerial, technocratic, or entrepreneurial initiatives to control it (Barnes/Gilman 2011; Held/Young 2011). It is well known, for example, that climate change generates natural disasters that are relatively local (wild-fires and tsunamis, e.g.); food shortages and armed conflicts that are regional; and migrations and species extinctions that are global. Climate change in the 21st century is not, however, the first time that humans have experienced genuine crisis scenarios that cascade across multiple scales. Historical examples can be productively used to understand these kinds of intersectional crisis scenarios. The present article tries to highlight the tensions within resilience discourse before that discourse was ever systematically articulated. The goal is to understand what it means when crisis occurs on a genuinely global scale; the ways that the system – in this case, the complex political ecology of postwar Berlin – reset in the face of extreme disruption; and, most importantly, what that process looked like for the people who lived it. In simplest terms, this chapter explores the case of Postwar Berlin to better understand the past, present, and future of survival in moments of radical disruption.

For a variety of reasons, the Berlin case is useful for exploring the individual experience of survival, and the social, political, and economic logics of surviving that is at the foundation of resilience discourses (Vale/Campanella 2005; Obschonka et al. 2017).[2] During the war, hundreds of thousands of housing units were destroyed, which made shelter an everyday question of survival; millions of refugees, displaced persons, returning soldiers and evacuees survived on starvation rations; theft, rape, and murder were as common as a decent meal. Survival is the baseline assumption of diverse contemporary discourses about resilience, and postwar Berlin can help us better understand what it means to survive. The example of postwar Berlin also highlights tensions within resilience discourse, because none of the implicit and explicit strategies for resilience building could have possibly been enough. Self-help was important but hardly sufficient. Adapting to hardship meant extraordinary suffering. Selfless action could mean starvation. Communities were decimated by demography. In short, massive state intervention to distribute shelter and food was critical: Berlin and the millions of people who lived there on a temporary or permanent basis would not have survived simply by 'being resilient', and advocates of resilience are wrong to suggest that the Berlin case proves their argument about self-reliance, creativity, and endurance.

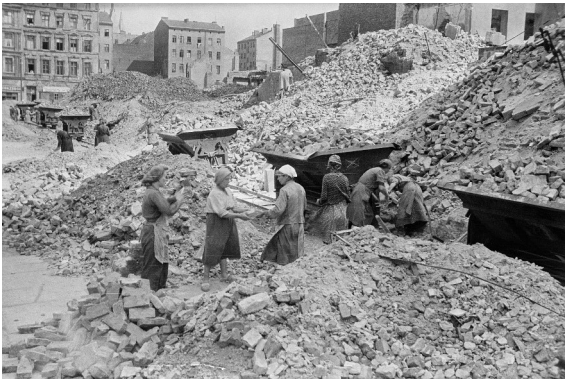
2 Other global examples might be equally instructive, for example, Leningrad, Warsaw, or Tokyo in the postwar period.

This does not however mean that critics of resilience discourse are correct in arguing that crisis and capacity are only political-economic fictions, because massive state intervention was not nearly enough to guarantee the provision of food and shelter. In postwar Berlin, administrators were bewildered by the breakdown of bureaucratic and legal norms. They had no idea how to supply residents and millions of new arrivals with shelter. International food aid was totally inadequate. The material fact of a destroyed city overwhelmed the capacity to rebuild. Most of those who lived in, came to, or transited through Berlin in 1945 survived. But what did survival entail, what did it look like, how was it experienced? For many of those millions, survival meant years in temporary housing, years of starvation rations, years of sexual abuse or transactional sex. In short, the Berlin case gives us some indication of what it means when we ask people to be resilient. The survivors of Hurricane Katrina who courageously demanded that the media 'stop calling them resilient' understood all of this, and the Berlin case is written in solidarity with them (Kaika 2017). At the same time, it is intended as a gentle reminder that 'better policy' cannot always make the painful task of survival painless; that rebuilding cities is not simply a matter of will but resources; that politicians do not control the weather; and that crises often intersect across multiple social, material, ecological, and political frames. It is a well-established fact of natural, social, and human sciences that shelter and food are two fundamental needs of individual and social organisms. This article uses the examples of shelter and food in postwar Berlin to better understand what it means to survive the breakdown of society.

Living in the Rubble. Housing Shortages in Postwar Berlin

Years of aerial warfare devastated German cities to the point that observers could scarcely imagine, let alone describe, what they saw. They spoke of graveyards, moonscapes, the apocalypse (Reichardt/Zierenberg 2008: 18; Häusser/Maugg 2009: 20; Evans 2011: 16–18). More than 4 million of a total 19 million pre-war apartments, for example, had been destroyed. In Cologne, 235.000 of the 252.121 (93 per cent) apartments in the city were uninhabitable. Bochum, Braunschweig, Bremen, Dortmund, Dresden, Duisburg, Essen, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hannover, Kassel, Kiel, Nuremberg, and Stuttgart all saw between 50-65 per cent of the housing stock completely destroyed. Compared to other German cities, Berlin was in relatively good shape in 1945. Four years of aerial bombardment had reduced much of the city to rubble, but just 525.000 of the total 1.5 million housing units in Berlin had been destroyed or badly damaged, amounting to only about 30 per cent (Schulz 1994; Steininger 2002). Nevertheless, photography, film, maps, and statistical data all show that the material destruction of the built environment was astonishing (Rürup 1995; Derenthal 1999; Shandley 2001; Evans 2011).

Figure 1: Herbert Hensky "Two boys fishing on the Spree in Berlin-Mitte," 1947. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz). Figure 2: Willy Römer, "Rubble removal: rubble women on Alte-Jakob Straße," 1948 (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz).



US Commander of Operations Frank Howley famously described Berlin as the "greatest pile of rubble" the world had ever seen, but as some historians rightly point out, the situation was less bad than it initially appeared (ibid: 18). Many roads were impassable but the grid remained; water and sewage infrastructures were disrupted but intact; there was limited subway and tram service as early as May 14th; and most major arteries were cleared of rubble relatively quickly. The symphony gave its first performance again on May 18th, and the first public soccer match was played on May 20th (Grossmann 2009). For millions of residents, though, symphonies and soccer games would have been little consolation. Allied and German administrators estimated that the city contained 75 million cubic meters of rubble (Dept. of Building and Housing 1949). 75 million cubic meters is more than 2.6 billion cubic feet. It is enough rubble to build a mountain more than 300 meters high, though Berliners chose to build several smaller hills instead (Dept. of Building and Housing 1986). Experts estimated that ten freight trains a day, each with 50 wagons, would be able to remove the rubble in 16 years (Steininger 2002). In fact, it took 27 years before all of the rubble was removed (Dept. of Building and Housing 1986). In 1945, Berliners returning home could scarcely navigate the city: the landmarks were gone, the streets in many cases impassable. Housing was a critical problem.

Housing was, naturally, one of the most pressing issues for many Berliners. Between 1945 and 1955, it was not at all unusual to live in an apartment or house that would, in normal times, be considered unlivable: walking down the streets of

Berlin, a gaping hole in an exterior wall often gave a clear view into the private lives of one's neighbors.

Figure 3: Unknown, "A destroyed apartment in a badly damaged building serves as a balcony in the summer," 1946 (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz)

The private sphere was opened to the public; intimacies were exposed. One Berliner explained how transformative this was. He joked that it was difficult to remain on formal terms with one's neighbors after waving to them from the street through a missing wall (Reichardt/Zierenberg 2008: 16).

While some were clearly exposed to their neighbors and the elements, others had a different problem. Across Germany, millions lived in basements and cellars, which were more likely to survive aerial bombing than above-ground structures. This might explain why some observers described Berlin as a city of troglodytes who climbed out of the earth each day (Sebald 2004 [1999]). Enforced intimacies, dark, cold, and damp shelters, the loss of home – all of these shaped the lives of short and long-term residents in enduring ways (Borneman/Peck 1995). As of the writing of this text, the UNHCR estimates that displaced persons spend, *on average,* 27 years in refugee camps, but even in the postwar period, millions of people spent years in emergency shelters and temporary housing.

In extraordinary times, though, city residents took shelter where they could find it. The well-known journalist Ursula von Kardorff claimed to have moved on seven occasions between 1942 and 1945, always remaining one step ahead of the British and American bombers (Hartl/Kardorff 1997 [1962]). If resilience is, as this chapter suggests, essentially about surviving, the experience of life in the rubble is quite telling: in Germany and other places across east and central Europe in the 1940s and indeed the 1950s, resilience meant flight and displacement; uncomfortable and potentially dangerous cohabitation; fear and a perpetual encounter with mortality (Sebald 2004 [1999]: 36).

The destruction of housing stock presented a huge problem for von Kardorff and millions of others, but before the end of the war, population outflows and high mortality rates stabilized the situation. Evacuation to the countryside and war-related deaths, for example, had reduced Berlin's population by roughly 30 per cent from 4.3 million to roughly 2.8 million. The end of the war destabilized this morbid equilibrium between population and housing, with at least 1.5 million people arriving in Berlin in the summer of 1945. Observers around the world were stunned. Newspapers in Chicago and London reported "floods" of humanity "overwhelming" Berlin. One observer reported that in July and August, 15-18.000 persons were arriving in Berlin each day, most of them "Eastern European" (Chicago Tribune 1945). Official reports were higher, claiming the numbers were on average, roughly 30.000 per day between May and October. In 1945, there were an estimated seven million Displaced Persons in Germany, and an additional twelve million ethnic German expellees from across Eastern Europe.[3] 7.738.000 of those people – more than 30 per

3 The distinction between Displaced Persons and Expellees is critically important, though it is beyond the scope of the present article. Most important, for present purposes, is that the

cent of all DPs and Expellees – transited through or settled in Berlin between July 1945 and March 1946 (Königseder 1998: 30).[4] This was one of the largest population transfers in modern history. On a city-scale, this contributed to a population density 230 times the national average (Berlin Senate 1952).[5] So where did people live in Berlin's ruined cityscape? How did they survive the postwar? What did it mean to "be resilient"?

Rebuilding Berlin? The Postwar Housing Crisis

When cities are destroyed by conflict or natural disaster, actors at a variety of scales typically talk about rebuilding, and indeed, rebuilding is a critical part of surviving. In some perspectives, the simple fact of urban rebuilding is an indication of the 'resilience' of urban forms (Ladd 2005; Vale/Campanella 2005). In the aftermath of disaster, state and some civil society actors regularly call on individuals and local communities to "be resilient". Critics typically demand that the state do more to help people who have lost their homes and livelihoods. These calls for the state to support extremely vulnerable persons to the greatest possible degree is, in my view, entirely justified. The postwar case, though, shows that neither the resilience demanded by some, nor the state assistance called for by others, is enough to insulate people from intersectional crises that occur on a genuinely global scale. There are, in other words, very real crises that outstrip the capacity of the state to intervene, and the abilities of the individual or local community to survive on their own. In Germany, but indeed in cities across central and Eastern Europe, the challenges were staggering, and Berlin offers important insights into what rebuilding a city from the ground up actually entails. As we have seen, rubble was part of the problem. Architect Max Taut was just one of many experts who projected that rubble clearance would take decades, and indeed, in 1971, ten million cubic meters of rubble remained in West Berlin alone (Taut 1946; Dept. of Building and

expellees did not fall under the UNRRA mandate (cp. Holian 2018). Historians have shown that, while population spiked in the divided Germany directly after the war, the UNRRA did an extraordinary job in repatriating the millions of displaced persons to their countries of origin (cp. Eder 2002; Holian 2012). In part because they did not fall under the UNRRA mandate, though, ethnic Germans expellees remained a large and stable percentage of the total German population from 1945 onwards.

4 In July 1945, the housing office in Reinickendorf in Northwest Berlin reported as many as 1000 people arriving per day in their district alone. This figure is surely exaggerated (cp. District Office Reinickendorf 1945). Historian Rolf Steininger estimates an average 30.000 per day between May and October (cp. Steininger 2002: 67; Echternkamp 2003: 63). This is consistent with Angelika Königseder's figures.

5 This is roughly 20 per cent higher than the population in density in Berlin, 2015, a fact compounded by the intense contraction of housing stock during the war years.

Housing 1986). Rubble was literally a barrier to rebuilding, blocking roads, occupying potential construction sites, consuming human resources and machinery, but it was hardly the only factor that accounts for the glacial pace of renovation and new construction.

Building materials were in short supply because the industrial capacity to produce them was badly damaged. This meant, for example, that when winterizing damaged housing, district building offices were only using roofing paper to cover damaged windows, roofs and walls in preparation for the cold weather. In 1945, administrators in the American sector district of Tempelhof secured 220 apartment buildings in this way, providing winterized housing for nearly 4500 district residents by November. This amounted to less than five per cent of the total population of the district (District Office Tempelhof 1946). In the Soviet Sector, the situation was far worse. Of a total 89.000 apartments requiring winterization, building offices reported repairing just 50 units in the span of a month (Häusser/Maugg 2009). During the so-called Hunger Winter of 1946-47, the city halted all construction work on residential properties, diverting roofing paper, concrete, and glass to winterize emergency shelters in schools, hospitals, and other public buildings. Builders were directed to ensure that one of every six rooms in these facilities was adequately winterized, which meant closing holes in exterior walls and covering windows (Dept. of Building and Housing 1945b). In practical terms, this meant that residents of already overcrowded apartments and shelters were diverted to even more overcrowded warming rooms.

State actors were unable to build the hundreds of thousands of housing units because financing, skilled labor, and raw materials were extremely scarce. Scrambling to find solutions to the housing crunch, the central office for housing directed district offices to appropriate and redistribute damaged housing to anyone with the financial resources or the construction skills to repair the property (Dept. of Building and Housing 1945c). Neither the city, the allies, nor the private sector had the resources to build Berlin, which meant that city residents would have to do the best they could to make temporary and damaged housing livable. In the early 1950s, the city was still tearing down more buildings than it was constructing, and in 1952, there was still a critical housing shortage of 120.000 units in Berlin alone. The situation was so extreme that the central housing office put a moratorium on the use of concrete for all non-housing related construction. They promised to deliver a total 11.500 units by the end of the year, addressing slightly less than 10 per cent of the critical shortage (Dept. of Building and Housing 1952).

The supply of new construction, whether privately or publicly financed, took decades to approach demand, and neither city residents nor officials could do very much to change that. In other parts of Germany, the situation was better, but by 1950, there were still more than 900.000 refugees living in emergency shelters, and in 1955, there were still more than 1900 camps providing emergency shelter

in the Western parts of Germany alone. If one includes expellees and evacuees, the numbers of those living in temporary or billeted housing was far higher (Echternkamp 2003). Rebuilding a city is obviously a challenge, no matter what caused its destruction. These challenges are amplified when recovery takes place against the backdrop of genuinely global pressures on resources.[6] After all, it was not only Berlin that needed to be built from the ground up: cities across Europe were demanding and, indeed, competing for raw materials to rebuild. If new construction was not a realistic option for providing housing, how then did Berlin house more than a million people who desperately needed shelter?

Temporary Housing and Durable Camps

In the months after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, roughly 100.000 people were arriving in Berlin each week, and the scale of in-migration – returnees, displaced persons, refugees, allied personnel – exceeded resource and administrative capacity across all sectors. Allied and city administrators were responsible not just for housing, but rations, bathrooms, medical attention, security, legal services, clothing, bedding, pots, pans, translation services, and logistics (Berger/Müller 1983). Despite the challenges, Allied and municipal authorities did find a range of temporary solutions. Housing of Nazi party members, for example, could be confiscated and placed in a pool for selected displaced persons. Workshops in primarily residential areas were repurposed to provide shelter. Military barracks, warehouses, schools, sport facilities and air raid shelters were catalogued and made available (Dept. of Building and Housing 1945a). Ironically, some 400.000 people were housed either in army barracks or facilities that had earlier been used as prisons and labor camps. (Dept. of Building and Housing 1951; Lanz 2007).

Emergency and temporary housing was one critical strategy for managing the postwar population spike, but "billeting" was another strategy used to manage the unmanageable population flows. Billeting is, of course, a centuries old practice typically employed by occupying armies, but in WWII, it became relatively common to billet urban evacuees in the countryside in order to minimize the risk of casualties during air raids. After the war it was, if anything, even more critical to managing the housing situation, and between May and December 1945, nearly 400.000 persons were billeted in apartments across Berlin. Like other so-called temporary

6 It is now generally assumed that the Marshall Plan was responsible for rebuilding Europe, and indeed, the 1948 initiative was an important factor in restoring industrial capacity, critical infrastructure, and injecting cash into economy. It is worth noting, though, that the Marshall Plan was directed at public and other high priority infrastructure projects and did not substantially fund or finance the construction of residential real estate (cp. Diefendorf 2009: 377–78).

housing arrangements, billeting often became semi-permanent (Harlander/Kuhn 2012: 78–79). The prime targets of billeting were housing units that were underutilized, and to this end, each of the allied sectors determined how much living space should be allocated per individual, with a range between 6.2 square meters in the British sector to 9.4 in the French sector. This meant that a 100 square meter apartment might house between 10 and 15 people. While this situation was by no means typical, neither was it uncommon, particularly in those districts identified as "hotspots" for housing shortage (Dept. of Building and Housing 1945a; Berger/Müller 1983: 23; Häusser/Maugg 2009: 54). Surviving meant finding shelter, and in postwar Berlin, the space, material, and structures that qualified as shelter would hardly have done so before the war. Resilience quite literally meant living in ways that just years before would have been unimaginable to most people. And in hundreds of thousands of cases in Berlin, and millions of cases across Europe and Asia, these emergency arrangements were not "temporary" but "durable".

Living together, oftentimes in overcrowded apartments where space, food, heating materials, and everyday supplies were in short supply, could be extremely difficult, and the relationships between older and newer residents could be acrimonious. Physical space and contests over supplies were, of course, important sources of tension. The war itself was *also* a point of contention. One man recalled living in a household with 16 people, including an unrepentant Nazi and his two children (ibid: 57). Across Germany, refugees and displaced persons were disgusted to find that, after years of forced labor, imprisonment, and murder, they were still being treated as inferiors. Many hosts also felt angry, complaining about the lack of "gratitude" on the part of billeted persons who were consuming already scarce resources (Antons 2014). Looking around the city, or waiting in lines at district housing offices, most city residents – 'natives' and new-comers – recognized that there was no quick solution to their problems. Housing was a matter of life and death, and would remain a critical issue for more than 15 years. Equally important, though, was access to food. Here too, a range of factors confounded efforts to normalize food supply. Here too, state actors and individuals used multiple strategies to ensure survival. Here, too, neither individual resilience nor state intervention was enough to stave off hunger and malnutrition. Here too, the work of surviving was miserable.

Surviving Scarcity. The Hunger Years, 1945-1950

In the first years of the postwar, food supply and distribution were catastrophic. The war interrupted harvests, depleted agricultural labor reserves, closed the trading routes that supplied vital foodstuffs to Europe. France, Belgium, England, the USSR, Poland – all of these countries were starved for resources (Trentmann

2006). Nor was the problem confined to Europe. The Bengal famine of 1943 was a clear product of British wartime policy, but the consequences for land distribution and food production lasted well into the postwar period and, indeed, after independence in 1947 (Sen 1980; De 2006). In China's Henan province, more than two million died starvation related deaths in 1942-43, disrupting social relations and food production well after 1945 (Wou 2007). Between 1943 and 1948, starvation was an everyday fact of life for more than a hundred million people spanning more than 5000 miles (Katkoff 1950; Ganson 2009). Berlin was just one of dozens of cities and town requiring food aid across Europe. Food imports were stretched thin in the face of the vast demand across the continent.

The weather compounded the challenges of restoring local food production to prewar levels. Winter 1946/7 was the coldest in decades, destroying late autumn crops, killing millions of livestock across the continent and British Isles, and making waterways impassable (Model 1948; Häusser/Maugg 2009: 69). The contemporary debate about resilience often turns on the question of whether nation-state and international actors have the capacity to solve post-crisis challenges, but the global food crisis in the mid-1940s suggests that there are indeed situations which outstrip the capacities of large-scale actors. These were not just questions of policy or political will, although those did play a role. Food shortages in Europe were also a product of durable limits on global food production, supply, and distribution. And even the weather.

Food was a critical issue for much of the world for much of the war, but in early 1945, the situation in Germany was far better than it was for many of the other combatants. For years, Germany had stolen resources from occupied territories, and millions of forced laborers worked German farms. Although some products were rationed as early as 1936, the food situation remained relatively steady through much of 1944. In fact, when Soviet and British soldiers arrived in Berlin in summer 1945, many noted how well fed the locals appeared to be. The end of food transfers and the liberation of forced laborers changed the situation dramatically, and in the immediate postwar period, food supply was reduced dramatically, in many cases, by as much as 40 per cent (District Office Tempelhof 1945b; Reichardt/Zierenberg 2008: 70). Even when food was available – through local production, imports, or food aid – the roads, bridges, and railways essential for the transport were badly damaged, making distribution extremely difficult. In Germany, roughly 40 per cent of motorized vehicles were unusable; and nearly 2400 train bridges, 10.000 locomotives, and 112.000 freight cars had been destroyed (ibid: 71). Food insecurity was ubiquitous, so where did food come from, and how did individuals make sure that they had enough to survive?

Surviving the Peace. Formal and Informal Strategies.

Germans could not have survived the postwar peace if not for food aid from the allies, and in May and June of 1945, the Allies authorized Berlin districts to issue roughly 1.5 million ration cards. Between August 15 and September 15, 1945, Joint Allied Commands delivered 71.000 metric tons of food aid, much of it imported from the Americas (Allied Kommandatura 1945).[7] In spite of the Allied Food Aid program, extreme hunger was widespread and in the first two years after the war, the situation got worse, not better. An average ration set at 1550 calories in summer 1945, for example, was reduced by nearly 30 per cent in just a few months. In the British zone this amounted to two slices of bread with margarine, two small potatoes, and a "ladle" of milk per person per day (Steininger 2002: 67). District administrators across Berlin agreed that this was their most pressing challenge. In a May 1946 report to district residents, for example, Tempelhof administrators expressed regret that some 80.000 individuals were not receiving rations, and asked for patience (District Office Tempelhof 1946). Just six months later, in winter 1946/7, total average rations were reduced to an average 700-800 calories across Allied zones (Häusser/Maugg 2009: 50). These calories were absolutely essential for survival, but they were not nearly enough to survive.[8]

Not everyone was happy about the rationing system. During the war, tens of millions of Russian civilians and soldiers suffered from extreme food insecurity, and many wondered why they were now responsible for supporting the Germans who were the cause of so much suffering. British public opinion was also suspicious of German demands for food aid. After all, Britons had been living on rations for years, leaving many to wonder why Germans deserved food aid while British citizens experienced continual shortages on the home front. One British MP noted that it was perhaps "the greatest joke in history. We defeat an enemy, and then call on tax payers to pay 80-100 million pounds a year to put them on their feet again" (ibid: 51). Despite the objections of some allied administrative and civilian populations, the rationing system survived until 1950.

Some in the ranks of former combatant nations were hostile to the rationing regime, but recipients *also* recognized that the system was unfair, if for different reasons. The rationing system was divided into five tiers, with those at the top in Tier I receiving more than double the ration of those in Tier V. Tier V was made up

7 Berlin, like Germany as a whole, was split into Allied occupation zones. Unlike Germany, though, Berlin was administered by a Joint Allied Command until 1948, which meant that matters like rationing were, at least in theory, administered according to a common policy.

8 Official data indicates that the death rate in Berlin jumped from 13.5 per thousand in the period 1937-39 to 53.5 per thousand in the second half of 1945. Based on a population estimate of 3.5 million, this would amount to 187.250 deaths for 1945 as compared to an average annual 47.250 deaths between 1937-39 (cp. Black 2010: 147).

of people working in non-essential professions, people who were not employed (the unemployed, for example, but also retirees and the disabled), and members of the Nazi Party. The Tier V ration card was jokingly referred to as the "Himmelfahrtskarte" – a play on the German term for the Christian holiday marking "Ascension." The pun was a good one, because the Tier V entitlement to between 500-800 calories per day was, on its own, a sure-fired "ticket to heaven". Women, many of whom were involved in professions deemed "non-essential" – like child, elder or family care – were particularly likely to fall in Tier V. (Reichardt/Zierenberg 2008: 76; Häusser/Maugg 2009: 47).

A ration card was an entitlement but not a guarantee. If trains and trucks failed to deliver flour, there was no bread. In March 1946, for example, the monthly bread ration for Hamburg ran out in the second week of the month (Steininger 2002: 67). If storms destroyed crops, fruits and vegetables became even more difficult to find. Wolfgang Herchner, who was 17 when the war ended, remembers queuing at 5am for his daily rations – typically a pot of broth (Häusser/Maugg 2009: 49). In memoirs and oral histories, these hardships take on a particular tone – they represent suffering survived. Contemporary accounts show, though, how difficult this act of surviving really was. In July 1945, Klara J., the widowed mother of four children, reported that it had been weeks since she had been able to provide her children with any meat. Her youngest son had a ration card entitling him to a milk supplement, but had only been issued ½ of a liter over a period of 25 days (District Office Tempelhof 1945a). Here, the problem was not just the ration card, but the absolute shortages. In the context of extreme scarcity, how did people like Klara and her children survive? A complex of formal and informal strategies emerged that aimed at supplementing allied food aid. The following highlights some of the difficult choices individuals made in their efforts to feed themselves and their loved ones.

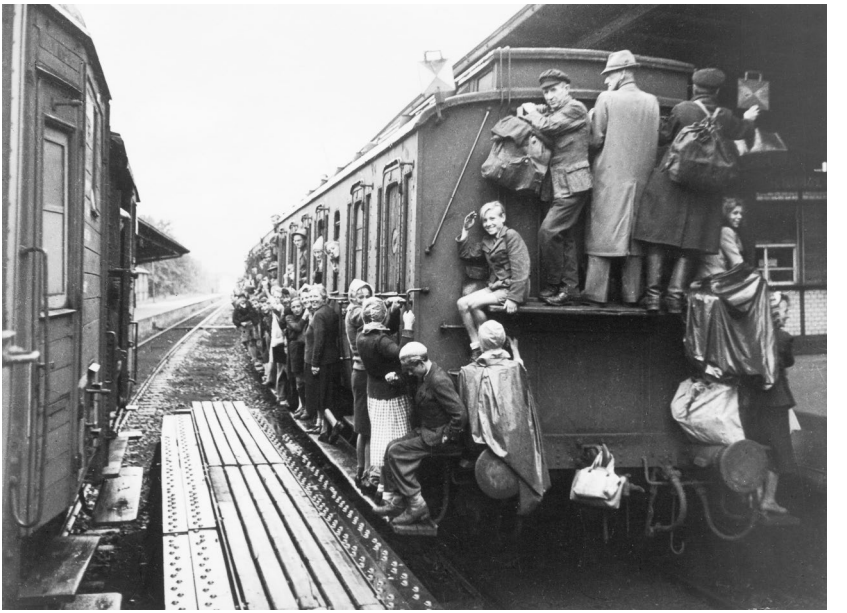
Partially because of the structure of the rationing regime, women were particularly impacted by food scarcity, and transactional sex was one of the survival strategies that was used to combat extreme precarity. (Grossmann 2009; Evans 2011). Transactional sex can take many forms, and not all, or perhaps even most of these exchanges would qualify as prostitution. Fraternization between allied personnel and women in Berlin might, for example, entail gift exchanges, intimacy, and even affection. Whatever the nature of these relationships, though, it is essential to remember that they were typically characterized by extreme power differentials between allied soldiers who had surplus food, money and fungible commodities like cigarettes; and women and girls who were trying to simply survive in desperate times. Sex and other forms of intimacy were, in the postwar years, key survival strategies for many vulnerable women (and some men). This, too, was a kind of resilience – a way to stabilize everyday life in exceptional times (Reichardt/Zierenberg 2008).

Sex was one kind of transaction, but informal trade could take a range of forms, and here, the unevenness of rationing system sometimes played an important role. In shared housing situations, for example, cohabitants frequently made implicit or explicit exchanges, trading rationed goods like cigarettes and food for more space, better living quarters, cooking utensils, bedding and so on (Prosser-Schell 2011; Antons 2014). These often complex negotiations within the household were hidden from view, but exchanges of space, food and other resources were important to postwar survival. If these kinds of exchanges were relatively hidden, the black market was everywhere visible. In illegal markets across Germany, people traded all sorts of goods – paintings and rings, baby clothes and bedding, food, medicine, licit and illicit drugs – in an effort to survive (Zierenberg, 2008). In an environment where paper currency was unstable, it was common to trade in other kinds of exchange products, and cigarettes became a preferred instrument of trade. (Steininger 2002: 26; Echternkamp 2003). Black markets were demonized by authorities, but they did give individuals increased flexibility in addressing food insecurity.

While secondary circuits helped to secure essential goods, there were times when food and fuel was simply impossible to find in cities. This led to a different but related strategy called 'hamstering', so-called because the hamsters were stuck in an endless back-and-forth circuit in the hunt for food (Häusser/Maugg 2009: 26).[9] On crowded platforms across Berlin and other German cities, the "hamsters" waited for trains to take them to the countryside - anywhere there was a chance to trade for food. The hamsters waited for hours for space in overcrowded trains. After disembarking, they would traverse the countryside, moving from village to village, farm to farm, searching for a willing exchange partner. They traded prized possessions for a few days of food and risked police controls where precious supplies would be confiscated. A young woman recounts trading her grandfather's gold watch for a sack of potatoes and a pair of apples. Hamsters, she said, never really thought about whether the time and resources were worth the return. "We had nothing to eat, so we had to trade" (ibid: 69).

9 An employee of the German Railways reported that more than 1000 people a day were departing the Stettiner Train Station for farming villages in Mecklenburg to the North. They brought with them table lamps, linens, porcelain, radios – whatever they had available – to trade for potatoes, milk, vegetables and other food stuffs.

Figure 4: Friedrich Seidenstücker, "The 'Potato-Express' at the Potsdam train station," 1946 (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz).



Hamstering, transactional sex, informal arrangements in the household, and black markets were all tactics that individuals used to survive in the immediate postwar period, but none of these did anything to solve the fundamental problem, which was the material scarcity of food and other essential supplies. Berliners may have been resilient, but rations were not enough to survive, and informal strategies did nothing to increase overall supply. In an effort to address the root-problem, cities across Germany undertook ambitious initiatives to foster urban agriculture.

Urban gardening has long been a strategy for enhancing food security in both peacetime and war, so it is unsurprising that urban green spaces across Europe were repurposed to stabilize food supply (Helphand 2008). During the war, Berliners were already planting vegetables on balconies, in courtyards and other small spaces, but in September 1945, the Berlin City Council passed an ordinance calling for a city survey to catalogue potential food production sites. This was an enormous task. They proposed to bring every possible corner of the city under cultivation. Some sites were obvious targets for urban agriculture. City parks and squares, undeveloped land and abandoned property were quickly put to use. In other cases, though,

dangerous buildings needed to be demolished and rubble removed to ensure the most productive use of precious seeds and fertilizers. The survey itself took more than two years, but the results were promising. The Central Office for Green Planning and Agriculture catalogued more than 115.000 small garden parcels totaling 5087 Hectares and an additional 49.243 parcels of undeveloped or underutilized land in Berlin (Dept. of Building and Housing 1947).[10]

Figure 5: Willy Römer, "Potato harvest in the Tiergarten," 1945 (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz).

District offices did not, of course, wait for the completed survey, and by spring 1946 local officials were distributing available gardens plots and allocating space in parks and squares. In Spring 1946, Tempelhof distributed roughly 4.5 hectares of uncultivated land to district residents, and in Wilmersdorf, the public parks and squares (e.g., Olivaerplatz and Preußenpark) were shared out among district residents. In addition to the small plots, the city provided 165.000 vegetable sproutlings to residents who were trying to supplement rations (District Office Tempelhof 1946;

10 This space - roughly 69 square kilometers – was fairly substantial. By way of comparison, it amounts to more than 75 per cent of the total area of, for example, Copenhagen.

District Office Wilmersdorf 1946; Schmidt 2008). Districts would take a portion of the harvest to be collected at a central distribution center. The scheme was hardly without problems. Urban gardeners no doubt diverted parts of their harvest into their personal stores or used them for trade on the black market. And as the city council office of nutrition warned, some districts – particularly those in the North and East of the city – were withholding the assembled harvest from central distribution points. Nevertheless, by the end of the summer harvest 1946, local production accounted for a substantial proportion of total food supply, approaching as much as 30 per cent (Häusser/Maugg 2009: 66). While this is an impressive achievement, it speaks more to the limited supply than to overall production. As historian Jürgen Schmidt points out, most of those given garden plots had little or no experience farming, the soil quality was poor, and fertilizer and seed was scarce (Schmidt 2008). Having access to a plot of land and seed certainly did not make urban gardeners self-sufficient.

The image above – gardening in the Tiergarten with the Reichstag and Russian Memorial in the back-ground – encodes what 'resilience' means to so many people in the 21st century. One can see the cause of the disruption and some of its visible effects; the hardworking people trying to draw sustenance from the soil; the repurposing of unfamiliar tools to scrape a living; a child helping mother or father. There is much that is not visible, though. The degraded soil, for one; the trades and exchanges to ensure that growing children have clothing; waiting in line and registering for a plot to garden; the insecurity of crop-yield and the threat of pilferage. If we admire people for their resilience, and I certainly do, it is essential to visibilize what it means to survive. This is even more important if we plan to call on others to be resilient.

The effort to survive extreme scarcity in the postwar combined a range of formal and informal strategies ranging from rationing and urban gardening to transactional sex and 'hamstering'. None of strategies, individually or taken together, were enough to ensure food security, and indeed, many remember the period 1945-1950 primarily in terms of persistent hunger. The postwar offers insights into a global food crisis – one where the issue is total capacity and not the lack of interest from donor nations (Trentmann 2006; Häusser/Maugg 2009: 50). The historical example of a food crisis that is simultaneously local, regional, and global may offer insights to those concerned with food security in a time of accelerating climate change.

Conclusion: Never Cry Crisis?

Postwar Berlin is, in a variety of ways, an extraordinary case. The legacies of genocidal violence and emerging geopolitical conflicts; the scale of physical destruction; the scarcity of food and building materials; the formal and informal survival strate-

gies – all of these are part of an historical record that still resonates in Berlin's urban everyday. The Berlin case is also useful for exploring questions about crisis and resilience more generally, offering potential insights into cases in different parts of the world and different time periods. It is, in fact, surprising that the postwar period has not already been comprehensively mined by resilience researchers and practitioners to generate insights into the challenges of surviving and rebuilding after catastrophe (Ladd 2005; Obschonka et al. 2017). For one thing, the postwar period is in the DNA of the debate between "regulationists" and neoliberals, informing the ways that each of these camps imagines the state's role in managing crisis and rebuilding after disaster (Mirowski 2014). The present case does not pretend to settle this debate, or the debate between advocates of resilience and their critics that was briefly sketched out in the introduction. It does show, however, that there are indeed instances in which state actors across scales lack the capacity to address life-threatening challenges like widespread homelessness or food-scarcity, as some advocates of resilience have argued. It also shows, and this is more important in my view, what resilience means for the people who live through profound disruptions. Berlin is an extreme example of the kinds of challenge that resilience claims to address, and in part because it is an extreme case, it illuminates the way that global disruptions differ from local or regional ones, creating different kinds of challenges for individual, state, and non-state actors.

This article attempted simultaneously to do several things. It showed the scale and scope of disruption to housing and provisioning; it explored some of the formal and informal strategies for addressing those disruptions; and it highlighted reasons why these disruptions were so difficult to solve, and so painful to survive. Most importantly, though, the article attempted to draw our attention to the particular challenges that arise when addressing intersectional crises that cascade across scales and geographies. The Berlin case, for example, shows that postwar housing and food crises were caused not just by aerial bombing and damage to the agricultural sector, but also by the regional pressures on building materials, machinery and human resources; population displacements occurring on regional and global scales; and food scarcity and weather events that were global in nature. This article suggests that, when talking about resilience in particular, and rebuilding in general, it is extremely important to distinguish between local, regional, and global disruptions (Held/Young 2011). As Diefendorf (2009) has argued, for example, rebuilding New Orleans in 2005 demands a different approach than rebuilding Berlin in 1945: in 2005, the resources and capacity to rebuild were available, while in 1945, they were not. New Orleans residents were right to demand that the media, state, and civil society actors stop applauding resilience and get to work supporting citizens in need. Berlin residents had no real hope that state intervention, whether local, federal, or international, could address shortages and material destruction in a timely way.

One troubling implication of this article is that there are global crises that exceed the capacity of state and other large-scale actors to effectively intervene. There were, of course, policy choices and geopolitical conflicts which retarded the process of rebuilding Berlin, stabilizing food supply, and addressing population displacement. But the entanglement of multiple disruptions across different scales meant that many people in Berlin would live in temporary shelters, cellars, and homes without walls for years; that many people would suffer from malnutrition for years; and that the best intentions in the world could not resolve the situation. This was a matter of capacity, and not political will or policy failure (although those, too, were abundant). The Berlin case suggests that there are instances when the terrible burden of surviving catastrophe has and will fall disproportionately on individuals. It also suggests that stakeholders should be extremely cautious in their calls for resilience, because the work of surviving is miserable work. All of this is worth considering for those who rightly argue that imminent challenges – most notably, climate change – are likely to overwhelm global capacity across a variety of crisis categories, geographies, and scales.

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