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Lockdown, resilience and emergency statecraft in the Cape Town food system

Florian Kroll [a,*], Camilla Adelle [b]

[a] Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies and DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security, University of the Western Cape, Robert Sobukwe Road, Bellville, Western Cape 7535, South Africa
[b] Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Well before the Covid-19 pandemic, rapidly growing cities of the global South were at the epicenter of multiple converging crises affecting food systems. Globally, government lockdown responses to the disease triggered shocks which cascaded unevenly through urban food systems, exacerbating food insecurity. Cities worldwide developed strategies to mitigate shocks, but research on statecraft enabling food systems resilience is sparse. Addressing this gap, we analyse the case of the African metropolis of Cape Town, where lockdown disrupted livelihoods, mobility and food provision, deepening food insecurity. Employing a vital systems security lens, we show how civil society and state networks mobilised to mitigate and adapt to lockdown impacts. Building on preceding institutional transformations, civil society and state collaborated to deliver emergency food aid, while advocacy networks raised food on the political agenda, formulated proposals, and navigated these through a widened policy window. Emergency statecraft assembled networks and regulatory instruments to secure food systems, enhance preparedness for future disruptions and present opportunities for transition towards more sustainable food systems. However, current food systems configuration enabled powerful actors to resist deeper transformation while devolving impacts to community networks. Despite resilient vested interests and power disparities, advocacy coalitions can anticipate and leverage crises to incrementally advance transformational, pro-poor statecraft.

1. Introduction

Although food shapes urbanism, it has been largely neglected in urban policy and governance discourse, while the urban has been widely ignored in food security policy and research (Battersby & Watson, 2019). As the Covid-19 pandemic and associated regulatory responses rippled across the globe, many cities experienced food systems disruptions which exacerbated food insecurity, sparking diverse adaptations (Bisoffi et al., 2021; FAO, 2020). While previous policy responses to food systems crisis increased vulnerabilities by pursuing efficiency gains through intensification and economic concentration, this pandemic represents an inflection point requiring different government responses that promote food systems transformation (Clapp & Moseley, 2020). However, little attention has thus far been paid to processes of statecraft whereby urban government officials propose strategic goals and develop capabilities to secure and transform these vital systems (Akinwumi, 2013; Collier & Lakoff, 2015). To address this gap, we analyse emergency statecraft promoting food systems resilience in the metropolis of Cape Town (Fig. 1).

Amid a flurry of statecraft responding to the Covid-19 lockdown crisis in Cape Town, a set of novel policies and institutional forms coalesced, intended to coherently govern urban food systems. How, after over a decade of apparently fruitless research advocacy for food systems governance, did the lockdown crisis enable such a sudden shift? The aims of this paper are thus to address specific research gaps on how the Covid-19 lockdown crisis influenced metropolitan emergency statecraft to transform food systems governance, and how this may affect resilience capability. Cape Town, a metropolis of 4.8 million people at the tip of Africa, faces governance challenges common to metropoles in the global South where rapid population growth, infrastructure constraints, economic concentration, poverty, and informality intersect (UN Habitat, 2020).

Addressing these research gaps therefore presents opportunities to understand dynamics relevant beyond both South Africa and the

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: florian@plaas.org.za (F. Kroll), camilla.adelle@up.ac.za (C. Adelle).

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thematic focus on food systems. Indeed, though the pandemic and regulatory responses affecting metropoles elsewhere in the world are abating, future zoonotic pandemics can be expected among multiple shocks emanating from climate change, biodiversity loss and political upheaval. These shocks are converging with an urban transition which is transforming the global South at an unprecedented scale and pace. UN Habitat estimates that 2000 metropoles currently accommodate a third of the world's population. By 2035 more than half the global population will live in metropoles, situating pursuit of sustainable development goals firmly in urban contexts marked by poverty, inequality, infrastructure constraints and informality. This places cities and urban food systems at the epicenter of multiple governance challenges amid intersecting shocks that affect populations unevenly (UN Habitat, 2020). Our inquiry is therefore of global relevance to urban studies and policy.

Though emergency statecraft is our central concern, we contextualise our inquiry with a literature review that charts the conceptual terrain of food systems resilience and governance, then surveys global responses to lockdown food systems disruption, before focusing more specifically on impacts on the Cape Town food system. Interpreting food systems as socioeconomic and infrastructure systems essential to population wellbeing, we then integrate two theories of statecraft – vital systems security (Collier & Lakoff, 2015) and policy windows (Kingdon, 2014) - to organise and analyse our findings. The policy windows framing structures our findings in terms of i) preceding stresses, crises and incremental statecraft; ii) lockdown impacts on the state; and iii) responses to the metropolitan food systems crisis, which we organise as absorptive, adaptive and transformative in accordance with the food systems resilience framing (Béné et al., 2016). The vital systems security framing sharpens our analytical gaze for key issues that shape our discussion, namely future preparedness, distributional politics, and trade-offs determining the transformative potential of emergency statecraft. We conclude with general recommendations to guide transformational metropolitan statecraft promoting future crisis resilience of those most vulnerable.

2. Literature review

2.1. Food systems resilience and governance

We understand urban food systems as dynamic networked assemblages of actors, activities and relationships that produce, process, distribute and sell food to urban populations. These systems are sustained by multiple infrastructural networks providing water, power, transport, shelter and sanitation (Ingram, 2011; Wiskerke, 2015). Complex adaptive systems framings emphasise resource flows, interconnections and feedbacks, and assess resilience to sudden shocks and gradual stresses (Battersby, 2012; Ericksen, 2008). Food systems resilience research evaluates vulnerabilities and capabilities to adapt to various stresses and shocks (Béné, 2020; Béné et al., 2016). Resilience emerges from the capacity to cope with strain and disruption with responses ranging from i) absorption without significant change, via ii) incremental adaptive change maintaining the status-quo, iii) deeper structural transformation or finally iv) collapse (Béné et al., 2016). Resilience capacity can be evaluated in terms of assets and capabilities developed in response to prior disruptions (Béné, 2020). However, food systems are internally diverse and entangled with wider systems. It is therefore important to consider food systems resilience not just from the perspective of the "whole system", but to explore differential impacts on, resilience capacity and power of its sub-assemblages.

Despite persistent advocacy on failures and vulnerabilities of food systems (e.g. Battersby et al., 2014), they resist structural change. Systems theorists interpret food systems transformation as a "***wicked problem***" - stubbornly persistent due to the co-evolution of complex systemic feedback loops and constellations of power (Bisoffi et al., 2021; Candel, 2014; De Schutter, 2017). To promote transition to sustainable and just food systems, researchers propose pluralistic governance mechanisms promoting institutional and policy coherence and multi-sectoral collaboration (Candel, 2014; Haysom, 2015). Haysom (2021) cautions that unfunded mandates and absent authority limit the viability of such approaches in the global South. He proposes instead that immediate opportunities to mitigate urban food insecurity in the long term can be leveraged by sensitising existing urban planning processes to food systems implications.

2.2. Responses to lockdown disruption of urban food systems globally

The importance of food systems transformation and the need to incorporate food systems thinking within urban planning became clearer as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which triggered a global food systems shock (Bisoffi et al., 2021; FAO, 2020). Worldwide, cities developed various responses to mitigate food system impacts, including market monitoring, direct food distribution, providing meals through dedicated food kitchens and school meal programmes, logistical support for distribution, financial aid through food vouchers and/or cash transfers, supporting community food production. The essential role played by non-state actors in mitigating the crisis is clear, but their role

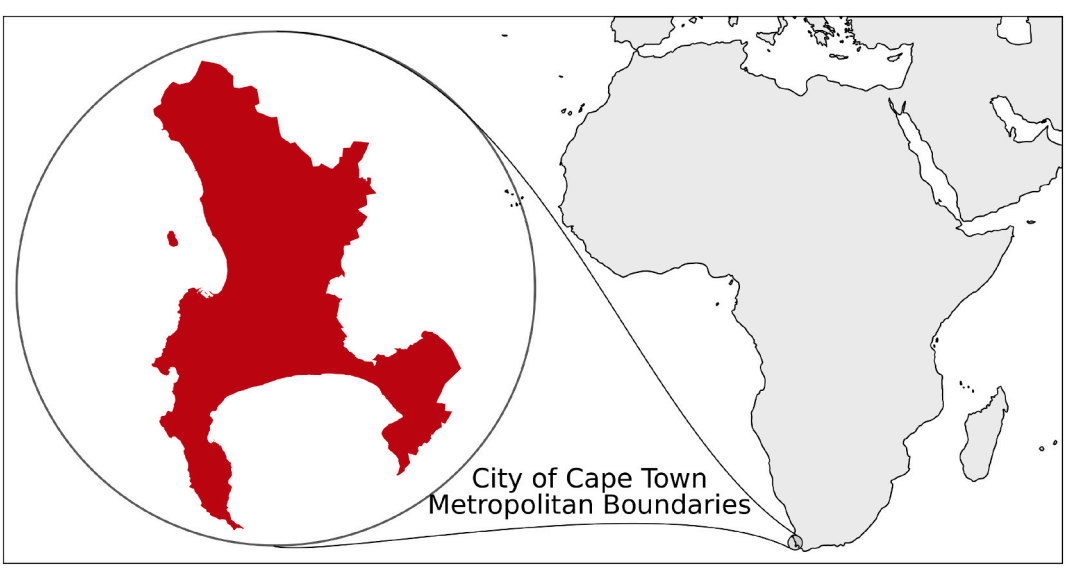

Fig. 1. City of Cape Town metropolitan boundaries.

in emergency statecraft is poorly understood. Studies that explore urban food systems adaptation during to Covid-19 lockdown (e.g. Zhong et al., 2021) describe state-led innovations that were ultimately inadequate to prevent food insecurity. Proposed interventions include shortening supply chains, economic support to healthy food businesses, protecting and supporting informal workers and food suppliers, improving food-sector recruitment and retention, keeping food local and reducing waste by redistributing surplus (Bisoffi et al., 2021; FAO, 2020).

These reports of adaptation do not contextualise innovations and neglect the differential power, vulnerability and resilience capacity of food systems actors. They gloss over the role of the state in shaping the field of possible adaptation even though food systems resilience is inextricably linked with power and statecraft. In urban governance responses globally, poor vertical coordination with National spheres of government was common, devolution of power or resources inadequate, and cities often executed National decisions, resulting in inconsistent implementation and lack of clarity (FAO, 2020). The crisis sparked the establishment of new committees, often pioneering ways to improve food access in partnership with local organisations, thus leveraging broader stakeholder participation, and in many cases establishing new policies. Local governments' potential to promote longer-term food strategy and planning beyond charity and emergency has, however, not been broadly realised (FAO, 2020).

Overview literature on lockdown mitigation does not discuss local economic and political conditions in which responses emerged. A deeper exploration of statecraft in particular cases is needed to understand how top-down regulatory interventions were interpreted and implemented, how new institutions and policies were developed, and their broader implications for resilience capacity and transformation. To contribute towards addressing this knowledge gap, we conducted a longitudinal case study of statecraft in response to lockdown in Cape Town.

2.3. Cape Town food system and lockdown impacts

As is true in the rest of South Africa (Greenberg, 2017), a concentrated core of large food corporations dominates the Cape Town food system, supplying informal street traders and small shops which offer convenient food access to poor households. Processing, distribution, and retail are significant elements of the Cape Town food system, and the past fifteen years have seen a rapid expansion of supermarkets and transnational informal retail networks. The metropolis is a food export hub, including a fishing industry dominated by large corporations (Battersby et al., 2014; Haysom et al., 2017). As a consequence of deep and pervasive poverty and inequality, its population experiences high levels of food insecurity - 54 % of households reported food insecurity (Crush et al., 2018), with up to 89 % in poor areas (Battersby, 2011). South Africa is undergoing a nutrition transition (Muzigaba et al., 2016) exacerbating the double burden of malnutrition. 22.9 % of children under five in the Western Cape were stunted while 43.7 % of men and 73.7 % of women were overweight or obese (National Department of Health, and ICF, 2017). Poor areas of Cape Town offer limited access to healthy food, and widespread access to staples and ultraprocessed food promotes obesity and non-communicable diseases (Kroll et al., 2019). Spatial and economic fragmentation of the city compounds socioeconomic and nutritional stresses, exacerbating vulnerability to the disease and the lockdown.

The South African state consists of four administrative tiers fragmented by multiple sectoral mandates. The metropolitan food governance terrain is shaped by various strategies, policies, planning instruments and by-laws located across almost all local and several provincial institutions (De Visser, 2019; Kroll, 2021; Smit, 2016). South African National government declared a state of disaster 15 March 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). This led to a series of emergency regulations (Republic of South Africa, 2020b; Republic of South Africa, 2020c). National government's lockdown was heavily securitised and allegedly led to at least twelve deaths and 230,000 arrests at the hands of security forces (Haffajee, 2020). This initially heavy-handed and violent lockdown regime triggered massive economic disruption (Tooze, 2021) which cascaded through urban economies and food systems, deepening food insecurity. Though lockdown regulations classified food as an essential good, exempting production, distribution and sale from restrictions, lockdown disrupted various Cape Town food system components, including informal retail, formal wholesale and distribution, retail, service, urban agriculture, fisheries, school and early childhood feeding schemes and emergency food aid. One significant initial impact was the closure of street traders and informal shops (Skinner & Watson, 2020; Wegerif, 2020). The status of the informal economy was ambiguous and ministerial statements heightened xenophobic tensions (Sizani, 2020). Informal street traders were unable to trade for several weeks, reducing passing trade and income (FGCoP1; FGCoP6). Many traders used up re-stocking capital to cover household expenses, and were unable to resume trading amid deepening debt (Wegerif, 2020). Some traders struggled to access supplies as upstream businesses had closed (FGCoP1). This simultaneously disrupted precarious livelihoods and removed essential sources of staples and fresh produce from poorer neighbourhoods. Prepared street food access stopped, and social food sharing networks were disrupted.

Formal-sector retail, distribution centers and centralised fresh produce markets leveraged considerable financial, organisational and legal resources to comply with lockdown. Some supermarkets closed due to employee infection (Evans, 2020), but retailers rapidly implemented measures to mitigate risk, including compulsory masking, hand-sanitiser stations at entrances, maximum customer number restrictions, demarcations for customer spacing at tills, and personal protective equipment for cashiers and food handling staff. Closure of school feeding schemes, the sole reliable source of food for poor children, constituted another severe impact. Longer distances to retailers and public transport restrictions increased provisioning costs.

Recognising the vulnerability of small enterprises and food insecure households, food systems actors and policy advocates mobilised to mitigate lockdown impacts. In contrast to national government's militarised lockdown, local and provincial mitigation efforts entailed enhanced surveillance and engagement with civil society food relief, adoption of a Food Systems Programme, and the emergence of new food governance networks. These developments offer tantalising prospects of deeper transformation of both food systems and government.

This rapid shift in the food governance landscape after more than a decade of advocacy presents opportunities to better understand how crises permit dynamic transformation of seemingly inert government arrangements. Our approach interrogates food systems resilience capacity with theories of emergency statecraft. Triangulating multiple sources of data, we describe preceding shocks and statecraft, lockdown impacts on provincial and metropolitan government, and responses to the food systems crisis. Analysing our findings, we discuss how government capabilities developed by emergency statecraft may enhance preparedness for future crises, how stresses and resources are distributed, and what novel resilience capacities mean for transition to sustainable, nourishing food systems.

2.4. Theories on emergency statecraft: policy windows and vital systems security

Our research questions are informed by two theoretical frameworks on statecraft: policy windows and vital systems security (Collier & Lakoff, 2015; Kingdon, 2014). Integrating policy windows with the vital systems security framing permits broader inferences about how emergency statecraft can enhance crisis preparedness, how distributional politics shape resilience unevenly and what this means for systemic transformation of power constellations resistant to change. Kingdon theorised that policy windows open when crises converge with shifts in the political stream - "*public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions and changes of administration*"

(Kingdon, 2014:145). Policy problems then become visible and can be placed on the agenda, innovations can be proposed and novel governance instruments incorporated within state architecture. This framing highlights the influence of various stakeholders: networks of officials, academia and civil society play key roles in these practices of statecraft, weaving alliances, developing policy narratives, formulating proposals, identifying windows of opportunity and taking advantage of them to reconfigure and deploy instruments of state power while previously rigid structures are in flux (Collier & Lakoff, 2015; Kingdon, 2014). The Covid-19 lockdown presents just such a crisis.

The analytical lens of vital systems security (Collier & Lakoff, 2015) appears particularly useful in understanding how metropolitan and provincial government developed new capabilities to govern urban food systems in response to lockdown. Centralised governments frequently manage crises by imposing states of exception suspending conventional legality and centralising power to enable urgent executive action (Schmitt, 2014) - precisely what many National governments did with lockdown. Vital systems security represents a different mode of statecraft: one that safeguards population wellbeing against the threat of unpredictable but potentially catastrophic emergencies by securing vital socioeconomic and infrastructure systems. However, vital systems security involves complex distributional politics on resource allocation and tradeoffs concerning whom to "make live", whom to "let be" and whom to "let die" (Collier & Lakoff, 2015; Li, 2007). Vital systems security promotes preparedness for crises firstly by making the vulnerabilities of key population groups, socioeconomic and infrastructure systems visible and legible, problematizing and making them amenable to strategic deliberation ("surveillance"), and secondly by establishing novel institutions and networks enabling adaptive coordination and collaboration. To link with food systems resilience theories (Béné, 2020), we interpret these instruments of power as adaptive state capabilities and assets.

3. Materials and methods

To understand the processes of statecraft galvanised by the Covid-19 lockdown crisis, we undertook a descriptive longitudinal case study reflecting on statecraft during a multi-year action-research programme on food governance. Our research explores the period preceding and during lockdown in 2020–2021. As the research questions and social processes studied are complex and dynamic, our narrative triangulates several sources of data (Table 1).

To understand lockdown impacts on governance, statecraft and rationalities of officials and actors beyond the state, we conducted twelve online interviews with officials. We gathered further insights from nine online stakeholder workshops convened under the auspices of the Food Governance Community of Practice from March 2020 to August 2021, usually attended by between thirty and seventy participants. These entailed specialist presentations followed by expert panel commentary leading into open deliberation by participants. These led to several online stakeholders focus group workshops reflecting on lockdown challenges and innovations in three topics - informal trade, urban agriculture, and civil society.

This research methodology enabled us to gather a broad range of qualitative data informed by the views and experiences of officials and other stakeholders. Although the longitudinal approach permits insights into statecraft during this time, this is an ongoing process, the outcomes of which are provisional. As participant selection was purposive and convenient, based on the interest and availability of respondents, the sample is not representative of either the food system or of state institutions. Ethics approval was granted by the UWC Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HS18/5/13; HS21/7/17). We structure our findings in terms of 1) preceding vulnerabilities, stresses, shocks, 2) disruptive effects of the lockdown crisis, 3) impacts, 4) adaptive responses, 5) transformations (see Fig. 2).

Table 1
Research methodology and data sources.

Research interest	Method	Participants	Period
Preceding stresses, shocks and statecraft	Literature review	–	–
Key impacts, food governance issues and responses;	9 online stakeholder workshops	Officials, activists, academics	April 2020–August 2021
Statecraft and rationality of officials	12 semi-structured interviews	State officials	February 2020–July 2020
Key food governance themes	Online focus-group workshops	Officials, activists, academics	March 2020–November 2021
Analysis and interpretation	Thematic analysis	–	

4. Results

4.1. Shifting currents: preceding stresses, shocks and statecraft

Multiple stressors and shocks arising from land, climate and water infrastructure systems converged prior to lockdown, eliciting statecraft that shaped lockdown crisis response. Acute recent shocks included political changes, contestation of the Philippi Horticultural Area (a key food production and aquifer recharge asset), a protracted drought compounded by lacking water infrastructure development (Day Zero), and listeriosis contamination. The 2011–2018 mayor centralised power under her office, establishing several new institutions: the Corporate Services Directorate consolidated government functions, including the Policy and Strategy Unit which coordinates policy development, and the Urban Management Directorate coordinated line departments around a district development approach. This period coincided with a factional struggle within the city, including attempts to unlock the Philippi Horticultural Area for speculators and property developers. Political uncertainty and administrative risk suppressed a report detailing Cape Town food system vulnerabilities and its harmful consequences, stifling calls for systemic food governance (A; D; F; Battersby et al., 2014; Olver, 2019).

As this struggle came to a head in 2017–2018, the city faced water shortages (Day Zero). Policy champions leveraged this crisis to establish a novel institution within the Corporate Services Directorate - the Resilience Department - which developed a Resilience Strategy (City of Cape Town, 2019). Though aimed at identifying key stresses and likely shocks, the strategy neglected a possible pandemic. In response to the water crisis, the resilience unit convened an informal food working group, developing networks of officials within the city and province (H). This supported knowledge sharing and provided a platform for academic policy advocates to present research. Officials developed a shared food systems governance narrative that elevated food systems governance on the policy agenda and developed support for this proposal (Kroll, 2021).

A political change of guard towards the end of 2018 defused the factional struggle within the City of Cape Town (D; F). Policy champions in the Resilience Department interpreted the new mayor's interest in urban agriculture as a green light to promote food systems governance (H). The embargoed food systems report was rehabilitated, informing the resilience strategy. As a result of this report and relationships with researchers, food insecurity found its way into the list of prioritised stresses, leading to a food systems programme proposal. With the ratification of the Resilience Strategy in August 2019, food systems governance had made its way onto the policy agenda after about a decade of advocacy and contestation.

Development of the proposed Food Systems Programme began before lockdown, involving a review of the urban population's food security status and foodways, essential food system features and vulnerabilities, as well as an audit of policies and institutions regulating the

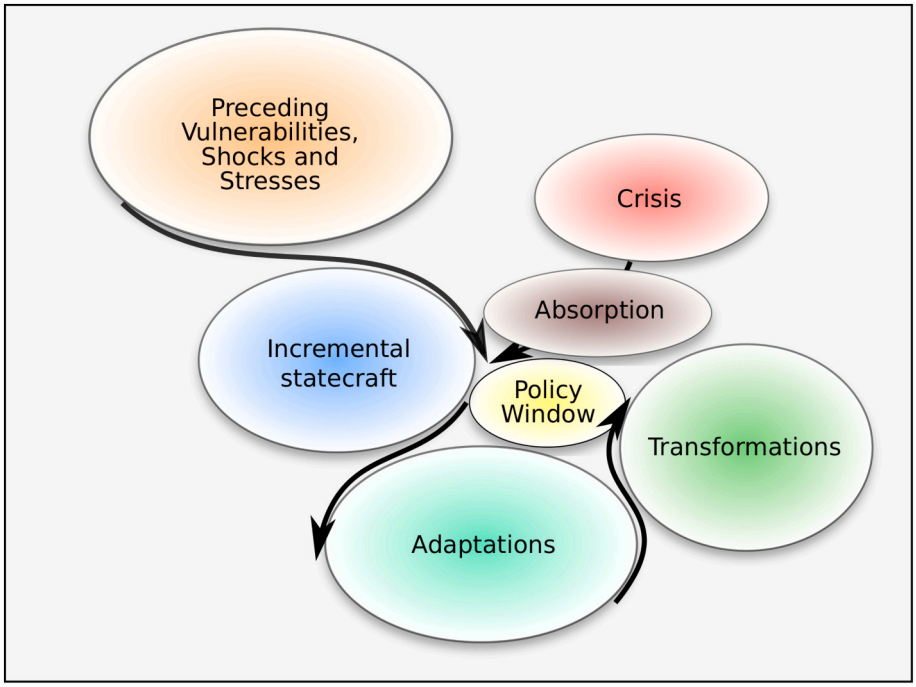

Fig. 2. Schematic overview of framing.

metropolitan food system. These policy innovations were influenced by the draft Provincial Food Security Strategic Framework (Western Cape Government, 2016). This framework, the Resilience Strategy and the Food Systems Programme, had been developed in consultation with researchers. These preceding stresses, shocks and processes of statecraft developed institutions, policies and networks which sensitised policy actors to food system risks and vulnerabilities and assembled a menu of policy options. This enabled policy networks in the City to respond rapidly to lockdown.

4.2. Lockdown impacts on systems of government

Declaration of a state of disaster and release of the Lockdown Regulations shifted the governance terrain, deepening regulatory uncertainty. Firstly, all other state mandates relating to economy, social welfare and service delivery were subordinated to the imperative to attenuate the pandemic. Secondly, to ensure that national directives cascaded effectively to provincial and local spheres, the department of co-operative governance and traditional affairs enjoyed elevated authority. Thirdly, provincial Disaster Risk Management structures assumed a central, coordinating role. Fourthly, many officials had to transition to remote working, where personal communication infrastructure determined collaborative capabilities. Finally, informal food trade regulation, previously the domain of urban management and environmental health officials, was increasingly a law enforcement responsibility. Shifting institutional structures and hierarchies triggered internal contestation, and policy ambiguities presented opportunities for arbitrary enforcement. In what follows, we consider how the impacts of food and governance systems disruption were differentially absorbed, how actors adapted, and what impulses for deeper transformation emerged.

4.3. Absorptive capacities

Poor people bore the brunt of the lockdown impact as a consequence of livelihood shocks affecting precarious employment, deepening poverty, rising food prices (PMBEJD, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2021) and food systems disruptions. This exacerbated food insecurity and childhood hunger (Statistics SA, 2020; van der Berg et al., 2021). Initially, just less than half of households nationwide reported running out of money to buy food, subsequently stabilising at just over a third. Levels of household hunger initially more than doubled from about 10 % to 23 %, and remained elevated to 17 %. Although mothers shielded children from hunger by reducing their own consumption, child hunger remains high at 15 % (van der Berg et al., 2021). Food insecurity affected between 27 % and 89 % of respondents in 5 Cape Town communities surveyed (Paganini et al., 2021). Draft regulations considered by the CoGTA minister prohibited CSO distribution of food parcels, insisting that the state should centrally co-ordinate relief efforts (Republic of South Africa, 2020d). Emergency food relief initiatives were also initially hampered by guidelines prohibiting provision of prepared meals. Though subsequently relaxed, National government still imposed requirements for registration and compliance with safety guidelines (FGCoP2).

When lockdown disrupted food access, the need for food relief outstripped state capacity to deliver. National food relief responses were slow and marred by allegations of nepotism and corruption. Bureaucracy hampered emergency food relief delivery, and budgets allocated were inadequate and inefficiently administered (Seekings, 2020). Civil society organisations stepped into the breach, shifting emphasis to emergency food relief. United by a sense of emergency, individuals, street committees, local community-based feeding schemes, food kitchens and food parcel distribution schemes mobilised. Local community organisations coalesced in the Cape Town Together Community Action Networks (CTTCAN), coordinating responses through area-based whatsapp groups. Large food relief organisations ramped up operations, many supplying community-based initiatives (FGCoP2; FGCoP7; Authors). The City contested the CoGTA minister's draft directives prohibiting provision of cooked meals (City of Cape Town, 2020). Civil society provided at least half of the food relief in the Western Cape in the first few months of lockdown and continued to provide food relief more than eighteen months later.

4.4. Adaptive responses

Lessons emerging during initial relief efforts enabled local state and

civil society to adapt in several ways.

4.4.1. Licensing and resumption of trading

A flurry of internal consultations led to a formal query of the National lockdown regulations, which was followed by further clarification from National government that informal trade could indeed operate. However, this depended on permits, imposing the need for traders to comply with novel requirements. In the City of Cape Town, the urban management directorate distributed licensing across twelve municipal offices which many traders to resume work (FGCoP1; FGCoP7). The novel permitting process encouraged new entrants to claim trading rights, upsetting customary arrangements. Officials recognise the need to revise trading regulations post-COVID-19 as current demarcation-based strategies may not support adequate physical distancing. These changes may enable the state to respond more effectively to informal sector representatives' demands for recognition, less red tape, and a more enabling environment including provision of business support, skills development, unemployment insurance, sanitation, water and storage facilities (FGCoP1; FGCoP6; FGCoP9).

4.4.2. Building food system surveillance capacity

The crisis spurred attempts to make the food system, population vulnerability and the food relief landscape more visible and legible to officials and policy makers. As conventional governance instruments to alleviate poverty were inadequate and emergency grants were slow to roll out, officials realised that they needed to leverage CSO networks and knowledge to enable food relief (FGCoP2; FGCoP7; FGCoP8; Author). However, the state lacked mechanisms to collaborate with CSOs. Recognising that records of CSOs were outdated and incomplete, the City of Cape Town, the Western Cape Government's Disaster Risk Management unit and the WCEDP conducted rapid audits of civil society organisations providing food relief. This included collating databases of large NGO operations as well as many smaller civil society and community-based organisations. Multiple pre-existing databases from different City and Provincial sources were collated and checked for currency, eliminating redundant or outdated entries. The Food Forum enabled the collection of detailed information on emergency food distribution. This contributed to the development of novel surveillance capabilities culminating in an interactive humanitarian relief dashboard which enabled City and Province to track resource allocation and distribution. Various indices were combined to map socioeconomic vulnerability across the city to enable more effective targeting of relief. The development of the Food Programme and the flow diagrams and institutional mapping this contains is another key outcome. It is informed by the overall aims outlined by the Resilience Strategy and the earlier food systems study commissioned by the City (Battersby et al., 2014).

4.4.3. Unlocking resources

Recognising the dire circumstances and large number of food insecure households, the City allocated an emergency budget of 40 million Rand (~2.6mUSD) over two consecutive years. As food security interventions exceed formal urban governance mandates, posing accountability risks, city officials framed this as a "grant in aid" based on savings made from ward allocations. This is a crucial example of agile and creative statecraft. Resources were allocated evenly across all wards despite divergent vulnerabilities revealed by surveillance instruments. The city also leveraged partnerships with the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) initiative and the German Development Corporation via an intermediary development bank. Further resources were allocated by the National Solidarity Fund. Funding allocation allowed the city to provide food aid packages and support to community food kitchens. The application process to access funding and report on expenditure was onerous, exceeding the capabilities of smaller agencies and diverting scarce human resources (MayCo presentation 8 June 2021).

4.4.4. Developing food relief partnerships

CSO relief networks distributed a total of 96,000 food parcels (WC Humanitarian Relief Dashboard, accessed 1 September 2021). Beneficiary identification was initially delegated to ward councillors. This was subsequently altered to allow CBOs to identify beneficiaries through local networks. Although large CSOs initially distributed food parcels, these were perceived as prescriptive and patronising. Beneficiary identification and aid distribution posed logistical complexities. Large organisations were more easily able to comply with reporting requirements, mediated between the state authorising environment and the community-based mobilising environment (FGCoP2; FGCoP7; FGCoP8; Author; Hamann et al., 2020). These intermediary organisations enabled community food kitchens to provide large numbers of meals to needy individuals (WC Humanitarian Relief Dashboard, accessed 1 September 2021).

4.4.5. CSOs converge in Food Forum

With the onset of lockdown, the WCEDP, an entity partially funded by the City's economic development directorate, began co-ordinating civil society responses to food insecurity, developing networks among community-based organisations as well as among larger, more established NGOs providing food relief. The EDP convened regular online meetings with CAN representatives and larger aid organisations, facilitating rapid development and sharing of practical learnings. The EDP leveraged its convening power and position as intermediary between state and civil society to formalise this network under the banner of the Western Cape Food Forum (FGCoP8; FGCoP9; Authors; Hamann et al., 2020).

4.4.6. Vouchers

Recent advances in payment technologies using cellphone technology enabled various NGOs and state initiatives to pilot the distribution of food vouchers via sms. These vouchers, redeemable with local traders and supermarkets, allowed individuals and organisations to purchase food through conventional market channels. These systems enabled resources to be allocated rapidly and flexibly, promoting the agency of individuals and organisations in addressing food insecurity and stimulating local economic recovery. This enabled donors to avoid the logistical challenges of food parcels, which is how the government had previously distributed emergency aid. Savings accruing from voucher use could be re-allocated to purchase fresh produce and electricity, indirectly enhancing dietary diversity. The VPUU embedded its voucher system within an ecosystem of activities including support for urban agriculture, local creches and community wifi (FGCoP9).

Voucher systems were not without challenges. Frequent change and loss of cellphones, the novelty of the system and widespread mistrust of sms scams hindered uptake and use of resources. Donors and intermediary organisations required thorough records of voucher allocation and use. Service providers were not equipped to deal with the sudden increase in demand for vouchers. Some informal shops charged commissions for the use of vouchers. Community aid schemes indicated that vouchers redeemable in small informal shops prevented purchase of better-priced supplies from supermarkets. However, large retailers tried to negotiate for exclusive agreements in return for discounts which would allow them to capture and monopolise aid resource streams. Managing these challenges required consistent engagement, learning and support from donor organisations and intermediaries like the EDP and VPUU, incurring significant costs (FGCoP8; FGCoP9).

4.4.7. Urban agriculture

Urban agriculture has been a consistent state and civil society response to food insecurity in Cape Town (Battersby & Marshak, 2013). National disaster regulations led to a lack of clarity about the role and regulation of urban agriculture, disrupting supply of fresh produce to consumers. This initially reduced income for urban farmers, exacerbating poverty. Farmers and advocacy organisations developed new

distribution strategies, alliances and networks including more direct links between producers and consumers, and supplied food relief schemes directly. Online platforms developed novel ways to supply affluent markets to generate incomes for farmers. Lockdown disruption created space for the emergence of alternative, localised food systems that emphasised self-reliance and sovereignty. Arising from the CTTCAN, the CTT Food Growers Initiative mobilised around urban agriculture. These developments informed state debate about incorporating urban agriculture within land use planning as well as revision of urban agriculture policies (FGCoP3; FGCoP8; Adelle & Haywood, 2021; Hamann et al., 2020).

4.5. Transformative impulses

Although most lockdown responses entailed buffering and adaptation, some changes present potential for deeper transformation. Intensification of transversal and intersectoral deliberation processes enabled the adoption of food systems discourse at senior levels (Mayoral committee meeting, 8 June 2021), elevating food on the policy agenda, enabling advocacy networks to navigate the Food Systems Programme through the policy window presented by lockdown. The Food Systems Programme collates indicators on food security, presents a sketch of the food system and foodways, identifies the institutions and policy levers by which the metro governs its food system, and defines its desired future state as able to "provide sufficient healthy, sustainable and fair food to all in the face of chronic stresses and sudden shocks". It proposes actions in six thematic areas, namely Governance, Resilience, Production, Environments, Health and Economy. Proposed governance actions include formalisation of the food working group, enhanced research, surveillance and reporting, partnerships and collaboration, and inclusion of food in existing policies. The resilience theme proposes development of flow models, disaster response management, scenario planning, and improved safety net support. The food environment theme suggests inclusion of food as a lens in spatial planning and support for both informal and formal food economy.

Strengthened networks resulting from the establishment of the Food Working Group, the Food Governance Community of Practice, the Food Forum and the CTTCAN have created fertile ground for deliberative and participatory food governance approaches to take root. To the extent that these are able to influence overarching strategic thinking, inform policy revision and establishment of institutions for democratic local food governance, they offer prospects for deeper transition to food systems promoting better nutritional outcomes and environmental sustainability. These networks have allowed the introduction of food sensitive spatial planning at metropolitan and provincial level (Haysom, 2021). This reasoning has informed the formulation of place-based governance pilot projects in three locations across the province, one of which, Langa, is located in the City. These initiatives will prioritise the nutritional needs of children under five, strengthen local food and farming initiatives to improve access, generate dense and multifaceted data to plan and evaluate responses, and leverage partnerships. Finally, following the election of the 2022 mayor, the Resilience Department was elevated to a Directorate of Future Planning and Resilience, while resilience was incorporated as a foundational element within the 2022 Integrated Development Plan, a key strategic document setting out metropolitan government priorities.

5. Discussion

We have noted how converging stresses and shocks incubated novel food governance capacities prior to the Covid crisis. As in other cases (FAO, 2020), Covid-19 emergency regulations were imposed by National government with poor devolution of authority and resources. This created a state of exception informed by the medical rationality of containment. We showed how the crisis disrupted both food and governance systems. Livelihoods and nutrition were traded off to "flatten the curve" and avoid overburdening health infrastructure. South African lockdown allowed large corporate enterprises free rein (i.e. "let be") and in fact supported them through fiscal interventions ("make live"). Simultaneously, National government advanced surveillance and formalisation, undermining street traders and community food aid ("let die") and politicising trading regulations to scapegoat immigrant-owned enterprises and bolster nationalist identity politics. Using declarations of emergency to legitimise violent enforcement of centrally-imposed decrees, the state exposed millions to the slow violence of hunger.

However, centrist impulses for surveillance, formalisation and control were mediated by local and provincial responses emphasising food systems security. In Cape Town, crisis responses include multiple elements documented in cities around the world – alternative distribution networks leveraging civil society, community meal services, electronic voucher systems, and urban agriculture support (FAO, 2020). Prefigurative statecraft enabled the state to facilitate legislative compliance of traders, allow latent civil society networks to absorb the initial food security shock caused by the lockdown ("let be") and partner with intermediary organisations to channel resources to support community-based food relief to the vulnerable ("make live"). Policy networks achieved the ratification of the Food Systems Programme in the policy window the crisis presented (Fig. 3). These governance instruments reflect the formalisation of a vital systems security approach within the City.

We now discuss our findings in light of the questions arising from the vital systems security framing: to what extent these responses enhanced preparedness for future crises; what governance of food relief reveals about distributional politics; and what tradeoffs in the policy innovation process imply for deeper food systems transformation.

5.1. Preparedness for future crises

Through the responses described, stakeholders within the food governance landscape enhanced their preparedness for future food system crises, contributing to food systems resilience capacity. Improved capabilities include better surveillance, resource allocation technology, partnerships with community networks and collaboration with intermediary organisations, place-based governance approaches and infrastructure-based food planning. These capabilities and assets including the food systems programme and transversal learning, advocacy and relief networks could enable more agile, responsive and robust adaptation to future crises.

To enhance preparedness for future crises, these networks need to persist and deepen, and state stakeholders need to enhance partnering capabilities rather than enforcing compliance. In the context of austerity, officials noted the tendency of directorates to retreat back into narrower mandates (A; D). "*The covid collaboration experience will not persist in any kind of meaningful way and establish itself in a behavioral culture change in the provincial administration that […] will enable further innovative transformation, unless deliberate management action is taken to ensure this persistence*" (A). This may hamper the transversal collaboration required to promote coherent food systems governance in the long term. However, recent mobilisation of networks to anticipate impacts of subsequent crises including political unrest in 2021, heat waves, and the Russia-Ukraine crisis of 2022 indicate that emergency statecraft is leading to persistent changes in the government structures and practices shaping the City food system.

5.2. Distributional politics

Relief efforts generated new stresses whose uneven distribution reflects deeper inequities. The distributional politics of food systems resilience included the uneven distribution of stresses and contestation of resource allocation. CSOs emerged as key actors in the crisis response, coalescing in novel networks that absorbed the worst impacts of the lockdown. Improving surveillance entailed requirements for greater

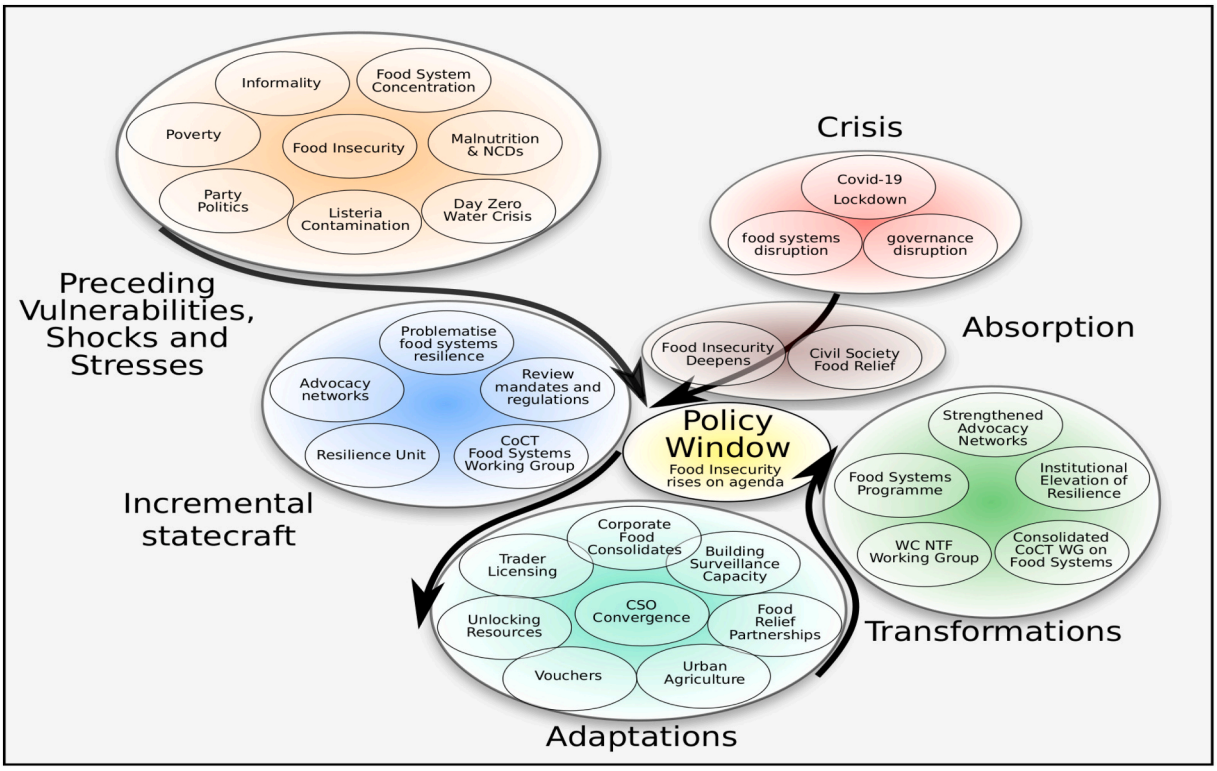

Fig. 3. Detail of findings.

formalisation and reporting. To ensure budget management compliance, the city needed to demonstrate that allocations were reaching intended beneficiaries, resulting in detailed reporting requirements. Voucher systems also increased reporting requirements for CSOs. In essence, the technopolitics of food relief imposed a didactics of accountability and control which changed how community aid initiatives operate (FGCoP9). This increased administrative burdens on already overstretched capacities and exposed vulnerable people to humiliation and patronage (Ekeland, 2021). Further research is needed to explore the extent to which formalisation requirements excluded smaller community based organisations from support, how surveillance and compliance affects agency, and whether these processes exacerbate gatekeeping and hierarchies.

CSO monitoring enabled rapid learning about capabilities, constraints and needs, and presented an opportunity for mobilisation towards food systems transition. Although the state was able to use greater visibility of the crisis and of relief efforts to allocate resources in a targeted manner, political rationales initially trumped differential needs. Allowing ward councillors to identify beneficiaries (H) created opportunities for the abuse of food parcels for neo-patrimonial politics whereby councillors could favour politically loyal recipients. Some councillors claimed credit for the delivery of infrastructure to capitalise on the political currency this presented.

Ongoing need for food relief, donor fatigue, significant investment of personal resources and emotional strains confronting community-based food relief workers pose increasing stresses for civil society. CSOs in the Food Forum are adapting to donor fatigue by refocusing on urban agriculture, emphasising local production for local consumption (FGCoP7; FGCoP8). This is mirrored by a revision and renewal of the City's urban agriculture programme entailing technical and material support to urban agriculture initiatives despite limited evidence for limited food security benefits of urban agriculture in South African cities (Battersby & Marshak, 2013). While broader mobilisation around food systems transition remains absent, civil society organisations may continue to coalesce around urban agriculture as a site of struggle for food systems transition and align themselves with broader contestations on the right to the city.

5.3. Tradeoffs for transformation

The disruptive impact of C-19 regulations created new spaces to contest current food system arrangements and recognise the importance of the informal sector, the potential role of urban agriculture and the essential emergency relief capabilities embedded within community networks, and establish new government assets.

> "*I think this is where the food systems group is largely going to come out of, is this Covid crisis […] it's largely growing because of this urgent need.*" (F)

The Food Systems Programme and Food Working Group provide a platform for longer-term engagement with the deeper structural drivers of food insecurity, and a shift from adaptive responses towards transformational initiatives. Thusfar, emergency responses have not led to postcapitalist food systems transformation. The majority of initiatives remain firmly embedded within neoliberal state rationalities: outsourcing responses to private sector and civil society agencies, leveraging market mechanisms to fulfil service delivery mandates and imposing strict financial management mechanisms to ensure procurement compliance. None of the interventions engage with the corporate core of the food system or its governance by private-sector interests. Proposals for transformative approaches to economic recovery in the City center were sidelined by senior officials in favour of a return to the pre-Covid status-quo, essentially a return to business as usual (J). Officials balk at proposals to regulate Big Food (H; I): "*we can't tell the private sector what to sell.*" H.

Pre-lockdown proposals of the Competition Commission Grocery Retail Sector Inquiry to discipline supermarket retail are absent from the Food Systems Program (City of Cape Town, 2021) despite being raised in consultations with officials: "*we discussed [the competition commission findings] and… we're not saying it doesn't need to happen. But […] this is not*

something that we should be taking on" H. Democratic food policy councils also have not found their way through the policy window and into the Food Systems Programme.

Even though these omissions betray reluctance among officials to challenge corporate interests, the loose wording of the food systems programme may permit future transformative statecraft. Transformation will require ongoing and sophisticated discursive struggles within the city to engage with issues that are not only complex but contested by powerful vested interests. It is unclear whether this emphasis will be sustained, and whether interventions will be adequately resourced. Anxieties about dependencies and the recognition of the ongoing need for food aid in the context of austerity and competing service delivery obligations (H) may hamper the City's ability to maintain or increase budgetary allocations towards food relief. With the establishment of the Future Planning and Resilience Directorate and inclusion of resilience as a foundational element of the Integrated Development Plan under the 2022 mayor, continued and increased influence of vital systems security as an emerging mode of statecraft seems ensured, for the short term at least. Whether these novel structures will yield more integrated interventions depends on "*political leadership, administrative courage and aligned resources*" (B). Still, changing ideological orientation and leadership priorities may destabilise local and provincial government, causing retreat from transversal networks, and withdrawal of budgets as the administration shifts focus.

6. Conclusions

Several adaptive and potentially transformational responses to the lockdown reflect the emergence of a vital systems security approach to food crises in the City of Cape Town: government enhanced surveillance, analysed systems vulnerabilities, and mobilised networks to adapt to food system impacts. These adaptive capacities may enhance preparedness for future crises and have resulted in the emergence of novel constellations of power in the metropolitan food governance environment as civil society and community networks achieved greater prominence and cohesion and the state shifted emphasis from control and compliance to collaboration. Plans to pilot place-based food systems surveillance and governance presage emergent territorial approaches to govern food systems. These adaptations could facilitate transition to more democratic, sustainable and nourishing urban food systems aligned with agroecological principles (Kroll, 2021).

However, we have also noted that distributional politics disproportionately burdened community networks and civil society to target and deliver aid, formalise, comply with regulations, and report. Surveillance highlighting uneven vulnerabilities and the elevation of the Resilience Department to a Directorate has not yielded commensurate targeting or increase of resource allocation. There are risks that local gatekeepers co-opt aid initiatives to promote partisan politics. Embedding the food systems programme in the city's formal policy environment has moreover involved tradeoffs which absolve incumbent interests from transformative regulatory pressures and which lack explicit mechanisms for democratic and participatory food governance. By attending to the distributional politics of resilience, future research into urban crisis governance in metropoles of the global South can inform responses that better secure vulnerable vital system elements and populations in the context of poverty, informality, infrastructure and capability constraints.

To unlock transformative potentials, existing procurement mechanisms could allocate resources to sustain community and civil society networks and insulate them from corporate or political interference in transformative food politics. In addition, formally recognised platforms could be established to enable local networks to influence resource allocation, enact place-based food governance, and inform city-wide food policy. Such platforms would need to establish deliberative capabilities to hold tensions and contestations rather than fabricating spurious consent (Haysom et al., 2019).

General suggestions emerge for urban planning and governance practitioners seeking to build resilience capacity:

- Understand civil society and community network partners' capabilities and needs
- Develop flexible and responsive emergency funding allocation mechanisms
- Develop multiple advocacy networks
- Cultivate a common discourse problematising vital systems resilience
- Anticipate disruptions that present windows of opportunity
- Prepare emergency governance proposals for policy windows
- Leverage crises to establish local transversal mandates for resilience
- Consolidate networks and shift organisational culture through ongoing collaboration beyond the immediate crisis.

Our findings point towards the resilience not only of the current food system and its inequities but also of underlying governmentalities and institutional cultures. These competing "discourses, narratives, worldviews and styles of thought" merit further research (Lemke, 2007:48; Akinwumi, 2013). Our analysis reveals remarkable innovation in response to the constraints and opportunities presented by the lockdown state of emergency. Simultaneously, emergency statecraft needs to be informed by sober assessments of the power of vested interests and the deeply unequal distribution of both impacts and adaptive capacity. Creative, agile statecraft informed by astute analysis of governmentalities, institutional constraints and opportunities for leverage can anticipate future disruptive crises to incrementally advance a transformational, pro-poor resilience agenda.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Florian Kroll: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Camilla Adelle:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicting interests to declare.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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