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The Grenfell Tower disaster: A case study of corporate crime

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Abstract

This is a case study which has applied a Marxist theoretical framework along with Zemiology. With the application of these frameworks, this thesis argues that the Grenfell Tower Fire is a victim of corporate crime to the highest degree due to the innumerable social harms. This study is important as it comes at a time where, even as many as six years on, there is yet to be any justice from the deviant omissions of the council and corporations involved in the fatal refurbishment project. The study closely examines the causative role that deregulation and stigmatisation of territory, social housing and race came to play in laying the foundations of the fire on the night of the 14th of June 2017, each individually and in their interconnected relationship. The case study is interesting as it applies Marxism, to criticise power relations in a capitalist society, and Zemiology, a somewhat contested theory, to examine the ripple of harms created before, during and after the disaster. Even how the research questions focus on corporate crime is interesting as it a contentious area of research due to how broad it is. Moreover, the study builds on relevant Marxist critical works to support and establish the validity of these key theories and frameworks, as well as providing key statistics and policies surrounding the high-rise building. Notably, the case study also uses a range of resources from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry as it is argued to have the most unbiased findings. Fundamentally, these key theories and frameworks, combined together, establish a new perspective on the social disaster. The study concludes, through the perpetual manifestation of harms, that Grenfell is a victim of corporate crime due to criminal negligence through deregulation (laissez-faire capitalism), stigmatisation of social housing and stigmatisation of race, ultimately breaching the Human Rights Act 1998. Although, most the implications are interesting and important, arguably the most interesting implication is that due to inaction after the disaster there is a possibility that another fire like Grenfell could be round the corner.

Introduction: A Marxist framework

On the night of the 14th of June 2017 Grenfell tower, a derelict 24-storey social housing block situated in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), became rapidly engulfed by flames, despite residents being reassured by safety officials that the block was safe. This “stay put” mantra echoed by state officials, inevitably, led 72 residents to their deaths in the greatest loss of life following a residential fire since the Second World War (Ministry of Housing, C.& L.G. 2020: 1) and ‘left hundreds more with both physical and psychological injuries’ (*London Fire Brigade*, 2019:3). The magnitude of harms and business interests surrounding the fire gained notoriety in the press and research due to the buried layers of corruption, launching the disaster into the history books. The disaster, nearly 6 years on, remains relevant as it is a hotly contested subject because of the inconsistencies by the state officials and corporations involved. The burning question that remains, then, is how did such an atrocity come to occur?

The research question for this study is, ‘The Grenfell Tower disaster: a victim of Corporate crime?’. This question will be approached through a Marxist-critical framework to establish how the (in)actions of the state and the organisations they employed were criminally negligent, so culpability should be addressed, and their behaviours should be defined as a corporate crime. This approach is uncommon as it combines a Marxist theoretical framework with concepts such as Zemiology (study of social harms) and Critical race theory (CRT) to a somewhat new construct of crime. This framework, initially applied in light of the severity and sensitivity of the disaster, gives purpose to the research question as without it the work would be met with innumerable ethical and, in turn, empirical issues. This research question and application of the theoretical frameworks is important as many important moral questions remain unanswered and true justice is yet to be served despite over 400 evidence days in the Public Inquiry. This Marxist theoretical framework is relevant to the disaster as it remains a horrifying ‘testimony to the violence of austerity’ (Cooper and Whyte as cited in Tombs: 2020:138); a reminder of unrelenting class conflict(s).

Due to the seriousness of the public disaster, it would be entirely unfounded to conduct sampling, analysis and interviews with survivors, relatives of the deceased or onlookers on that long summer night as it could create further social harms. Moreover, collecting the data would be impractical and time consuming, especially in terms of accessing the respondents themselves. Instead, the social disaster will be examined as “‘the before and after” of a chapter in the study of the conflict between public interest and profitable enterprise’ (Gonzalez and Voutsadakis, 2023:1); a narrative will be created through the Marxist-critical framework, in conjunction with the Grenfell Tower inquiry and the academia that surrounds it, to contextualise how such an event came to be. In light of inconsistencies and delays in achieving absolute justice in wake of Grenfell, this approach of a case study using an accepted theoretical framework is the most appropriate in terms of both ethics and theoretical suitability. The Marxist perspective enables deeper connections, uncovering the motivations driven by power and, in its criticism of capitalism, money through the interests of businesses surrounding the tower. Instead of using surveys and interviews, the case study uses data from pre-existing research and of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to explore how deregulation and stigma contributed to the disaster. Notably, the works of John Preston (*Grenfell Tower: Preparedness, Race and Disaster Capitalism*, 2018), Steve Tombs (*Home as a Site of State-Corporate Violence: Grenfell Tower, Aetiologies and Aftermaths*, 2020) and Stuart Hodgkinson (*Safe as houses: Private*

greed, political negligence and housing policy after Grenfell,2019) have greatly impacted and contributed to this case study, each adding to the Marxist critical theoretical framework and study of social harms. Moreover, the data utilised from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry provided this case study with a breadth of information which, in turn, contributed to the narrative of Grenfell.

As disparities still remain from the Inquiry, the case study, with application of a Marxist critical theoretical framework will focus on ideas of power, (de)regulation, class and race; Key determinants which produced and catalysed the disastrous fire. The first chapter, 'Deregulation kills', maintains the central claim that the Grenfell Tower Fire occurred as a result of Laissez-faire capitalism (removal of state intervention) and its creation of absent regulation. It starts by explaining the events that unfolded on the summer night to establish the context and then it moves on to rigorously explore how the state's criminal negligence over the last fifty years enabled local councils like RBKC to cut corners in fire safety in order to minimise public spending and maximise corporate profits, ultimately demonstrating that the benefits of capital outweigh that of human life. In addition, it develops how pivotal the role of deregulation was in increasing privatisation and giving less funding to essential sectors such as the fire service. Lastly, the chapter makes the central claim that deregulation was responsible for maintaining out-dated and lenient policies such as 'stay put', especially when it comes to marginalised BAME individuals. In short, the chapter examines the relationship of deregulation and its ultimate creation of harms to support the claim that the disaster is a corporate crime through the detrimental social and physical harms of the 72 immediate deaths and subsequent Grenfell fallout, it aims to expose how inaction is as dangerous as action. Ultimately, establishing this definition is pivotal as criminal activity by state officials is predominantly undocumented and goes unpunished; 'Grenfell tower is yet another disaster where the call that lessons must be learned remains particularly empty (as Aberfan and Hillsborough before it)' (Preston, 2018:56).

Chapter 2 builds on this concept of deregulation in chapter 1 and makes the central claim that the absence of regulation was intensified through the process of stigmatisation. The chapter, alongside the Marxist theoretical framework and Zemiology, applies Critical race theory (CRT) to explain why and how racialised groups are awarded an 'ambiguous status' in society (Preston, 2018:55) because of stigmatisation based on class, race and ethnic origin. The chapter uncovers how capitalism manufactures this stigma to create a negative conscience where the most vulnerable in society are ignored and, when needed, scapegoated. Furthermore, within this process, is ambiguity in terms of territorial stigmatisation and stigmatisation of social housing; How the Government had turned a blind eye and a deaf ear on social housing which, evidently, led to a regression in Housing and Fire safety standards. Fundamentally, both chapters, through a range of frameworks, work together to defend the Marxist notion that capitalism is criminogenic (causes crime) and explain how capital outweighed that of marginalised, socially housed, working class, BAME residents living in the high-rise building.

1 Literature review

Since the Grenfell tower disaster, a plethora of criticisms, based on state interventions, have surfaced in the aim to hold The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council (RBKCC), the contracted companies and Government officials accountable for their actions and inactions in response to the fire. Existing academia draws upon ideas and theories of capitalism, White-collar crime, corporate crime, deregulation and the stigmatisation of social housing to contextualise how disasters such as Grenfell tower transpire. Under the Marxist-critical framework that this case study will maintain, these factors are meticulously designed to simultaneously work alongside each other to accumulate a full narrative, to find the missing piece of the harrowing puzzle. The interconnections between the different factors will find definitions of how the atrocity is a flagrant crime, an act in which German Philosopher and fellow Marxist, Friedrich Engels, would coin 'Sozialer Mord' (social murder) (Engels, 1845:96).

1.1 Crime and white-collar crime

In order to evaluate whether the Grenfell tower disaster can be viewed to be as a result of corporate and white-collar crime it is first important to outline the definition 'Crime' and, more specifically white-collar crime. Crime is situational and can be constructed in legal, social and moral narratives and is interpreted in different ways by different people at different times. However, in regard to academia crime is defined as 'an act of deviance that breaks not only a norm but a codified law' (Vyain et al. 2014). White-collar crime, then, finds meaning as 'a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his or her occupation' (Sutherland, 1949:9). Moreover, the concept refers to 'any non-violent act committed for financial gain', regardless of one's social status by individual professionals (Brightman and Howard, 2009:3). White-collar crime, in terms of research, is a relatively new concept with the term only being coined in 1939 by Professor Edwin Sutherland. Sutherland (1940) asserted that like the over-generalised notion that the working class commonly commit crimes, the privileged socioeconomic class also engaged in criminal behaviour. However, he noted that, the primary difference between the two offenders was that the elite criminal was much less likely to be apprehended or punished due to his or her social status. Fundamentally, although the concept of white-collar crime was deemed to be controversial, predominantly by fellow academics that classed themselves to be among the elite that Sutherland criticised, his findings work as a 'catalyst for an area of research that continues today' (Brightman and Howard, 2009:2). Having discussed the concept of white-collar crime and its importance, corporate crime, specifically, will now be explained as it is the most relevant field in relation to the Grenfell Tower disaster.

1.2 Corporate crime

Building from Sutherlands work, corporate crime, falls under the threshold of White-collar crime as 'theoretic siblings' (Huebner et al. 2016:115) but the two differ as (corporate crime) is known to be a specific area which exclusively deals with crimes committed by a 'company against individuals in the company, investors and/or creditors, members of the general public, the environment, and/or governing bodies or agencies' (Stary, Norton and Halphen, 2023:1). The distinction between white-collar crime and corporate crime is important and can be filtered down to the difference between occupational and organisational crimes. White collar-crimes are 'crimes committed by people within

corporations or businesses (such as embezzlement)’ and, by contrast, corporate crimes are ‘crimes by corporations (such as failure to observe health and safety legislation)’ (Newburn, 2017:402). Significantly, due to shared accountability corporate criminal offences are ‘often perceived to be less “criminal” (Newburn, 2017:402) whilst individual offences are predominantly sensationalised and receive ‘heavier sentences’ (Newburn, 2001:12). In this sense, the (in)actions that surrounded The Grenfell Tower Fire (de)regulation of Housing standards, Fire safety and private corporations) would fall under corporate crime instead of individual white-collar crime as they were made under a collective organisation. Although these crimes, at the surface, are not violent, it does not mean they are victimless (FBI, 2022). For the most part, these crimes cause harm beyond the conventional eye and are ingrained in decades of deceit but, with the help of whistle-blowers, exposure of corruption in the modern day ‘erodes the public’s trust in institutions’ (FBI, 2022). However, unlike the established official measures of crime, Police recorded data and Victim surveys (Crime survey for England and Wales, CSEW), to which corporate and white-collar crimes may be included, there is no official measure to specifically measure white-collar crimes because the crimes of the powerful are ‘largely hidden from plain sight’ (Reiner, 2016:141). This failure to capture the invisible figure of the crimes of the powerful (Corporate crimes) is referred to as the “Dark figure” and, the disparity in data, is suggested to be ‘undoubtedly much larger than that of other crimes’ (Huebner et al. 2016, p. 115). To summarise, corporate crime, like white-collar crime, is a newer area of research but, through increasing cases, is gaining respectability. However, as mentioned previously, corporate crime can be difficult to map and measure. Nevertheless, the next section will explore how, despite not being defined as criminal, corporate crimes can still manifest harm.

1.3 Zemiology

Within the concept of corporate crime, Zemiology (the study of social harms) is equally as significant as it is a means to uncover the hidden gaps in the law, its enables further understanding of crime and deviance in relation to imbalances of power and structural inequalities. Zemiology aims to expose that the mainstream view of crime is of the deviant actions of the powerless and not of the harmful actions of the powerful, it is a focus on ‘Crimes of the streets’ rather than the ‘crimes of the suites’ (Timmer and Eitzen, 1989). The focus on harms demonstrates that deviancy is normally viewed in the powerless and not the powerful, thus the ‘Criminal justice system [...] is simply not a viable forum for tackling corporate wrongdoing (Gobert and Punch, 2003:9) as they inflict harm themselves but in discrete methods of broadcasting through the media and stigmatising individuals, mostly in the aim to ‘mystify rather than clarify’ (Roberts, 2011:13). In regard to Grenfell tower, exploring social harms is important in classifying the disaster as a victim of corporate crime as it focuses upon the ‘social origins of harms, upon the structures that produce and reproduce such harms’ (Hillyard et al. 2005). In this sense, academia recognises that Domicide is central in portraying these social harms; [Domicide is] the deliberate destruction of home by human agency in the pursuit of specific goals, which causes suffering to the victims. It encompasses that the home was not just a ‘physical unit within which people lived, slept and ate’ (Tombs, 2020:123) but also a ‘site of state-corporate criminality and harm’ (Tombs, 2020:120). Furthermore, it unveils the violent impact that austerity cuts and welfare reforms have on tenants (Paton and Cooper, 2017). Ultimately, the theoretical concept of Domicide enables further connections to deregulation and the stigmatisation of social housing as the deregulation by the state catalysed the destruction of the homes and deaths of those that occupied Grenfell Tower.

In short, Zemiology is well regarded in terms of research as it helps classify normally hidden and buried acts as harmful and deviant; it fills-in disconnected gaps in the law. Having established the significance of Zemiology this study will next consider, through a Marxist perspective, how white-collar crimes and subsequent harms are driven by power.

1.4 White collar crimes, power and Marxist perspective

Through the positivist criminological lens, 'Crime' is viewed to be determined by power relations. In J Muncie's (2000) 'Decriminalising Criminology', he notes that within the discourse of Zemiology, crime 'alerts us to relations of power embedded in social orders [...] a conception of crime without a conception of power is meaningless (p.4). White-collar crime, then, exists in the context of a capitalist society where a minority of the population owns most of the wealth whilst 'the mass of the population does not own enough resources to survive without engaging in wage labour, working for others' (Bittle, S., Snider, L. and Tombs, S. 2021:29). Conversely, radical criminology adopts the Marxist theoretical framework to explain that the deep inherent inequalities in society provide those with economic and political power with the opportunity to criminalise the activities of the poor and powerless (Burke, 2018). Marxist theory takes the viewpoint that 'Profit' only comes from successful exploitation and/or the less economically viable (Proletariat) selling their labour to survive. This, inevitably, creates inequality and class conflicts through discontent; "The class war is over. But the struggle for true equality has only just begun" (Tony Blair cited in Friedman & Laurison, 2019: 5). In light of this, capitalism can be viewed to be criminogenic as these inequalities, which are generated by market economies, foster crime as they can lead to unemployment, poverty and homelessness, which, in turn, leaves a disenfranchised individual with no other escape then to commit a crime as a means of survival. Moreover, these inequalities and crimes of the powerless are then sensationalised and stigmatised by, the state's tool of oppression, the media in order to maintain power. In essence, capitalism relies on class hierarchy to produce class inequalities which are, in turn, instrumental for capitalism to function and disasters like Grenfell to materialise. To further understand the role of power, class conflicts and profit in a capitalist society, the next section will focus on the concept of 'disaster capitalism'.

1.5 Disaster capitalism

Building on from the idea that capitalism is fuelled by exploitation and needs disasters to restructure itself, many academics take the view that the central motivation of white-collar crime is, undeniably, capitalism or as Preston (2018) recycles the term, in wake of Grenfell tower, 'disaster capitalism' from Naomi Klein; 'the idea that the state is interested in the citizen as an abstract notion in disasters and emergencies and is more concerned with maintaining capitalism, social control and cohesion' (Preston, 2018:2). It is the notion that capitalism profits from disasters through a move towards privatisation, the handing out of contracts to private contractors in the hope of absorbing funding for inadequate and unregulated work.

Furthermore, to reinforce the view that Grenfell certainly wasn't the first and certainly isn't the last public disaster to happen at the hands of state corruption, academics draw noteworthy references to similar tower-block building disasters, some dating back to as far as the 1960s in order to cast an eye to the fact that failings of the state are an old age concept, of which Grenfell is only a cog in a system. In this sense, there certainly isn't an abundance of examples of state failings that expose the detrimental effects of deregulating

the law on building safety and neither is there an abundance of literature to criticise them. Ultimately, academic references to other official failings are integral in contextualising and laying the foundations of how disasters such as Grenfell come to be as well as unearthing the ideal that society 'should always be sceptical of claims that atrocities lead to reform' (Preston, 2018:56). Having established that the state doesn't learn from their failings and that they could be viewed to profit from disasters this case study will next consider how these failings are products of state-driven deregulation.

1.6 Deregulation

To further contextualise Grenfell tower, it is important to understand the role of deregulation, within capitalist structures, in laying the foundations for how outdated regulations lead to unimaginable social harms. Deregulation refers to the 'removal of controls and restrictions in a particular area of business or trade' (*Collins English dictionary*, 2022). In relation to the Grenfell Tower Fire, this deregulation concerns the decline in housing safety standards, regulation of companies through the PA scheme, fire safety and the training of The London Fire Brigade. Academics and professionals such as the London Fire Brigade expose how insubstantial and fragile regulations are instrumental in placing unsuspecting tenants in harm's way, especially those that occupy social houses. The 'watering down' of building safety regulations has long prevailed since Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s in their attacks of laws tailored to 'improve fire safety and national standards meant to help firefighters protect the public' (Fire Brigades Union, 2019:19). Moreover, in light of Grenfell, deregulation can be viewed to extend as part of stigmatisation; the notion that warnings of failed safety regulations as well chances to change outdated "stay put" policies were ignored.

In addition, within the relationship of deregulation and privatisation resides a policy that was introduced by the Labour government in 2009: the PA scheme. This scheme allows businesses to participate in their own regulation, instead of regulation by state officials, through the statutory partnership with one local authority' (Better Regulation Delivery Office 2014:2). In effect, the scheme is a formal series of barriers to enforcement in the event of business offending, demonstrative in the relationship between Whirlpool and Peterborough trading standards. Fundamentally, deregulation is a product of a laissez-faire capitalist transition to privatisation; This deregulation is beneficial economically, but the removal of important safety regulations creates more risks and, in turn, social harms. Having established this importance of deregulation, the next section will explore the significance of stigmatisation and its connection to deregulation.

1.7 Stigma based on social housing and Territorial stigmatisation

Building on the idea of deregulation, academia draws attention to how social housing is susceptible to the most deregulation. Social housing is the process whereby state-owned houses or flats are provided by local councils to those who have low incomes (*Cambridge dictionary*, 2023). People that receive support from this state-funded programme have long been stigmatised as second-class citizens and have been branded with derogatory slurs like 'chav' (Council housed and violent). In The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), which Grenfell Tower resides in, this disdain for social housing is no different and can be viewed to have had added fuel to the fire through class conflicts. The concept of territorial stigmatisation explains this relationship between marginalised socially housed individuals and the areas in which their council houses reside. The concept or

‘phenomenon’ (Meade, 2021:191) combines Bourdieu’s theory of ‘symbolic power’ and Goffman’s model of the management of ‘spoiled identity’ to ‘capture how the blemish of place impacts the residents of disparaged districts’ (Wacquant et al. 2014:1). Notably, some academics account that territorial stigmatisation is ‘produced and reproduced by capitalist economic relations and inequalities’ (Meade, 2021:195). This expansion on spatial stigma ‘generates individual and collective humiliations’ as well as producing implications for the physical state of places, in terms of ‘how they look, how they are policed, and whether they are economically valued’ (Meade, 2021:195). In short, deregulation was reinforced by institutional classism and racism as life-saving warnings about the tenant’s living conditions were blatantly ignored for years leading up to the fire. Stigmatisation can also be viewed to have delayed resettlement and justice after the Disaster. These ideas will be explained in more depth in chapter 2 but before that the next chapter will examine how ‘deregulation kills’.

2 Deregulation kills

This chapter will discuss how deregulation influenced the events before, during and after the fire. To set the scene, the chapter will begin by discussing Marxist theory and the crimes of the powerful and then it will begin to recount the initial response on that long summer night. The rest of the chapter will explore how fire safety policies for high-rise buildings gradually became deregulated which, in turn, exaggerated malpractice during the refurbishment and the response by the underfunded fire service. These contributions will then be examined through Zemiology to justify the absence of regulation as criminal.

2.1 Crimes of the powerful

Using the main framework for this case study, Marxist discipline advocates that, as the ruling class retain all agencies of power and means of production within society, they [the Bourgeoisie] hold responsibility for the working class (Proletariat) and ‘are charged with the duty of protecting every member in society’ (Engels, 1845:95). However, in a modern context, where disasters such as Grenfell perpetuate, this responsibility ceases to exist in terms of both welfare and accountability for (in)actions (crimes). Whilst disenfranchised working class individuals are stigmatised and criminalised for petty crimes, the ruling class and subsequent elitist corporations escape criminality through building ‘bunkers’ (Preston, 2018. P.55). This lends the question of: Why does this happen and how can the elite be held accountable?

The answer: they have not and, in the case of Grenfell, will continue not to. Crimes of the powerful have long perpetuated across the course of time through innumerable social murders. Despite this blatant oppression, this unrelenting stigmatisation and this absence of regulation, history continues to repeat itself in terms of proving capital outweighs that of life. In this sense, Grenfell Tower, in the eyes of capitalism, is just another cog in the well-oiled machine, it is ‘part of a larger story about unevenly precarious lives in today’s unequal cities [. . .] a chilling illustration of how inequality kills’ (Madden, 2017, as cited in Tombs:2020:127). This lack of justice in the acts committed by the powerful is, under the Marxist lens, explained by the fact that ‘No man sees the murderer, because the death of the victim seems a natural one, since the offence is more one of omission than of commission’ (Engels, 1845:96). Moreover, it is an understanding that crimes have to be violent to be classed as criminal but, with the application of Zemiology and Domicide, that

understanding can be undermined to demonstrate that negligence (inaction) by corporations was (is) equally as deadly and criminal. To further understand the crimes of the powerful, the next section will begin by relaying the chain of events that took place from the first 999 call.

2.2 Background: The night of the fire

Before applications of these theoretical mechanisms can be implemented it is first important to understand the initial events that occurred in the “minutes and hours of that summer night in West London, in which [72] residents of the building lost their lives” (Millett, 2022:27). Mr Behailu Kebede, a Grenfell tower resident, made the first of what was to be a “torrent of 999 calls” to the London Fire Brigades’ (LFB) control room at 12:54:29AM, informing the LFB of a fire in the kitchen of his flat, flat 16, on the 4th floor (Millett, 2022:27). By 12:59am, the London Fire Brigade arrived to respond to the fire, with advice from their HQ echoing that all residents should “stay in [their] apartments” as the fire should be contained in flat 16. However, unbeknownst to LFB, the high-rise building’s cladding was refurbished between 2013 to 2016, under The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council’s (RBKCC) orders, with untested and highly flammable Polyethylene-filled aluminium composite panels (ACM) in an aim to cut council spending.

At the height of the incident, at least ‘60 fire appliances and 250 firefighters were on scene’ (Fire Brigades Union, 2018:7). Onlookers of the fire witnessed harrowing scenes of screams and residents attempting to jump from the building to escape the “fierce fire” (Witness statement of Mr Aghlani cited in the Grenfell Inquiry, 2018:3). When the fire was finally extinguished, as many as 60 hours later, the scorched high-rise building served as a symbol of injustice to the highest degree, a reminder of the stigmatisation of social housing in one of the richest boroughs in London. In response to the fire, The Metropolitan Police began investigating offences of ‘manslaughter, corporate manslaughter, misconduct in public office and breaches of fire safety regulations’ in relation to the fire (BBC News 2017). Despite The Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May, establishing the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, justice is yet to be served so this study will pick up where they left off. With close reference to evidence from Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry as well as surrounding academia this chapter will expose how every decision and every step taken by agencies on every level, from the production line of the cladding to the state officials that deregulated integral fire safety policies, “placed this community in mortal danger” (Witness statement of Mr Aghlani as cited in the Grenfell Inquiry, 2018:4). Now that the chain of events, on the night of the fire, have been explained the next section will discuss how deregulation sealed the fate of the 72 residents that lost their lives.

2.3 Deregulation over the last 50 years

One of the most shocking aspects that surrounds the Grenfell tower fire is, undoubtedly, its complete preventability; how the occupants of Grenfell tower “warnings fell on deaf ears as [they] predicted that a catastrophe was inevitable and just a matter of time” (Grenfell Action Group as cited in Tombs, 2020:209). The foundations of this preventability are deeply rooted in the latter part of the 1970s and the decades to follow. Post-World War Two was a time of instability but also significant change in terms of both legislation and culture; The 1947 Fire Services Act was enacted with the philosophy that ‘all fires matter’ (FBU, 2018:8) which laid the foundations for the emergency fire service that we know today and most significantly with a housing boom between 1945 and 1975, where

‘440,000 high-rise flats (defined as flats in blocks of five or more storeys) were built in the UK’ (FBU,2019:7). Grenfell Tower was part of this influx in high-rise buildings and was completed in 1974, a time which seemed to be gaining recognition for Fire safety following disastrous fires such as The Ronan Point tower-block explosion in 1968. The Fire Precautions Act in 1971 was created in response and centred around existing legislation but extended from most factories, offices and shops to hotels and boarding houses, giving fire services the power to issue fire certificates to ensure compliance with the law (FBU, 2018:9). However, this new law excluded high-rise residential buildings from the beginning and was never extended far enough to manage the risks in high-rise flats which meant ‘important warnings went unheeded’ (FBU 2019:12) and buildings like Grenfell tower to go unregulated.

Despite, the Holroyd report into the fire service (1970) and The Summerland Fire commission report (1973) which demonstrated that Fire authorities should be responsible for enforcing all fire prevention legislation (FBU 2019:15) and that public buildings had to be inspected in order to gain a fire safety certificate, the Capitalistic Prime Minister of the late 1970s, Margaret Thatcher, began to deregulate building and fire safety. The White paper ‘Lifting the burden’ (1985) was the first chapter in the novel of deregulation that would eventuate in future high-rise fires as it listed 80 sets of regulations that could be scrapped because they were a burden on business (FBU 2019:16). Fast forward to the next millennium and a few chapters later, this process of undermining fire safety regulation, both in terms of high-rise safety procedures and the fire departments, continued to be sustained by the British Government. In former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron’s 2011 campaign, Cameron continued to wave Thatcher’s deregulation torch in his attack of ‘red tape’ (regulation) which opened up criticisms of the legitimacy of fire safety regulation and allowed it to be branded as an unwarranted interference with businesses instead of it being an integral lifesaving service. From the above, it is clear that this ‘gross betrayal of public interest’ (Horwitz, 1985:145) enabled Grenfell tower to be transferred from local authorities to private tenant management organisations, ‘effectively removing responsibility for fire safety from the state and weakening safety standards’ (Ewen, 2018). Having established the birth of deregulation, the next section will demonstrate how deregulation opened the door malpractice in the refurbishment project.

2.4 Deregulation in the refurbishment project

From the evidence in the previous section, it is clear that the deregulation birthed before, during and after the existence of Grenfell Tower fostered the criminally negligent refurbishment project between 2014 to 2016. Staggeringly, this refurbishment project was accounted, by The Metropolitan Police, to have had over ‘60 companies and bodies involved in the construction’ (Hodkinson, 2019:56). This startling number, encouraged by the absence of regulative laws, allowed for an intangible chain of responsibility, a “spider’s web of blame” (Millet, 2022:38). Notably, this web initially started when The Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation (KCTMO) hired and made Rydon, a construction company, the lead contractor of the refurbishment project. This web then expanded to at least 8 other contractors and sub-contractors, hired separately by the KCTMO and Rydon. The main companies that KCTMO directly hired were ‘Artelia UK’ who were project managers, ‘Max Fordham’ as building service engineers and ‘Studio E’ as architects overseeing the project. Moreover, as lead contractor, Rydon also hired sub-contracts to assist them in the refurbishment. The main companies they hired were ‘Harley Facades’ who installed the cladding, ventilation firm ‘Witt and Son’ and ‘Celotex’ who

provided RS5000 insulation for the Grenfell Tower cladding. All of these companies contributed to different sections and provided different materials on the refurbishment project under loose provision and regulation.

These 'Opaque contractual relationships' surrounding the refurbishment project were facilitated by the deregulation into private corporations which enabled a series of self-regulation, further intertwining state and private corporate activities (Tombs and Whyte, 2015:23). This symbiotic relationship between the Government and the private sector was encouraged under the 2009 Labour Governments PA scheme. Created in wake of the 2008 economic crash the scheme authorised businesses to be involved in their own regulation through a makeshift coalition with local councils. This form of privatisation proved to be so popular that by April 2014, 1,500 businesses had established PA relationships across 120 local authorities and within three years of this statement, there were '17,358 such relationships across 182 authorities' (Tombs, 2020:135). This PA scheme along with other schemes, virtually dug the graves of the residents of Grenfell tower as the absence of law allowed for radical cost-cutting or "value engineering" (an industry euphemism for using cheaper materials and systems than originally specified) (Nadj, 2019:5) which, consequentially, turned 'Grenfell's cladding from fire safe to flammable' (Hodkinson, 2019:85).

Through the Marxist framework and Zemiology these contributions of deregulation can be examined in a more robust and critical way as the 'states collusion in symbiotic relationships with private companies and in newly created markets following privatisation and deregulation [...] produces criminal deviancy and harms' (Bittle *et al.* 2018). In essence, deregulation reveals a bigger picture where market economies foster corporate crime(s) and subsequent harms through the cutting of corners and a move to Laissez-faire capitalism where the state no longer intervenes (feeding into deregulation). Under the Marxist perspective this, then, is problematic as the state no longer protects citizens and, so, companies can put profit before people and safety by opting to decrease cost margins even at the expense of increasing risks. The next section explores this transition between decreased regulation and increased privatisation further to uncover how it influenced the fire.

2.5 Deregulation and increased privatisation

Following on from the previous section, in the case of the Grenfell Tower, the most prominent beneficiary of this PA scheme was Whirlpool, the manufacturers of the Hotpoint brand; the same brand that was known to produce the faulty fridge freezer that triggered the raging inferno. Significantly, consumers' organisation Which? and 'the Chartered Institute for Trading Standards (CTSI) had been campaigning for several years for a ban on plastic-backed electrical goods' (Tombs,2020: 132), the same plastic-backing later found on the Hotpoint appliance. This, however, wasn't just a one-off incident by a Hotpoint appliance but yet another example of regulatory failure by the organisation. Whirlpool's sordid history of malpractice is not unknown, in fact the complete opposite- it is entirely publicly known- yet their exercise of corporate power continued to prevail with no penalisation. This lack of penalisation is what the PA scheme owes its popularity to as 'Should a local authority wish to prosecute a company signed up to a PA agreement it can only do so with the permission of the local authority which is party to that agreement' (Tombs,2020:135). Ultimately, the PA scheme created a shield to which Peterborough trading standards, under their PA contract, protected Whirlpool and their Hotpoint

appliances, which they knew to be unfit for purpose, from being recalled; it didn't prevent the Hotpoint fridge freezer on the 4th floor of Grenfell tower from igniting the UK's biggest social disaster.

'Self-compliance may be cheaper for the taxpayer, but it comes at a much higher social cost, as Grenfell tragically demonstrated' (Ewen, 2018). Fundamentally, then, this deregulation can be viewed to reflect harm as, despite no direct aim to cause death, choices to cut costs and not have construction practices overseen by a fire consultant were made by state officials prevented technical scrutiny, eventuating in the deaths of 72 vulnerable people. It was the accumulation of decades of deregulation, privatisation and stigmatisation that catalysed the final choice to put cost above all else and replace fire-resistant zinc cladding in the refurbishment contract 'with cheaper aluminium panels to save £293,368' (Tombs, 2020:127). It was the choice made by one of the most affluent councils in London, 'a Council with £274 million in reserves at the time of the fire' (Tombs, 2020:127), that 'Hurried them [Grenfell tenants] to the grave before their time' (Engels, 1845:96). Even the residents of Grenfell recognised this notion that capital was prioritised over ethics, over safety, as the Grenfell Action Group (GAG), established in 2010, joined with Unite Community Membership in 2015 over concern of the refurbishment project. This demonstrates that their negligence was visible as many as two years prior to the disaster and, despite the tenants' best efforts, they were blatantly ignored which led the group (GAG) to 'believe that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our land-lord, the KCTMO, and bring an end to the dangerous living conditions and neglect of health and safety legislation' (Grenfell Action Group, 2016). Now that the deregulation leading up to the fire has been examined, the next section will examine the events during the fire.

2.6 Deregulation of The London Fire Brigade (LFB) and 'stay put' advice

Fast forward to the events during that long summer night, deregulation even effected the initial response to the emergency in reference to The London Fire Brigade. Notably, it is not the direct actions of individual fire fighters but of the service as an organisation, an organisation that has long felt the wrath of the Government, by being marginalised themselves, through endless budget cuts and the dismissal of integral fire safety campaigns. On the night of the fire, Mr Shahrokh Aghlani, a witness who was looking for his mother and aunty that lived in the tower, accounts that there were 'insufficient numbers of firemen and equipment' to the extent that at 'approximately 3am (he) was asked to help move heavy equipment such as their shields to a different part of the Tower' (Shahrokh Aghlani as cited in The Grenfell Tower Inquiry, 2018:5). This, alongside Firefighter, Craig Eden's account that 'radios weren't working' (p.10) and that the established bridgehead (a safe position inside a building in order to carry out firefighting operations) had 'moved to the ground floor at Grenfell' (p.6) despite the fact that it is 'not supposed to move' (Craig Eden as cited in The Grenfell Tower Inquiry, 2017), exposes that the London Fire Brigade were gravely unprepared. In light of this, the cuts and deregulation made by Brandon Lewis, Minister of the Fire Service from 2016 to 2017, running up to Grenfell, can, undoubtedly, be held to account for the unpreparedness of the service during the fire. This perspective is based on how Lewis was known to have taken an 'axe to the fire and rescue service' with fire safety officers' roles being 'cut by 25% between 2011 and 2017'.

Not only did the tenants of Grenfell's warnings "fall on deaf ears" but so did the Fire Brigades Unions warnings. Perhaps the most significant of these warnings was the failure

to abolish the outdated ‘stay put’ mantra that was echoed to the tenants that sought help from the 999 responders on the night of the fire; the mantra that tragically misinformed unsuspecting tenants to remain in their flats and inhale toxic carbon monoxide. ‘Stay put’ advice was typical advice that was given to racialised groups for ‘purposes of social control rather than safety’ (Preston, 2018:55), again driven by contempt towards those that are socially housed and their ethnic origin. This notion of stigmatisation based on class and race will be further explored in the next chapter. Fundamentally, this mantra eventuated in a higher death toll as, through an excessive chain of command, it took two hours from the original start time of the fire for ‘The LAS to declare a significant Incident’ and for ‘AC Roe to finally revoke the “stay put” advice’ (*Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 report overview*, 2019:3) but it was too late, as giving “the wrong instruction sealed the fate” (Shahrokh Aghlani, 2018) of the 71 residents that were trapped in the raging inferno .

Essentially, the contexts of decades of deregulation, privatisation and ‘contempt between the KCTMO and RBKCC’ (Tombs, 2020:127) ‘together explain the politico-economic production of the harms manifested at Grenfell’ (Tombs,2020:127), thus supporting this case study’s central claim that the Grenfell Tower Disaster is a victim of corporate crime. Whether deliberate or not, whether ‘violent’ or not, people died at the hands of state and corporate negligence. Which lends the question: If people die as a result of a corporations (in)actions, how can this not be labelled as violent, as criminal? Despite the disaster not being ‘treated as violence by the criminal justice system’ (Tombs,2020:122), the act through Marxist and zemiological frameworks is not mere manslaughter, but social murder. Murder at the hands of corporate crime. Moreover, Grenfell exhibits how it was not just the murder of people but also the murder of people’s homes, or what Steve Tombs coined Domicide. These harms of the destruction of home by deregulation and the stigmatisation of social housing that came with it will be further explored in the next chapter, along with Theresa May’s broken promise to rehouse and reform the surviving tenants and their families within the “three weeks deadline” as it was reported that exactly one year after the fire, only 82 of the 203 households that needed rehousing were in new, permanent accommodation’ (Booth and Bowcott as cited in Tombs,2020:131).

3 The role of stigmatisation and Grenfell fallout

‘Slums’, ‘problem neighbourhoods’, ‘sink estates’ and ‘shitholes’ (Butler et al. as cited in Meade,2021:195) are just some of the slurs branded onto the face of social housing and the likes of Grenfell Tower, a derelict 24-storey social housing block. The demonization of public housing estates certainly isn’t a new phenomenon and still dominates media headlines as evidence of relentless class conflict, a key stimulant in maintaining capitalism in society. Marxist theory recognises that the ‘mass media form the arena in which various ideological battles are fought’ (Chandler and Munday, 2011). This, in the case of Grenfell, is how the media, driven by the state’s agenda, produced contempt of social housing to the extent that tenants’ clear warnings of not being safe in their own homes were ignored instead of explored. This, in part, was due to how social housing [became] ‘a symbol of failure in the consumer society, a tenure of last resort’ (Taylor as cited in Ejiogu & Mercy Denedo:17). This Chapter will explore the role of stigmatisation of territory and race through deregulation and Domicide.

3.1 Stigmatisation and stigma

Firstly, it is important to understand what is meant by 'stigmatisation'. Horgan (2009, p.9) defines Stigmatisation as 'a process [to which] stigma is its product.' In this sense, contentment by state would also be considered the product of stigmatisation. Directly or indirectly, from the day of its completion until the fire, Grenfell tower and its residents became ostracized predominantly by upper class onlookers and, in turn, those who learnt its name and its supposed reputation through the media or word of mouth. Disdain for social housing, in general, has long perpetuated, namely because 'estates [were viewed to be] poorly designed, constructed, built and managed' (De Decker et al. as cited in Ejiogu & Mercy Denedo:15). Grenfell tower was no exception to the rule and was long perceived to be a 'visual eyesore' (Preston, 2018:57) among London's visual landscape. However, it wasn't just the architectural design that caused disdain for Grenfell but also the territory (area) in which the high-rise block resided. This concept will be explored in the next section.

3.2 Territorial stigmatisation

Following on from the concept of stigma that was discussed in the previous section, it is important to note that Grenfell tower was situated in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), notoriously one of the most affluent boroughs in London. Neighbours to the wealthiest constituency of Kensington where 'The average terraced house sold for £4.3m in 2016' (Barr as cited in Tombs,2020:125), Grenfell stood in stark contrast as an area of 'absolute deprivation' (Tombs, 2020:125) with 'above average poverty rates, child poverty, and receipt of out-of-work benefits' (London's Poverty Profile 2017 as cited in Tombs,2020:125). The previous Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is part of a wide collection of state officials that have cemented the stigma of social housing by referring to social housing residents as an 'underclass' who have 'lost hope' and are 'trapped in fatalism', cut off from society's mainstream (Aejiogu and Denedo, 2021:24). It came as no surprise, then, that this social housing block was at the receiving end of stigmatisation through the boroughs indistinguishable divide of the richest and the poorest.

The stigma-driven labels attached to people, like the tenants of Grenfell Tower, help push criminal narratives and the idea of problem neighbourhoods. Despite councils implementing programmes, often referred to as urban renewal programmes, to integrate households of different incomes and social classes, territorial or spatial stigma is inflicted upon low-income individuals as they 'experience disutility from a low status of the street or neighbourhood'. (Koster and Ommeren, 2022). Subtly overtime stigmas can grow and formulate to become a status-quo, a shared norm in society which for state officials in Government can be beneficial to implementing various political and social agendas, however for those at the bottom of the food chain it can have detrimental effects, similar to those that transpired at Grenfell. In this sense, the residents of Grenfell were not only ignored because they were socially housed but also because they were perceived to be deviant and as criminals. This reflects the Marxist ideal that capitalism is criminogenic as those in power label the most vulnerable in society as a scapegoat for their own corruption. This process, in other words, is known as 'Labelling theory'. This sociological theory expresses how 'deviant behaviour can become "means of defence, attack, or adaptation" (p. 17) to the problems created by deviant labelling' (Lemert 1967 as cited in Bernburg, 2009:3)

Essentially, as those that are stigmatised are already labelled as ‘troubled’ and ‘deviant’ the individual would eventually only ‘associate with those he believed to be like himself (others exhibiting criminal behaviour)’ (Ntara, 2021). In the case of the Grenfell Tower fire, this stigma and labelled led to the segregation of its residents both physically and theoretically. The literature surrounding territorial stigma perceives this ‘stigmatization of neighbourhoods as a prelude to gentrification [...]and regeneration of neighbourhoods’ (Kallin and Slater as cited in Ejiogu and Denedo, 2021:18), an ‘asocial extermination’ (Preston, 2018:55). Fundamentally, economic austerity subjects the less-economically viable in society to crime as means of escape and as a method of survival. Austerity is the process whereby Governments make cuts to public expenditure in an attempt to stabilise the economy. However, austerity measures actually intensify inequality as the cuts to vital programmes increases ‘insecure work, unemployment and (enables) the destruction of mechanisms to reduce poverty’ (Oxfam, 2013:4). With this in mind, austerity is crucial to understanding the context of Grenfell, especially in relation to the process of deregulation which was mentioned in the previous chapter. To further understand the role of stigmatisation the next section will explore its relationship with race.

3.3 Stigmatisation of race

Building on the role that stigmatisation came to play, the Grenfell Tower disaster is said to be “inextricably linked with race” (Leslie Thomas QC as cited in BBC News, 2020). This statement correlates to the fact that ‘40% of high-rise residents in the social rented sector are from BAME communities’ and of the residents that died in the fire, ‘85% were from ethnic minorities’ (Townsend,2020). Moreover, stigmatisation of race was so ingrained in social housing block and its tenants that, a teenaged resident stated outside the Tower as it continued to burn: ‘We’re dying in there because we don’t count’ (Wynne Jones 2017 as cited in Tombs, 2020:127). With the application of Critical race theory (CRT) micro stigmas on race are revealed to produce macro race-driven social harms like those seen at Grenfell. Critical race theory (CRT) explains how systematic racism becomes so deep-rooted that ‘the most extreme racism appears normal and unexceptional, simply ‘business as usual’ to society (Mohammed, Ramadan and Riaz, 2021:2).

Marxist discipline recognises that this occurs because Capitalism may utilise, reinforce or instrumentalise racism to their advantage. This draws reference to the analytical framework of intersectionality. Intersectionality explains how an individual’s identity markers (e.g., Age, race and sex) interact and intersect with each other to create different forms of discrimination like ageism, racism and sexism (Bernard, 2020). In the case of Grenfell Tower this racism was instrumentalised to keep marginalised individuals silent and compliant, despite relentless cries for help over their dilapidated home; “only an incident that results in serious loss of life of KCTMO residents will allow the external scrutiny to occur” (Grenfell Action Group, 2016).

Evidently, then, the ignored warnings by tenants, serve as evidence of corporate crime as they were labelled as ‘rebels’ by those who were paid to refurbish Grenfell Tower ‘safely’, ‘simply for raising complaints about the building’ (Bhakta, 2021). On top of that, renters could be further intimidated into speaking up about ‘repair requests or (subsequently taking) their landlords to court because of ‘retaliatory evictions’ (Hodkinson, 2019:230). In essence, the ignored warnings and eviction threats of the tenants demonstrates how there was a certain intersectionality of class and race which, in turn, manifested vulnerability.

Ultimately, stigmatisation of both the less-economically independent people or ‘incapable tenant’ (De Decker and Pannecoucke, 2004:2) and the state-owned homes that they occupied is integral to understanding the narrative of how the Grenfell Tower Fire came to be. The discrimination by class, race and territory, within the Marxist lens, demonstrates how the imbalances of power led not only those who were socially housed to be branded as second-class citizens but also how the safety regulations of their homes were also treated as second-class in terms of priority. Within the harm-based discourse, Domicide, helps gain understanding of how the Grenfell Tower fire occurred as a ‘form of violence against tenants and their homes’ (Tombs, 2020, p.124).

3.4 Domicide

With the contributions of institutionalised stigmatisation in mind this section will examine the concept of Domicide. Whilst Domicide may be commonly known as the destruction of civilian homes during wars through bombing, Domicide, in the case of Grenfell, connects how stigmatisation led to negligence that inflicted harms not only on the tenants but also directly on their homes. These findings come in reflection to how, no matter ethnicity or class the home is perceived to be a ‘symbol of freedom [...] where residents reported having stronger emotional bonds to their homes than their neighbourhood’ (Shamai et al., 2012). Despite this, these acknowledgments were ignored by policy makers, RBKC council and the organisations they employed and, instead, contentment of the Grenfell as a home, which manifested through national and local level policy changes (deregulation), led as many as 200 homes to fall victim to Domicide.

Although Domicide refers directly to the ‘deliberate’ destruction of the home, to which there is no tangible evidence of, in a harm-based discourse this deliberate action can be seen in the deliberate choice to cut corners by using cheaper and more flammable materials to minimise expenditure and the deliberate choice not to regulate the fire safety standards of the building. Cooper and Whyte (2018) describe this process as ‘Institutional violence’, a ‘Form of violence that is intimately connected to a more insidious targeting of subject groups. However, the notion of Domicide also comments on how this destruction of home ‘causes suffering to the victims’ (Tombs: 2020:124), to which there is an abundance of.

Within the Marxist framework, racial capitalism explains that ‘racism supplies the precarious and exploitable lives that capitalism needs to extract land and labour’ (Danewid,2019:298). Furthermore, racial capitalism establishes that, within the landscape of a city, ‘places and people [are] disposable and expendable’; Grenfell was ‘a racially devalued, surplus place’ (Pulido, 2016: 2).In short, since the birth of social housing and of its tenants, which research indicates to be predominantly of BAME origin, cultural differences have been exaggerated and weaponised to supposedly oppose ‘national norms’, to attack society all whilst their ‘vulnerable class position is downplayed or ignored altogether’ (Wacquant et al., 2014: 1274). However, Grenfell Tower is a harrowing example of how stigmatisation and ‘policy (or lack thereof) is as mighty as a bulldozer’ (Tombs, 2020:124). Thus, the harms based on design and territory of social housing, coupled with the stigmatisation based on race, at Grenfell have been, and will continue to be, produced by a combination of State and corporate acts and omissions (Tombs, 2020:128). Having established this, the next section will build on how these harms rippled through buildings across the UK after the disaster.

3.5 Failed lessons

Aberfan, Hillsborough and now Grenfell each produced public outcry, ritual mourning and official inquiries (Preston, 2018:58) but, yet disasters of similar and/or growing magnitudes continue to transpire. Grenfell is yet another disaster where lessons appear to have failed and accountability is hidden with capitalists in their ‘bunkers’ (Preston, 2018:55), what could’ve been an opportunity for the working class and disenfranchised to be recognised was glossed over by empty promises. This, however, comes as no surprise as capitalism is said to rely on disasters to restore and expand its power and affluence, without it there would be no one to exploit, no surplus value to achieve and no world to dominate.

These failings in ‘lessons learnt’ are not in short supply, the Grenfell fallout is the epitome of this. One of Grenfell’s ‘successes’ -if you can call it that- is the raised awareness for the downright criminal building regulatory system but just like the main social harms, this awareness came at a cost. In the 15 months after the fire, ‘over 6,000 high-rise buildings (in the UK) were inspected and the number officially deemed unsafe more than doubled, to 468’ (Hodkinson, 2019:228). However, disconcertingly, of those 468 high-rise buildings found to contain similar cladding to Grenfell only 32 were repaired by the government. Furthermore, the government, begrudgingly, agreed to fund an ‘estimated £400 million’ to the removal of dangerous cladding on social housing blocks, money which came from the affordable housing budget (Hodkinson, 2019:228) ergo limiting future developments for social housing projects. Arguably, this decision could be seen to be profitable as of those some £400 million, the contracts no doubt are part of the wider privatisation picture. This idea is reinforced in the wider Grenfell landscape as research indicates that there is as many as 20,000 leaseholders living in private high-rise blocks which also contain flammable cladding. The lease-holders face being trapped in highly combustible, unsellable homes due to high-rise building owners passing on the responsibility of repairing the flats, which could ‘cost up to £60,000’, onto them (Hodkinson, 2019:229).

Disaster capitalism would draw upon how, in wake of Grenfell and this fallout, legislation became watered down so that the government could pass on and relieve themselves of any responsibility and millions in repairs. This ripple of economic responsibility is evidence that ‘as capitalism ‘grows’ so does ‘misery’ (West, 1969, p.6). However, there has been some forwarding developments earlier this year. Michael Gove, Secretary of state for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, has been working towards making developers sign a building safety contract that will hold them liable to funding repairs for any unsafe buildings in England and “Those that fail to do the right thing will be banned from the housing market” (Gove, 2023). The potential success of this will only be seen in the years to come. Building on the idea that negligence by RBKCC and the corporations it hired caused unimaginable social harms beyond the 72 immediate deaths, the next section will round off this central claim and classify it as a crime.

3.6 Guilty as charged

Indeed, the Inquiry has made some significant and blatantly criminal findings but yet still no one has been issued any penalties of reparations or convictions. Robert Millett addresses this in the closing statements of Phase 2 of the Public Inquiry by stating that ‘One question remains: who among the core participants has actually admitted that they caused or contributed materially to these deaths?’ (Millett, 2022:34). However, with the reflection of harms, corporate criminal liability asserts that ‘for offences of negligence, it

should be possible to convict a corporation on the basis of collective negligence' (Lewis, 2022). Thus, those, whether at state level or in private corporations, involved in the interference of Grenfell tower should be treated as criminals, corporate criminals.

Conclusion: Will Grenfell have a sequel?

Definitions help to contextualise and conceptualise fully unexplored ideas to find the full narrative. This case study's aim was to do just that, to unravel the multi-faceted tragedy that occurred on that long summer night in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC); it aimed to define the marginalised, socially housed and neglected tenants as victims of corporate crime. Not only of corporate crime but, with reference to the Marxist notion of social murder, corporate manslaughter of the highest degree.

Chapter one focused on deregulation over the last 50 years and how it became a driving force for austerity not only for Grenfell but major fires such Summerland (1973), Harrow Court (2005) and Lakanal house (2009) that came before it. The aim of this was to demonstrate how deregulation created a domino effect from insubstantial policy to contentment to unimaginable social harms to corporate crime. It was the focus on how lessons were failed to be learnt time and time again. Moreover, the chapter focused on how tenants of Grenfell, and high-rise buildings in general, were not alone in experiencing the long-term frustrations of deregulation and austerity cuts as the Fire Brigades Union's warnings were also ignored and the tenants, themselves, faced being evicted for whistle-blowing the landlords 'malign governance' (Grenfell Action Group, 2016). Fundamentally, the chapter aimed to expose the "Prioritisation of cost over virtually any other factor" and that "every one of the deaths that occurred in Grenfell tower on 14th June 2017 was avoidable" (Millett, 2022:28) had regulation been legitimately monitored. The application of Zemiology (study of social harms) facilitated this case study with a theoretical framework to explain and intrinsically define the events leading up to, during and after the fire as a corporate crime due to the magnitude of indirect and direct harms.

Building on the role that deregulation came to play in the Grenfell Tower disaster, chapter 2 focused on how territorial stigmatisation and stigmatisation of social housing manifested further deregulation and harms. The chapter reinforces how the disdain for social housing set a complacent standard which, in turn, created second-class regulations for those with 'ambiguous' or second-class statuses. It was the years of labelling and branding, by those in power and the media's influence, that manifested contentment in which residents of the social housing block life-saving warnings of their landlords (RBKC and KCTMO) negligence and malpractice as many as 5 years before the fire were blatantly ignored and pushed under the carpet. With the application of the theoretical framework of Domicide (destruction of the home) it introduced and explained how, through this stigmatisation, harms occurred not only in the physical harms of the resident's bodies but also of their homes. The chapter demonstrated that Domicide eventuated in the violent destruction of sentimental property, routine and of the safety and security that a home provides, all virtually irreplaceable objects. These harms were reinforced by Theresa May's failed promise for residents to be "rehoused within 3 weeks" and that as many as 12 months later residents were still yet to be properly rehoused. Furthermore, in this chapter, the issue of race was incorporated to reinforce how disdain against socially housed BAME individuals manifested additional harms through their perceived 'deviancy'. To combine and round off the influences of deregulation and stigmatisation, the last section of the chapter, in

conjunction with a Marxist critical view on capitalism, sought to discredit the notion that crises' lead to reform and, instead, little change is made. Significantly, the chapter demonstrates how the harms of Grenfell not only rippled directly to those affected on the night of the fire but also of unsuspecting private leaseholders across the UK as the houses they occupied had the same flammable cladding and still continue to as many as 5 years later.

Ultimately, the causational factors identified in this study are “complex and in many cases inextricably interlinked” (Millett, 2022:28), each catalysing the disaster. The use of Marxism, Zemiology, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Domicide has allowed further harms to be uncovered and alludes to how Grenfell is a victim of corporate crime. These theoretical frameworks, combined, undermine the general notion that harm is only seen in the immediate deaths of 72 people and instead conveys a convoluted range of physical harms which were produced and will continue to be produced. These harms include: the destruction of homes (virtually making them homeless), destruction of personal property, cultural harms (disruption of work and social life), bereavement of family members, production of trauma (PTSD) in survivors and family, long-term mental health problems and the Grenfell fallout with other buildings maintaining the same cladding. The true extent of these harms, whether micro and macro, however, will remain unknown as the ripple continues to fluctuate, especially in terms of buildings around the UK still being covered flammable cladding.

In this sense, using the Marxist theoretical framework, capitalism can be deemed to be criminogenic in light of Grenfell but perhaps not in the original sense to which Marx intended, instead the concept ought to be flipped on its head; it should be that market economies of privatisation and deregulation, emphasised by capitalisms deliberate creation of class conflicts through stigmatisation, foster crimes of the powerful, corporate crimes. Ultimately, it is conclusive from this case study to define inaction as dangerous and criminal as action, regardless of the lack of violence applied, negligence is the absence of consciousness and the abundance of culpability. To say that Grenfell was an isolated accident, where the causes were unknown and unpredictable, is completely misguided and disingenuous, ‘On the contrary, each and every one of the risks which eventuated at Grenfell tower on that night were well known by many and ought to have been known by all who had any part to play.’ (Millett, 2022:28). It is in this sense, that all the corporations and RBKC members, involved in the refurbishment project, actions and inactions should be classed as an act of corporate crime as they “thought that something was somebody else’s job, but never bothered to check” (Millett, 2022:37).

Although justice is still yet to be served to this heartbroken community, only time will tell if true reform is to be met, in wake of Grenfell tower, but as Richard Millett, King’s Counsel to the Inquiry, states “True regret is not the repeated and mournful use of the word ”sorry”, but the achievement of a practical outcome reflecting permanent self-corrective action” (Millett, 2022:37) which, as demonstrated at the end of chapter 2, is yet to be accomplished. Instead, there is as many as ‘20,000 possible buildings with flammable cladding’ in the UK (Hodkinson, 2019:228) and those are just the published numbers, there could be thousands of more Grenfell’s in the UK and the rest of the world.

Fundamentally, these layers of inaction post Grenfell leave no doubt that Grenfell tower and its residents were (are) victims of social murder, of corporate crime. A statement from Grenfell united (2022) declares that ‘Whilst this system exists [...] a justice system that

protects the powerful [...] we face the same unachievable battle as the many before us' (Burgon, 2022:473). Whilst Michael Gove's contractual policy earlier this year, in terms of holding corporations accountable, is a step in the right direction, it is only one policy and for significant change to come then there has to be a wider range of legislation. However, if society continues to be driven by capitalism, then it is unlikely that disasters like Grenfell will be averted. In this sense, capitalism is the root cause of inequality and injustice; Capitalism will be the cause of 'the eventual demise of civilisation' (Preston, 2018:55). Ultimately, the failed lessons 'Five years on (strengthen the notion that) another Grenfell is a very real possibility' (Burgon, 2022:473).

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