

Will the Grenfell Tower disaster result in transformational policy change?**1. Introduction**

The Grenfell Tower fire that was reported on 14 June 2017, responsible for killing around 80 people, continued for over a day before being extinguished (The Guardian, 2017, BBC News, 2017). In the immediate aftermath, the focus shifted onto how it was possible for such a fire to break out and some of the technological failings of Grenfell Tower and other flats of this nature came under investigation (The Independent, 2017). However, increasingly commentators have identified the policy dimension in relation to Grenfell and this assignment will examine that angle (The Guardian, 2017a).

2. Policy dimension

From a theoretical perspective, transformative policy change in relation to housing entails the fusing of practice, research and policy designed to promote a set of underlying values (Sylvestre et al., 2017). These values can include seeking to ensure better management, empowering staff and generating greater responsiveness to residents (Pawson et al., 2010). In relation to Grenfell Tower, a public inquiry has opened examining the causes of the fire, but it has already faced criticisms for failing to appoint a survivor to the inquiry panel (BBC News, 2017a). There is no ostensible policy dimension in the inquiry and whilst the Department for Communities and Local Government has stated that it will consider conducting separate investigations (DCLG, 2017). and production of a Green Paper (Inside Housing, 2017), there does not appear to be any transformational policy change proposed at present from the official authorities.

Advocates of transformational policy change have called for a number of fundamental reforms to housing policy that ought to result from Grenfell (The

Guardian, 2017a). Firstly, it has been argued that the process of managing housing services has become increasingly commercialised and that subcontracting has led to a lack of responsiveness and connection between tenants and housing providers (The Guardian, 2017a). Secondly, at a broader level, it has been argued that the imperatives of neoliberal market economics have subverted the needs of marginalised groups in relation to housing (The Guardian, 2017b). The injustice of empty luxury flats sitting near the Grenfell site has often been voiced and Labour MP Frank Field has called for Grenfell survivors to be given tenancies in these properties (The Guardian, 2017b). Ultimately, advocates of transformational policy change are articulating the view that neoliberal housing policies have “socially cleansed” parts of London of working class and low-income communities and that reforms tackling growing inequality and emphasising fairness are necessary (The Guardian, 2017c).

3. Conclusion

It is too early to say whether the Grenfell disaster will engender transformational policy change, but so far, it seems unlikely that it will. The purview of the inquiry appears to be too narrow and whilst further discussion of housing policy reform has been mooted, there is little in the way of substantive commitments. The Grenfell tragedy, however, clearly shows that urgent reform is necessary, particularly in relation to tackling the future of social housing and rising inequality in the housing market.

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