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Grenfell Tower

Preparedness, Race
and Disaster Capitalism

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ISBN 978-3-319-96850-6 ISBN 978-3-319-96851-3 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96851-3>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018949147

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

PREFACE

Aberfan, Hillsborough, Grenfell. These are events that can't be talked about in British culture without a solemnity that often masks everything in silence. Following the Grenfell Tower fire in which 72 people officially died, including a baby who was stillborn, there was a media clampdown regarding the exact number of deaths and people were silenced on the news when they mentioned there might be anomalies in official casualty figures. In the 1966 Aberfan industrial disaster (where 116 children and 28 adults were killed) and the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster (where 89 people died) there was a similar national silence around the facts of each case. Silence is political. After Aberfan, Hillsborough and Grenfell we see the same patterns repeating themselves. A national tragedy followed by the visits of the ruling class, anger, the right-wing media pathologising the victims and memorialisation. Shutting the door on the tragedy with lessons learnt and a weak promise made that catastrophes such as this must never happen again.

Of course, these events happen again, perpetually and with increasing frequency. They afflict the working class, white and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) disproportionately. We can't seriously consider a white, ruling class Aberfan as the wealthy do not live near coal slag heaps. We don't have nightmares about their Hillsborough as we cannot consider a wealthy sporting event with such poor safety and policing. We can't think about a ruling class Grenfell as their tower blocks have sprinklers, multiple stairways and are made of fire retardant building materials.

As disasters disproportionately impact on the working class the idea of preparing for disasters and making environments safe to live in had, in the twentieth century, served a purpose of providing a means if not of saving lives of keeping Capital in motion and some sense of social cohesion. Now things are different. It is the rich who want to be prepared, to flee the planet or the metropolis, to restart capitalism or to retreat to their billionaire bunkers. Events such as Grenfell Tower are part of the process of capitalist resurgence and terminal decline. Skylines are reconstructed at lightning speed as buildings and cityscapes become outdated whilst profits splutter and fall. In this process, the lives of those in Grenfell Tower are not just the collateral, but are the purposive, victims of class and racial cleansing of the city.

The approach that I take in this book is to focus on the structural reasons for the Grenfell Tower disaster and response. I decided early on in this project that it would be unethical and inappropriate for an academic outsider to the tragedy to appropriate or ventriloquize the words of activist groups and the community through a qualitative approach. As a working class academic myself from a former mining town in the Midlands (Bedworth) I am aware of the ways in which projects around disasters and poverty can misrecognize and commodify suffering. An honest qualitative approach requires activist engagement and an ethnographic embedding in the setting. Other working-class academics (namely Lisa McKenzie's work on class cleansing, Beverley Skegg's on class positioning and Kalwant Bhopal's work on class and white privilege) have provided exemplary studies of how this can be done. Here, I use critical approaches on how the right to existence is classed and raced (from Critical Race Theory and Critical Legal Studies) and Marxist value critique to uncover why preparedness for disaster was never intended for the racialised working class, including the residents of Grenfell Tower. In accordance with this approach, I capitalise both 'Capital' and 'State' as singular phenomena that have a unique form of existence in capitalist society.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) for supporting this research through my role as a Leadership Fellow for the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research which has allowed me to continue to consider issues of preparedness and its relation to equity.

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CHAPTER 1

Preparedness Inevitably Fails

Abstract Preparedness, the campaigns which the State produces to protect its citizens, is usually considered to be in the interests of the population. In the case of Grenfell Tower, preparedness was apparently based on a science and social science of tower block fires. However, State interests, rather than the interests of citizens, are the primary subject of State preparedness. Preparedness campaigns, such as the ones employed in Grenfell Tower, are necessarily limited by the State's desire to tacitly protect certain citizens rather than others. In the final analysis, the State aims to protect itself and capitalism rather than the citizen. Preparedness inevitably fails the citizen as its ultimate purpose is State survival and the maintenance of Capital.

Keywords Preparedness · State · Capital · Existential threat

INTRODUCTION

London as a global city prides itself on being prepared for various forms of disaster and emergency. Following high-profile terrorist attacks in 2017, in which the response of the city was considered to be exemplary, the response to the fire which engulfed Grenfell Tower, a residential tower block in one of the most unequal parts of the city, in June 2017, was severely inadequate. The impacts on residents many of whom were low income and/or BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) working

class citizens not only included death, injury and displacement but have continued through pathologisation, lack of housing and loss of income. In the next chapter, I will consider the Grenfell Tower disaster explicitly in terms of how the specific form of ‘stay put’ preparedness at Grenfell tacitly produced a disproportionate impact on the poorest residents. In this chapter, I focus on preparedness and why the subject of preparedness (who preparedness is designed for) is rarely the poorest and most disadvantaged citizen and in some cases not the citizen at all. 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 and ultimately in its own continued existence. Inevitably, the citizen must be failed by preparedness. Ultimately, preparedness is becoming unsustainable as its true purposes become clear and as I will show in the final chapter the ruling class of London have adopted their own private forms of preparedness frequently as a response to what they see as the consequences of events such as Grenfell and the social disruption arising from these incidents.

The residents of Grenfell Tower were subject to various kinds of preparation in responding to a potential fire in the building aside from ‘stay put’. Plans for evacuation (where residents have to shelter in place), guidance notices and emergency response plans were devised, if not necessarily enacted, to plan for a tower block fire. These strategies are part of a wider apparatus of global preparedness. Governments across the world are constantly engaged in public information campaigns to make us aware about what we should do in disasters and emergencies. Depending not only on what is seen as the most frequent type of disaster in a particular country, but also on what governments perceive as being worthy of public information, we are given advice through various different channels for differing emergencies. Fire is one form of emergency but there seems to be no end to the types of disaster and emergency that we should be prepared for from the apocalyptic (nuclear war, global pandemic and catastrophic climate change), the natural (tsunamis, floods, forest fires and pandemics), the human made (terrorism and industrial accidents) and the esoteric (space weather). The vistas for preparedness are constantly expanding and the boundaries between types of disaster are becoming less clear. Emergencies such as flooding are linked to the wider crisis of climate change and cascade into failures of infrastructure. Preparedness for terrorist attacks evolves with changing threats and risks from fears of a ‘dirty bomb’ to preparedness for low tech attacks

by ‘self-starters’ with knives, guns and vehicles. Financial crises reappear as infrastructure failures and riots. The permeability of boundaries around types of disaster, and threats, means that preparedness materials grow in volume and complexity over time. Alongside this expanding verbiage and imagery of preparedness comes a corresponding increase in the variety of media that is used to prepare us for disasters and emergencies. Preparedness has always been hungry for new sources of media and outlets. Even in the early 1950s, the US government was experimenting with new sources of media and information to educate the public about nuclear attack. The Federal Civil Defence Administration (FCDA) were particularly captivated by producing new and innovative forms of media including themed television broadcasts on nuclear war, filmstrips for schools and travelling exhibitions. The public information leaflet or booklet, even then, was an anachronistic form of public information (Preston 2015a). Now we have ubiquitous preparedness information through social media (Palen and Hughes 2018) responding to real-time events, school and workplace initiatives and cards that we can put in our wallet to remind us how to treat the victims of a terrorist attack. Preparedness is no longer seen to be a job just for the government but is also a non-profit and private sector business with advice on how to prepare from organisations, such as the Red Cross, advice on how to protect animals in a crisis and multiple online stores selling preparedness manuals and materials to concerned citizens and ‘Preppers’ alike.

In contrast to this multimedia spectacle, at Grenfell Tower the advice provided was more prosaic and minimalist. It depended almost exclusively on residents following a small amount of advice that was provided textually in terms of fire safety notices. That advice was to ‘stay put’ in a tower block that was ostensibly designed to resist fire and where people would be safe in their own apartments. The minimalism of that advice resonates with what is happening across the whole public sector. Ironically as the security services consistently identify new terrorist threats and introduce more complex forms of transmedia preparedness the resources that the public sector, local councils and housing associations are using to meet more frequent events such as fires are consistently diminishing. Anecdotally, when I started researching preparedness at the turn of the century, I would be interviewing large teams of emergency planners in plush modern council buildings. Now even for large local authorities that department is one person in a room with some road cones. Preparedness has been downsized, asset stripped and distributed

across existing roles even as its remit expands. The State wants us to be prepared for an increasing number of disasters whilst its resources to enable us to do so are stretched unbelievably thinly.

THE LIMITS OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE FOR PREPAREDNESS

The advice given to the residents of Grenfell Tower to ‘stay put’ in the event of a fire was based loosely on behavioural science. This does not necessarily mean that the advice had a high degree of scientific certainty. In terms of preparedness, behavioural science is plagued by significant degrees of guesswork due to the idiosyncratic nature of disasters and emergencies and the scope for improvisation and collective action. As I will show in the next chapter, ‘stay put’ is a strategy with many risks even in the safest tower block. Uncertainty in this field is often played down in the academy as preparedness is big business for academics, with grants and government contracts to be won. Although it can be said of most modern social science fields, preparedness is an area which is truly interdisciplinary, an almost compulsory aspect of contemporary academic endeavour. Primarily a sub-field of psychology and sociology, preparedness is also of interest to anthropologists, educationalists, socio-physicists (who use physics and engineering models to predict and influence human behaviour), economists, cultural theorists and political scientists.

There is a subtle difference between behavioural science and preparedness in practice, although the two are obviously connected. Behavioural science makes predictions about behaviour in a given situation (to the extent this can be determined) whereas preparedness is designed to prepare people for an emergency and may (or may not) be derived from behavioural science. Of course, preparedness should ideally be derived from science but obviously not everyone (or even the majority) will react in a way informed by preparedness. Preparedness materials might inform, nudge or guide people towards a course of behaviour but they might not be followed in a didactic, literal form. Behavioural science should therefore consider how people might act in the absence of preparedness advice before considering its consequences. Cascading chains of events and multiple points where safety might fail make events such as tower block fires extremely hard to model behaviourally which makes unequivocal advice such as ‘stay put’ a dubious strategy.

Given the expansion of preparedness materials across every conceivable situation, media, organisation, and its foundation in behavioural

science it is still apparent that preparedness is far from reaching a point where there are clear and unambiguous principles that should govern what we should do in a given situation. Such a question is particularly apt in the case of Grenfell Tower, where there were questions about whether individuals were better off staying where they were (the ‘stay put’ strategy), or evacuating, in the fire. Of course, the key feature of risk is that it is in itself ‘risky’ and preparedness will never be able to prepare us for every given situation. However, ambiguity in preparedness advice is often used strategically so as to redistribute risk from the State to the citizen. It is also used to open up preparedness for marketization. Some epistemological traditions would consider that the nature of human knowledge and information is such that certain modes of preparedness will never be able to account for unknown risks. Hayekian economics (Hayek 1962), for example, would consider that the future is inherently unpredictable by even the most knowledgeable central authority as human insight and behaviour is fundamentally private and unknowable. In this ultimately free market view it is impossible to predict what people will do in advance in a given situation. There is no State solution to preparedness, and government failure is more pernicious than market failures caused by incomplete information. In these circumstances it would be the market, rather than the State, which would be most effective in producing preparedness information. This mode of thinking, where State preparedness is completely redundant, is becoming particularly influential in terms of guiding public policy in disasters with increasing calls for self-reliance, resilience and ‘grit’. This discourse can then be used as a technique of responsabilisation, divesting the State with responsibility for what individuals might do in a disaster (Cretney 2017). One can see preparedness as a special case of State responsabilisation. The State’s presence is unavailable, or diminished, during a crisis so it passes the responsibility for some of its welfare functions to the citizen. Preparedness also allows the State to deflect responsibility from Capital and capitalists. In the case of Grenfell Tower, for example, it is possible that the ‘stay put’ strategy might be used to blame the fire service rather than other agencies for the tragedy by isolating it from the wider structural conditions of the fire. The State can turn on itself (the police pursuing action against the fire service, perhaps) to maintain the continuation of Capital.

Precise statistical modelling of behaviour under extreme situations, which should be a pre-requisite of producing preparedness guidance, is beset with several problems. Emergent phenomena, such as the

spontaneous intervention of non-state actors in disasters and emergencies (such as the participation of the Occupy movement in responding to Hurricane Sandy), improvisation and courage (the ‘Let’s Roll’ response by passengers on United 93, aware on 9/11 that their aircraft was, in all likelihood, going to be crashed into the ground) and the reciprocal ways in which certain emergencies change their nature due to public behaviour in response make it extremely difficult to model behaviour. In terms of the reciprocal nature of emergencies, game theory and related behavioural science theories of reciprocity, can help us to model the impact of preparedness strategies but the problems they are designed to meet are often intractable. For example, if in response to the expectation that people will run from a primary terrorist attack the terrorists plant a secondary device at the location where people are most likely to flee from, then this may change the nature of preparedness advice but it is almost impossible to convey game theoretic concepts in public information without heavily caveating that advice. Similarly, in the event of a food shortage the advice not to panic buy as this will lead to a shortage would be difficult without the message producing the effect it was desired to defeat. If the government tells you not to panic then panic might seem like a rational response, particularly if trust in government is low. The intractability of human behaviour *ex ante* in these scenarios makes it difficult to provide advice. Of course, human behaviour in disasters can be simulated *ex ante* and people can be asked about their responses using thematic interviews or real-life simulation exercises. Complex models of behaviour can also be produced *ex post* and advances in social psychology have enabled social scientists to move beyond simple models of behaviour, rejecting naïve conceptions of social contagion (Stott et al. 2016) and mass panic (Rogers and Pearce 2016) However, we are far from a behavioural, or social, science, that gives us firm guidance on preparedness.

If we take as an example what might seem to be a scenario of such scale and intensity that there might seem to be universal agreement as to what to do, the explosion of a nuclear weapon in a city, then we can explicitly see that there is actually very little consensus in terms of scientific or social scientific guidance, which makes producing preparedness information extremely difficult. Since the Cold War, the advice has been that one should shelter in place, preferably in an underground location with a high protection factor remaining there with sufficient food supplies to last for a number of days giving time for a reduction in fallout, and hence radiation. In the unlikely scenario where there are

a few weeks warning that an attack might happen, and given that the person/group has sufficient resources and accommodation then this might seem to be the optimal strategy. Once, we start to examine this in more detail, though, then we can see that there are questions as to whether this strategy would really work best, at least at the level of the individual/group. The first question is whether, given the prediction of a nuclear attack, you would want to stay where you were. If you lived in a capital city which was a possible target, such as London or New York, or next to a military base, and had the means and ability to travel to a more remote location then surely it would be a good idea to do so. Of course, if everyone behaved in the same way then the roads might become blocked due to congestion and then you might have been better off staying where you were. The outcome would then be whether being in your car (or on foot) and out in the open (or making use of whatever shelter you could get) would be better or worse than staying in place (deciding to 'shelter in place' in the language of preparedness). The preparedness advice needs to take into account not only what you, as an individual might do, but how the collective behaviour of others (and other forms of information) will impact on your decision about what to do. It could also be considered that the decision about what to do is not really a decision at all and individuals could be constrained by all sorts of factors which impact on what they might do such as their mobility, age, whether they have children or pets and whether they have access to the advice in the first place. The idea that people might have advance warning about what to do in the case of a nuclear explosion may be considered to be unrealistic. The Cold War assumptions about a period of increasing tension between the Soviet Union and the United States/North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries which would allow States and citizens to prepare may be considered to be unrealistic in an era where nuclear war would be a surprise (perhaps due to the miscalculation or impertinence of a President, the belligerent firing of a weapon by a would be superpower or an error or accident). In this situation, the first warning that individuals might get that something is amiss could be the blinding flash of a nuclear explosion followed by the heat, blast and fallout. In this situation, it would seem that the best preparedness advice is to shelter in place immediately. The 1950s advice to 'Duck and Cover' seems to be of particular relevance here, that it is best to put a barrier (physical if possible) between yourself and the nuclear explosion. In an immediate emergency situation involving a nuclear explosion 'Duck and

Cover' would seem to be valid but even here there are issues of whether the individual concerned would be better trying to get to shelter if this was very close by. If I am caught just outside a building with a shelter by a nuclear explosion then it is a close judgement call whether it is better to 'Duck and Cover' where I am or to try and make it through the door. Besides, such a reaction almost falls into the criteria of a non-decision in that individuals might act on instinct, or by muscle memory, in determining what to do. Given the fact that a nuclear explosion has occurred (or the individual considers that a nuclear explosion has happened) then the advice to shelter in place can additionally be questioned. If the individual decides to stay where they are they are in close proximity to the source of the explosion (potentially receiving a higher dose of radiation) they may not be in the optimal position to shelter in terms of protection, food or safety. On the other hand, they have the benefit of some protection and will not be in the open when fallout descends or in the event of a further explosion. If they run (or walk quickly) from the source of an explosion they might be able to get to more robust shelter or get some distance between themselves and the radiation. Running for twenty minutes away from the explosion might be better than sheltering in place immediately. Besides the person may want to get home as that is where their children are, their pets, food and medicine. They may even want to die at home rather than in the nearest anonymous building. Despite this uncertainty governments were very clear in the Cold War about what they wanted individuals to do in a nuclear attack, not because they knew precisely what was correct, but as this was guided more by geopolitical, military and strategic decisions rather than necessarily what would be in the best interests of citizens. The survival of (some) citizens was designed for geopolitical, game theoretic, advantage rather than being a social good in itself.

One thing is clear in preparedness, that nothing is certain and that any advice is qualified, caveated and conditional on individual circumstances. In Grenfell Tower, this conditionality produced ambiguity about what residents should do and this in turn may have led to residents deciding to remain in place given the 'stay put' advice when it was not in their best interests to do so (as will be considered in the next chapter) particularly as the 'stay put' message was constantly reinforced during the fire and given the poor fire safety in the tower. Given the disruptive nature of disasters and emergencies, and the difficulties for behavioural science in considering what should be done in a disaster or emergency, then we

may wonder why there is so much preparedness advice. Although the answers as to what to do are seemingly unclear the State is actually constantly expanding its boundaries in terms of explicitly telling us *exactly* what to do in given situations.

Behavioural scientists are often cautious and caveat the advice they offer. The (seeming) clarity of preparedness is instead driven largely by the State: how the State imagines us to be and what its aims are in a disaster and emergency for social control. Where there is ambiguity in advice this is a strategic decision. In the case of Grenfell Tower the advice to ‘stay put’ was indeed caveated for strategic purposes, to absolve agencies of responsibility particularly given the poor fire safety in the block. The form of guidance given in disasters has as much to do with what the State would like people to do, or how the State imagines people to be, than what would best help them in practice. We need to shift our perspective from considering how preparedness helps the citizen to one where we consider how preparedness helps the State, and relatedly how it helps Capital. This involves looking at how the State constructs the ideal citizen of preparedness and how, in the final analysis, the State is purely self-interested in terms of readiness for disasters. The inevitable failure of preparedness is rooted not in the vagaries of behavioural science but because preparedness is in the interests of the State, rather than the citizen.

THE STATE AND ‘MODAL CITIZENS’ IN A DISASTER

Models of how people prepare for disasters and emergencies are based on abstractions which are largely constructed by government agencies and academic departments in Universities. Tower block fires are modelled through computer simulations that should (but not always) rely on behavioural science about how people might behave. This produces a particular kind of abstraction, one that is driven not only by the assumptions of the paradigmatic models of social science but also by modes of governmentality in terms of representation and simulation. The State, not as a monolithic entity but as a network of agencies which are always constitutive of a wider politic arising from and supporting existing social structures (Jessop 2016, 212) has at its basis Capital as ‘value in motion’. Value in capitalism is a social substance which is constituted by abstract labour (Postone 2006). The State constructs a mode of understanding citizens in disasters and emergencies through that lens.

This mode of citizenship, indeed the form in which the State understands humanity, is subservient to Capital in one of its particular modes of existence (the State) and this becomes more apparent in considering disasters and emergencies than in other areas. As capitalism inevitably continues into crisis (a crisis that it has been in since the moment of its formation) the role of the State ‘...mutates into an authority that must make the cut between valorizable and unvalorizable human material’ (Lohoff 2014, 161). In other words as value is constituted from (abstract) human labour power and as value creators (expressed in the commodity, money, the State and all other capitalist social relations) then humans are ultimately valuable only in terms of whether their labour power is valorisable. The only other reasons for Capital (and therefore the State) to unlimitedly keep people alive is because of their social power as holders of money, as consumers whose purchasing power enables the valorisation of commodity values in sale or as the supporting structures of that valorisation.

Although the State is constituted at many levels (national and local) by individuals and networks and power is ultimately distributed its monolithic nature is two-fold. First, the State is based on value, the social form of Capital, and ultimately arises from this social substance. It was, and is, formed of the dead and living abstract labour of humans. It therefore makes no sense to talk about the relative autonomy of the State as if it were formed of conscious entities and associations as ultimately even forms of State resistance or autonomy are subject to the ebb and flow of forms of value. Second, one unusual feature of the State is that it has the authority of violence, the only agency of Capital to directly have this power at present. Therefore, whilst the State is not ostensibly a Hobbesian leviathan, rather being constituted by flows and forms of value, its authority over life and death makes it a monad of Capital’s rule, able to enact forms of direct violence and control that other agencies cannot as yet. In the Grenfell Tower fire, the State (and Capital) has a supra-legal relationship to death that individuals do not. Death is practiced indirectly and asocially, but no less personally, through disasters.

At present, the State manifestly supports a liberal notion of human rights and the idea that lives should be saved in disasters but even this is compromised by crisis. Classed, racial and gendered distinctions between citizens are used to determine if not economic value than a social value in terms of a politics of disposability. In the case of Grenfell Tower, the State showed compassion for survivors and the dead in a limited

economic sense, for reasons of social cohesion, with eventually the compensated (insured) value of life being ultimately determined by cost-benefit analysis.

In the ultimate existential crisis the State itself is collapsible and considers its own survival, and of supportive social relations which might enable capitalism, to be superordinate to the survival of any one, or group, of citizens (Preston 2012). Existential threats to the State are very real, as the State is from its very formation in a state of contradiction and collapse. As constituted by Capital it attempts to resolve Capital's own contradictions, including those caused by disasters and emergencies, but it is continually in a state of atrophy as will be explained in the final chapter. The State's view of its citizens is in terms of an idealised, imaginary, simulated form of behaviour which makes assumptions about mobility and survival in a disaster or emergency. In doing so it considers its own interests (and survival) to be paramount. Its function in terms of disasters and emergencies is to keep the socio-temporal web of Capital's value relationships spinning. In practical terms, it protects and quickly reconstitutes commerce and workplaces. Following 9/11 and the 2017 London Bridge terrorist attacks the State in the United States and the United Kingdom placed top priority on the resumption of trade and mobility. It has become a matter of national pride that following a terrorist attack people rapidly return to work, shopping and tourism. Acts of mourning are woven into disaster planning so that the nation may quickly return to work and consumption.

How the State actually conceives of citizens is abstract and alien as is appropriate in its nature arising from a form of Capital. In modelling disasters, emergencies and preparedness such as a building fire the State, through its agencies, creates a *modal citizen* (the average, or modal, human survival unit) which is animated (simulated) through various disaster scenarios and discourses. This involves all kinds of simplifying assumptions which are resolved in many different forms. In some (statistical) models the error term and explained variance (or associated forms of this) are used to consider what can't be explained. The variables which are used in the model come to represent the dimensions to which citizens can be reduced to. In other models, game theoretic approaches or emergent phenomena are used to explore the boundaries of inexplicability. However, ultimately in social scientific models the idea of a 'modal' citizen (or citizens with different characteristics, or multilevel citizens/groups/institutions) is formed. The citizen is simplified to a single acting

unit in most cases. Obviously, these models change over time but it is in the nature of preparedness that the models are resolved into some generic preparedness advice. These models, and their social contexts, are historically related to a form of preparedness. Although an exact periodisation of behavioural science, models and preparedness advice is not practicable it is still possible to draw out certain themes in periods that might overlap. These models of citizen behaviour are not just scientific models but produce all kinds of State assumptions concerning human survival and preparedness in disasters.

In the early Cold War, preparedness considered narratives of ‘character’ and individuation, albeit within a national context (or a context of nationalism). In the United States, for example, survival in a Nuclear War was considered to be concurrent with the traditional values of patriarchal families, nationalism and racial homogeneity (Sharp 2012). Before the widespread adoption of statistical or social scientific, models of behaviour in disasters a case study approach was frequently used to work out how individuals or groups might behave. Such models emphasised individual leadership and community exceptionalism to consider how certain individuals and groups were better prepared than others. Often this was orientated around a context which was particularly nationalistic or xenophobic considering the exceptionality of communities in the United States or the United Kingdom (UK) in contrast to communities in Japan (in the case of nuclear preparedness) (Sharp 2012). In Civil Defence preparedness materials of the late 1940s and early 1950s in both the UK and the United States we can see an emphasis on the individual as exemplifying the nationalistic mood in terms of joining the Civil Defence Corps (in the UK) or volunteering for Civil Defence (in the United States). Similar themes can be found in other preparedness campaigns around fires in the home, or industrial safety, with an emphasis on the character of the individual and the virtues of a clean home, good habits and morals. Fires in the home arose as a result of bad character or habits which were considered mainly to be the problem of the poor and both the causes and responses to the fire were expressed in terms of character. This emphasis on character and virtue is topologically related to a social science methodology of the comparative case study, emphasising the types of person, group or community that is best prepared. Hence, the ‘modal citizen’ was one who could be expected to form an ideal type of person and preparedness advice was designed to emphasise such virtues (Preston 2012). Although this mode of preparedness

was heavily tainted by racial, class and gender hierarchies it exemplified a kind of universalism through making the survival of a particular kind of citizen (white, middle class and heteronormative) contemporaneous with the survival of the nation. This type of preparedness approach has not quite disappeared but there is not such an emphasis on character in contemporary models of behaviour, or of preparedness, at least explicitly. However, character still lingers on in terms of the concept of responsibilisation where ‘modal citizens’ are expected to behave with character, in terms of stoicism or heroism.

The growth of statistical, and qualitative grouping models in the social science, together with the increasing scale of threats (tower block fires, thermonuclear war, mass transit accidents and the increased scale of industrial production) as Capital increasingly concentrated people in cities and accelerated urban living, produced a more scientific way of modelling behaviour and devising preparedness campaigns. The concentration of people in cities produced a need to respond to increasingly greater scales of disasters which occurred at an accelerated pace. Together with new modes of representation, particularly, the reduced costs of animation and film production, preparedness of the later Cold War period (1960–1985) is characterised by a particular blankness in term of representation of individuals and communities. This can be seen in public information campaigns for nuclear war that portray individuals as white, outline, uncanny cartoon characters (Such as The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the British Government’s nuclear preparedness short films) and industrial safety shorts that eschew characterisation for narration and focus on behaviour and activity. There is a movement away from ideas of character and virtue and an emphasis on behaviour and direction. Pedagogies of preparedness during this time are largely didactic and not caveated. Models of behaviour in disaster become technically more sophisticated and interdisciplinary work between scientists and social scientists (in areas such as emergency feeding and individual behaviour) means that the State has a new, scientific, confidence, in terms of how the modal citizen might behave. Agency and behaviour, with a paradoxical emphasis on individual conformity, were emphasised rather than character.

Following the Cold War, with Civil Defence transformed into civil protection and ‘dual use’ and with the growth of more sophisticated models of social science that recognised multilevel effects, emergent phenomena, game theory and post-positivist approaches to behaviour

in disasters, preparedness becomes increasingly nuanced and caveated. A new range of disasters and phenomena appeared involving new forms of terrorism that impacted on countries which had not previously been the target of terrorist attacks (particularly the United States) which in turn produced modes of preparedness designed for different contexts and groups of citizens. This can be seen most clearly in recent preparedness campaigns against terrorism by the Department of Homeland Security which presents citizens in a number of different contexts, with a range of different social characteristics (in terms of race, class, gender, age and ability) reacting in more nuanced ways. However, despite the caveating and refining of preparedness information the State still speaks with authority in creating a ‘modal’ citizen, able to respond to multiple, unknown and dynamic threats.

To summarise, although the State (as a manifestation of Capital) universally abstracts individuals into valorisable subjects, the exact form of ‘modal citizen’ that the State uses to represent people in disaster preparedness is an artefact of the historically situated social scientific models that the State uses to model behaviour in disasters. Of course, this is not an exact correspondence and the disjuncture between models and the forms of preparedness materials is apparent when one considers that preparedness advice is infrequently directly constructed or tested by behavioural scientists. Preparedness campaigns are frequently constructed by advertising agencies, public relations companies, and government bureaucracies such as local authorities and (increasingly) management agencies. Artistic license and the need for plot resolution and structure can subtly change the nature of preparedness campaigns to give a linear narrative with recognisable characters. Often what is seen to be the result of planning can occur by accident in preparedness campaigns which can make it difficult to read intention into the structure of preparedness materials. For example, British preparedness for nuclear attack in the 1970s and 1980s can be seen to favour certain groups of people (those living in rural areas, in large private houses with a cellar, with sufficient resources and supplies to last a prolonged period of isolation—in other words the white, middle classes) and the form of the preparedness campaign to support this (Protect and Survive) certainly seemed to make those assumptions. However, in practice, the visual and musical design of the campaign was somewhat ad hoc, with disagreements between scientists and animators and a lack of coordination between the design team (Preston 2012). The State is far from omnipotent in its plans, which

are beset with all sorts of errors and miscalculations. What is consistent, though, is the common modality which the State uses to categorise citizens. The State creates an ‘optimum’ human unit of survival by character or behaviour.

There are limits to the willingness, and imagination, of the State in constructing what can be called the modal citizen. In particular, assumptions are made on the basis of race, class, gender and sexuality in terms of who best meets the criteria for survival. Exceptionally, preparedness for disasters can sometimes appear to be a socially progressive area of State representation. For reasons of interest convergence (a concept from Critical Race Theory where the State makes concessions to equality in order to protect its own interests) the State will sometimes want to ensure strategic areas of survival, or its own survival, through preparedness (Bell 1980). These elements of interest convergence become most obvious in terms of disaster and crisis. This means making concessions to certain groups in terms of preparedness. For example, in civil defence films in the 1960s the US government went out of its way to present schools that adopted civil defence as embodying modes of progressive education and being inclusive (to a certain extent) of African-American and Hispanic students. Here, the Department of Defense was more progressive than the schools in promoting new educational ideas of inclusion and democratic educational philosophies (Preston 2015b). Similarly, in contemporary DHS films regarding terrorism, the Department of Homeland Security goes to great lengths not to show terrorists as being Muslim or ‘Other’, focusing on visibly white individuals. This normativity in preparedness materials may be due to interest convergence (in drawing everyone into the ‘war on terror’) but may also be a strategic reversal in that the State is de-emphasising the role of a certain group knowing that the audience will read in the pathologised group into the text. These progressive examples are exceptional. Whilst the State may make advances in terms of knowingly including certain groups in preparedness materials it more frequently tacitly excludes others. For example, in terms of making assumptions of mobility or fixedness in disasters, it makes assumptions about permanence of accommodation, assets and family structure that might exclude or disadvantage certain groups. It is easier to move, for example, if you are not disabled, have your own car and a small (or no) family whereas it is easier to remain in place if you have health needs that do not require you to move (whereas people who need frequent hospital treatment have to

move), have good food stocks and own your own property. Although the State may not openly disadvantage certain groups it *tacitly* disadvantages them through different modes of preparedness advice. Another, related, example is in terms of modes of preparedness that might triage between individuals on the basis of economic, cultural and social capital. If a serious pandemic were to strike the UK then the official advice is that individuals should remain in their homes for 14 days, follow official advice and only visit their doctor or a hospital on advice. This advice makes strong assumptions about wealth (people who have food and provisions for fourteen days, who do not depend on continuity of work for survival, those who do not rely on food banks or who are not on zero hours contracts), cultural capital (in understanding and differentiating between different forms of health advice, in having the class position to communicate and have influence with middle class professionals in health and social service networks) and social capital (in having contacts in the health service and with individuals in the public and private sector who can be drawn on for support). In making decisions about mobility and resources the State therefore advantages some groups of individuals rather than others. In the case of the Grenfell Tower fire, assumptions concerning mobility, obedience and resourcefulness were tacitly made. Citizens who do not fit the State's modality do not enter into the framework of State preparedness.

To summarise, citizen preparedness is an area in which the State shows a considerable degree of ingenuity and imagination. It, alongside non-state and private actors, creates sophisticated models of behaviour which define what I have referred to as a 'modal' citizen, a subject who will be expected to respond in a certain way to future imagined events. The State delivers, and attempts to deliver (it is not an exact science) a mode of preparedness to suit this modal (imagined) citizenry and the situation which is historically and situationally contingent. In doing so it might make some limited allowance for diversity or individual circumstance, but usually for the purposes of interest convergence. Tacitly, its advice will mean that certain groups benefit at the expense of others. Although the State might strategically account for diversity it ultimately cannot consider more systemic effects of its preparedness initiatives as it cannot recognise, or chooses to ignore, the systemic nature of disadvantage and inequality. In the case of Grenfell Tower, although the State (local authorities, management agencies, emergency services) produced advice which may even have accounted for local circumstances it is not

able to penetrate conceptions of systemic inequality. Through this lens we can see that preparedness will always be bounded by circumstance, not only by obvious historical contingency and situation, but by the need to systematise its citizenry in a disaster through social science techniques of categorisation and by tacit intentionality. An equitable preparedness in these circumstances is not possible, given the way that modelling response leads the State to stratify and its inability to compensate for systemic inequality. Moreover, the State has always operated a tacitly selective approach to who is the subject of preparedness. Although never explicit its modelling has always determined who should be the survivors of a disaster by virtue of character, resources or behavioural ingenuity. This has always been classed, raced and gendered but as the resources of the State are increasingly limited claims to universalism in terms of protection become even less credible.

It is not, though, just that the State is just intrinsically flawed in its ability to create an equitable form of preparedness it is that the State is the prime actor in itself, using preparedness for the purposes of its own survival and maintenance. As we shall see in the next section, the State itself can be considered to be collapsible, and in an existential disaster or emergency will put its own interests, and that of Capital, above those of its citizenry. Preparedness cannot work for the citizen as ultimately the State is the creator and beneficiary.

STATE PRESERVATION AND PREPAREDNESS

It is extremely difficult to discover what governments would consider to be the ethical principles behind preparedness. Most States seem to operate with a tacit understanding that the preservation of life is the ultimate aim of preparing for disasters and emergencies but there are at least as many references in official literature to the preservation of business and infrastructure. Such evidence might lead us to believe that the State is a disinterested party in preparedness, or even a beneficent one with the interests of the population at heart. Whilst there are some elements of altruism in preparedness, when we turn to examine truly existential threats the State will strive for preservation of itself above the survival of its citizens. As the State is nothing but an entity itself formed of value to preserve value in motion, the survival of Capital is paramount in these plans. The State makes plans for its own continuity even given the most extreme threats and plans to survive and to be ‘collapsible’ (Preston

2012) with the ability to reduce itself to its constituent parts to reconstruct itself and its social relations following the disaster. Obviously, it would only be in extreme situations that such plans, sometimes called preparations for Continuity of Government (COG, which is a form of continuity of the State without citizens), would be put into effect. Nuclear war is one of these scenarios, and the origin of these COG plans was to ensure that leadership remained after a so-called ‘decapitation’ strike that threatened to remove the Head of Government and government operations. Other scenarios might include conventional war, large Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) events, social disruption or systemic infrastructure failure. These are situations which could involve large casualties and social chaos.

Such events and plans for COG are particularly telling even if they are never enacted because they reveal not only the minimal criteria that the State considers necessary to reconstruct itself but also the social relations and other artefacts that it believes to be necessary for the reconstruction of the nation state. The minimum legal requirements for a nation state in international law in terms of a permanent population would be violated although the government could still claim that their nation had a geographical boundary and recognition by other states. This reveals a great deal concerning how the State perceives preparedness and tells us something about what the State considers to be important in less extreme scenarios. Rather than a ‘decapitation’ attack, an attack would leave the State in a situation where it is an ‘isolated brain’, a head without a body, attempting to preserve itself outside of a citizenry. Obviously, a government without a citizenry cannot survive for very long (although there have been examples of governments in exile and other lacuna in international law) and so governments in COG make arrangements to reconstruct the State and its social relations, particularly the necessity for labour power to create value, following the existential disaster. It is in this way that the State is ‘collapsible’, it compresses itself into a ‘kit’ that allows for its reconstruction after the emergency which can be unfolded into the entities that will reconstruct the State (Preston 2012). Often the plans do not involve reconstructing the State, economy and society in exactly the same way that it was before the emergency. Rather, they are to reconstruct a simulacra state initially which would contain the desirable entities and social relations that would eventually be expected to unfold to create the full nation. Obviously, some notion of the human, or an eventually viable population, is necessary to eventually achieve this,

but the plans for reconstruction often involve a respecification of rights, including the right to life, to produce the nation that the State desires. I use the term ‘collapsible state’ to refer to the State’s various architectures to reconstruct itself after a crisis (Preston 2012).

There are interesting differences between what nations consider to be necessary in terms of reconstruction of the State in COG. These differences between Nation States seem to reflect the path dependence of preparedness and the very different histories of countries. In all cases, COG plans include some conception about the survival of national leadership, parts of the government, the ability to communicate internally and externally and the preservation of elements of the ruling class (although how this is defined differs from country to country: Preston 2012). In the United Kingdom, COG plans additionally focused around symbolic elements of British identity and nationhood, such as art treasures, the Royal Family and the re-establishment of a postal service. The UK would be split into a number of subnational authorities which would be responsible for what citizens remained, to be eventually reconstructed into a greater nation. Plans for reconstruction were grounded around agricultural development; with rations going to those who could work or protect the State receiving extra rations (it is assumed that the ‘male’ workers would want to work to support their ‘families’). These plans involved reconstructing the UK on lines that might be considered a romanticised idea of the nation’s past, with feudal arrangements for sub-nations and agricultural surpluses. In the United States, the plans focused on re-establishing capitalism and private property through the preservation of records on property rights, the re-establishment of the banking system and alliances with the private sector (COG itself in the United States can be considered to be a private sector initiative with the collaboration of industry partners such as Halliburton). In Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plans for reconstruction there are frequent references to the way in which a nuclear attack would shift the capital/labour ratio in a very favourable way for the surviving populations which would lead to an increase in productivity for the economy. This is congruent with ‘Disaster Capitalism’ (Klein 2008), particularly in terms of how the destruction of old and outdated capital paves the way for increases in productivity and economic growth in times of stagnation. Although plans are not so detailed in other countries, in Japan the role of industry and industrial leaders would play a major role, which again aligns with the history of Japanese reconstruction post-war.

As can be seen from this analysis, the plans for COG are nationally specific. Underlying this, the fact that they exist at all tells us something about the value that the State places on the reconstruction of a nation of a particular form. Existential threats are not taken to be times to consider what has happened or engage in any forms of democratic renewal, rather the State seeks to renew itself as quickly as possible and in a form that is almost a parody of itself, emphasising key national characteristics. That the State devotes so much time and energy to its own survival has not gone unnoticed by historians and political scientists. It has been referred to as the ‘first sphere’ of civil defence whereas the second sphere (resources devoted to the survival of the public) has been awarded a lower priority, particularly in countries such as the UK (Grant 2010). Preparedness, in the sense of public preparedness, could almost be seen to be a secondary concern of the State, and plans for COG tacitly neglect population survival. Implicit and unspoken is the principle that the survival of the State is a primary concern. Moreover, this is not just the survival of the State as is, but the reconstruction of a State that, at least initially, and possibly for an extended period of time, would be undemocratic and authoritarian in nature. A feudal UK with forced labour to survive, a re-energised and capitalist United States with old Capital swept away and an improved ratio of capital to labour, a Japan starting again as a corporatist economy with industry and government taking shelter and planning together. Given this understanding public preparedness appears to be secondary and we can reconsider what it means for the State to want to prepare and protect its citizens.

THE STATE AND INTEREST CONVERGENCE

In the previous section, I mentioned the term interest convergence to refer to the ways in which the State considers the interests of social justice for instrumental reasons. Interest convergence is a concept that arises from Critical Race Theory which considers that policies and practices that are in the interests of social justice are unusual (Bell 1980). In terms of Critical Race Theory, this is expressed in terms of whether the interests of a minoritised (not necessarily a numerical minority) racial group (usually expressed as the political grouping People of Colour, in American terminology, or a more specific socio-political group such as African-Americans) are met as opposed to a majoritarian political grouping (normally expressed as the political grouping Whites). Normally, State

policies and practices are interest divergent in that they promote the interests of majoritarian groups at the cost of minoritised groups. In some circumstances, though, it might be necessary for the minoritised group to be given benefits in terms of a change to policies and practices. This can be considered to be an outcome of the political system, particularly, in liberal democracies. Critical Race Theorists look at these cases as anomalies in political, legal and social systems and consider that such changes to policies and practice will only take place when it is also in the interests of the majority. In racial terms, changes to policies and practices that benefit People of Colour will only occur if they are also to the benefit of Whites. Moreover, such policies will probably be partial, riddled with legal loopholes and retracted when the need for interest convergence has subsided. The classic example of interest convergence is school desegregation in the United States. School desegregation has been seen to be a victory for the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and attributed to progressivism in US democracy and government. Critical Race Theorists would point to the partial nature of desegregation (segregation was practiced inside schools) and local opposition to desegregation (allowing schools to progress at a slow pace towards desegregation). The fact that desegregation was passed at all can be attributed to the need for the US government to enlist African-American soldiers into the army to fight its wars in East Asia and also to the need to present an image of the United States as a democratic and equal country to the rest of the world. Hence, partial and patchy desegregation was championed in government for reasons of foreign policy rather than equity (Bell 1980).

Turning to preparedness, interest convergence operates at a number of levels. The State itself cannot be transparent regarding its desire for survival or its plans for survival given an existential crisis. Contemporary policies around COG are largely secret not only because it is necessary to do so for national security but also as they would reveal an intentionality at work as regards the State and its own survival. Certain threats are occluded from the public (at least in the UK), particularly those of the existential kind. In securitisation, we tend to look at what there is (individual preparedness which is publically available) rather than what is absent (COG plans, which are largely secret). There are strategic choices to be made in terms of which risks to address through preparedness and which not to consider. Certain domains of risk, such as health and safety within factories, are not usually domains of preparedness although

they might be if there is a risk of a wider industrial disaster. The divide between health and safety and population preparedness is probably due to the former being in the private domain and the responsibility of employers and employees rather than the State. Preparedness is rarely private and contractual, it is more often found in the public domain and either given as guidance or is legislative. Beyond the private sphere, States generally focus on medium or high-risk disasters and emergencies with moderate consequences. Contemporary population preparedness is focused on disasters and emergencies that are manageable by the State without it enacting its own procedures for protection (at least to any great extent). In the case of COG, though, no interest convergence exists. The State loses any convergence with the idea of existence of its own population.

This seems counter-intuitive as at a basic level the survival of at least a proportion of citizens might be considered to be the minimum requirement for a State in terms of having a 'permanent population'. It might be believed that the government sometimes needs to consider the interests of the general population for this reason. To be clear, this is not to say that individuals in government and government departments are not interested in the survival of the population as a whole, and they may be passionately committed to social justice. Instead, the State in the final reckoning would ensure its own survival, and makes plans and enormous infrastructure provisions to do so. Interest convergence hence only goes so far, even if the circumstances in which it would be enacted are extreme and existential. This is not the norm (but always underlies State decisions), and the State sometimes makes difficult decisions which overtly, tacitly or unconsciously mean that certain groups experience greater levels of protection from preparedness than others. As well as tacit intentionality (which was discussed previously) the State effectively bargains with certain groups by benefiting them in emergencies at a cost to other groups. It is often difficult to penetrate just how this sort of interest convergence works as by its nature it is not overt and the nature of preparedness is to use a 'modal citizen' who either seems to be characterless (a stand-in for anyone) or where a range of characters are used to represent different aspects of diversity. However, preparedness is selective in terms of who is represented, who has the information and resources to prepare and who has access to greater levels of cultural and social capital. Omissions, and differences in resources, act as a form of interest convergence in terms of signalling to certain groups who has favoured

status. The privileging of certain groups in campaigns (and the exclusion of others) sends a message to them that their interests are, *for now*, congruent with those of the State. Strategically, the State needs a citizenry to survive but not necessarily all of them all of the time. Of course, concessions to equity can also act as forms of interest convergence in terms of reducing liberal guilt over disasters. Although interest convergence may seem somewhat conspiratorial when applied in a preparedness context it allows us to go beyond naïve ideas of the inevitable rise of progressivism in preparedness and across other government domains. As well as interrogating preparedness itself it needs to be considered how far preparedness is in the interests of the State, why certain policies act in the interests of some groups rather than others, and when policies and practices are amended in the interests of equity, representation and social justice whose interests do they serve. Ultimately, in an existential crisis ideas of equity or even humanity are jettisoned in terms of State survival.

PROTECTING SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

It is also obvious that the State has divergent interests which might differ from those of individuals and these might produce conflicts between the State and citizens in terms of preparedness, even if the threat is not of an existential nature. These are in terms of both social cohesion and social control.

States have an interest in social cohesion that both shapes the nature of preparedness in a society and can be conceived of as a possible outcome of preparedness. Rather than conceive of social cohesion as a single entity it is better to consider it as a range of regimes, or a number of ways in which the State justifies patterns of distribution and builds trust and tolerance and social norms (Green et al. 2008). There is not a straightforward relationship between social cohesion regimes and modes of preparedness as there are significant national differences (Kitagawa et al. 2016) but a few generalisations can be made. For example, in liberal societies that stress individuality and markets, there is an emphasis on initiative and personal resolve in preparing for disasters. The United States and the United Kingdom both use a variant of the ‘Run, Hide...’ Strategy—‘Run, Hide Fight’ in the United States and ‘Run, Hide Tell’ in the UK. Both countries emphasise making individual preparedness arrangements such as packing a ‘grab bag’ in case of a disaster which means that they will have to evacuate rapidly. Countries which have

a more collectivist society, such as Japan, emphasise partnership and collective responsibility such as collective training exercises for natural disasters. The Nordic countries have a strong ethos of community volunteering in preparedness, as historically does Germany. However, it is possible to find differences between preparedness arrangements across societies and there is strong path dependence in countries preparedness arrangements in that the institutions established in a country have a powerful role in determining the future preparedness arrangements which it is very hard to break out of. The UK and the United States are very different in that the UK has a culture in which preparedness is not always a matter of national discussion or public information and there is not as much information in the public domain. This is due to the strong relationship between the Security Services and preparedness in the UK. In the United States, on the other hand, responsibility for preparedness has been held by government agencies such as FEMA, as well as distributed across many government departments, which have an explicit outreach mission. In the United States, preparedness is also supported and disseminated by a strong and active civil society (including a proportion of citizens who are armed) whereas in the UK there are lower levels of social capital. In other liberal countries, such as New Zealand, a strong settler (or colonialist) culture has produced a still individualistic, but also community-based approach with close links to government, a possible artefact of being a small country. These countries share an individualistic approach to preparedness which is diametrically opposed to that adopted in more collectivist countries. There are also considerable differences in approach across those countries. For example, in Germany volunteering for civil defence is in decline due to demographic and cultural changes, particularly in small communities, whereas in Nordic countries it is reasonably stable due to a younger demographic who see civil defence participation as legitimate. Japan, with a collectivist approach to preparedness, has also seen some generational changes with a younger generation who may not wish to participate in collective preparedness activities, particularly as some of these were criticised as being ineffective in the recent Japanese Tsunami. Therefore, it is important to look at individual country circumstances although as a general point it can be seen that preparedness is both determined, albeit sometimes loosely, by the social cohesion regime and institutional arrangements in each country and is in turn used to protect social cohesion. As a supra-individual collective property of societies social cohesion is desired for its own sake, as a way

of maintaining social functioning in a crisis. This is not necessarily in the interest of citizens as it involves processes of ideology, policing and conformity to ensure political functioning.

As well as social cohesion, the State's need for social control also shapes preparedness. As has been argued, preparedness is not just (or even necessarily) a technical matter that can be determined by an interdisciplinary science, or social science. Preparedness is also influenced by the need to maintain social order. This has obvious implications for mobility, or immobility, in a disaster or an emergency. The movement of people, particularly the movement of people who are pathologised is often seen to be a problem by the State. As Beverley Skeggs (2013) argues, some bodies are seen to be mobile whereas others are seen to be fixed in physical or social space. This distinction is important as some bodies can be fixed in social space during a disaster or emergency whilst being mobile in physical space. The example of refugees would be a case in point. Due to a crisis, they are mobile in physical space, although this mobility is constrained and ordered by the legal, policing and security framework to which they are subject. During this movement they are, though, fixed in social space as regimes of social control keep them fixed in their refugee status. Similar statuses can apply in terms of preparedness. Bodies that are considered to be in need of social control can be fixed in physical space even when it is a danger to stay where they are, as in the case of Grenfell Tower. If the State decides it is necessary that such bodies need to move (for example to find emergency accommodation) then they are often fixed in social space, their ascription with a particular social status means that they are limited in the types of accommodation they are offered. On the other hand, certain bodies are considered to be both physically and socially mobile. In the case of professionals in a building during an active shooting, for example, preparedness materials show them as being physically mobile in many forms. This might include running and making barricades to keep intruders out and finding exit routes. It might also include using information from signage or social media in making decisions and to be mobile across a range of media (or transmedia). Similarly, mobility across social space allows them to interact with people of various different social classes and to access all areas of a company building. It is a surprisingly effective method of classification that if a disaster impacts working class or BAME people the advice is generally to 'stay put' whereas if a disaster impacts upon middle class or white people the advice is generally to 'get out' (there are some

exceptions to this, but even in cases of fire this still would seem to apply). In this way preparedness is similar to other forms of State policy when it comes to social control. In the final analysis, however, the State is willing to sacrifice the idea that even class or racial distinction should be a factor in deciding whether individuals should be placed under close surveillance and social control. In extremis, the State can decide that the whole population should 'stay put' as in the case of preparing for a nuclear attack. In these circumstances the State would legally, and through force, enact a national stay put policy. Roads would only be available to the military and high ranking officials. Homes that became unoccupied through vacating them would be given to other residents. Preparedness materials reinforced the idea that people should 'stay at home'. Hence, social control is in many ways unavoidable and the State can always decide to operate a regime of population stasis. Like interest convergence, this is not always evident but remains a possibility. In some ways, those under strict social control in disasters act as indicators of the power of the State over life and death, particularly in disasters and emergencies. This acts as an indicator, or a warning, to other social groups who may fear being under tight social control. In the case of tower block fires, this often involves keeping people where they are, under the social control of the emergency services (particularly the Police).

CONCLUSION: WHY PREPAREDNESS INEVITABLY FAILS

As has been argued in this chapter, preparedness makes sense not as a technical fix for disasters, but only in terms of its relationship to the State. A late twentieth-Century discipline, the idea of population preparedness has been dominated by a logic that has become increasingly difficult to maintain in the twenty-first. The inability of preparedness to actually prepare us for disasters and emergencies has increasingly become apparent in terms of the ambiguity and qualification of advice. We are in a time where risks are not only increasingly complex but also interdependent. One area of complexity is the increasing scale of industrial production and the creation of new capitalist technologies where the risks to society are yet to be identified, and are to a certain degree incalculable (Artificial Intelligence, small-scale nuclear reactors, nanotechnology, low tech bioengineering). Another is the group of risks posed by ecological disasters and crisis such as changes in floodplains, extinction of species, pandemics and zoonosis. Complex risks are interdependent, and also

interdependent with preparedness itself. Terrorists use expected public reaction in their plans, attacks on infrastructure use security architectures against themselves, social media reaction of how to respond to a crisis produces crisis in itself through stockpiling, rumour and crisis of public trust. The ways in which the State responds to this, by working with the ‘modal citizen’, is increasingly anachronistic in the face of complexity and interdependence. New forms of interdisciplinary modelling and working may produce models of human behaviour which can deal with these new forms of risk and interdependent, almost unbounded, behaviour. However, the inherent uncertainty (not just risk) in society means that these models may be unable to produce preparedness advice.

Preparedness raises questions about our relation to the State, and the assumption that the State, as an actor (or at least of a network of governmental organisations) approaches preparedness with detachment, disinterest and from a beneficent perspective. It should be acknowledged that there have been former critiques concerning the role of the State in preparedness. The earliest critiques considered the ideological role of preparedness in social control of the population or mystification of the role of the State in wider military conflicts. The idea that Civil Defence, for example, was designed to encourage people to accept the value of nuclear weapons and to distract citizens from participation in the Peace movement has some validity (although archival research finds no evidence of manipulation or distraction in terms of preparedness). Another critique is that preparedness acts to pathologise certain groups on the basis of ethnicity, faith or other ascribed characteristics. This has become particularly relevant as a critique of preparedness activities arising from ‘The War on Terror’ or relating to counterterrorist campaigns. There are also critiques based on the way in which the State defines threats in a certain manner, ignoring risks which arise due to capitalism and associated environmental depletion, producing a security and preparedness industry that is concerned with profit rather than people. Some of these arguments can be found in the ‘Disaster Capitalism’ thesis whereby not only disaster, but the threat of disaster can be used for profit.

The argument presented here builds on these critiques by considering not only the State’s wider function within a capitalist society but also its self-interest. Preparedness fails the citizen as it is motivated by the concerns of the State for capitalism’s socio-spatial continuity, as well as social control and social cohesion. Preparedness might temporarily benefit certain ‘modal citizens’ as a concrete manifestation of a State abstraction

but this is for purposes of interest convergence which is in itself a fragile form of maintaining security. The State, in the final analysis, wishes to protect itself and Capital above the population. Sometimes this is obscured as we see examples of ‘interest convergence’ with the citizenry in offering some kind of information and protection. In this ‘interest convergence’ some citizens are of more value than others. It is not that preparedness information and protection is ideologically misleading, and it may be of some use, but is limited by the caveat that all preparedness guidance is flawed due to issues of complexity and interdependency. The State is also imperfect, as any organisation might be, in terms of who it decides is the object of preparedness as it makes the error of tacit intentionality which is difficult to correct given the formation of State bureaucracies (It may not ever be possible to conceive of a modern State that cannot escape tacit intentionality of its policies and Critical Race Theorists consider that the contemporary State is structurally racist from its formation which would support this conclusion). Ultimately, though, the State is self-interested although it hides this with concern. It places certain citizens above others, social control and cohesion above citizens, and itself and the continuity of Capital above humanity. The mask of the beneficent State sometimes slips, though, and this was profoundly true in the case of Grenfell Tower as will be considered in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 2

The Grenfell Tower Fire: ‘Stay Put’ and Eliminationism

Abstract The Grenfell Tower disaster, in which at least seventy-two people were killed, has been considered to be a potent symbol of the elimination of the racialised working class, who are already victims of social cleansing and gentrification. The history of disasters shows that the ‘stay put’ strategy at Grenfell Tower has historically been used as a social strategy to keep the racialised working class in tower blocks in emergencies rather than encouraging them to spontaneously evacuate. Although the science of tower block fires is complex, the use of equivocal language in addition to ‘stay put’ leads to probabilistic eliminationism amongst the racialised working class in a tower block fire. What happened at Grenfell Tower was congruent with a political strategy of probabilistic eliminationism.

Keywords Grenfell Tower · ‘Stay put’ · Race · Class · Eliminationism

THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

Few recent events in the United Kingdom (UK) have had as great a political impact as the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower in June 2017. The Grenfell Tower fire cannot be understood without considering the social inequalities of the disaster. These inequalities frame the disaster and the inadequacies of the ‘stay put’ strategy. The twenty-four storey tower block (or block of flats as it is sometimes called in the UK)

was located in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, one of the most unequal boroughs in the UK in terms of extremes of income and wealth. Grenfell Tower was surrounded on all sides by mainly wealthy and privately occupied housing whereas the block was primarily social housing occupied by mainly Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and white working-class people. The social housing was managed by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation (KCTMO) on behalf of the council (Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council). Like much social housing in London, some of the flats (apartments) were occupied by more middle class residents and there were a small number of privately owned flats. The tower block was built in the 1970s, but had recently been renovated by decorative ‘cladding’ (which was cheaper than the safer form which was rejected) that was designed to improve the aesthetics of the wealthy area. Both the design of the block and the cladding raised serious safety concerns, which were not acted upon. Additionally, there was only a single staircase for evacuation, no water sprinklers and residents had raised public concerns about fire safety and maintenance of the block. Despite these concerns, central and local government were criticised as being unwilling to act. In 2013, the Grenfell Action Group (GAG) raised their concerns in a social media (blog) post which identified safety concerns. These included the authorities not checking fire safety equipment such as fire extinguishers and the fact that the building had only one escape route which was frequently blocked. Rather than listen to resident’s concerns it was reported that they had been threatened by the local authority (Madden 2017, 1).

Although at the time of writing the full facts of the fire have yet to be established through an official inquiry some things are becoming clear. The fire broke out during the night, just before 1 a.m. on the 14th June in a kitchen on the fourth floor. Although the kitchen fire was extinguished, flames rapidly spread up the exterior of the building. As the blaze engulfed the block in the early hours of the morning 250 firefighters attempted to rescue residents in Grenfell Tower many of whom were following the ‘stay put’ advice to remain in place during a fire. Residents became trapped in the tower, banging on windows and turning on and off lights to attract attention. People, who might have been able to evacuate were advised when phoning emergency services and through a megaphone from responders on the ground to continue to ‘stay put’. Just after 4 a.m. the police contradicted this advice and addressed the crowds

who were forming below the tower and told them to contact residents by phone or social media to instruct them to evacuate rather than follow the 'stay put' advice. By 5 a.m. the entire tower was burning. The exact death toll in Grenfell Tower is still unknown, and the figure is a source of dispute between the local community and the authorities particularly as there were a number of undocumented residents in the tower, including migrants and asylum seekers. The authorities have admitted that at least seventy-two people lost their lives, including a baby who was still-born. Many more were severely injured. The aftermath of the fire produced not only local protests but also demonstrations and other actions against the authorities and politicians, and national outrage against the political establishment in the UK (Millward 2017; BBC News Website, 'London Fire: What happened at Grenfell Tower' 2018; Baker-Jordan 2017; Foster 2017; Greenwood et al. 2017). Victims have experienced discrimination and have not as yet been offered suitable housing alternatives, an example of the 'secondary violence' experienced by victims of disasters (Harvey 2016).

The Grenfell Tower disaster is both apocalyptic and horrific and it lends itself to multiple interpretations through different lenses from the obvious to the critical. In the official view, it can be seen to be an exceptional tragedy rooted in a series of collective mistakes through which lessons need to be learned through an official inquiry. Another way, it can be approached is as a metaphor, or exemplar, for contemporary economic and political realities. The spatial and economic geographies of London were writ large in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea where private wealth not only rubbed up against public poverty but sought to mask it through decoratively (perhaps dangerously) clad buildings. There was an obviously racialised and classed position of those in the tower: asylum seekers, Muslims, BAME and white working class, as well as middle class immigrants and British nationals. Underfunded emergency services were not equipped to deal with a disaster so high in a block of flats, no ladders available in London which were tall enough to rescue people. Another way of approaching Grenfell is as a symbol of disaster capitalism, or the 'Shock Doctrine' (Klein 2008) which will be considered in more depth in the next chapter. The poor and disadvantaged of Grenfell Tower were more prone to disasters through the State economising on safety and once the tower and its residents were eliminated the disaster was used to further investment opportunities to benefit capitalism. For capitalists, particularly property speculators, Grenfell

Tower existed as a blockage to profit, not only through depriving the rich with a decent view, but existing as a public sector anomaly to further development and speculation. It would not take a high degree of cynicism to conclude that some wealthy people might have benefited from the fire in Grenfell Tower and it seems perfectly understandable that conspiracy theorists might believe that the Grenfell disaster was purposive. If you wanted a building to be destroyed completely by fire then things, such as cladding, inadequate fire alarms, no sprinklers, slow emergency response, malfunctioning radios, ladders that were too short, flimsy evacuation plans, gas pipes in the stairwell and ignoring resident's complaints would be a good start. There is no need, though, to invoke a conspiracy in order to explain what happened at Grenfell Tower rather it can be seen to be part of an *unexceptional* classed and racialised history of disasters and disaster preparedness. This does not make Grenfell Tower any less tragic, or horrific, but it is necessary to contextualize what happened in terms of wider social forces. As discussed in the previous chapter, the State has a conception of a 'modal citizen' who is the subject of preparedness and ultimately the State is self-interested, putting its own interests (and those of Capital) above that of citizens. Grenfell was a *non-accident* (Gillborn 2008, 5). The residents of Grenfell did not enter into the State or Capital's probabilistic nexus as being sufficiently of value before, during or after the fire. Although the source of the fire was (it seems) accidental the victims and survivors were trapped in a net of racial and classed disadvantages. Ignoring these disadvantages, and the ways in which they would have played out in a fire would fit with the notion of 'motivated inattention' (Mills 2003, 190). Attention is not paid to risks for marginalised groups. Rather than this being an accident (omission) the inattention is motivated by the potential (conscious or unconscious) benefits for certain groups. Powerful interests may not, ever, have wished the residents of Grenfell to be harmed but had a vested interest in the non-presence of Grenfell Tower and its inhabitants.

RACE, DISASTERS AND PREPAREDNESS

As I argued in the previous chapter, who survives and who dies in a disaster is tacitly factored into State decisions in preparedness. The State seeks to maintain its own continuity, and the continuity of capitalism (defined as 'value in motion'), across space and time. Preparedness is part of that continuity but where necessary the State will tacitly determine

the degree to which differentiated social groups should be protected. With regard to race, the racialised nature of disasters in terms of location, impact, response and recovery has been a consistent theme in work on racial inequalities—the State often prioritises ‘whiteness’ above other racialised categories. If we are to use the concept of race and racialisation precisely then all disasters are racialised. This includes disasters which impact solely on white people. For example, in the 1966, Aberfan disaster (in which one hundred and sixteen white children and twenty-eight adults were killed through the rapid movement of waste from a coal mine which obliterated a local school) the official and media reports racialised the Welsh working class white people who were affected as differentially white from the English (Preston 2014). Whilst the blurring of boundaries of whiteness and class can produce situational racial distinctions within whiteness (such as between acceptable/non-acceptable whiteness, Bhopal 2018) evidence shows the distinctively racial impacts of disasters. BAME people are more likely to be located in areas that are subject to disasters, less likely to have the resources to avoid impending disasters, experience greater impact from disasters, are more likely to be subject to aggressive police and law enforcement strategies following a disaster, are less likely to receive official aid or relief efforts and are discriminated against in terms of compensation in recovery both in the United States (Bullard and Wright 2012; Marable and Clarke-Avery 2008) and in the UK (Preston 2012). It is important to state that such an analysis absolutely does not discount the role of class as either an economic or a social/cultural category. Although Grenfell Tower was a racialised disaster it simultaneously was part of the ‘class cleansing’ of London.

In explaining these racial differentials there are two broad groups of explanations. One group considers cultural differences and inequalities in socio-economic status (Fothergill et al. 1999; Davidson et al. 2013). These explanations, which highlight individual or group differences by ethnicity make an important contribution in that they consider the forms of disadvantage experienced by ethnic groups. However, they are partial in that they do not consider the historical, political economic, creation of categories of race (Benadusi 2014). According to Critical Race Theory (CRT) blackness, whiteness and other racial ascriptions as political categories do not simply exist as separate spheres accidentally containing individuals and groups who then are the expression of individual and group differences. To structure social explanation in disaster in this manner can

only be partial and fragmentary. An alternative view, from CRT, is that blackness, whiteness and the universe of racial ascriptions are co-determinate in an oppressive social formation of white supremacy (Allen 2001; Leonardo 2009; Tate 1997). This approach considers that the structural and systemic aspects of racial oppression, including the consequences of disasters, are beneficial for whites, although these are usually elite groups of whites. As opposed to the view that disasters are simple accidents, it introduces intentionality into an analysis based on race. If black people suffer in disasters this is not considered simply to be an 'accidental' consequence, as this naturalises a natural (or anthropogenic) disaster, rather than arising as a result of the intentionality (or tacit intentionality) of a white political-economic system. These two points: the white supremacist nature of policy and practice and the intentionality of whiteness in securing advantage are key insights of CRT and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS).

CRT and CWS have recently been influential in explaining disaster dynamics, moving us away from an approach which focusses on individual and group differences as a social explanation towards one that considers how white interests are served through disasters that impact on BAME groups and how white elites might further benefit through response, reconstruction and recovery (Cook and Dixon 2013; Chakrabarty 2012; Preston 2012). In terms of Grenfell Tower, for example, the inadequate and unsafe construction of the tower block, the siting of primarily economically disadvantaged BAME people in the tower, the cladding on the tower to make it more appealing to (predominantly) white and middle class neighbours in Chelsea, the slow and under-resourced response of the fire service, the gratuitous media coverage and the inadequate recovery and rehousing efforts following the disaster could, of course, be considered to be a series of unfortunate coincidences, or alternatively examples of inadvertent racial discrimination. A systemic explanation from CRT would additionally consider the ways in which these consequences arose as a result (overtly or tacitly) of classed and raced interests in terms of encouraging the social cleansing of the borough (through the way in which social inequalities group poor residents in certain areas and through obscuring Grenfell Tower with cladding and providing inadequate housing for black residents), prioritising resources for other emergencies (postcode discrimination in terms of emergency service response) and the use of tragedy as 'edutainment'. Of course, such disasters are not just racialised but are obviously classed and one could also consider how the Grenfell Tower disaster benefits property

developers and investors but these class interests are in turn racialised through the predominance of white people in this group.

A cautionary note on these theories is that CRT cannot provide a full explanation of the inequalities involved in the Grenfell Tower disaster. The theories are somewhat inadequate in explaining white working class disadvantage, and white people were impacted through the disaster (many died, were injured, lost family members or were displaced) as well as being an active part of the reconstruction, recovery and protests. Whiteness, in the form of an elite ruling class ideology, ultimately disadvantages all working class people in terms of their joint class interests (even the white working class—Preston 2009), and this was brutally true at Grenfell. As Lisa McKenzie powerfully points out in her work in a Nottingham council estate, working class communities contest normative racial and class categories (McKenzie 2015). Class is also a unique form of social relation. In the next chapter, I turn to not just the classed but the explicitly capitalist elements of the Grenfell Tower fire and urban preparedness more generally. We must accept that CRT, or even culturalist theories of class, are partial in explaining what happened at Grenfell. This is because racial eliminationism through disasters is only an initial symptom of a capitalist system where the life-force of capitalism itself (value) is absurdly becoming less central to capitalism as a social form. Disasters such as Grenfell Tower impact on the most marginalised citizens but they threaten to instantiate themselves as part of the everyday destructive tendency of Capital. CRT, and an associated theory Critical Legal Studies (CLS) (CLS, which has an emphasis on class inequalities in the legal system) have great explanatory power in disasters as they dispute the seemingly universal legal and institutional structures that protect the right to life in a capitalist system but they are inadequate in their treatment of class as a theoretical entity. However, as well as being an element of intersectional status in terms of class as an economic, social and cultural variable there is a need to consider class as a constitutive element of capitalist society. The working class (in the widest sense), through their abstract labour, are constitutive of Capital itself (as value in motion). Therefore whilst CRT and CLS provide a powerful critique of human life as a universal right in capitalist societies they seldom consider that human life is constitutive of its own death in terms of Capital ('dead labour'). Therefore, although this chapter uses CRT, and to a lesser degree, CLS, in addressing the Grenfell Tower fire such an analysis needs to be contextualised in terms of the wider dynamics of capitalism (which is the

subject of the next chapter). CRT and CLS can powerfully explain the way in which preparedness discriminates through frameworks of eliminationism and ambiguity but not the wider context of capitalism's contradictory desire for self-preservation whilst simultaneously having an inherent tendency towards self-destruction.

'STAY PUT' AT GRENFELL TOWER

In the Grenfell Tower disaster, attention has been paid to the ways in which public information campaigns advised residents to 'stay put' (that is to remain in their flats in the event of a fire) rather than to attempt to evacuate the tower (Halliday 2017). To put this in a wider theoretical context public information in disasters has not only an immediate and individual pedagogical (teaching and learning) function (in teaching people a particular repertoire of behaviours) but also a public pedagogical function. Public pedagogy considers the ways in which discourses beyond education are not only culturally pedagogical but also have a political function (Giroux 2000; Sandlin et al. 2010). 'Stay put' is publicly pedagogical in that it aims to teach people that stasis is the best option in a disaster, closing off other types of learning and behaviour. It contains individuals within their environment for their own safety but potentially to serve a wider social and political purpose. It can be considered to be a didactic pedagogical mode of disaster education (Preston 2012) in that it does not consider active forms of engaging with one's environment. The instruction also has a potential political purpose, to keep residents in their flats and off the streets, to stop 'overcrowding' of exits and tacitly to reduce social disorder during a fire. Here, we can see that the State's priorities (for social control) are not always in the interests of the citizen. According to the official inquiry, 'stay put' at Grenfell failed at 1:26 a.m. less than half an hour after the start of the fire at 0:54 a.m. but advice to 'stay put' was not altered until 2:47 a.m. Even then this does not mean that residents would have directly received advice not to 'stay put' immediately (BBC News Website, 'Grenfell Tower Fire: 'Stay Put' Advice Failed Says Expert' 2018).

The justification for 'stay put' in Grenfell Tower was that to remain in one's flat was allegedly the 'safest' place to be in terms of a fire. The flats were considered (incorrectly it seems) to be individually isolated against fire damage which should have given the emergency services time to rescue individuals trapped in the tower. The advice to residents, provided by a sign in each flat was:

There is a 'stay put' policy for residents unless the fire is in, or is affecting, your flat... IF YOU ARE SAFELY IN YOUR FLAT & THERE IS A FLAT SOMEWHERE ELSE IN YOUR FLAT / BLOCK you should initially be safe to stay in your flat keeping the doors and windows closed. On arrival the fire brigade will make an assessment and will assist with evacuation if required. If you wish to evacuate, leave closing the door behind you and exit the building. (Maizland 2017)

This advice is contradictory. On the one hand, the advice is didactic and couched in terms of official and legal language in enacting a 'stay put' policy for residents. This is in contrast to advice to evacuate which is conditional and is based on the judgement of the resident which is qualified by terms such as 'initially safe' and 'if you wish to evacuate'. The order in which this is stated on the sign would mean that to choose evacuation is going against the initial policy. Hence 'stay put' is given superordinate status in terms of what to do in an evacuation. The advice to 'stay put' was reinforced when residents who called the emergency services during the fire were told to stay where they were and through officials with megaphones on the ground who reiterated that advice. There are media reports that residents who contradicted that advice and evacuated were more likely to survive (Greenwood et al. 2017). A simple analysis of signage as information, though, misses the classed and racialised context in which such contradictory advice is created. 'Stay put' as qualified advice in disasters has often been used as a method of social control for racialised, working class, groups. 'Stay put' is, arguably, key to understanding the cruelty of the Grenfell fire, particularly given the inadequate safety features of the building. 'Stay put' serves two purposes. First, it is a strategy of social containment in keeping residents in place for social reasons, even in catastrophically unsafe conditions. Second, it is a strategy of indeterminacy and contingency, to individuate the responsibility for survival in a fire. I will consider each of these aspects in turn.

SOCIAL CONTAINMENT: 'STAY PUT' AND TOWER BLOCK FIRES

'Stay put' as a strategy in emergencies has a long history in the UK. Prior to World War 2 (WW2), authorities seldom considered evacuation in an emergency. The advice, if it existed at all, was to stay where one was. According to Grayzel (2014), this was due to economic and social reasons such as loss of production and morale rather than to protect the

population. Hence ‘stay put’ operated as a mode of social cohesion and social control for arms production and the war effort. WW2 was the exception to this policy of ‘stay put’ where there was evacuation of school children from the cities to the countryside. In the Cold War, with a growing threat of nuclear attack there was initially a marginal role for evacuation in the years 1945–1963 but after that date ‘stay put’ was the advice which was provided by authorities (Preston and Kolokitha 2015). Even in those early cold war years, the groups who would be selected for evacuation were chosen for pro-natalist or moral reasons (children, babies and Mothers of young children) or those required for industrial production (Preston and Kolokitha 2015, 7). For those left behind in cities, the chances of survival would be extremely limited, if not zero, in the event of a nuclear attack, particularly for those who lived in high rise buildings. In support of this policy of abandoning city dwellers in tower blocks, in May 1980 the government issued an advice and information booklet ‘Protect and Survive’ (H.M.S.O. 1980) which tacitly prioritised the survival of white middle class families in rural areas through a policy of ‘stay put’ (which would disadvantage those in urban areas where attacks are more likely), emphasising building a shelter in a cellar with large stocks of food (which would require a large, privately owned house and the money to obtain stocks) and working together as a traditional nuclear family (with cultural and heteronormative assumptions) (Preston 2008). For those living in high rise buildings, predominantly in the inner city, guidance was to take shelter in the block itself rather than to leave:

If you live in a block of flats there are other factors to consider. If the block is five storeys high or more, do not shelter in the top two floors. Make arrangements now with your landlord for alternative shelter accommodation if you can, or with your neighbours on the lower floors, or with relatives or friends. If your flat is in a block of four storeys or less, the basement or ground floor will give you the best protection. Central corridors on lower floors will provide good protection. (Protect and Survive 1980, 9)

If you live in a block of flats which is more than five floors high it is important not to use the top two floors. The safest places are inside passages away from inside walls and windows. If you are too high up to be safe you must make arrangements with your neighbours now in the lower floors or make suitable arrangements with those close by. (Protect and Survive: Make Your Fallout Room NOW 1980)

As with the 'stay put' signage in Grenfell Tower, the advice is equivocal using terms such as 'if you can', not 'you must' which also shows the distinction between didactic and active information. There is also a presumption that those who are on the top floors will be able to find shelter with those on the lower floors, or those close by. The assumption is that individuals will take responsibility for their own survival. This advice, in terms of where to shelter in tower blocks, was not based on the scientific advice. Interviews with Home Office scientists who created the advice in the publication (Preston 2012) shows that their survival assumptions were based on people living in a large house with a cellar and they 'didn't do' flats as it was 'too difficult'. What appeared in Protect and Survive was therefore social, rather than scientific advice, to keep residents in flats inside their buildings. As I have argued elsewhere (Preston 2012), 'stay put' is a policy for those of lower socio-economic status or marginalised on the basis of race or some other social category. Distinctions are made between those who are assumed to be 'fixed', or whose racialised and class status makes the State believe that they would be better off being 'fixed', and those who are assumed to be mobile and agentic.

Since 1960, 'stay put' has become part of the official advice in terms of tower block fires (Fire and Local Government Association 2012, 27) but this assumes that the structure of the tower block is designed in such a way that compartmentalisation (the separation of individual flats from a fire elsewhere) is possible and there are no further structural risks which would enable a fire to spread to other flats (Fire and Local Government Association 2012, 27). This further assumes that the agency responsible for the tower block has otherwise maintained its safety functions. Even in such cases, contrary to this official advice, many experts on fire safety consider that evacuation is a necessity in tower block fires. Craighead (2009, 89) with regard to the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks states that 'One clear message that applies to all high rise buildings, whether they are evaluated to be at risk of a terrorist attack or not is that all occupants should be well trained in evacuation procedures'. However, the very nature of tower blocks means that they were '...never designed for total evacuation' (Craighead 2009, 30). Rogers (2017), in a journalistic feature in Wired magazine, considers a range of expert opinion on tower block fires. In buildings which are fitted with all possible safety features, including sprinklers, a robust fire alarm system with voice commands and real-time evacuation information to residents it may be that in *some*

occasions ‘stay put’ is the best strategy otherwise evacuation plans should be prepared. Even with all of those safety arrangements in place, the building should have adequate compartmentalisation (keeping the fire in place) and suppression (a means to put out the fire). Rogers considers that in the case of a fire exiting the building is optimal, but this is often not considered due to increased inequalities in terms of housing:

In other words: evacuate. But exactly the best way to do that in a residential high-rise fire isn’t as well-understood as compartmentation and suppression. And as more and more places around the world solve their housing crunches by building up, that’s going to become a serious problem. (Rogers 2017)

The science base for ‘stay put’ is poor, even in tower blocks with all of the safety features fitted. As was discussed in the previous chapter, preparedness for disasters is not an exact science. Evacuation of tower blocks is a poorly researched issue in terms of both how to evacuate a building and the dynamics of movement. The majority of articles considering the evacuation of tower blocks were written in the aftermath of 9/11 and the evacuation of tower blocks in a conventional fire attracts less academic commentary than what to do in a terrorist attack. One of the reasons why evacuations of tower blocks are opposed is due to the manner in which people in such models are considered to behave as ‘modal citizens’. Their behaviour is often pathologised in terms of the ways in which they are considered to react in terms of panic or disruption to the rights of others (Preston and Kolokitha 2015). ‘Stay put’ has historically served a social function of containment rather than simply as a strategy to save lives. Even when ‘stay put’ is adopted as a strategy, it is argued that evacuation should be planned for and other fire precautions should be put in place. ‘Stay put’ has therefore always been a social method of containment, rather than a technically optimal strategy for saving lives.

INDETERMINACY AND ELIMINATIONISM IN DISASTERS

Returning to the Grenfell signage, disclaimers and the equivocal nature of the ‘stay put’ strategy in Grenfell Tower produced a confusing picture for anyone in the fire who may have had to arrive at a decision as to what to do. The definition of ‘stay put’ refers to a situation where ‘when a fire occurs within one dwelling (or, less likely, in the common parts),

it is *normally* safe for other residents to remain within their own flat' (Fire and Local Government Association 2012, my italics, 20). This statement makes use of equivocal language in stating *normally*. This ambiguous language runs through other statements concerning 'stay put'. For example, the implication that people should be free to leave the building if they chose to do so is also included in the advice (Fire and Local Government Association 2012, 28). There are few examples of practiced tower block evacuations with only 22 out of 8000 (3 in 1000) fires that involved the evacuation of more than 5 people in the UK with the assistance of the fire service (Fire and Local Government Association 2012) although this does not include tower blocks that spontaneously evacuated. The advice to 'stay put' is based upon the principle that it is the safest method of protection:

Some enforcing authorities and fire risk assessors have been adopting a precautionary approach whereby, unless it can be proven that the standard of construction is adequate for 'stay put', the assumption should be that it is not. As a consequence, simultaneous evacuation has sometimes been adopted, and fire alarm systems fitted retrospectively, in blocks of flats designed to support a 'stay put' strategy. This is considered unduly pessimistic...proposals of fire risk assessors, and requirements of enforcing authorities, based on a precautionary approach (e.g. abandonment of a 'stay put' policy simply because of difficulties in verifying compartmentation), should be questioned. Before committing resources, it might be appropriate to seek a second opinion. (Fire and Local Government Association 2012, 28)

Even in the above statement, there is an equivocation in terms of a second opinion and 'stay put' is usually couched in an ambiguous and indeterminate fashion. In the case of the Grenfell Tower signage, people were instructed that they should be 'initially safe' to stay in their flat, that the fire brigade will assist with evacuation 'if required' and that if residents 'wished to' evacuate they should leave, closing the door behind them. The terms 'initially', 'if required' and 'wish to' are indeterminate and confusing, particularly when residents were being told to 'stay put' by the authorities after the fire was well established. Moreover, the use of equivocal language around 'stay put' can actually act to reinforce the idea of staying in place. In terms of how individuals choose to make decisions on evacuation, there is a long history of decision theory

(Ellsberg 1961) that considers that people will prefer a known probability rather than to risk an ambiguous outcome. In a fire where you appear to be safe (or at least where going outside appears more dangerous) and you are told to stay where you are it is difficult to overcome the urge to stay in place rather than to take a risk of heading outside the flat even though in the long term ‘stay put’ might put you in more danger. In the signage and information in the Grenfell Tower flats, alternatives to stay put, such as evacuation, are presented as ambiguous. Ambiguous information increases anxiety and may actually lead to a lower probability of taking precautionary action (Klein et al. 2015). In particular, there is evidence that for communities, where trust in stakeholders is low, ambiguity of information leads to inertia as individuals spend time seeking information and cues as to how to act (Lindell and Perry 2004, 48). This means that paradoxically the ambiguity of the ‘stay put’ message may make it *more likely* that individuals will stay in place particularly given that the emergency services and responders on the ground reinforced that mantra.

Aside from the social psychology of ambiguity in preparedness around ‘stay put’, it also serves a wider social function in terms of denying rights, hence tacitly providing justification for eliminationism. CRT contends not only that the structural elements of law (including safety laws) are designed to protect whiteness but also that *ambiguities* in the process of law are also purposive in building in disadvantage. This view of indeterminacy from CRT, as in itself undermining the idea of universal rights, is more powerful than that initially adopted by CLS scholars in that indeterminacy in itself *always* a threat to the rights of BAME people, rather than being a *potential* threat to rights. According to Gabel (2013, 517), one of the key writers of CLS, the indeterminacy critique is a ‘...headless horseman, an analytical method without moral content that could not itself point the practitioner in any moral direction’. The indeterminacy critique can only be motivated by theorising structures, institutions and networks of power. Therefore, for Gabel, the critique does not mean anything without an underlying social and moral justice to animate it. Without a consideration of power, the indeterminacy critique allows one to consider that there is considerable agency by individuals in determining a particular legal (or in this case, preparedness) outcome. This means that, given favourable conditions the legal system might (although it would be unlikely) generate a fair outcome. Solum (1987) considers that rather than being indeterminate where there are different judgements

the law is 'underdeterminate'. The law is not mechanical but there might be a set of (seemingly opposing) judgements given a range of circumstances that are consistent with the law. For both Gabel and Solum indeterminacy is, in of itself, meaningless without some underlying theory of power (Gabel 2009). CRT scholars would concur that indeterminacy needs a motivating theory of power relations but CRT also considers that indeterminacy *in itself* is also a tool of responsabilisation, negatively transforming the rights of BAME people. CRT points to the contingent nature of rights for this group which always places them in a precarious social position. Tate (1997) considers that ambiguity is often a purposive component of educational directives designed to give the leeway for inequity. Ambiguity gives authorities the ability to absolve themselves of blame for the failure of their policies to deliver equitable effects. Similarly, in the case of 'stay put' the strategy is couched so ambiguously as to place the responsibility for survival onto the individual and not the authorities. The 'stay put' sign and the operationalisation of that policy on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire indicated the ambiguity of the right to survival for the residents. This is because the indeterminacy critique is not simply a critique of the biased nature of legal judgement (as in CLS) but has also been used as a critique of the principal of universal rights (as in CRT). The idea that law is indeterminate is used by CRT scholars as a critique of rights discourse in general, including the right to life. Crenshaw (2011) takes the view that a discourse based on the gaining rights is of little utility given that the law is indeterminate and often fails to protect earned rights in practice. Rights which have been won can be overturned through legal processes in the future and we should not mistake determinateness of law at one particular point for a trans-historical notion of law. CRT contests claims of neutrality and meritocracy. In a life-threatening disaster such as a fire the right to life becomes a contestation of different agencies on the ground and not an absolute. The Grenfell Tower fire made the fragile and contingent nature of rights for BAME people, and working class people more generally, dramatically apparent. It is no stretch of this theory to consider how it can also apply to class, and how the working class (of all ethnicities) at Grenfell were simultaneously disadvantaged by a 'stay put' policy and a policy where ambiguity served to shift the burden of responsibility to individuals.

Beyond the legal, indeterminacy can operate through policies to produce inequitable responses. Ambiguity in disaster advice produces something akin to a 'branching point' (Boudon 1974) or a point of

educational ‘triage’ (Gillborn and Youdell 2009) which exacerbates existing inequalities as surviving a disaster is based on the access to resources as well as other indicators of privilege. In the case of evacuating Grenfell Tower, for example, one can consider existing disadvantages in terms of language, mobility and resources that would make certain groups of individuals more likely to follow the ‘stay put’ advice (or simply unable to evacuate). Preparedness is different from legal jurisprudence. Indeterminacy in law means that the individual is subject to a legal judgement that is the result of social inequities rather than as a result of an objective judgment of the case. Similarly, educational decisions such as the decision to award a certain grade or to exclude a student from school also place the individual at the mercy of social forces.

In terms of preparedness, indeterminacy produces probabilistic eliminationism and anxiety. This is particularly the case when one considers the indeterminacy critique as being substantively different when one applies it outside of legal jurisprudence. Although the form of public advice or instruction may be open to legal debate (and there are legal precedents and statutes underlying the design of safety signs) an individual’s decision is a subjective (perhaps collective if family or friends are involved) one on the basis of existing information. Preparedness advice is often given in situations where there is extreme information asymmetry. Whether to stay or to evacuate in a tower block fire is a decision where there is no right answer *ex ante*. Even if one were to consider that there was no motivation behind the disaster instructions contained in Grenfell Tower the ambiguity of those instructions (and ‘stay put’ instructions more generally) introduces (automatically) inequities in response. Ambiguity means that a proportion of individuals may decide not to take certain actions (such as to evacuate) which leads to a form of eliminationism which can be called *probabilistic eliminationism*. Disasters involve the possibility of death (elimination) or serious injury. In some circumstances, individuals are systematically exterminated through being forced to abide by instructions in a disaster that would cause them death or serious injury. In most cases, such eliminationism is probabilistic in that those with more resources and greater privileges have a higher chance of survival. Indeterminacy of advice, particularly under information asymmetry, in the case of ‘stay put’ in Grenfell Tower means that survival was premised on *going against official advice*. To do so requires prerequisites about the cultural capital necessary to do so and having the resources and capability to get out.

Ambiguous advice also transfers anxiety from authorities (who have displaced the risk to individuals) to citizens (who now must decide what to do). Cretney (2017) considers that this is a common theme in free-market countries where governments are passing risk on to citizens in disasters. Social risk is privatised to become individual risk. Existentially, authorities are absolving themselves of responsibility for their citizen's lives through mobilising choice, a process which has been called *responsibilisation*. Rather than the individual being the subject of a legal process which may disadvantage them according to the power relations involved, individuals are subject to their own (seemingly) subjective decision but the subjectivity of that decision exists only because of the removal of objective direction and resources. Similarly subjectivity in terms of 'what to do' is a result of a consideration of all sorts of resources and factors. Such an approach will '...not only ensure that race inequalities continue but also to present them as fair and just' (Gillborn and Ladson Billings 2011, 40). The presentation of the 'stay put' advice as conditional means that in all circumstances it can be claimed by authorities that residents were responsible for their fate. If they stayed put and lived, or evacuated and lived, the authorities can claim that they did so as a result of the guidance. If they stayed put and died, or attempted to evacuate and died, the authorities can claim that they did so as a result of incorrectly following the guidance. The ambiguity of the guidance produces a horrific and paradoxical situation in which authorities can morally remove themselves from responsibility, passing this on to the residents, or to other public services (such as the fire service).

The indeterminacy of the pedagogical advice to 'stay put' can therefore be seen as unjust in three senses. First, from behavioural science studies in the context of a tower block where the residents may be from BAME groups with low trust in official advice, not have English as a first language and where they are of lower socio-economic status it is more difficult to refute the advice of a sign even where there is ambiguity. Second, where individuals might be expected to have a right to correct information (if not in a sign then over time) in order to protect their lives ambiguity introduces a probabilistic notion of eliminationism. Not everyone might die but those who follow the incorrect decision, with no way of knowing in advance what that decision is, will. Third, ambiguity is a transfer of responsibility from the authorities to the residents, ensuring that the State maintains itself as an authority on matters of preparedness.

CONCLUSION: GRENFELL TOWER AND ‘STAY PUT’ AS ELIMINATIONISM

Rather than seeing ‘stay put’ as objective and technical advice it is best seen as a social technology of eliminationism. ‘Stay put’ has historically been used for social reasons in terms of the State meeting its strategic objectives whilst keeping populations inert. In war time, or in Cold War planning, ‘stay put’ was not based on the scientific advice but on a desire for social order in terms of criteria of ‘disposability.’ Since the 1960s ‘stay put’ in tower blocks has been advocated but the advice is riddled with ambiguities. The indeterminacy of this advice means that responsibility for survival in a fire has been shifted from the State to the citizen whilst keeping the social purposes of ‘stay put’, as social control, in play. As CRT scholars have indicated, indeterminacy means that law, and other institutional structures, operate in the interests of the powerful. Additionally, indeterminacy undermines the idea of ‘rights’ as a whole including the right to life. If rights are indeterminate then they are not rights, or if so they are transitory rights. As I have shown in terms of preparedness indeterminacy in advice not only shifts responsibility and undermines rights but it also makes eliminationism probabilistic. In the case of Grenfell Tower the alleged inadequacy of building safety, fire regulations and emergency advice can be masked through passing decisions on ‘stay put’ to the individual. The probabilistic eliminationism of BAME people (and poor white people) indeed for any resident of the tower, that operates in disasters, is made explicit.

Although the Grenfell Tower fire can not necessarily be understood without considering the wider political and social context of gentrification, the racial and class politics of London and the desire of developers for profit there is a politics of preparedness, of State information, which is necessary in understanding what happened. In the ‘last resort’, the advice which residents were given was not just technically designed to protect life but operated in a wider historical and social context of keeping certain people in place in unsafe conditions, whilst making them responsible for their own fate. This advice is indicative of the ways in which residents of Grenfell Tower were given a probabilistic chance of survival, or some form of prosperity, more generally in British society. Unsurprisingly, in terms of an immediate politics of preparedness the

response of some groups who have experienced disasters previously has been to reject official advice as biased and dangerous and create their own community-based disaster education that is not co-opted by authorities. In Hurricane Katrina evacuation for African-American and other BAME communities was frustrated by the authorities (Marable and Clarke-Avery 2008) a situation in which 'stay put' was enacted through force. Following Katrina strategies to cope with future disasters were widely propagated by African-American and Vietnamese churches, community organisations and families (Li et al. 2008). Similarly, following Hurricane Sandy, the anti-capitalist movement Occupy directed efforts towards community relief and information (Rana 2013). There may be objections around community-based preparedness initiatives concerning the lack of scientific objectivity and expert advice but as has been shown in the previous chapter preparedness at the level of government and local authorities has a politics of its own. This is not to suggest that communities can compensate for systemic inadequacies of building design or poverty but interrogation of why certain policies are in place, and whose interests they serve, can act to demystify wider social inequalities.

'Stay put' is only one, albeit connected, piece of the Grenfell Tower atrocity. As was considered in the introduction, Grenfell Tower has led to a wider interrogation of the political organisation of British society. The righteous anger from the community following the Grenfell Tower fire has involved public protests and rejection of conventional political figures. There is cynicism surrounding the 'official inquiry' that has surprised the political establishment. Grenfell Tower has become a lightning rod for public feeling about the treatment of the poor, asylum seekers and BAME people, gentrification, public housing, disaster capitalism and income and wealth inequalities in our cities. Critical Race Theorists would claim that rights in a white supremacist, capitalist society are never certain—a view that is often perceived to be on the extreme of social theory—as exemplified through the 'Black Lives Matter' movement in the United States. The response to Grenfell Tower has, tragically but astoundingly, brought that view into the mainstream British political debate, at least for a moment. As Aberfan and Hillsborough have shown before this, though, the State and Capital attach little, and increasingly no, value to the lives of working class and BAME communities.

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CHAPTER 3

Billionaire Bunkers and Disaster Capitalism

Abstract The destruction of Grenfell Tower can be seen to be part not only of ‘Disaster Capitalism’ but as a consequence of capitalism’s everyday horrific functioning. Disasters act as exogenous shocks to open up new markets for Capital, to destroy anachronistic buildings as fixed assets and to eliminate populations for ideological purposes. Disaster Capitalism is, though, only an exceptional example of Capitalism’s necessity to accelerate and destroy in order to maintain its existence. We have reached a stage in which even the ruling class try to escape Capitalism’s waves of destruction through building bunkers and creating escape routes for the eventual demise of civilization.

Keywords Disaster capitalism · Marxism · Value critique · Ruling class

INTRODUCTION

Grenfell Tower was a particular case of eliminationism, an asocial extermination. The racialised and classed inhabitants of the building had an ambiguous status in the cityscape, exemplified by the nature of the ‘stay put’ advice. The advice to ‘stay put’ was typical of that provided to racialised, working class, groups for purposes of social control rather than safety. In terms of the racialised dimension of this advice, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Legal Studies (CLS) provide a theoretical framework for understanding why poor, racialised groups are awarded an

'ambiguous' status in society. Although CRT has recently been anchored to reformist causes synonymous with social democracy the theory was originally critical of reform and even of the modernist form of democracy and society. The idea that social reform could ever be expected to lead to true social justice is one that is often anathema to CRT's original formulation. That preparedness for the racialised poor could ever be equal to that of white elites would be challenged by CRT on grounds of interest convergence (that white elites would only accept this if it was in their own interests, perhaps to prevent further social disruption) and that any reforms would be piecemeal and partial. Society can never be reformed to achieve racial and social justice and notions of society, modernity and enlightenment (and preparedness) were created to maintain the privilege of white elites. This radical, nihilist, formulation of CRT is found in the works of Derek Bell (2018), Richard Delgado (1996) and in the Marxist/Anarchist inspired 'Race Traitor' work of Ignatiev and Garvey (2014). The overarching message from these works is that we must always be sceptical of claims that atrocities lead to reform. In the case of Grenfell Tower it can be seen that this is yet another disaster where the call that lessons must be learned seems particularly empty (as Aberfan and Hillsborough before it). There are already claims that Grenfell has led to only limited reforms in terms of fire prevention measures in tower blocks and that the residents of Grenfell have not been rehoused (Madden 2017). Even interest convergence is seemingly insufficient to motivate minimal reform.

Greed and privilege are important in understanding the reasons why Grenfell happened but these explanations are prone to moralism, and that it is only through a change in character that such tragedies could be prevented in the future. Binary oppositions such as ruling class/working class and white/BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) in intersectional relations (where the cityscape is largely determined by the interests of white elites) are powerful explanations of why disasters such as Grenfell Tower occur and recur. However, specifying social problems in terms of relations in this way does not mean that there is some form of redistributive politics (perhaps a social democratic redistribution of resources) that would lead to social change unless the underlying relations of power are challenged. This is because the ruling class are not just a feudal remnant (although elements of feudalism remain) but are a distinctively capitalist ruling class. In considering capitalism, it is necessary to consider Capital as the 'automatic subject' (Marx 1986, 255).

Capital, as the constitutive form of society in capitalism which depends upon, as well as being simultaneously constitutive of, binary and dialectic class oppositions. Although Capital may be mostly in the ownership of the (primarily white) ruling class in the way it is presented here it is not entirely synonymous with money (social power) and, most importantly, it is not by any means absolutely controlled by the ruling class (or entirely by any human entity, for that matter although it is a human construction). Understanding Capital in this way in an era of ‘Disaster Capitalism’ explains why disasters like Grenfell Tower happen in general and also why even the ruling class are starting to prepare for existential threats by building bunkers, panic rooms, picking ‘bug out’ locations and even preparing to leave the planet or reality for a transhumanist mode of being. We are entering a phase where even the ruling class are afraid of capitalism, not just due to its consequences (such as Grenfell Tower, a consequence of racialised disaster capitalism) but due to its everyday functioning.

Within an analysis of Capital’s workings in the disaster, there is no denying that as a class, the ruling class benefited from Grenfell. Grenfell Tower was considered to be an area of possible redevelopment for more expensive, exclusive, private properties. The tower block itself was categorised as a visual eyesore for possible purchasers of private properties in the area, which was partly responsible for the ‘cladding’ of the building. For Capital, Grenfell Tower represented a blockage to future investment and speculation in the area. There was underinvestment in protecting Grenfell Tower and its residents. Emergency services and the local authority, subject to cuts in public expenditure and privatisation, may not have had the resources to deal with the fire. Therefore, the Grenfell Tower fire can be considered to have benefited the ruling class through a complex and asocial network of interests.

The disaster was a projection of the social power of money and hence an asocial eliminationism. As far as, we know property speculators did not deliberately set fire to Grenfell Tower and there were no capitalists celebrating over the disaster. Although indirectly gaining profits at some point may have led to conspicuous consumption at an emotional distance as well as an increased return on investments. A wealthy person looking from the top window of their Chelsea townhouse at Grenfell Tower burn in the distance might have invested in an American hedge fund that had in turn invested in a Japanese investment bank that had invested part of its portfolio in the shares of English construction companies. The destruction of

the dead (commodities) and living labour (as a source of labour power) in Grenfell Tower resulted in an increased dividend on their investment perhaps leading to expensive meals being eaten through the profit opportunities opened up through human extermination. Capitalism connects everything through sociality in production and exchange whilst distancing sociality so that there is no direct moral implication on eating the meal and benefiting from death. It produces an asocial sociality (Lohoff 2014, 154). Understanding the motives of the ruling class can, to a certain extent, help us to understand why perhaps there was little preparedness or protection for the Grenfell residents in a fire. Ruling class control at the commanding heights, though, is not directly how capitalism operates (although it is one form) and it is through considering capitalism and Capital (Marx 1986) in an analysis of the Grenfell Tower fire that we can understand what is happening to preparedness in terms of ruling class retrenchment and the privatisation of preparedness more generally. At the same time, the ruling class are increasingly fearful of disasters and catastrophes. We can understand why Grenfell Tower happened and simultaneously why the ruling class are preparing their own form of exit from society (capitalist society) through examining what capitalism, and society is, by considering value within disaster capitalism in a form of analysis which has been called ‘value critique’.

VALUE CRITIQUE AND DISASTER CAPITALISM

The racialised (white and BAME) working class of the UK must be incredibly unlucky as they have been victims of various disasters, each one of them so unspeakably horrific that they should never be allowed to happen again—and yet they do. Aberfan, Hillsborough and now Grenfell each produced public outcry, ritual mourning and official inquiries. Of course, all economic systems are subject to disasters but there is something specifically capitalist about these disasters, including Grenfell Tower as considerations of increasing profit by cutting safety are paramount. Klein’s (2008) ‘Shock Doctrine’ is significant in using the term ‘Disaster Capitalism’ making it clear that what happens in disasters is not separate from capitalism more generally. It is not the ‘Rich Doctrine’ as, although all of the interventions discussed are for the benefit of the wealthy, rather it sees class as a duality which is produced under capitalism. Klein defines what she calls the ‘Shock Doctrine’ as a way in which capitalism operates which implies strategies of shock and disruption for reasons which are

ultimately beneficial to the production of profit. This might be through many avenues such as dispossession (by privatising public utilities, such as water supply after a disaster), bringing new labour into exploitation ('liberating' populations after a natural disaster to bring them into employment in capitalist industries), increasing the rate of exploitation (using the consequences of disasters to make workers work for longer hours or for lower wages), opening up new markets (using the consequences of disaster to privatise systems such as education and schools) and creating new opportunities for finance capital (opening up new areas for investment and trading in risk). We could also link Grenfell Tower to processes of cost-cutting, deregulation and the privatisation of public safety. The racialised eliminationism of Grenfell provided a 'shock' to the London property market. It acted as a warning to those in social housing that their lives were not necessarily valued in capitalist society.

Klein sees the 'Shock Doctrine' as a capitalist process, but largely an exogenous one in terms of the dynamics of capital. In attempting to resolve crisis of Capital, to provide it with new markets and labour forces, it indulges in primitive accumulation on a global and tragic scale. Capitalism erases and remakes the world (Klein 2008, 3) in order to increase profits through restructuring existing sectors for commodification (such as education and health) and creating new commodities for profit (security markets and preparedness). Capitalism not only benefits from disasters and emergencies, engineering their consequences, but systematically produces economic and social shocks. The ruling class through corporations, governments and think tanks engineers shock policies and practices which are functionally devised to meet elite interests. This is an approach advocated by the Chicago school of Economics, particularly their guru Milton Friedman who saw disasters and emergencies as opportunities for permanent reform:

The 'market radicals' argue (correctly) that for commodity production to continue sacrifices need to be made '...open machine gunnings and summary executions can be sold to the slain as collateral damage that they themselves have, perforce, already accepted out of what appears to be well-understood, long term self interest. (Lohoff 2014, 169)

Klein refers to this approach of '...orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities' as 'disaster capitalism' (Klein 2008, 6).

If we consider Grenfell Tower itself, the concrete, glass and furnishings that make up the building, and its (partial) destruction in the fire we can see how capitalism was not just implicated in the fire but how it actually constituted Grenfell and the people inside of it whilst it simultaneously destroyed them. Grenfell Tower, and the objects inside of it, were commodities in the form specific to capitalism, the ‘social form’ of Capital. The labour power of the residents was itself a commodity as, those who worked, sold their labour time to an employer to produce surplus value and hence profit. Grenfell Tower, and the commodities within it, were formed through living labour to produce value, in terms of exchange value, with the capitalists who employed labour to make them aiming to gain more money than expended in their production. It makes no difference to the people who made the carpets destroyed in the Grenfell Tower fire what happened to them after they were bought. Indeed, disasters in capitalism can be seen simply as rapid consumption (of commodities) and depreciation (of fixed capital). Value, and the expansion of value into many forms (in commodities, in exchange, destruction through consumption, and in fictitious forms as money, in credit—as finance capital) as the ‘automatic subject’ treats all existing (and potential) entities, relations, thoughts and feelings as an actual (or potential) source of future value (and profit). The destruction of Grenfell Tower might represent the loss of investment opportunities for some, but more opportunities for others, an opportunity for further profit. The destruction of the fridge at the start of the Grenfell Tower fire represents an opportunity for Capital. Again, it is not the fridge manufacturer that aimed to start the fire, but through the social interconnectedness formed through capitalist relations other fridge manufacturers (and the manufacturers of all of the commodities that existed in Grenfell) stand to gain as their products have not been destroyed through consumption, but by the fire. For Capital, the real tragedy of Grenfell might be the destruction of living labour (as the only commodity, labour power, that can produce value) in the fire which cannot be subject to further or future exploitation and the production of surplus value but we may now be at such an advanced stage of eliminationism that such deaths are not even part of the ‘collateral damage’ of Capitalism but rather part of the process. Even death reveals the ways in which Capital regards the labour power of individuals. Rikowski (2017) refers to education’s use in forming human capital and then labour power as representing ‘fuel for the fire’, living labour that is consumed in the hellish vortex of capitalist

production. In the literal Grenfell Tower fire, this potential labour power is destroyed and stops entering as ‘fuel for the fire’ of commodity production.

The process of disaster in Grenfell Tower reveals the distinctively capitalist nature of representation. Even positive representations are tinged with capitalist logic. Following Grenfell, there has been reference to how not all of the residents were poor refugees, or unemployed, implying that human value can only be valued in terms of its role in value production. Insurance pay-outs are based on the calculated value of individual’s wages in the future (which is considered to influence their private productivity) with some consideration of their social contribution (which is calculated as a monetary value). The media sells advertising space, newspapers and social media clicks, commodifying our empathy with the Grenfell Tower victims and promoting their lost ‘value’ as an employee, or providing the unpaid labour to reproduce the next generation.

In capitalism, value and its movement, based on living labour, is everything including spatial and temporal arrangements but at the same time is ‘nothing’, simply the expression of the movement of value from labour power into different forms. At one level this is a takeover of natural and human qualities by Capital, but this is an unstable relationship from the start (based on an antagonistic relationship between labour and capital in terms of appropriating labour power from a living subject, first through extension of the working day and then through increases in productivity through technology). This means that every entity, even the State, can be interpreted as a transfer of value forms, and that our human characteristics (or ascribed characteristic, such as race) become a matter of value production (in terms of race perhaps being useful for race management in the workplace). Rather than seeing this as closing off possibilities for analysis, this ‘value critique’ of Capital opens up ways of considering the always transitory and contradictory nature of social forms, and their dynamics through capitalist time. Grenfell Tower therefore is not just a subject of ruling class whims but part of the unstable, dialectical, process of value formation. The State is not just ideologically predisposed to Capital, but is part of the process of value transformation and social reproduction. It desires to save itself as the ultimate subject of preparedness not for separate State interests but to continue the process of capitalist reproduction through the ‘collapsible state’ in restarting wage labour, issuing money and recommencing commodity production.

To understand these movements requires a negative critique, one opposed to value and therefore to capitalism itself. Value critique historicises concepts such as wages, profits and the State, deploying their uniqueness in capitalist reality. The forms in which these categories are expressed are historically specific to capitalism (Tenkle 2014, 1). Following this logic, Marxism is not another form of political economy but a critique of political economy in general, not just a specific form of Classical political economy. In particular, labour as constitutive of capital is of a historically specific dual form, as concrete and abstract labour (Tenkle 2014, 2). Labour power is expended in the production of a commodity not just to produce a concrete, sensuous, material item (or service) like Grenfell Tower but to create value as an abstract entity itself, without reference to a qualitative determination (Tenkle 2014, 5). All commodities in capitalism have in common that they are a ‘...pure abstract, reified quantity of elapsed time...the substance of value’ (Tenkle 2014, 6). This is not merely symbolic but is a material, actually existing, abstraction (Tenkle 2014, 7). The commodity is the physical manifestation of this abstraction, a paradoxical ‘concrete aspect of an abstraction’ (Tenkle 2014, 9) as a material-social substance (Kurz 2014, 21). Indeed, there are many mutations of value in its forms as labour, commodities, in exchange, circulation, money and destruction. Capital seeks to increase the predominant form of wealth in capitalism, value, through its material essence as money (Kurz 2014, 18) to seek the ‘valorization of value’ (Ortlieb 2014). The residents and the material form of Grenfell Tower are part of the process, but their existence was never in itself important to the workings of Capital other than they can be used as a source of value production.

Capital's Chaos and Grenfell Tower

For Grenfell Tower, and its residents, survival was contingent on Capital but this dance between material and human things and the alien movement of value was from the start a fragile relationship. Grenfell Tower represents a tragic moment in capitalism's brutal past and future but by no means a turning point. From the moment of its existence Capital is contradictory (in the antagonism between dead and living labour, between capitalist and worker and between various forms of capital) and in crisis. As technology inevitably and endogenously expands (as capitalists are motivated by increasing surplus value) socially necessary labour

time plummets, labour is dismissed and seemingly becomes irrelevant hence undermining the source of value production— ‘...commodity production itself becomes obsolete’ (Kurz 2014, 27). Contradiction and crisis cannot be solved by even radical redistribution between ‘...the owners of labour in its living phase (labour) over the owners of labour in its dead phase (capital)’ (Jappe 2017, 24) as long as production on the basis of value continues. Value is anachronistic from the start but production on the basis of value has to continue if capitalism is to sustain itself resulting in greater crisis (manifested as both anthropogenic and natural disasters). Capitalism discards the very resource that it necessary to its survival, humans as a source labour power, and eliminates the concrete necessity for humanity. The class and racial cleansing of our cities is part of this process as the ‘unnecessary’ are eliminated in the name of profit. In doing so it heads towards its collapse, not because mass extinction would be the end point of capital (as discussed in Chapter 1 even following nuclear war the State made plans for capitalism to reset itself), but perhaps through total environmental destruction or some other form of barbarism (Kurz 2014, 73). People’s existence becomes a ‘luxury’ for capitalism (Lohoff 2014, 161). According to Jappe (2017) ‘...humanity itself becomes superfluous when it is no longer necessary for the reproduction of the capital fetish’ (Jappe 2017, 6). People who are not even good enough to be exploited are of no value (in terms of labour power) for capitalism. Indeed, ‘...humanity itself is beginning to look like a superfluous luxury, an unsustainable expense’ (Jappe 2017, 77). This speaks to Grenfell, to Aberfan and Hillsborough, where human life was treated as having no worth. This zero worth is not simply a moralistic concern that can be rectified through social justice but an inevitable part of capitalist growth. Theories of social justice can point towards why certain racialised and classed subjects are eliminated in disasters but not why this process has a dynamic of its own towards human destruction.

This destruction can present itself as an exogenous process of ‘shock’ (as in Klein’s ‘Shock Doctrine’) but this should be complimented by considering the endogeneity of disasters within capitalism. There is a continuous and naturalised process of contradiction and disaster within capitalism where the system engineers its own limits which cannot be surpassed. The substance of Capital, its form, is value: human labour congealed in a commodity as a function of socially necessary labour time. Tower blocks, including Grenfell, are not just concrete and cladding but are built using human labour, brain and muscle. In capitalism

labour acquires a dual character. It is a source of both use value (producing material objects that are of use, or utility, to people) and a source of exchange value (producing material objects that can be exchanged for a specific quantity of another object, or the generalised form of exchange in capitalist society, money). The tower blocks surrounding Grenfell Tower could be (eventually) useful for people to live in. However, capitalism is not motivated by whether flats are nice to live in, but only by profit and the movement of money into greater quantities of money. Speculators invest in building tower blocks, forwarding a quantity of money which through complex systems of financial intermediation and deals, is then spent on machinery, raw materials and labour to build a tower block in the hope of gaining a greater sum of money when the tower block is sold to investors at the end of the process. However, this increase in the quantity of money (profit) arises not as a function of the good fortune and intelligence of the speculator but by a process in the 'hidden abode' of production. Although workers might be paid a decent wage, the indecency of the process is that in the time that workers are employed only part of that day's work is necessary to reproduce their labour power (variable capital), the rest accrues to the capitalist in terms of surplus value. Although the first floor of the tower block may be built by the workers in terms of the time that is returned to them in wages, the other nineteen floors are built in the time that the worker advances 'unpaid' to the capitalist. On the surface, everything appears fair in that the worker has freely sold his labour to the capitalist, received a wage for a certain time of work and the capitalist bears the risk of the investment not yielding a return. In the 'hidden abode' of production, something strange and alien yet concrete and unremarkable is happening. The capitalist is not buying the worker but their vital force, their 'labour power'. This labour power is an abstraction in two senses. First, work is a completely different domain to other fields of human activity. The worker turns up at the building site, freely, expecting to work. The foreman, the organisation of the work process and various surveillance devices make sure that the worker does not do anything other than labour for the time that they are allotted. In producing the tower block (the commodity) their work is congealed in the tower block as an abstraction of their vital force, their labour power. Second, work in capitalism is measured by an abstract yardstick, that of socially necessary labour time, or the time taken to produce a particular commodity under the existing social conditions (primarily the technologies and organisational forms used in

constructing the building). A fifty-seven storey tower block in China was built in nineteen days in 2015. The Empire State building took one year and forty-five days to build in 1931. Over eighty years, there has been a massive increase in technologies of construction, materials and organisational practices such that it is now possible to produce twenty-four tower blocks in 2015 in the time it took to produce one Empire State building in 1931. The measure of labour is the current time it takes to achieve a material result in terms of the production of a commodity under current social conditions, the socially necessary labour time. Capitalism is interested in time discipline in terms of the production at no more than the socially necessary labour time for a commodity. If a firm produced a fifty-seven storey tower blocks in thirty-eight days whereas another took nineteen days then the first construction firm would not be in business for long. Capitalists will constantly try to get the most from workers by extending the working day and making sure that workers are working at their optimum performance every second that they are at work to extract the maximum effort from workers. This increases the surplus value to the capitalist but there is only so far that this process can go as humans are not machines. Capitalists will invest in technology and changes in organisational form to increase their profits. This reduces the socially necessary labour time to produce a commodity and initially gives the firm an advantage in terms of relative surplus value (the ratio of total surplus value accruing to the firm to variable capital, that is required to reproduce the existence of the worker).

For example, if the first firm invests in building modularisation then they will gain an advantage over the second and increase their profits. This is only temporary, though, as when modularisation becomes generalised the socially necessary labour time required to produce a tower block becomes standardised across the construction sector (or branch of industry) and there is no particular advantage for the firm. Moreover, less value is congealed in each tower block produced across the sector. Workers are laid off and the source of value production in the industry as a whole walks out of the door and to the food bank. However, construction firms are compelled to introduce new techniques in production constantly reducing the socially necessary labour time to produce them, flooding the city scape with tower blocks at an ever-increasing rate and requiring fewer workers to produce each block. Value as the motor for generating profits becomes increasingly ludicrous as each tower block contains less and less value. Eventually, the sale of tower blocks as places

to live becomes anachronistic and value moves to a ‘fictitious form’ in terms of finance capital whereby flats and apartments become investments. Even prior to this, tower blocks are the ‘...concrete abstracts of an abstraction’ (Tenkle 2014, 9) the ghosts of value. Eventually, capital moves out of construction into other sectors in search of profit, absorbing displaced labour and commodifying previously non-commodified areas of life. As the form of Capital, value is paradoxically our abstracted (doubly) labour and ‘nothing’ a process which yet compels us as a form of social domination. This process seems completely logical from the perspective of the individual construction company or property developer who are ‘socially partial’ (Kurz 2014, 59) producers interested only in their own profit rather than the viability of the system as a whole. This acceleration of production is not without its consequences for disasters. As production speeds up accidents occur in machine time, rather than human time, more rapidly and more significantly (Wendling 2011, 192). The metric of value is consistently falling socially necessary labour time and existing cityscapes become not only anachronistic, but the speed at which they are displaced increases. In such circumstances, the human capacity to prevent accidents becomes increasingly limited (Wendling 2011, 153).

Capitalism speeds up time as the socially necessary labour time in one area after another falls with the introduction of technology and organisational processes destroying all of our conceptions of concrete time to live. It warps space, commodifying all areas of human activity and destroying them with their only use being the production of value. There is no other choice for capitalism, to continue as a system it needs to consistently expand ‘...slightly faster than its tendency to collapse’ (Jappe 2017, 130) even in face of physical, social and aesthetic limits. As capitalism destroys the one thing it depends upon for its existence (production on the basis of value) it becomes increasingly acquisitive and brutal. The protection and preservation of human life becomes secondary to the production of value. Grenfell Tower was concretely, in its very existence, an aesthetic, physical and financial structure that acted as a blockage to the rapacious thrall of value. Capitalism consistently seeks out a gap to move into, to keep expanding and accelerating. The destruction of Grenfell acted not only as a visceral way of destroying this block for value but created new opportunities, a way of restoring some more value in construction. There was no teleology implying Grenfell’s destruction, but as capitalism necessarily speeds up, human life embodied in prior

commodities (including buildings) and human lives become increasingly irrelevant. Grenfell Tower was literally out of time in terms of the accelerationist tendencies of capitalist construction.

To summarise, although what happened at Grenfell Tower was about the desire for profit, as accumulation through dispossession and the class and racial cleansing of the working class, it has to be seen to be part of a wider process of capitalist crisis that always returns to the hidden abode of production. The acceleration of building and the rate at which past environments become anachronistic makes everything and everybody potentially the next casualty of this process. In this context, Grenfell Tower can be seen as a moment in Capital's destructive power where the safety of the racialised and classed residents became less important than the generation of future profits.

CONCLUSION: BILLIONAIRE BUNKERS

Grenfell Tower was not only a moment in the circulation of value in terms of the destruction of future labour power and the opening up of opportunities for profit but even in terms of our emotions it enveloped us in a capitalist mode of mourning after disaster. In disasters and emergencies the mode of mourning is pre-planned by the State. In the Manchester terrorist attack of 2017, for example, plans had already been made for victims to mourn down to where their cars would be parked, what sorts of events might take place and the cooperation of not-for-profit and religious groups in the mourning and recovery. Social media tags around praying for the location of disaster are a source of advertising profits for locations, such as Facebook and Twitter. The death of youth is used to indicate 'potential' in terms of the lost opportunity of becoming something for capitalist society. I am not arguing here that mourning, compassion and sympathy are worthless rather than their worth in capitalism is judged through money and the creation of future value, in terms of a historical political category. Anger is also seen as counterproductive and attempts are being made to neutralise this through visits by the Royal Family or rock concerts and charity singles which ultimately represent chances to sell more music. It is also a chance for preparedness agencies, who were caught out by the anger produced by an incident such as Grenfell, to re-establish themselves.

Even as the desire for preparedness expands as a State activity (with increasingly limited resources) it is becoming increasingly anachronistic

in favour of an individualistic, privatised approach to surviving a disaster. The State, and its support for health and safety, preparedness and public services is opening itself up to commodification as ‘combustable material ready to be thrown into the open maws of the profit engines....’ (Lohoff 2014, 162). There is no end to this process ‘Capitalism is like the sorcerer forced to throw the entire concrete world into the cauldron of commodification in order to prevent everything from coming to a halt’ (Jappe 2017, 130). Neither the State nor Capital is inevitably able to meet the needs of the population for basic safety and security and preparedness. This produces legitimate anger against the ruling class and it is this anger, the chance of social dislocation and revolutionary activity, which has framed the way in which preparedness has been orientated in London both before and after Grenfell. The fears of the ruling class are not just around environmental depletion (as a result of capitalist production), pandemic (as yet uncontrollable parts of nature), war (through States that they cannot control) or A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) takeover (through technologies that they cannot control) but are based on a real and plausible fear of the working class (often this is a racialised fear) and the result of class antagonism.

The ruling class have their own forms of preparedness and shelter which are partly planned as a result of the consequences of disasters such as Grenfell Tower. This class are starting to seriously consider their own survival as humans notwithstanding the survival of capitalism. As there is no limit to the spatial or temporal expansion of capital we are witnessing ever more elaborate plans for escape and exploitation. There are plans for the colonisation of near earth planets and the exploitation of space colonist labour in the extraction of raw materials. The ruling class are heading both upwards (with even higher skyscrapers) and downwards (in terms of basement living quarters and panic rooms) and setting up exclusive colonies for the rich where they can debate technology and then retreat to their environmentally friendly mountainside mansions. The ruling class have always wanted to live on the margins of the rest of humanity but there is a subtle change in their escape plans as they are increasingly tinged by fear over their own personal safety not from kidnapping, crime or terrorism but from the threat from the rest of humanity as capitalism declines and collapses.

There is evidence of this from a variety of sources. Billionaires are increasingly scared of the conditions that they have purposively created for the rest of humanity. The CEO of Cartier is fearful for his life

due to an imminent uprising of the poor. He has sleepless nights as he believes that his business will collapse if the middle classes become too afraid to wear jewellery for fear of being mugged by the feral poor (Withnall 2015). Peter Thiel, technology entrepreneur and co-founder of PayPal has bought a retreat in New Zealand, one reason for which is alleged to be the expectation that capitalist democracy is coming to an end (O’Connell 2018). Groups of the super-rich have formed cartels to prepare for national unrest and instability by ‘bugging out’ to secure locations (Osnos 2017). There is a burgeoning market in panic rooms, bunkers, safe houses and retreats for the rich. Kensington and Chelsea, the borough where Grenfell Tower is located is a site where security businesses are keen to expand:

Billionaire bunkers may be underground and feature swimming pools, saunas and private cinemas, and there has been a growth of planning applications to build luxury subterranean extensions in the Kensington and Chelsea districts of London. High-net-worth individuals living in the capital have a genuine risk. These extensions are often occupying a space larger than the original residence and are built to be highly secure. They’re like submarines – there’s only one way in and out, often there are no windows, and with other security measures it forms another impenetrable safe place. (Croma Security Solutions Plc 2018)

On the one hand, it is easy to mock these fears, but they are quite legitimate and realistic, if not now, then in the long run as the rule of value splutters out as a motor of progress, more of humanity is consigned to the scrap heap and the environment is fully depleted. As the point where the State can no longer protect the ruling class sufficiently has been reached and even breached, given the fear of some for their lives and that even the sovereign state is retreating back into itself, there has been an expansion of the elite private security market. As considered in Chapter 1, it used to be the State which made extensive plans for the Continuity of Government (COG) and the reinstatement of capitalism following an existential threat, primarily a nuclear war. To that end, they established a security apparatus in terms of the police, army and legislative processes to protect them. Now, amongst the ruling classes, there is a need for the continuity not of government but of life itself to be protected by an elite cadre of security guards, many of who are former members of the army and the police. The purpose of these guards is to whisk the ruling class

away to a secure location or bunker. There is never any material escape from the rule of value, though, and increasingly the ruling class are turning to outer space and other planets or the inner space of uploading consciousness to a computer to attempt to get away whilst cities burn and angry populations riot. In the final analysis, escape is an impossible task. As value atrophies, all buildings and all residents become ultimately disposable.

In the aftermath of Grenfell Tower it is perhaps hoped that a new form of politics might form. It is seductive to suggest that disasters such as Grenfell produce a new political negotiation where the interests of the working class and the disenfranchised are recognised. That is surely *never* the case as the evidence of previous disasters has shown. Aberfan and Hillsborough before Grenfell show that there are never ‘lessons learnt’ in disasters by the political establishment. This is not to be nihilistic, but to recognise that the State and Capital can only protect people instrumentally, for profit, and their own existence, and ultimately cannot protect them at all. What Grenfell Tower has produced is a sudden surfacing of this reality and a sense of anger in communities that not only is there neglect of human interests but that this neglect is purposive. There is no denying that the forms of righteous anger and grassroots politics produced reinforce the idea of a politics which is not guided by the State or Capital. As disaster capitalism becomes an everyday way of life in the city people are looking for alternatives in which disaster itself can create social action to construct alternatives not simply within Capital and the State. These are alternatives based on mutuality and action rather than dependence on State processes of investigation, deliberation and ‘lessons learnt’ which never are learnt, and (given the State and Capital’s brutality) never can be.

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