

TITLE: Marshalltown fire disaster points to major governance failures on all levels

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## Article Summary

The article discusses the recent fire disaster in Alberts Street, Marshalltown, Johannesburg, and highlights major governance failures at all levels of the government. The building that caught fire was not only a fire hazard but also overcrowded, with poor living conditions, and managed by criminals. The article emphasizes that it is the most vulnerable in society who suffer the most when governance fails. Wealthier communities can buffer themselves from the effects of a failing government, while those who are impoverished and lack access to basic services become targets for criminals.

The author explores three narratives related to the fire disaster. Firstly, they debunk the notion that poor people prefer to live in poverty and unsafe conditions by highlighting that shelter is a basic human right that even the residents of Alberts Street were willing to pay for. With a thoughtful and humane plan, the government could have provided affordable, safe housing options and collected revenue rather than dealing with the aftermath of the fire. Secondly, the article challenges the idea that undocumented migrants benefit from their status, arguing that it actually makes them vulnerable to exploitation and criminalization. The government should focus on regularizing or repatriating migrants rather than criminalizing them based solely on their legal status.

Lastly, the article condemns the crime of building hijacking, where criminals target neglected buildings and exploit vulnerable people. Instead of focusing on evicting occupants, the government should prioritize finding and arresting the landlords who are responsible for these crimes. The author emphasizes that the government has the power to respond to housing and migration crises if it is committed to addressing them within the boundaries of the law. They conclude by stating that the government must address the crimes rather than just the consequences and either plan to deliver on basic human rights or openly denounce them.

## Article Analysis

1. Does the article give a political economy contextual analysis of the event?

Yes, the article discusses the governance failures that led to the Marshalltown fire disaster and emphasizes the impact on vulnerable communities. It also addresses issues such as

poverty, dysfunctional immigration, lack of service delivery, poor law enforcement, and corruption.

2. What according to the article, is/are the root cause/s of the event?

According to the article, the root causes of the event are governance failures, including poor management of the building, overcrowding, and the control of the building by criminal syndicates. It also highlights issues such as poverty, lack of affordable housing options, and inadequate response from the government

3. Does the article present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building?

There is no specific evidence provided in the article regarding complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organized criminal syndicates. The focus of the article is more on the failures of governance and the impact on vulnerable communities.

4. Does the article present evidence of NGOs (like SERI) engaging with organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building, on behalf of and in the interests of their clients (i.e. the tenants)?

There is no specific evidence provided in the article regarding NGOs like SERI engaging with criminal syndicates. The article focuses more on the role of the government and the need for effective response and planning.

5. Does the article present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum?

The article suggests that the government should focus on dealing with the crimes committed by the hijackers and improving law enforcement. It also emphasizes the need for planning and providing alternative accommodation for the tenants. The article does not explicitly mention economic development or social upliftment as potential solutions. The concept of tenants' "right to the city" is discussed in terms of their right to live in decent circumstances close to livelihood opportunities.

6. Does the article emphasise the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI (and other NGOs) regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act?

There is no emphasis on the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI in the article. The focus is more on the failures of governance and the need for effective response and planning from the government. The article does mention NGOs impeding the government to act illegally but does not delve into specific conflicts or interpretations of the rights of tenants.

## Critical Analysis

The article "Marshalltown fire disaster points to major governance failures on all levels" by Tessa Dooms discusses the recent Johannesburg fire disaster in Alberts Street, Marshalltown, and its implications on governance failures. While critiquing the article, it's important to note that the author's perspective aligns with her commitment to impartiality.

The article starts with a strong statement that the fire disaster in Marshalltown exposes major governance failures. This sets the tone for the author's stance on the matter. The author uses language such as "government must deal with crimes rather than consequences" to emphasize a bias towards blaming the government for the fire disaster.

Throughout the article, the author uses subjective language to describe the situation, including phrases like "managed by thugs" and "government that seems better organized than the government". These descriptions imply criminality and incompetence on the part of the government. The language used in these instances does not provide a neutral perspective but rather a highly critical one.

The author also presents personal opinions and assumptions without providing concrete evidence. For example, the statement "people who are vulnerable because of poverty, dysfunctional immigration, lack of service delivery, poor law enforcement, and corruption become the targets of criminals" is presented as a factual statement without supporting evidence.

Additionally, the author assumes that people living in poor conditions would be willing to pay for better housing options. While this might be true for some individuals, it is not supported by concrete evidence or data.

The article acknowledges the importance of planning for social housing, but it does not provide specific recommendations or solutions for the government. Instead, it focuses on criticizing the government for its failure to address the housing crisis effectively.

In conclusion, this article demonstrates a clear bias and uses subjective language to criticize the government's role in the Marshalltown fire disaster. The author's commitment to impartiality is not fully achieved in this piece, as it lacks balanced perspectives, supporting evidence, and constructive solutions.

## Contradiction Analysis

1. Contradiction: The article states that the government must deal with the crimes rather than the consequences, suggesting that the government has control over the situation. However, later in the article, it states that nothing that happened at 80 Alberts Street was a surprise to the government nor outside of its control.
2. Contradiction: The article argues that the government should plan for social housing and collect revenue from it. However, earlier in the article, it is mentioned that the building in question was owned by the City of Johannesburg and managed by thugs, indicating a failure of governance.

3. Contradiction: The article highlights the vulnerability of undocumented migrants and argues for regularization or repatriation rather than criminalization. However, it also mentions that the government must deal with the crimes of hijacking buildings, suggesting a need for law enforcement actions.