

Whose crisis is it anyway? Contesting and constructing political housing discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Crises are both ‘real’, in the sense of actual changes in social processes, and socially constructed, in the sense that different interpretations of the crisis have implications for its outcome. The interpretation of a crisis may under- or over-state its magnitude and impact, as well as attribute blame as to its cause (Walby, 2015: 14)

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“

The actual motivations for state action in the housing sector have more to do with maintaining the political and economic order than with solving the housing crisis (Marcuse and Madden, 2016: 119-120).

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The growing trend for 'Crisification...'



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NEW ZEALAND

Auckland's transport crisis:
How it was made and why it

BUSINESS

Fran O'Sullivan: Infrastructure
'at crisis point'

The emergence of 'crisis' as a discrete research agenda...

Roitman (2014): crises claims are a feature of contemporary society, from financial, to climatic, to political, and have become **less of a signifier for a critical, decisive moment and more a discursive practice to open up certain narrative accounts & foreclose others.**

Paglia (2018: 96): the growing use of a crisis frame as a process of 'crisification', whereby political actors use the term as a **valuable discursive device to set agendas & align behind**

AIM: to explore the emergence, contestation, and construction of a 'crisis' frame relating to housing in Aotearoa New Zealand; how was it framed by different political parties; how this shaped policy intervention; who was privileged (or not)

Nic Toki sees herself walking a tightrope of hope.

On one side, the Department of Conservation's bubbly public face sees apathy. On the other, she sees a sense of helplessness. The battle is already lost.

It's a tricky balance to strike for our official threatened species ambassador.



diversity, ethnic affairs and immigration
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Auckland's fuel infrastructure needs immediate investment to avoid disruption to Auckland Airport if something goes wrong with the



Photo / L24F

BP stations across New Zealand will raise fuel prices by 6 cents per litre from today's production facilities over the weekend.

Leigh Taylor, a spokesperson for BP, said there has been a sharp increase in the

allegations. Photo / Greg Bowler

By Audrey Young
Audrey Young is political editor for the
New Zealand Herald
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COMMENT:

The resignation of Labour Party president Nigel Haworth may have

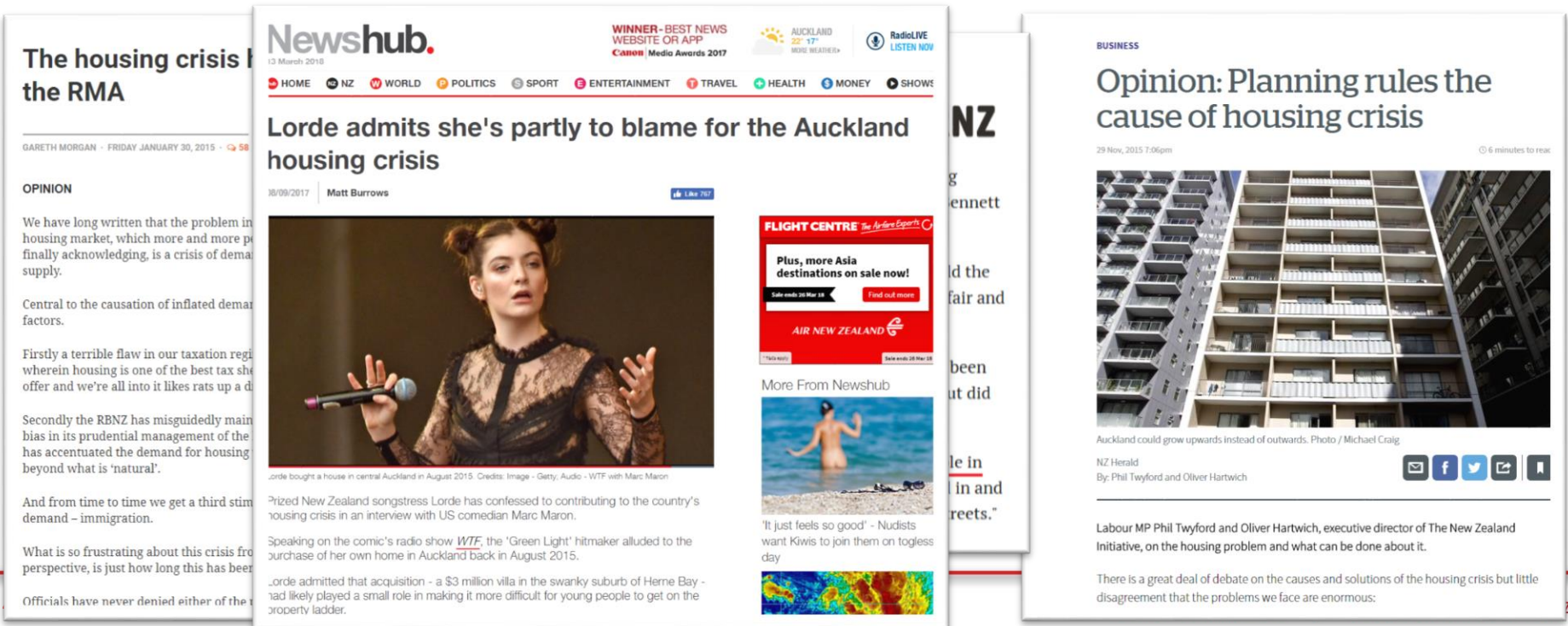
Puritan Pharma logo at its offices in Stamford, Conn. Photo / AP

Washington Post



Words matter: Crises, framing, & policy

- Crisis discourse—recognising a problem and explaining **why**—influences the **design and effectiveness of the public policy** response (Roitman, 2014: 49-50).
- Crises are **truth claims**: they frame/define problems, assign blame, and privilege certain ideologies/policy. **Claims of normalcy/non-problem** – what is preserved?
- Framing – cognitive structures that influence how reality is known. If policy is critical in addressing crises, then we also need to examine the framing that underpins the political discourse. In simple terms: words matter (Goetz, 2008).



The collage features several news snippets and advertisements:

- Left snippet:** "The housing crisis in the RMA" by Gareth Morgan, Friday January 30, 2015. It discusses the problem in the housing market and mentions the RMA.
- Center snippet:** "Lorde admits she's partly to blame for the Auckland housing crisis" by Matt Burrows, 10/09/2017. It includes a photo of Lorde and text stating she bought a house in central Auckland in August 2015.
- Right snippet:** "Opinion: Planning rules the cause of housing crisis" by Phil Twyford and Oliver Hartwich, 29 Nov, 2015 7:06pm. It includes a photo of a modern apartment building and discusses planning rules.
- Advertisements:** "FLIGHT CENTRE" for Asia destinations and "AIR NEW ZEALAND".
- Other text:** "More From Newshub" with a photo of a person in the ocean, and "It just feels so good" - Nudists want Kiwis to join them on togless day with a weather map.

Methods – telling the story...

Approx 10 year Time period: 2008-2017 - three consecutive National-led govts.

Searches: ‘Housing supply’ & ‘housing affordability’. 18 Bills, 53 debates, 611 parliamentary speeches (Hansard) from MPs in parliament: National, Labour, the Māori party, the Greens, ACT, and New Zealand First. Search for ‘crisis’, ‘housing crisis,’ ‘crisis of affordability,’ ‘crisis of availability.’ *Useful as language unfiltered by the media, but designed to influence media/public/policy narratives.*

Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis to understand the ways in which phenomena is problematised in politics and operationalised in policy. Grapple with issues of power in the policy formation process, to shed light on the interests of stakeholders, and to ascertain whose ends it serves (Hastings 2000; Jacobs, 2006).

Coding: Dominant, counterframing, episodic/silent (Iyengar 1994; 2010)

Analysed Housing Policy Initiatives: Suite of recent policy mechanisms to address ‘crisis’... Designed to link language, ideology and social change (Marston, 2000)

Emergence, resistance and Acceptance.

In a RNZ interview, Guyon Espiner questioned the new National Party leader, Simon Bridges about whether NZ has a housing crisis. In opposition since late the previous year, Bridges agreed. Reflecting upon how National ministers had repeatedly avoided this framing during the time the Party was in power,

Espiner responded: *“It is interesting you call it a housing crisis now. Man, you’ve avoided that term for a long time”*.

Bridges: *“I’m leader of the opposition now, I suppose I get to decide how we phrase things and where we see things”*.

Espiner: *“It’s a crisis when you are no longer responsible for it?”*

POLITICS

New National leader says there is a housing crisis in NZ

8:10 am on 28 February 2018

Share this     

New National Party leader Simon Bridges has admitted that there is a housing crisis in New Zealand “for those it affects”.



Photo: RNZ / Rebekah Parsons-King

Simon Bridges was named the new leader of the National Party yesterday, while Paula Bennett was reinstalled as deputy

Crisis emergence, resistance & acceptance

Surprisingly recent. First instance was 2010, then greens gave a push from 2012 onwards. Labour joined discourse alliance in 2013. Greens only had few MPs, so the frequency is impressive. National only 5, and then each one refuted a 'crisis'

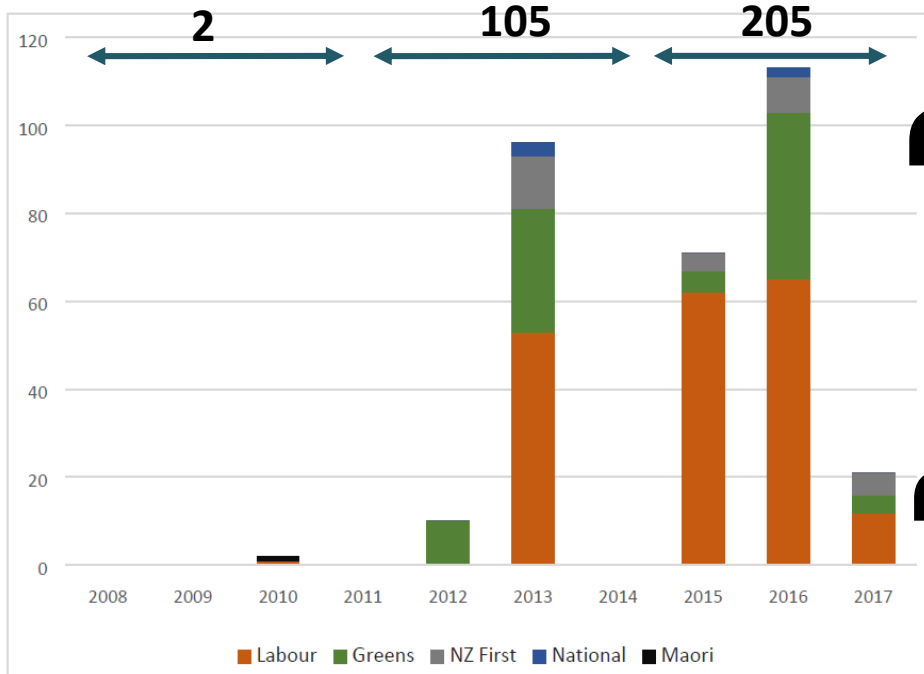


Figure 1: Frequency of the 'housing crisis' framing by year and political party

“

It is fair to say the context for this bill is that we have a crisis in housing in New Zealand. It is both a crisis in the affordability in housing and a crisis in the availability of housing. The amendments that this bill makes to the Building Act are relevant to how we are going to address that crisis.

- Green MP (2012)

”

“

The government seems to be in denial that there is even a housing crisis in parts of New Zealand... So here we have a Government whose head is in the sand about the housing crisis

- Labour MP (2013)

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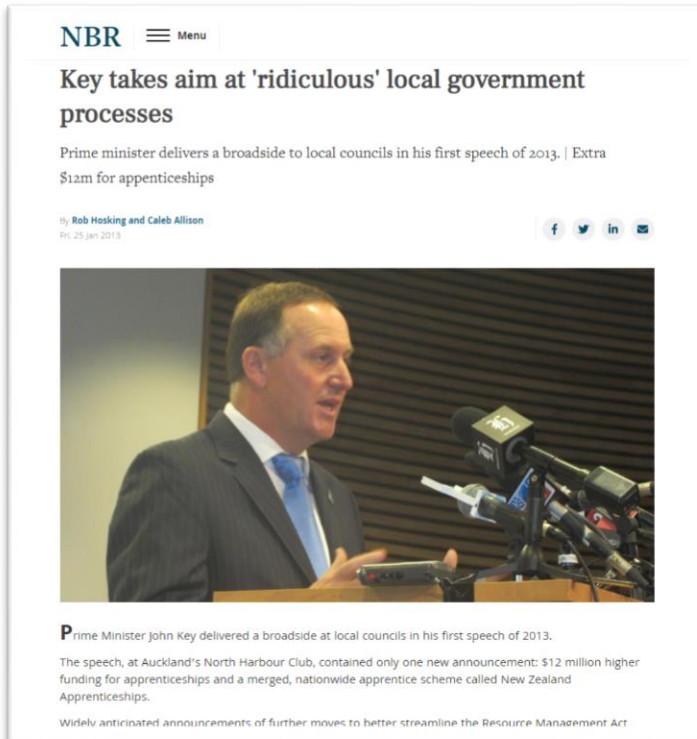
When push comes to shove, what the New Zealand public have recognised-try as those members might to manufacture a crisis...

- National MP (2013)

”

Claims Opened New Political Spaces – The Framing of Problems and Blame...

Very consistent framing from National, the party in power with the most MPs.
Differs from other framing research (eg media) as the dominance of National MPs in these parliaments meant it was less a battle of ideas, in a competitive democracy and more about disciplined messaging




NBR Menu

Key takes aim at 'ridiculous' local government processes

Prime minister delivers a broadside to local councils in his first speech of 2013. | Extra \$12m for apprenticeships

By Rob Hosking and Caleb Allison
Fri, 20 Jan 2013



Prime Minister John Key delivered a broadside at local councils in his first speech of 2013. The speech, at Auckland's North Harbour Club, contained only one new announcement: \$12 million higher funding for apprenticeships and a merged, nationwide apprentice scheme called New Zealand Apprenticeships. Widely anticipated announcements of further moves to better streamline the Resource Management Act

“

Freeing up supply of land and reducing red tape strangling the building and construction sector were crucial for addressing New Zealand's housing problems

- National MP (2010)

”

“

Direct correlation between reducing red tape, reducing bureaucracy, and the cost of a house.

- National MP (2012)

”

“

*...The issue of land-use planning is at the core of the challenges around housing affordability
...This housing issue is around supply. We think that this is critically important
...On this side we know that housing affordability and availability can be addressed by increasing the supply...*

- Various National MPs (2016)

”

Whose Crisis is it anyway?

Dominant Frames

- Poor land supply
- An inefficient planning system

Counterframes

- Wages and Income
- Immigration and Migration
- Private rental market and security of tenancy
- *Māori* and Pasifika aspects of homeownership
- Homelessness

Episodic and Missing Frames

- Quality of Homes: insulation and mould
- Design/Type of Homes
- Quality of Place: liveability, amenities, sustainability
- Regional or spatial perspectives
- Foreign ownership and Investment
- Human right, etc...

From Political words to Policy words...

NEW ZEALAND
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri o Aotearoa

*“To enhance housing affordability by facilitating **an increase in land and housing supply in certain regions or districts**”*

*“Providing the essential problem with this bill is **the essential problem with this bill is** demand. The harm that it defines the problem as the **supply of affordable housing, but it** is a serious issue of a **sets out a solution that is designed to** planning at demand. **address something different, and that** is land supply... **is land supply...** house prices at **- Green MP (2013)** ability”*

*“This national decision... **addresses something different, and that is land supply...** This will... **addresses something different, and that is land supply...** prices at **- Green MP (2013)** ability”*

*“Uncompetitive land markets drive housing costs higher and higher... **primarily due to planning rules, the costs of overcoming land-use restrictions and infrastructure shortfalls. This has led to house prices becoming increasingly more expensive relative to incomes over the past 25 years**”*

Urban Development Authorities

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

February 2017

New Zealand Government

- **Crisis largely undefined.** Not about left/right, but in power or not. Malleable claim about political competence. Characteristics of an empty signifier.
- **Crisis as utility.** Opposition crisis discourse **opened up political space** for gov. Provided ‘Big wave’ momentum (Kingdon, 1995) for powerful to advance ideological positions.
- **Science Impact?** We recognise housing as a multifaceted problem and consider many streams of evidence, while this was present in counterframing, the dominant political framing was simple, siloed, and ideological—in this instance poor land supply and an inefficient planning system—which informed policy responses.
- **Our Response?** If political power and ideology is so central to the framing and response to a crisis, then how can researchers can better integrate research into politics and policy? What does this mean for research impact and our response (eg power)?
- **The results.** Disconnect between research & politics may help explain how crises have become a lived condition that may not be ‘solved’ but rather redistributed politically in line with dominant frames

Thank you

White, I. and Nandedkar, G. (2020) The Housing Crisis as an Ideological Artefact: analysing how political discourse defines, diagnoses, and responds, *Housing Studies* (in press).

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