

# DECISION-MAKING IN THE NEW ZEALAND HOUSING SECTOR: ANALYSIS OF A COMPLEX GOVERNANCE NETWORK

National  
**Science**  
Challenges

BUILDING BETTER  
HOMES, TOWNS  
AND CITIES

Ko Ngā wā Kainga hei  
whakamāhorahora

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## Context

This study complements the growing body of research into the structural reasons for increasing housing inequality in New Zealand by exploring our planning and regulatory systems. As such, the research is positioned within the fields of both planning and politics (Dorling, 2014). As Philippa Howden-Chapman explains, “One way or another, all taxpayers pay for the effects of poor housing, whoever rents or owns it” (2015, p.64). Using a critical, post-positivist public policy approach, the study aims to reveal the hidden politics in decision-making for new housing developments, investigating the logics underpinning planning decision processes within key governing institutions and the implications for our built environment.

## Key Research Questions

1. Why, despite apparent political support to address New Zealand’s housing supply problems, does the planning system continue to deliver an insufficient number of affordable houses in liveable communities?
2. Who are the actors involved?
3. What are the influences on them?
4. How do their logics affect decisions made?
5. How can planning decision-making processes be improved?

## Theoretical Approach:

Network Governance and Decision-Making

- This draws attention to critical actors involved in housing decision-making, and the interdependencies and exchanges between them.
- Leads to an exploration of the ‘rules’ and ways of making decisions that are usually hidden from view. Koppenjan & Klijn (2004) argue that interdependencies between actors drive the establishment of rules which become perpetuated, creating pathways for future dealings.
- Rules are different for different ‘policy games’.

## Next Steps

- Two case studies of new housing developments within the Hamilton City Council area.
- Focus will be on structure plans and consenting processes.
- Involves semi-structured qualitative interviews with planners, developers and other decision-makers, and workshops to ground-truth insights from interviews.

## References

- Dorling, D. (2014) All that is solid. *The Great housing disaster*. Allen Lane. London, England
- Howden-Chapman, P. (2015) *Home Truths. Confronting New Zealand's Housing Crisis*. Bridget Williams Books Limited. Wellington, NZ
- Koppenjan, J. & Klijn E. (2004) *Managing uncertainties in networks*. Routledge. London; England.