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Acclimatising to higher densities in Auckland, New Zealand:

Examining how the residential experiences of Generation Y influence their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification

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Abstract

Seeking to provide more housing while avoiding urban sprawl, growth management strategies promoting urban intensification have been adapted into development policies and spatial plans in numerous cities. However, these strategies often encounter opposition from local residents living in countries with historic and cultural traditions of low-density detached housing, such as New Zealand. This antagonism has attracted significant media attention and has reinforced the notion suggested within studies of housing preference, that compact housing is largely unappealing to New Zealanders. However, I argue that the voices of Generation Y, young adults aged between 25 and 35, have been largely ignored in this debate and are poorly understood within much housing preference research.

Specifically, this thesis examines how previous residential experiences might influence the housing preferences and stated attitudes towards urban intensification of young adults living in Auckland, New Zealand. I make the case that without an appreciation of the influence that subjective residential experiences along the life course have upon the formation of preferences, the complexity and dynamics of contemporary housing trends will continue to be misunderstood. As a corrective I propose a theoretical framework guided by David Clapham’s ‘Housing Pathways’ approach. Utilising this framework, the thesis employs a mixed-methods research (MMR) approach combining Q methodology with the thematic discourse analysis of qualitative interviews. The perspectives of 24 ‘Gen Y’ Auckland residents are examined to reveal potential connections between their attitudes towards urban intensification and previous residential experiences.

The findings reveal the existence of three distinct attitudes towards urban intensification held by the participants. My analysis highlights the inter-relationship between specific understandings, expectations and values in the construction of these attitudes. The influence of early childhood residential experiences and overseas urban environments, as well as, differing definitions of convenience and community and the ‘New Zealand way of life’ are found to contribute to the subjective development of my participants’ housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification. The study concludes that over time a process of ‘acclimatisation’ to density is likely as Generation Y becomes more exposed to higher-density residential environments. However, to encourage positive experiences, compact dwellings must attend to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of younger lifestyles, be of a high-quality, and be located in the neighbourhoods and communities in which young people aspire to live.
For my family
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification of a diverse group of Generation Y, young adults aged between 25 and 35, living in Auckland, New Zealand. In ‘New World’ cities in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Northwest urban growth management policies and strategies commonly promote intensification and compact housing designs to reduce sprawl while providing housing for growing populations. Compact city approaches have typically directed smaller housing into existing neighbourhoods around urban centres and transit corridors. These existing areas are regularly composed of predominantly low-density housing types. As such, this form of intensification anticipates an increasing number of people choosing to live in higher-density dwellings where low-density detached houses have traditionally been the norm. However, these plans frequently provoke a hostile response from some local residents.

There are a number of policies that fall under the urban intensification and compact city approach in urban planning and design, all of which are aimed in some way at reducing the suburban expansion of cities in order to promote sustainability and liveability (Woodcock et al., 2011). Internationally, there has been considerable academic support for such policies (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999; Jenks et al., 1996; Hall, 1997). Yet, despite significant uptake of urban intensification policies in Australasian cities, the application of such approaches and their alleged benefits for sustainability and liveability have been critiqued and challenged by academics and practitioners in Australia (Birrell et al., 2005; Bunker et al., 2002; Davidson, 1997; McCrea & Walters, 2012; Ruming, 2014; Ruming, Amati & Houston, 2012; Searle, 2004; 2007; 2010) and New Zealand (Beattie & Haarhoff, 2017; Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Dixon, Dupuis & Lysner, 2001; Dupuis & Dixon, 2002; Vallance, Perkins & Moore, 2005; Vallance et al., 2012).

The nuances of this critique fall beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the focus of this research is on the inter-relationship between the housing experiences of young adults and their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification. Thus, the contribution of the thesis to the urban intensification debate is through its investigation of the construction of attitudes towards higher-density residential environments within the context of a city where a specific policy of urban intensification has been endorsed.
Chapter 1 Introduction

In Auckland, the Council’s release of its ‘Unitary Plan’ for the city was met with opposition from some quarters, primarily due to its plans for significant intensification of existing residential areas within the rural-urban boundary (RUB). However, while this significant and vocal opposition has attracted considerable attention, there is evidence of substantial interest in more compact housing types among the younger generation. I argue the viewpoints of Generation Y have so far been inadequately represented and understood within the media and within the field of housing studies. Being more attentive to the housing preferences of a younger generation, possibly more attracted to, and supportive of, intensified urban environments, offers the potential to encourage and accelerate the process of ‘acclimatisation’ to higher densities and gain greater acceptance of intensification policies.

Through utilising a mixed methods research (MMR) approach I investigate how the views of these Generation Y participants are socially constructed, with a particular focus on the influence of cultural expectations and subjective residential experiences. My mixed methods approach combines Q methodology with the thematic discourse analysis of qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive and holistic representation of the viewpoints of these participating young adults. Utilising a shared theoretical framework each method attends to a specific aspect of the research question.

1.2 The Aims of the Research

The research question this thesis has been developed to addresses is:

**How do the residential experiences of Generation Y influence their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification?**

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Reveal patterns of common thinking in the complex and subjective construction of Generation Y’s attitudes to urban change.

2. Examine how Generation Y’s ‘housing pathways’ intersect with their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification.
Chapter 1 Introduction

(3) Theorise the sociospatial construction and symbolic nature of residential environments.

(4) Consider the political nature of urban intensification and how an appreciation of the subjective nature of attitudes to housing and urban environments can inform policy responses.

My first research objective relates to the search for shared discourses, expressions of knowledge and understanding that communicate a distinctive and subjective viewpoint. This objective is investigated primarily through my Q study, which allows for the systematic search and identification of shared discourses amongst the participant group. The second objective relates to my theoretical framework, the pathways approach (Clapham, 2002a; 2004; 2005). I assert that a resident’s previous experiences of different dwelling types and environments influence their subjective construction of alternative and future urban landscapes, such as urban intensification. Consequently, these constructions, based on previous experiences, are argued to interact with cultural expectations and shape people’s future aspirations and housing preferences. My third objective relates to the urban landscape itself and its sociospatial construction and symbolic nature. This objective is informed by Lefebvre’s (1991) spatial trialectics and its more recent application to studies of neighbourhood activism and place-protective action as a complementary theory to the research. This concept helps to explain the process through which resident understandings of material spaces and their practices within them can conflict with urban planning and policies. As found in the Auckland context, this opposition can be persistent, emotionally charged and politically influential. Hence, my final objective is to consider the political nature of urban intensification and how an appreciation of the subjective nature of attitudes to housing and urban environments can inform policy responses. I consider how a housing pathways approach, emphasising the diversity and subjectivity of the housing experience, can inform policy responses and strategies for promoting urban intensification.

The objectives of this thesis are embedded within, but have been developed independently of, the MBIE-funded Resilient Urban Futures programme (sustainablecities.org.nz/resilient-urban-futures). The thesis objectives are located within the discourse currently surrounding the future of Auckland’s urban form and attempts to alleviate the city’s housing affordability ‘crisis’. The research is primarily concerned with the aspirations of young adult ‘Millennials’ or ‘Generation Y’ for home ownership and how rapidly inflating house prices within Auckland might be ‘locking out’ this generation from achieving that goal. The problems of a housing shortage and of decreasing housing affordability within the region has, thus, become commonly framed as an inter-generational conflict between a home owning older generation and a younger, ‘generation rent’ (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015), who see their hopes of owning a home dwindling as prices continue to rise. My thesis takes the current controversy
surrounding Auckland’s future development as its starting point and attempts to use the energy and emotion that this debate generates to explore several different perspectives on Auckland’s future intensification.

However, the research objectives of my thesis are broader than just an examination of perspectives on Auckland’s current housing crisis. Since the turn of the century there has been a wealth of studies exploring the attitudes people have towards different forms of urban development, specifically in relation to more compact forms. Quantitative work has often attempted to capture levels of acceptance and opposition towards specific strategies of urban intensification, while more qualitative studies have tended to search for explanations of how such opinions emerge (Tighe, 2010). Syme, McGregor and Mead (2005: 50) find that “most surveys and media articles concentrate on people’s attitudes to their immediate, day-to-day living environments”, while a majority of academic literature focuses on “whether particular planning approaches...are better or worse”. Sampling populations through various forms of structured surveys has proved to be the most common method in attaining data on the technical and objective construction of housing problems and attitudes. Yet, there is growing recognition of the difficulties in determining overall housing trends through such techniques (Bessant & Johnson, 2013) and awareness of the complexity of contemporary housing experiences. Thus, there is a pressing need for more sensitive and holistic methods based within sophisticated theoretical frameworks to unpack the complexities of housing preferences (Baxter & McDonald, 2004; Beer & Faulkner, 2009).

The prevalence of survey data and quantitative methodologies, operating within a ‘social facts’ paradigm, has also meant that the subjective and symbolic elements of the built environment have largely been ignored – much to the detriment of planning praxis (Devine-Wright, 2009). Ruming (2014: 254) argues that, thus far, urban intensification debates have played out in academic and policy circles with “limited recognition of the knowledge and perceptions of such policies held by the general public”. Equally, as Vallance, Perkins and Dixon (2009: 11) note, there is a need to recognise that the public have knowledge and understanding of their environment outside the sphere of the technocratic, that is – in alignment with Lefebvre’s (1991) ‘spaces of representation’ – “temporarily alive, and holistic in character”. The temporality and contingent nature of everyday knowledge and experience can make this data difficult to accurately and appropriately represent empirically.

Recognising the legitimacy of this criticism, I posit that a mixed methods approach combining Q methodology with qualitative interviews provides a promising methodological conduit for the
exploration of the subjective and symbolic experience of housing. In employing Q to a study of attitudes towards urban change and housing preferences, I reveal the subjective understandings and experiences of different residential environments held by a younger generation of Aucklanders. As I discuss in more detail below, Q provides a promising approach to reveal statistically robust patterns of common thinking in the complex and subjective construction of people’s viewpoints. Combined with thematic analysis of interviews focussed on each participant’s ‘housing pathway’, this research examines how the biographies of young adults intersect with their viewpoints towards intensification.

1.3 The Auckland Housing Context

How to house new residents in a sustainable, affordable and liveable urban environment presents a serious concern for Auckland. The topic has become the site of heated political debate within and between central and local government. During the last century, Auckland’s suburban landscape rapidly expanded, echoing a trend evident in many ‘New World’ cities. However, a broad critique of suburban sprawl has developed across several disciplines (e.g., Davison, 2006; Frank et al., 2004; Mees & Dodson, 2007; Saelens et al., 2003), and in recent decades experimentation with alternative forms of development has increased. Yet, at the same time, both qualitative and quantitative research continues to suggest that, when presented with a choice between traditional suburban environments and more compact types, New Zealand residents continue to show preference for the former (DTZ Research, 2005; Haarhoff et al., 2012; Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; Saville-Smith, 2010; Witten & Abrahamse, 2011; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015).

Since the early 1990s Auckland has experienced a rapid growth in higher-density housing typologies (Dupuis & Dixon, 2002; Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011), influenced by policies that have encouraged forms of residential ‘intensification’ (e.g., Auckland Regional Growth Forum, 1999). As such, the significant emphasis on housing intensification and compact urban growth in The Auckland Plan (2012) is no surprise. However, once again, this policy direction has led to controversy and hostility from some Aucklanders, and this reaction has attracted significant media attention, much of which has focused on negative aspects of increasing densities (e.g., Orsman, 2013a). Furthermore, even with a growing number of Aucklanders living in compact dwellings and resident satisfaction with such dwellings reportedly rising (Haarhoff et al., 2012), this strong preference for low-density detached housing persists.

Concern over the expansion of cities can be found in New Zealand research dating as far back as Putt (1937) and Jones (1949), who argued for a form of rural urban boundary (as found in the current
Unitary Plan) to “prevent sprawl” and to encourage “redevelopment and urban rehabilitation” (quoted in Rowe, 2012: 82). Debate around urban sprawl and expansion is therefore not a particularly new phenomenon for Auckland. More recently, the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (ARGS), adopted in 1999, and Plan Change Six to the Auckland Regional Policy Statement both introduced legislation intended to encourage urban intensification. Over the last decade the city’s councils have followed this lead and encouraged residential intensification around urban centres and along major transit routes. Since the amalgamation of Auckland’s councils in 2010, there has been continued support for the ‘compact city’ model.

The current conflict between the ‘compact city’ aspirations set out in The Auckland Plan, and the reportedly persistent aspirations of Auckland residents for low-density detached housing, risks undermining the Plan’s intensification agenda. Further pressure comes from central government’s underlying support for greenfield development in their policy-making (Murphy, 2014). Although it is estimated that 40 per cent of Aucklanders will live in a form of attached housing at some point in their life (Auckland Regional Council, 2010), it is a concerning dilemma if the council’s compact city ambitions continue to be at odds with the aspirations of the majority of Auckland’s residents. If the growing number of neighbourhoods with higher-density living spaces in the city were characterised by transient communities and a high level of tenant ‘churn’ this would surely damage or waste their long-term potential (Haarhoff et al., 2012). Therefore it is important to better understand the complexity of residents’ housing aspirations and the nature of their resistance. If Generation Y are increasingly living in higher-density dwellings, are these experiences influencing their housing preferences? If they aspire to live in a different type of dwelling, what trade-offs are they making? How are these preferences related to their past residential experiences? These are some of the questions this thesis intends to answer.

1.4 Research Design

This thesis employs a mixed methods research design and utilises two primary research methods in order to achieve its objectives. These are: Q methodology, a qualitquantilogical method (containing both qualitative and quantitative elements) that combines factor analysis with statement interpretation; and thematic discourse analysis of qualitative semi-structured interviews. Both methods are operationalised through a shared guiding theoretical framework developed from Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach and are deployed to address the same research question. This approach, and my two primary research methods, will now be briefly outlined.
1.4.1 Conducting Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research (MMR) is the harmonious combination of both quantitative and qualitative elements within the methodology of a single study and/or utilised to answer a common research question, in an attempt to provide breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007). It is argued to be an intuitive and practical solution in situations where a purely quantitative or qualitative study might be insufficient or limiting (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Particular to the social sciences, Greene (2007) identifies the generative value of MMR is to achieve a better and more insightful understanding of complex social phenomena. Moreover, mixed methods can further anchor science’s distinctive role in society to uncover and meaningfully engage with difference and diversity. This ‘third research paradigm’ is growing in popularity within the social sciences as it challenges the traditional methodological dualism between qualitative and quantitative studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

As I elaborate in Chapter Five, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) develop a definition of the core characteristics of appropriate mixed methods research that emphasises the importance of integration across the research design. In particular, a shared theoretical lens that combines the various data types in order to address a shared research question is considered essential. This definition supports the design of the research conducted for this thesis. My own research combines Q methodology, itself a hybrid methodology, and qualitative interviews. Conducting mixed method research using Q, which contains both statistical and interpretive elements, alongside qualitative interview data, is well established within Q methodological research practice (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 81; see also, Gallagher & Porock, 2010); this is because of the validation it provides through a combined qualitative and hybrid (qualiquantilogical) approach.

1.4.2 The ‘Housing Pathways’ Approach

The MMR design of this thesis is guided by a theoretical framework developed from the ‘housing pathways’ approach first introduced by Clapham (2002a). It is becoming clear that the growing complexity and uncertainty of people’s housing transitions demands the application of new theories and techniques to examine preferences and residential choice. Critical reflection is required to move beyond the imprecision and abstracted nature of many traditional methods of inquiry. Vague household trends provide only a limited and static picture of the reality of housing circumstances and behaviours and have proven to be problematic and erroneous in predicting actual housing behaviour (Baxter & McDonald, 2004; Beer & Faulkner, 2009; Bessant & Johnson, 2013; Winstanley, Thorns &
Perkins, 2002). Instead, individual-level data that enables a holistic examination of the connection between housing and other important life events is required.

New frameworks of knowledge, influenced by the new mobilities paradigm (Cresswell, 2006; 2011; Sheller & Urry, 2006), serve to disrupt conventional theories of residential mobility and reveal the dynamism of contemporary housing experiences (Buckle, 2017). In order to attend to this complexity, I utilise Clapham’s (2002a) housing pathways framework to provide a structure for the development of theoretical connections between housing preferences and life course experiences. Employing a housing pathways framework foregrounds the various residential environments that people transition through during their life course. This framework includes the choices, trade-offs and values that people realise in their negotiation through the housing market. However, following the work of Clapham (2002a; 2004; 2005), housing pathways also places emphasis on the subjective and individually experienced nature of housing. Thus, the term embraces the traditional elements of a ‘housing career’, but does so with the critical awareness of the socially constructed nature of housing, the meanings attached to it, and its relationship with other life events and interactions within the neighbourhood (Beer, 2005: 12).

In order to develop a suitable theoretical framework, my conceptualisation of young people’s housing experiences must be sensitive to individual subjectivity and expressions of knowledge and meaning. The housing pathways approach is a key concept in developing this understanding. Its application within my research allows housing to be conceived of as both a physically and socially constructed component woven into the fabric of a life course, and as an interactive element within the symbolic and politically contingent nature of urban spaces. The places where people live or have lived are rich in meaning and significance and hold the potential to influence future housing choices and trade-offs. As such, it is critical to incorporate an appreciation of housing pathways into an assessment of the aspirations and attitudes that young people have towards different residential environments.

1.4.3 A Critical Application of Q Methodology

In order to assess the construction of these attitudes I use Q methodology, a hybrid ‘qualiquantilogical’ technique novel to the field of housing studies. Q has been described as an approach for the scientific study of subjectivity (Stephenson, 1953; see also, Brown, 1980). It was developed by William Stephenson in the 1930s, although it remained rather dormant for much of the 20th century, even in its native discipline of psychology. Since the 1980s there has been a renewed interest in the technique, which has spread its application to increasingly diverse fields of study. Q’s hybridity bridges the
traditional divide between qualitative and quantitative research by providing a statistically robust quantitative measurement through which an interpretation of people’s subjective viewpoints towards an issue can be made. This method is particularly illuminating when exploring the structuring and alignment of preferences of a specific population towards a controversial issue, such as that explored in this thesis. As Wolf (2014: 7) explains, “Q methodology enables the discovery of where people are coming from” (emphasis in original); it allows the researcher to uncover the underlying belief systems that lead to opinions and attitudes.

The method offers my study a systematic approach to study attitudes towards urban intensification. Q illuminates patterns of construction in people’s opinions and their political subjectivity, as it “renders empirical the question of who is similar, under what conditions difference is expressed” (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 644). Topics such as intensification, over which there is much debate and contestation, are particularly suitable for Q as they generate clear and distinct views (also variously known as ‘discourses’, ‘accounts’ or ‘subjectivities’). As noted by Vallance, Perkins and Moore (2005: 731) “the strength of emotion expressed by respondents” in their research on resident interpretations of local planning changes “makes it essential that the relationships between the two are better explored”. I argue that my application of Q methodology works towards achieving a better understanding of the relationship between residents’ emotional and subjective viewpoints and the proposal for changes to their residential environment.

1.4.4 Complementary Qualitative Interviews

To complement this examination of attitudes towards urban intensification, qualitative interviews were also conducted with each of the participants. The interviews for this research served two main purposes. The first purpose was directly related to the use of Q methodology: to explore the themes emerging from the Q sort activity and expand on any comments that may have been made during that process. The post-sort interview has previously been identified as a highly valuable addition to the Q methodology procedure (Brown, 1980; see also, Wolf, 2014). The opportunity to review a participant’s individual interpretation of statements and how one may relate to others has been found to be valuable in aiding the subsequent interpretation of factors. The validity of the research is further bolstered through this added capacity to cross-check analysis between the data sources (Bryman, 2015).

Watts and Stenner (2012: 82) also make the point that an interview opens up the possibility of conducting an additional and complementary follow-up qualitative study. Thus, the second purpose
of the interview was to more generally allow the exploration of the research question of this thesis. Within the interviews I sought to uncover connections between the attitudes these young adults expressed towards urban intensification and their previous experiences of different residential environments. So within the broader scope of this MMR design, my interviews are intended to investigate the connections that might exist between the views my participants hold, as expressed through the Q study, and their housing pathway experiences.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In this introduction I have briefly outlined the basis for the research by discussing the character of growth management policies in Auckland and its purported conflict with the desires of some of the city’s residents. Within this debate, the need for a better understanding of young adults’ housing preferences has been identified. The mixed methods approach undertaken for this research has also been established. This final introductory section provides an overview of the content of each of the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two provides a review of recent trends within housing research, both internationally and in New Zealand and Australia. The chapter addresses a number of critiques within the field of housing studies and, in particular, the need for a greater awareness of the growing complexity within modern life courses and the contemporary meaning and experiences of housing. In order to achieve this awareness I engage with David Clapham’s housing pathways framework (Clapham, 2002a; 2004; 2005). The arguments made within this chapter place pathways as part of a growing theoretical sophistication within housing studies. Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) ‘spatial trialectics’ in the ‘the production of space’ are also introduced as a complementary theoretical perspective in order to support the theorisation of social space and the often potent disconnect between urban planning and resident experiences. A number of important critiques of the housing pathways framework are then considered, particularly in relation to its positioning as a social constructionist approach. The chapter concludes by outlining how the pathways framework engages with the specific research objectives of this investigation into Generation Y’s attitudes towards urban intensification.

Together, Chapters Three and Four provide a detailed account of the context of this research. Firstly, Chapter Three charts the rise and fall of the ‘New Zealand dream’ of home ownership (Ferguson, 1994), paying particular attention to the role that the government has played in supporting home ownership and establishing the primacy of the detached dwelling. This chapter traces the development of New Zealand as a home owning country, from the colonisation of Aotearoa, through
British settlement during the 19th century, to the eventual apex of homeownership during the 1980s. It concludes by considering the political nature of urban intensification as a response to falling housing affordability and reviews the position of both Auckland Council and the National Party-led central government towards its causes and potential solutions.

Chapter Four continues my contextual review by investigating the housing nexus between Auckland’s political and physical landscapes. The first segment of my review examines how the creation of a single territorial authority for the city has provided the opportunity for greater levels of planned urban intensification than has previously been possible. Following this discussion, the Auckland Council’s plans for the creation of a ‘quality, compact city’ are evaluated and contrasted with data indicating New Zealanders’ continued preference for low-density detached housing. Through providing evidence of changing preferences within particular age cohorts, I make the argument that there is a significant oversupply of low-density housing and an underlying and, as yet, undersupplied demand for more compact housing. I then evaluate the importance of a life cycle perspective – informed by the ‘housing pathways’ approach – in assessing housing preferences and choices. Finally, I identify the potential for a greater supply of medium density housing to provide greater flexibility within the city’s housing stock and provide people with more flexibility and choice during life stage transitions.

With both the thematic framework and study context reviewed, Chapter Five introduces the research methodology. This chapter provides a discussion of the theoretical justifications and epistemological and ontological presuppositions of the research approach. Firstly, I position the research strategy within a mixed methods research (MMR) framework. The mixed methods approach is introduced and its suitability and appropriateness regarding the objectives of this research is assessed. Three prominent critiques of MMR approaches are also considered in relation to my own research design. Following this introduction to the research methodology, the remainder of the chapter addresses the two primary research methods: Q methodology and thematic discourse analysis of qualitative interviews. Anticipating my later discussion of Q’s specific application within this study, Chapter Five presents a broad introduction to the development and foundation of the method. This discussion includes the nature of Q’s abductive logic and its contemporary positioning within a social constructionist epistemology. The scope of my analysis then narrows to Q’s current applications within human geography and its future potential within the discipline. My second research method, the thematic discourse analysis of qualitative interviews, is then discussed. Within this section thematic analysis as a research methodology is reviewed and its application within this mixed methods
approach is described. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key justification for my research methodology.

Chapter Six turns attention to the practical application of Q within the empirical work conducted for this thesis. As such, the focus of this chapter is on the pragmatic and procedural elements of Q and the interviews. I outline the development of the research tool, the data collection method, the definition of my participant group and recruitment techniques, and the research activity procedure. This procedural outline describes the use of the distribution table for recording participant activity data and the activity schedule. Finally, the interview procedure is outlined. These interviews were semi-structured and were conducted following the Q-sort to record each participant’s decision making regarding the sorting of the statement cards. However, as mentioned previously, the interviews also explored the participants’ housing experiences and aspirations.

Chapters Seven and Eight are the empirical findings chapters of my thesis. Chapter Seven presents the data and analysis of my Q study. This chapter is organised into three sections that follow the chronology of the analysis sequence: first the quantitative data from the Q analysis is detailed; second, the statistical interpretation and narrative generation process is discussed; and third, the three emergent narratives are defined. The outcome of this analysis is three statistically-determined ‘discourses’ that are written in a narrative form to represent three distinct views held by the participants towards urban intensification in Auckland. The chapter concludes with a summary ‘synthesis’ section that examines what the three discourses hold in common and where they differ.

Chapter Eight is the second empirical chapter and presents the findings from my thematic discourse analysis. Before discussing the themes emerging from the interviews, the chapter briefly reviews my thematic analysis technique, data management and the coded themes used in the analysis. Moving to the discourse themes, the remainder of the chapter details the results of the analysis within three main sections that relate to the key themes extracted from the data. Where relevant, links to the literature and wider Auckland context are also included within the discussion. In addition, the three discourses presented in Chapter Seven are utilised to corroborate the research findings. Throughout the analysis quotations from interviewees are used to illustrate and contextualise the research findings. A summary of the major findings from the thematic analysis is provided at the end of the chapter.
Chapter Nine reviews the core findings from my research. This chapter summarises the argument I present in this thesis and discusses its implications. I then present the contribution to knowledge my research makes to the understanding of Generation Y’s housing pathways, housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification. Following this discussion, Chapter Ten provides a conclusion to my thesis. I reflect on my MMR methodology and the efficacy of my research methods for urban research and studies of housing preferences. I also identify a number of areas requiring further investigation. Finally, I present three key policy recommendations for urban planning that arise out of this research, before providing some brief concluding observations.
Chapter 2

Conducting Theoretically Engaged Housing Research: The Housing Pathways Approach

2.1 Introduction

It is an intention of this thesis is to develop a greater understanding of how Generation Y’s previous experiences of different residential environments influence their attitudes towards urban intensification. In order to do this I engage with David Clapham’s (2002a; 2002b; 2004; 2005; 2009) ‘housing pathways’ concept and integrate it as a guiding theoretical framework in my research. The research combines an application of Q methodology, a quantitatively informed method for the analytical discovery and interpretation of shared viewpoints, with semi-structured interviews. The synthesis of Q with interview data provides the potential to discover how previous experiences of density can influence young adults’ attitudes towards urban intensification. The housing pathways approach, as discussed in this chapter, provides a theoretical framework to help explain the connections between past residential experiences and future housing choices. Specifically, the existence of a relationship between the various distinct housing pathways that young people experience during their life course and their attitudes towards different living environments. The notion of a ‘life course’ emphasises a combination of trajectories that emerge from different types of events and intervals between them (Clark & Dieleman, 1996). These events may include changes to household composition, education and job careers, marriage and divorce, the birth of a child, or the decision to retire. Utilising a life course approach, as is broadly taken by residential mobility research in general, directs us to an examination of the impact that these events have on the housing behaviours of households or individuals that is sensitive to a longitudinal perspective (Kendig, 1984).

This chapter introduces the housing pathways approach proposed by Clapham and considers several important critiques. In particular, claims of relativism due to Clapham’s adoption of a social constructionist position are examined. To fully understand the influence of housing experiences through the life course it is necessary “to employ a framework that places the subjective nature of the meanings held by households at the centre of analysis” (Clapham, 2005: 63). In emphasising subjectivity the housing pathways approach overcomes previously held universal assumptions about housing preferences and recognises the extensive diversity in housing experiences, even within
households seemingly occupying similar positions in the housing market (Stone, 2015). Thus, the pathways framework supports a more holistic analysis of the attitudes that young people may hold towards different urban forms and how such viewpoints may develop through a subjective experience of the housing market.

Kemeny (1992) suggests that a persistent weakness in housing studies has been an underlying ambivalence towards the conceptualisation of housing as both part of the physical world as well as the social. Studies will often consider housing spatially as dwellings, pure physical objects to be counted or located; or in regards to issues such as affordability or residential mobility, or socially as households with little or no interest in the materiality of the dwellings themselves. Sometimes analysis may alternate indiscriminately and unproblematically between either conceptualisation. What is crucially missing here, and that which the housing pathways approach adapted for this research aims to elucidate, is the foundations of what housing actually means to people, how it is experienced and integrated into the complexities of modern life. The arguments contained within this chapter place the housing pathways approach as part of a growing theoretical sophistication within housing research that provide new insights into the connections between housing and people’s everyday lives. Of particular pertinence to the objectives of this thesis, I argue that such an approach also allows a more holistic conceptualisation of how distinct attitudes towards particular types of housing are constructed out of everyday lived experiences and the far-reaching social, economic and cultural trends of contemporary society.

2.2 Towards Theoretically Engaged Housing Research

The housing pathways framework was introduced by Clapham in 2002 as a response to a long-standing criticism of housing studies, that much research has been “orientated to specific practical and policy issues and has adopted an atheoretical, empiricist approach” (Clapham, 2002a: 57). It is expedient to the arguments of this thesis to consider such criticism and how the housing pathways framework can

1 The term ‘atheoretical’ is perhaps inexact, since research must always contain epistemological and methodological assumptions based on a theoretical foundation of some sort. What is being argued here is that it is not often stated or obvious. Because such assumptions remain unspecified they also remain unquestioned and, in doing so, damage the integrity of the research. Moreover, they automatically silence alternative perspectives and lead to an incomplete and superficial understanding of the topic of inquiry. It is in this sense that I take such research to be labelled atheoretical.
be seen as part of a broader progression towards a more theoretically-engaged field of housing research.

In 1992 Jim Kemeny, in his book *Housing and Social Theory* (Kemeny, 1992: 13), argued that “despite growing interest in theoretical issues there remains a strong tendency for housing researchers to bury themselves in their own empirical and policy issues, with almost complete disinterest in ‘abstract’ questions”. There was, he insisted, the urgent need for more theoretically engaged research into housing and people’s experience of it. At that time the study of housing had been mostly dominated by neo-classical analysis based on positivistic approaches aimed at measurement and empirical description. Decades earlier, Pinker (1971) argued this of social policy research in general, stating that “[it] has developed an impressive empirical tradition while lacking any substantial body of explanatory theory” (Pinker, 1971: xii). Although nearly all policy debates within social science have gradually developed recognisable theoretical traditions, Pinker’s contention has been shown to remain true for much of the research concerning housing (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). Such research has often involved assessing levels of overcrowding and poor sanitation, or shortfalls in dwelling availability – all emphatically valuable areas of enquiry. It follows that in the UK most of this housing research was commissioned by government departments and concerned with the evaluation of specific policy issues (Clapham, 2005). Research was undertaken through social administration or social work departments and was atheoretical. Academic studies had similar concerns and were conducted within established disciplines, such as economics or sociology (Kemeny, 1992). In the UK the roots of this tendency towards policy-orientated research have been traced back to the influential Fabian agenda emerging in the late 19th Century (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). The movement achieved much success in the post-war period with researchers from institutions such as the London School of Economics having significant practical and intellectual influence on the agendas of successive political administrations. However, the lasting implications of this practice on social studies, such as housing, has been a preponderance of policy-orientated research directed to, and defined by, the interests of government administrations – at the expense of a more theoretically engaged, critical and reflexive field of housing research. Arguably, previous housing research groups in New Zealand, such as CHRANZ, echo this trend.

Kemeny (1992) was not alone in his critique and a rising interest in theoretically informed housing research was both reflected in his observations and bolstered by it. The gradual emergence of housing as a specialist field of academic enquiry has been matched by a steady growth in theoretically engaged research grappling with contemporary housing issues. However, in the decades following, several
housing researchers have felt the need to reiterate Kemeny’s critiques in the 21st Century (for example, Beer & Faulkner, 2011; Clapham, 2005; Marston, 2002). They express a shared dissatisfaction for the propensity of theoretical applications that “tend to be mid-range versions of political economic theory” which favour conceptual models of ‘housing systems’ and are rarely “explicit about the epistemological foundations or theoretical frameworks that inevitably inform them” (Marston, 2002: 82-3). Thus, although housing research has become theoretically concerned, there remains opportunity for further theoretical sophistication and specialisation within the field.

2.2.1 Housing Research in the UK and Australia

Jacobs and Manzi (2000: 35) suggest that a focus on housing policy and practice remains strong in the UK with much of the governmental research now being contracted out to large funding institutions like the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (also see, Allen, C., 2005; Clapham, 1997). Similar observations on national institutional funding systems have been made in Australia (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2009), Sweden (Kemeny, 1997) and France (Pinson, 2010). Such institutions are shown to have “enormous influence” on research efforts by commissioning “projects which are viewed as likely to have an immediate bearing on service delivery” (Jacobs & Manzi (2000: 35). This trend towards what has become called “evidence based policy” has continued to militate against the support of more critically aware approaches to policy development that consider questions like: What is evidence? Whose evidence is it? Are there a variety of views towards the evidence? (Clapham, 2009: 8)\(^2\). The development of evidence based policy (EBP) and its impact on the social sciences are considered in more detail later in the chapter (see, Section 2.4.5).

In Australia, there has long been a concern with the preoccupation of housing research with housing production, rather than the values and aspirations tied-up in housing consumption. In the early 70s, Stretton (1974: 7) commented that, “there are basic questions about the way people use and value their houses which I think...the experts all tend to neglect”. Yet, nearly three decades later, Marston (2002: 83) suggested that there remained a powerful orientation in Australia towards policy-focussed housing research. Similar to the UK, most housing-related research funding is available through a

\(^2\) Recent research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has included a greater variety of methodological approaches. For example, Young People’s Housing Transitions (Ecotec, 2009) and Housing Options and Solutions for Young People in 2020, utilising the housing pathways approach (Clapham et al., 2012). Although there is little to no theoretical discussion or critical consideration of the concepts used within the body of the report itself.
policy-orientated agency, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), whose mandate is to fund ‘policy relevant’ research through a competitive grants program. This orientation leads Marston (2002: 83) to consider it “unlikely to be a site of theoretically informed housing research”. On the other hand, at the time of Marston’s (2002) assessment AHURI had only been re-established for around a year. More recently Dufty-Jones and Rogers (2015: 14), evaluating the impact of AHURI in the years since its re-establishment, note – rather more favourably – that the institute is a key driver in the “veritable boom in Australian housing research” in the 21st Century and that “[b]eyond the sheer quantitative contribution of research funded through AHURI, Australian housing research in the 21st Century is also increasingly critical and theoretical”.

In both the UK and Australia it would seem that, while government interests remain a driver of much housing research, there has been a widening of methodological and theoretical scope within the bounds of ‘policy relevant’ research. Nevertheless, the influence of EBP on academia and its impact on research funding structures mean that a significant proportion of housing research is likely to remain technocratic in character and uncritical in approach.

2.2.2 Housing Research in New Zealand

New Zealand has developed a healthy body of housing research that in some ways follows a similar character to its Australian counterpart. This also includes some valuable comparative research between the two countries (for example, Austin, Gurran & Whitehead, 2014; Murphy, 2011). There is a well-developed corpus of policy-focussed work, including regular broad national policy reviews from Thorns (1986; 2000; 2006) and those aimed at specific policy issues and outcomes (for example, Davey & Kearns, 1994; Murphy & Kearns, 1994; Murphy & Cloher, 1995; Cheer, Kearns & Murphy, 2002; Murphy, 2003a; Murphy, 2003b). However, unlike Australia, there is considerably less funding provided for housing research, policy-orientated or otherwise.

The Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ) was established in 2003 to “kick start the housing research sector” with suitably broad intentions, to research “(i) The New Zealand Housing System, and (ii) Linking Housing and Social, Cultural, Economic and Environmental Outcomes”, as well as, including a “holistic view embodied in its Maori name Kainga Tipu”. The membership of CHRANZ was relatively broad and included a number of critical housing researchers who attempted to generate a level of theoretical engagement within the research. However, with the election of a National-led government in 2008, there was an ideologically-driven shift in focus and significant funding cuts for the organisation, which eventually closed in 2011. Nevertheless, a number
of researchers have continued to conduct critical housing research, particularly through studies linking housing to social inequalities. Notably, the work of Howden-Chapman, director of He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme and the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities, has been influential in signalling the broader environmental and public health consequences of inefficient ‘unhealthy’ housing. Her work within health and housing in New Zealand has developed an extensive body evidence linking poor energy efficiency (through inadequate insulation and heating systems) to a range of illnesses caused by dampness and mould (e.g., Howden-Chapman et al., 2007; Howden-Chapman et al., 2012).

Following the lead of British housing researchers, studies that advance the subjective experience of home as a critical element of housing consumption have grown in prominence since the late 1980s. In New Zealand, studies have investigated the multiple meanings of home to express its complex, contingent and contextually-specific nature (e.g., Allen, G. & Crow, 1989; Saunders 1989; & Williams, 1988). The subjective experiences and perspectives of the residents themselves could not be ignored if such an approach was to be successful. A study of residents experiencing serious housing difficulties in Auckland and Christchurch by Kearns, Smith and Abbott (1992) reveals an early example of the influence of this approach in New Zealand, observing how “relatively little is known about the actual experience of inadequate housing from the perspective of the residents themselves”. Dupuis and Thorns (1996; 1998), also building on the work of Saunders, introduce Giddens’ (1984; 1990) concept of ‘ontological security’ to investigate the housing experiences of older New Zealanders’ and to contextualise their culturally-specific understanding of home and home ownership. Although progress had been made, housing studies in New Zealand remained a predominantly quantitative field and a decade after Kearns, Smith and Abbott’s (1992) comments, Winstanley, Thorns and Perkins (2002: 819) similarly identified a need to “… understand the nature and complexity of individuals’ and families’ residential histories, present experience and future aspirations”.

Having embraced social theoretical approaches, emphasising a multiplicity of perspectives towards home and its highly contingent nature, housing research in New Zealand has expanded its scope significantly. More recent housing research has examined influences on the construction and meaning of home within households (Buckenberger, 2012) through influences external to the household (Leonard, Perkins & Thorns, 2004), as well as the influences and emotions involved in household decision-making processes (Levy, Murphy & Lee, 2008) and the construction and experiences of home for particular groups of people (Parsell, 2012).
2.2.3 A Critique of Housing Research

A final perspective on housing studies that should be addressed is provided by Allen (2009). He extends a comprehensive epistemological critique of housing studies from the original arguments of Kemeny (1992), suggesting that housing researchers have responded to Kemeny’s appeals by simply incorporating theories from external disciplines into their own studies, without critically considering the production of housing knowledge itself. In other words, while researchers increased their reflexivity in regards to the phenomena with which they are concerned, there is “little evidence that housing researchers have become more reflexive about the grounds of their own practices of knowledge gathering and production” (Allen, C., 2009: 54; emphasis in original). Allen’s key argument towards a theoretically engaged housing studies is that debate is concerned merely with methodological and theoretical differences and presupposes that the researcher’s knowledge is superior to that of, what he calls, the common sense knowledge or the lived experience of residents. He continues to comment that housing researchers “ask questions about housing phenomena that are fundamentally different to the types of questions posed...by people as they dwell in everyday life” (Allen, C., 2009: 66). This view stems from social research’s privileged position in which knowledge developed from an often objectified distance from the social world is seen to supersede the ‘natural’ development of local knowledge and casts its in situ understandings as irrelevant. Worse still, Allen argues, such practices, when brought into contact with non-privileged (non-scientific) people, conduct “symbolic violence” by leading these people to discount their knowledge and legitimise others, furthering the hegemony of particular privileged ontologies.

By way of resolution, and without abandoning the field entirely, Allen (2009) uses the work of philosophers Heidegger (1988), Winch (1958) and Gadamer (1975), amongst others, to make the case for researchers to:

...dispense with the idea of the ‘master scientist’ that possesses the ‘concepts’ that enables him [sic] to know ‘better’ and, instead, re-orientate the task of social investigation towards an understanding of forms of being-in-the-world and the way in which the manner of these forms of being-in-the-world result in the formation of concepts that make houses intelligible and meaningful. (Allen, C., 2009: 72)

More recently C. Allen (2016) furthers this contention by suggesting the development of an alternative “anarchist approach” to housing and urban research. Such an approach would reject an essentialised relationship between the ‘researcher’ and the ‘public’ and would require the scholar to “step outside of the ‘scholar self’ and into genuine personhood and reciprocal human relationships that dissolve the boundary between ‘in here’ and ‘out there’” (Allen, C., 2016: 12). Unlike critical housing studies that
would regard theory as the primary means of interpreting housing issues and policies, an anarchist would see our active embodied engagement with others, who would otherwise be regarded as the ‘subjects’ of our research, as a means to reaching new ‘lived’ understandings that are “beyond the reach of theory” (Allen, C., 2016, 14). Housing researchers influenced by this approach have applied it to collaborative studies of disadvantaged and marginalised communities and attempts to foreground the experiences and constructions of residents themselves. For example, Darcy and Gwyther (2012) incorporate Allen’s (2009) critique of housing studies into their investigative studies of links between individual disadvantage and neighbourhood context. They argue that new knowledge requires a new epistemological and methodological framework. So to transcend existing models of disadvantage, which label particular neighbourhoods as ‘problems’, residents must be situated as the knowledge producers and academics as supporters to nurture and inspire the emergence of this knowledge.

Allen’s (2009; 2016) critique and proposed solution renders a field of housing studies that is beyond theory and is therefore not only constituted in the real world of everyday lives, but also seeks urban change through taking an active part in the actions and struggles it involves on the ground. Indeed, one of the aspirations of this thesis has been to engage with young adults in Auckland in order to provide a platform for the expression of their understandings and experiences of the city’s housing and its future. However, I contend there is no need to abandon a critical theoretical perspective when engaging with people whose individual experiences may differ from one’s own. So I argue that the basis of this critique is founded on a misrepresentation of the nature of housing studies as a whole. Specifically, I suggest that housing research informed by a social constructionist perspective encourages an epistemology that closely resembles that which Allen believes to be lacking. As I will discuss more thoroughly later, the social constructionist epistemology purports that individual experiences are formed through an active process of interpretation, that actors do not simply describe events but rather are themselves actively part of their constitution. Thus, constructionist methodologies are certainly interested in the complexities of people’s everyday experience and their own subjective interpretation of them. Another important tenet of social constructionism is the rejection of social facts and objective evidence. This anti-positivist stance leads constructionist researchers to consider the multiplicity of knowledge production and, therefore, accept the perspectives held in their scholarship as being only one of many potential understandings. Arguably, this undermines the hegemony of privileged ontologies by working against the reification of ‘social facts’ and explicitly interrogating the process of ‘claims-making’, particularly in regards to the construction of social policy (Jacobs et al., 2004: 4).
Clapham (2009: 7) frames a similar rebuttal, in which he posits that many housing researchers would heartily agree with Allen (2009), but specifically as a major criticism of positivist research within the field. Clapham also contests his critique of a theoretically engaged field of housing studies that, Allen suggests, confines itself to debating different methodological and theoretical approaches and claims superiority over local knowledge and the lived experience. Again, this is certainly true for studies that deploy rigid conceptual frameworks to data based on inadequate theorisation. These types of research always run the risk of restricting opportunities for those being researched to express their subjective viewpoints and locally-specific knowledge. On the other hand, as Clapham (2009) identifies, a key principle of social constructionist research is to elucidate the multiplicity and subjectivity of information. In legitimising the existence of alternative information, of contextually contingent and locally produced knowledge, theoretically-informed housing research can be emancipatory and highlight perceptions and views that otherwise would be hidden. Research of this type is often characterised by inductive approaches with the purpose of understanding phenomena from the perspectives of those experiencing them, from which analysis and appropriate theorisation may result in novel and unsuspected connections. In combination with a social constructionist epistemology, the application of Q methodology in this thesis presents just such an opportunity – providing a forum for the expression of complex viewpoints that might otherwise be misrepresented or ignored.

2.3 Taking a Housing Pathways Approach

The housing pathways approach has a relatively short history, although it builds upon approaches that are well established within housing studies. It was first proposed in 2002 by Clapham (2002a) as an analytical framework for expressing and understanding the relationships involved in the production, consumption and distribution of housing. Clapham describes his conceptualisation of the pathways approach as a metaphor, rather than a theory, that assists in illuminating the changing episodic relationships that people have towards and within housing during their life course.

While Clapham (2002a) positions housing pathways as a framework, it is one from which he sees theories being developed. I employ his framework within this thesis in order to structure the development of a theoretical framework that emphasises the interplay between different aspects of housing and life course experiences. Suitable perspectives offered through theorisation of residential mobility, individualisation and liquid modernity, and Lefebvrian sociospatial trialectics are examined in order develop a theoretical framework from the housing pathways approach outlined by Clapham (2002a).
Chapter 2 Conducting Theoretically Engaged Housing Research

What is of crucial importance in regards to the objectives of this study, and which makes the housing pathways a fitting framework, is that rather than merely focussing on measuring change in housing circumstances and assessing how structural influences shape those movements, Clapham’s analytical framework focuses on how individuals themselves interpret and understand their progression through the housing system.

As will be discussed later, an appreciation of the interface between the subjectivity of individual interpretation and the particular contexts in which such interpretations are made is well aligned with the principles of the primary methods of data collection and analysis for this study, Q methodology and the thematic analysis of qualitative interviews. The combination of housing pathways with Q methodology and thematic analysis provides the potential to study urban intensification from the perspective and experiences of young adults through an approach that is holistic, meaningful and statistically robust.

2.3.1 Approaching Growing Complexity through the Life Course

The idea of a pathway through which people travel in their life courses is not a new idea. While introducing a fundamentally different perspective to the concept, Clapham (2002a) is building upon decades of scholarship involved in determining connections between people’s life stage and their housing needs and choices. Research of this type has often used the concept of ‘housing careers’ introduced by researchers of residential mobility. Conventionally the concept of a housing career has been used to explain significant correlations between the types of dwelling people occupy, their life cycle stage and job status. Simply defined, it is “the sequence of dwellings that a household occupies during its history” (Pickles & Davies, 1991: 466). As explained by Beer and Faulkner (2011), through the 1980s the concept was associated with an upwards climb towards the ‘peak’ of home ownership, the apogee of the housing career. This progression was paralleled in their occupational career and was seen as part of the broadly shared social and economic aspirations of all households (Saunders, 1990).

Exchanging dwellings was understood to be part of a rational choice in exercising their purchasing power towards progressively more expensive housing, to improve their level of housing amenity, increase opportunities for capital gains, or as a result of a job transfer. Kendig et al. (1987) notably displayed this as a metaphorical ladder which households aspire to climb up through the housing market to outright ownership, while hoping not to slip backwards through adverse events like unemployment, divorce or personal problems.
The concept of ‘housing histories’ built upon the housing career, seeking to resolve a number of serious oversights. In particular, the housing career is conceptually weak in its interpretation of motivations for housing change, falling into reductionism by assuming economic rationality and ignoring a plethora of other reasons involved in making housing decisions. Moreover, people’s choices in the housing market are constrained in many ways beyond their financial position. This includes demographic factors and social divisions, as identified by Forrest (1987: 1611) in the UK, where there has developed a “marked social and spatial unevenness in mobility, asset appreciation, and capital gains” within the housing market (see, also, Kendig, 1984). Forrest (1987: 1611) introduces the concept of housing histories to attend to these evident differences in how people experience ‘progression’ in their so-called housing market career:

The notion of housing career, however, conveys intendedness, suggests a series of moves towards a particular goal, an upward trajectory through the housing market, and a certain autonomy of housing processes. Although some housing histories may contain a strong ‘career’ element...others are chaotic and characterised by constraints and coping strategies.

In building a theoretical appreciation of housing pathways it is therefore important to recognise that the opportunities, preferences and choices people experience in their life are a reflection of the interplay between individual and household aspirations and structural processes that open doors for some people while limit the agency of others (Beer & Faulkner, 2011: 25). This leads Clapham (2002a) to embrace a Giddensian view of social practice in his development of the housing pathways approach.

Contemporary and future life courses are argued to be more complex than in previous times, with substantial bearing on housing careers. While there are increasing opportunities to accrue wealth for some, there are also new risks for substantial costs introduced at critical phases in the life course. As displayed in Figure One, Beer (2005: 7) considers these changes for Australians, comparing the connections between life course events and housing careers in ‘industrial’ and ‘post industrial’ life courses. The life courses of an industrial Australia are presented as a teleological journey towards outright ownership, with home purchase at the time of family formation (traditionally, marriage and child birth) eventually leading to outright ownership in later life. This pathway privileges the idea of the family unit and presumes a goal of home ownership. There is also a favourable net gain achieved by a reduction in expenditure as children leave home and with entry into outright ownership occurring before the loss of occupational income through retirement. This trajectory leaves the household asset rich and secure against rising expenditure expected in older age (such as medical costs and/or supervision and care).
Figure 1. Changed life courses and changing housing careers (Beer, 2005: 7)

The post industrial life course in Figure One presents a pathway that is at once more complicated and more diverse than the industrial life course. It contrasts the notion of a deliberate upward trajectory towards progressively more expensive housing, all embedded within a stable career and social life. Instead, pathways appear more chaotic and uncertain, and less clearly orientated towards a consistent trajectory. This situation has been identified as particularly true for the experiences of young people in early housing pathways (Castro Campos et al., 2016; Clapham et al., 2014; Ford et al., 2002). However, uncertainty may also be experienced in middle and later life through unanticipated life course events. For example, changing housing patterns have been noted due to a significant rise in
the rate of divorce and re-marriage, women’s increasing participation in the paid workforce and
delayed childbirth (Thorns, 2000). Broad structural changes in Western industrialised countries have
included a shift from manufacturing to service and information-based occupations, reorientation of
employment practices towards short-term contractual working arrangements and greater economic
uncertainties (Winstanley, Thorns & Perkins, 2002). Consequently the relationship between people’s
housing and their life course has been fundamentally transformed. Multiple tenures are now expected
over a life course, with the potential to experience entry and exit from home ownership several times.
Periodic transitions back to the parental home are also more common and more time is now spent in
the private rental sector (PRS) at various stages in the life course (Sage et al., 2013).

This growing complexity of lives in ‘post modern’ times (a broad term used by Clapham (2002a) to
indicate the increasing globalisation and individualism of society) or ‘post industrial’ society (a more
precise term representing the rise of service and information industries over manufacturing (see, Beer,
2005)) has serious implications for the housing pathways approach. It should be noted that the utility
of such terms has been questioned (cf. King, 2002). Indeed, a number of prominent social theorists
have suggested that contemporary society can be best understood as ‘radial’ or ‘late modernity’
(Giddens, 1991), or ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000; 2005), which suggest that, rather than a break
there has been a continuation and acceleration of modern societal trends. Since, although
contemporary society has experienced significant shifts in social and economic structures, these are
outcomes clearly consistent with an extension and development of the same social forces that
course of individuals and their housing careers due in part to significant changes in the structure of
the economy and the nature of society. These same changes have been theorised by sociologists
Anthony Giddens (1991) and Ulrich Beck (1992; 2000) to be part of an emerging ‘risk society’ that is
associated with processes of ‘individualisation’ and ‘globalisation’ and have eroded the previous
certainties of industrial (‘Fordist’) society.

Globalisation, tied to the rise of information technology, has quickened the pace of change in the
world and opened up global influences that may impact people and places far from the causes of such
change. Potential impacts on people’s housing pathways are numerous. One only needs to look at the
recent reverberations through global housing markets triggered by the global financial crisis (GFC) –
itself caused in large part by the collapse of the US sub-prime mortgage market (e.g., Martin, 2011;
Murphy, 2011; Whitehead &Williams, 2011). A growing individualisation, on the other hand, is
associated with changes in the nature of the family (and household), the decline in influence of
traditional collective institutions, such as churches or trade unions, as well as, local social networks and communities (Clapham, 2005: 13). Giddens (1991) argues that these factors constitute an ‘opening out’ of social life, removing traditional barriers to life choices and allowing individual definitions of what has become known as ‘lifestyle’, as we seek self-fulfilment through the negotiation of personal preference. While the ‘opening out’ of social life can afford some people new freedoms for self-definition through lifestyle choices, there are growing inequalities between those empowered by the resources (social and cultural, as well as economic capital) to make choices regarding many facets of their lives, and those who have less resources and consequently less capacity to control their lives and make ‘lifestyle’ choices. The consequences of risk are not universally experienced either, the decline of traditional institutions has also had the consequence of removing previously expected ‘safety nets’, leaving some more exposed to the currents of global tides than others.

Bauman’s ‘liquid life’ and the ‘liquid modernity’ thesis (Bauman, 2000; 2005; 2007) – the removal of many traditional lifestyle restraints and conventional understandings – leaves young people with an expanded array of life choices, trajectories and mobilities. As part of a process of ‘individualisation’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), these choices provide individual agency against constraining social structures. Yet, consequently, these choices induce greater uncertainties, diminish securities and clear life course trajectories. The fluidity and uncertainty of contemporary society lead Colic-Peisker and Johnson (2012) to question the longevity of the ‘Australian dream’ of home ownership, which involves long-term planning and exposure to risk, as an anachronistic aspiration, particularly for younger people. Nevertheless, as discussed in the next chapter, home ownership symbolism and cultural tradition of home ownership in both Australia and New Zealand remain highly influential within politico-social discourses and as signifiers of status and socioeconomic position.

For Beck (1992; 2000; & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), the processes discussed above have undermined the traditional position of national governments and other ‘risk-regulating institutions’, casting them unable to limit and control contemporary threats to society. Consequently, the burden of risk is less associated with the jurisdiction of institutions and has migrated to the individualised sphere of personal decision-making (Mythen, 2005). In the discourse of risk there is, then, the coarticulation of personal responsibility with personal choice. Individuals are increasingly held accountable for their own fates, with the values of individual accountability and achievement having become entrenched within societal institutions (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). However, as is precisely elucidated in Freedom (1988), by Zygmunt Bauman, since people are unequally afforded the ability to make choices in life, yet all are cast responsible, in an individualised society exposure to risk is unequally experienced. Put
another way, whether one has possessed the capability to perform choice or not, one will be judged to have done so (Warde, 1994). As we shall see, consumer choice, including the consumption of housing, is not exempt from this logic.

Furthermore, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) note that individualisation may indeed lead to growing inequalities, but that the experience of poverty and unemployment is less aligned with traditional class distinctions. Instead, poverty and unemployment become distributed across society at particular phases of people’s lives, so that “the conflicts involved in social inequality appear as conflicts between parts of a single life history” and “people’s lives become more varied and discontinuous” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 41). It is debateable whether we can, as John Urry (2003: 95) asserts, unremorsefully jettison the old theoretical schemes of “class domination” and “start from scratch” as we attempt to understand this “new world of global complexity”. Indeed, many have taken issue with Beck for his ambivalence towards class, accusing him of reducing class theory to no more than a caricature (cf., Atkinson, 2007; Mythen, 2005; Skeggs, 2004). However, with the quickening pace of societal change, there have been radical changes to the shared experiences of younger generations, which sharply distinguish them and lead to a level of intra-generational convergence, although many forms of difference remain (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

2.3.2 Inter-Generational Inequality in the Housing Market

Due to the long-term nature of trends within the housing market, the socioeconomic impacts of its fluctuations are not dealt equally to all generations. As such, the housing market is naturally inclined towards intra-generational convergence and creates the potential for inter-generational inequality. Contemporary housing opportunities have led to housing pathways of a younger generation that contrast considerably with those of older generations.

Greater government support and favourable economic conditions existed at the time when many older generation New Zealanders purchased first houses. While interest rates were higher in New Zealand during the 1980s, initially causing greater mortgage requirements, subsequent high levels of inflation diminished this debt relatively quickly. It is therefore possible to consider the existence of a generational class of homeowners within New Zealand growing financially secure through investment in property at a fortuitous time. Conversely, younger generations wishing to become homeowners under quite different conditions may find achieving the security and financial benefits of their parents’ generation considerably more difficult. In addition to the recent boom in house prices, changes within
employment structures and lessening job security, as well as rising indebtedness through student loans, all contribute to the stress and difficulty of securing home ownership for Generation Y.

However, the ‘individualisation’ thesis, constructed in the works of Giddens (1991), Bauman (2000; 2005) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), suggests that this inter-generational inequality has become concealed under a veil of ‘individual choice’ and ‘personal responsibility’ discourses. In contemporary society younger people’s struggle or failure to achieve home ownership is often adjudged to be through personal and individualistic failings. For example, some older generation New Zealanders have made statements suggesting if young people want to buy a house they need to “get real” and stop wanting to “go out…and have a good life” and spend money on technology like “Sky TV” (Gibson, 2014). The mainstream media have seemingly sought to inflame the notion of an inter-generational conflict, with regular articles on the matter of ‘blame’ for generational inequalities that are invariably written by a property owning ‘baby boomer’ (the amount of ‘comments’ posted below these articles may suggest one reason for the frequency of their publication). But articles such as ‘My outstanding case for why your financial woes aren’t my fault’ (Norquay, 2017) – while ostensibly discussing a generational issue – remain absorbed by an ‘individual choice and responsibility’ discourse. This perspective is further bolstered by the frequency of articles that highlight the success stories of young couples who have become property owners, purportedly through effective saving and budgeting (McDowall, 2017; Rowe, 2017). In a ‘risk society’, articles such as these reinforce the individualisation of responsibility and the perception of young adults who struggle to purchase a house as ‘failed consumers’ (Bauman, 2007) – individuals who have acted unwisely or recklessly in the market and now must publically shoulder their responsibility.

Several Australian researchers have contended that the desires of Generation Y to spend money on new technologies and the latest products are leading them to develop unrealistic housing expectations (Pleffer, 2007; Thomas, 2009). This concurs with the research of Merlo and McDonald (2002) who found that younger participants (under 25 years old) were considerably less likely to realise their home ownership goals than older participants, and that this might reflect their unrealistic expectations and incomprehension of the financial investment required. Bruce and Kelly (2013) also found that the Generation Y respondents of their study aspired to own a well located high-quality

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3 As documentary film maker Adam Curtis recently stated in an interview, following the release of his latest work, ‘HyperNormalisation’: “The fact is that angry people click more and clicks are gold dust, clicks are the measure of success for all corporations and media platforms” (Jones, 2016).
house, leading them to delay purchase until they could fulfil those expectations. In agreement with the earlier work of Bonney, McLeery and Forster (1999), elements of the house, such as its location, were found to be particularly important to young buyers because of the appearance they felt it gave to their identity. Bruce and Kelly (2013) conclude that for Generation Y the house is a medium through which to express and create their identity. Their participants placed a high value on personal development and saw owning an appropriate house as critical to their social and professional lives, as well as a component of their identity and personalities.

Arguably, under conditions of increasing individualisation, Generation Y is compelled more than in previous generations to construct an identity for themselves within society. Equally, the construction of self-identity has become increasingly perceived as an individualised ‘project’ based around consumptive behaviour (lifestyle), which has served to obfuscate traditional production-based (class) identities (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), particularly amongst young people (Colic-Peisker & Johnson, 2012; Miles, Cliff & Burr, 1998). Thus, in this contemporary societal context, housing consumption is inextricable from the reflexive process of identity formation, grounded in the responsibility of individual choice (Warde, 1994). Consequently, the social and symbolic value of housing must therefore be recognised to fully appreciate the heightened housing aspirations of younger generations and its relation to youthful spaces and urban lifestyles (Moos, 2016).

The rise of a form of generational consciousness within New Zealand, particularly in regards to the housing affordability crisis in Auckland, can be seen as a pertinent example of the response to generational inequality. This response has given rise to new organisations, such as ‘Generation Zero’, who express a youthful voice into matters they feel politically disenfranchised from and unrepresented on in traditional forms of media. Generation Zero (www.generationzero.org) formed in 2011 as a youth-led initiative to increase young people’s political participation, particularly in regards to climate change issues. The organisation has expanded considerably and has become a vocal supporter of urban intensification and improving public transport as a means to build a more liveable city. This has led the organisation and its leadership, to speak out at public events principally in favour of the aspirations contained within the Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan. Economists Shambubeel and Selena Eaqub (2015) have also recently argued in their book ‘Generation Rent’ for a reorientation of New Zealand priorities – deploring the failure of the country’s politicians to act to

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4 Hence the ‘Zero’ represents a desire to cut carbon pollution and realise a ‘zero carbon future’ for their generation and for the generations to come.
remedy a housing market rapidly locking out its future generations from home ownership. Support for young people’s right to home ownership and against growing inter-generational inequalities has arisen in other countries also facing declining housing affordability. For example, in the UK, McKee (2012: 859-60) comments that “young people inherited a housing system, which privileges one generation over another” but that the “phenomenon of ‘generation rent’ is much more than a housing ‘problem’; it reflects fundamental inter-generational inequalities”.

The impact of long-term changes within the housing market upon the next generation of home buyers in countries such as Australia, the UK and New Zealand is considerable. Housing and home ownership have long been considered significant to wellbeing. In the Anglophone world the purchase of a house has had a deep connection to other significant life course events, principally family formation and child rearing. As such, rates of home ownership and the ability for the average family to own a home inevitably become provocative spaces of political engagement and a central concern of government. Typically considered politically apathetic, there are signs of an awakening of generational consciousness within Generation Y, as their inequitable situation within the housing market has become a plain reality. Frustration at their inability to attain adequate affordable housing is likely to grow as the fissure between their housing circumstances, self-actualisation and life course occurrences continues to widen.

2.3.3 Recognising Complexity and Subjectivity within the Life Course

The growing complexity of contemporary society is a common sociological theme and has become well-established as a discourse of academic research. However, akin to the discussion surrounding definitions of contemporary society as ‘late’, rather than ‘post’ modern, it should be acknowledged that growing complexity has always been an attribute of modernity. Thus, we should consider that the traditional life courses and housing careers of many people were perhaps not always as straightforward as is suggested in Figure One. It is likely that complexity was always lurking somewhere not too far beneath. In actuality, it is change in research methodologies and theoretical frameworks that have invited new perspectives and has better equipped researchers to appreciate the messy realities of people’s lives. In housing research, as much as anywhere, the development of greater theoretical sophistication and of more reflexive methodologies in recent years has allowed the researcher, the outsider, to grasp more fully and represent more faithfully the highly contingent and subjectively formed understandings and experiences that constitute modern society. Alongside this recognition of complexity, theories of mobility have been heavily influenced by the life course approach (Clark & Dieleman, 1996; Mulder & Wagner, 1993). The sensitising of theoretical and
methodological approaches to complexity and subjectivity within the life course has been influential in the study of residential mobility and housing choices.

The complexity and subjectivity expressed through the new mobilities paradigm and the life course approach have (re)conceptualised the relationship between people, place and mobility (see, Cresswell, 2006; 2011; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Within studies of residential mobility and housing choice this approach has displaced the teleological ‘family life-cycle’ model conveyed within the housing careers metaphor (Buckle, 2017). Consequently, determining contemporary trends and connections between people’s life courses and housing decisions and their outcomes require holistic and multifaceted research techniques.

For example, through an examination of survey data from the AHURI research project ‘21st century housing careers and Australia’s housing future’, Beer and Faulkner (2009) found that home ownership rates of 25 to 34 year olds may have actually increased since the 1980s. This assertion contradicts the conclusions of previous research (cf., Baxter and McDonald, 2004; Yates 2003). Crucially, Beer and Faulkner (2009) find that, while younger Australians are more likely than previous generations to enter home purchase, they are also more likely to subsequently exit from that tenure. Adding to the complexity, they also found that the reasons for exiting were often based on a diverse range of factors, most commonly the ending of a relationship, but few of which conformed to patterns contained within the traditional housing careers metaphor. Hence, they conclude that individuals exhibit such diverse patterns of housing mobility and tenure choice that the analytical value of a typical ‘housing career’ is severely reduced. The subjective nature of the housing experience forces us to recognise that different housing experiences through the life course cannot be understood in isolation from one another (Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008; Pickles & Davies, 1991). Equally, since housing trajectories are formed through people’s individual narratives and the relationship between their housing, location and identity, as well as by the aforementioned increasing inter-generational inequalities, “it is impossible to create predicative models that capture unique conditions and circumstances” (Winstanley, Thorns & Perkins, 2002: 825).

A key contribution of this approach with relevance to the research aims of this thesis, has been to identify the importance of previous residential experiences as a predictor of housing choices made later in the life course (Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008). For example, the work of Feijten and van Ham (2013) and Mulder and Malmberg (2011) both emphasise the spatially constrained nature of future housing choices related to individuals who experience some form of partnership dissolution.
Equally, Mulder and Wagner (2010) recognise the growth in reconstituted families, separated but spatially bound through joint custody and residential itinerancy of children. Alternatively, researchers have also considered long-term influences along the life course. Feijten, Hooimeijer and Mulder (2008) examine the connection between previous life course experiences and the attraction of rural, suburban or urban residential environments. Meanwhile, Blauboer (2011) focuses on early (residential) childhood experiences and kinship associations with place as an influential factor in current residential environment choices. Her study identifies the importance of location-specific capital and socialisation in causing residential inertia or return migration to similar residential environments to those that one grew up in. Thus, the reasons behind residential mobility and housing choices may be based on personal and subjective experiences and meanings attached to housing developed throughout the life course.

Consequently, there is now a growing recognition of the difficulties in determining overall housing trends through purely quantitative methodologies and recognition of the frequency of contradictions within the data (Bessant & Johnson, 2013). The problematizing of traditional conceptual frameworks reflects a diminishing confidence in the positivistic ‘social facts’ paradigm and a growing necessity for housing researchers to equip themselves with theoretical frameworks and methodologies more sensitive to the complex nature of modern housing pathways (Beer & Faulkner, 2009). For example, Baxter and McDonald (2004) question the utility of age cohort census data in determining rates of home ownership, since those who constitute a particular cohort necessarily changes each census. Relying on this data results in a static comparison of successive cross sections of people rather than considering the home ownership histories of people through their life course. A more thorough analysis requires “individual level data rather than vague household data” so that the relationship between purchasing a dwelling and other important life events can be examined (Baxter & McDonald, 2004: 187).

Studies of residential mobility and housing choice have, therefore, benefited from the incorporation of a life course approach. This approach implores us to engage with the lasting connections between previous housing choices and those likely to be made in the future (Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008). However, the growing complexity and diversity of contemporary life courses must be recognised, and the difficulties this presents to studies of residential mobility, particularly those which attempt to predict future behaviour through macro-level cohort data. Housing pathways offers a theoretical framework through which the subjective and interconnected nature of people’s housing...
Chapter 2 Conducting Theoretically Engaged Housing Research

experiences can be incorporated into analysis of people’s housing mobility and the choices they make in where to live.

2.4 A Pathways Approach to Housing Research

So far, this chapter has examined contemporary societal trends, stressing the increasing diversity and complexity of life courses and their relationship to housing consumption. In particular, the work of Beck (1992; 2000; & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2000; 2005; 2007) has been used to theorise the decline in traditional societal structures and institutions and the emergence of a risk society emphasising individual choice and responsibility. An individualist society offers new freedoms for personal expression and choice, but also contains new dangers and less security. Conventional understandings of the relationship between housing and the life course expressed through the housing careers metaphor has been critiqued for its universalist and simplistic conception of attitudes towards housing and its inability to grasp the complexity of contemporary lives. In order to comprehend this complexity, Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach extends housing careers and housing histories scholarship to explore the diverse and subjective meanings attached to housing, its dynamic relationship with other life events and interface with local contexts. Specifically, the housing pathways approach offers a conceptualisation of housing issues that “foregrounds the meanings held by households...as well as emphasising the dynamic nature of housing experience” (Clapham, 2002a: 64). It is sensitive to the subjective and symbolic nature of people’s housing choices. Therefore, the housing pathways approach is presented as a valuable tool for the analysis of the relationship between individual experiences through the life course and the subjective attitudes towards housing that develop.

To extend the housing careers concept, Clapham draws on the work of Giddens, as discussed earlier, but particularly on his borrowing of Hägerstrand’s (1976) time-space geography in social practice. This addition strengthens the pathways approach through recognition that, beyond the more obvious material differences, change in housing can also lead to altered sets of social practice. Since social practice is connected to housing change during the life course, through events such as marriage, childbirth or infirmity, these events will also impact upon the meaning of home. Additionally, the experience of housing can be modified substantially without mobility due to changes in social practice. Recognition of this connection reveals the possibility of the meanings attached to housing changing for people without the necessity for formal movement through housing stock (Beer & Faulkner, 2011: 36) – something traditional approaches to residential mobility would almost certainly miss. Put another way, what a house symbolises to an individual or household can be transformed through
shifting social practice, while physically the house remains unchanged. Equally, we can envisage that multiple individuals may observe the same house or landscape and come to quite different interpretations of its meaning to them and to that space, which may in part be influenced by previous experiences during their life course. Clapham (2005: 29) also emphasises potential exogenous influences on the meaning an individual gives to tenure or dwelling types, such as a change in the rhetoric of government and the media (see also, Tighe, 2010) – since without any direct experience of living in a particular type of built environment, a person’s perceptions will undoubtedly be informed from secondary sources.

The proposed connections between housing, social practice and subjective meaning, also speak to the conflicts that occur when contrasting perceptions of urban spaces collide. These types of encounters can often occur between residents and property owners, or against the intentions of developers or local government. Such encounters exemplify the potent and emotional nature of place-based conflict that can erupt when there is rupture between the physical environment and the grounded meanings and social practices attached to it. As indicated by my research question, it is the significance of these quotidian residential experiences and their potential to shape and inform individual attitudes towards different urban spaces with which this thesis is concerned.

2.4.1 The Symbolic Nature of Space

The tripartite conception of the house, social practice and subjective meaning bear a close resemblance to the trialectics of social space developed by Henri Lefebvre in his treatise on ‘The Production of Space’ (La production de l’espace) (Lefebvre, 1991). His ‘spatial trialectics’ portray urban space as produced through social relations, which in turn are constituted by space, forming a triad. Since Lefebvre’s work has been influential within studies of neighbourhood activism and local resistance to undesirable developments, it is expedient to briefly consider his socio-spatial philosophy here. In particular, his spatial triad can help inform our understanding of why plans for urban intensification, such as the Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan, can invoke such fervent resistance from certain groups of residents.

While Lefebvre’s socio-spatial philosophy, founded in Marxism, may not be fully consistent with a social constructionist approach like Clapham’s Housing Pathways, their shared expansive view of space and its social and symbolic meaning within people’s lives presents a potentially productive conceptual convergence between the two. In the same sense that Clapham’s housing pathways directs us towards the social and symbolic elements of residential mobility, Lefebvre’s conception of urban
space allows – and beseeches us – to embrace the social as well as physical paradigms of urban change (Merrifield, 2006: 104).

Leary (2009) provides a useful synopsis of the theoretical construction of the spatial triad from an urban perspective. Making explicit reference to their relation to urban phenomena found in Leary’s (2009) work, I will briefly explain these three moments in the production of space:

1. ‘Spatial practice’ or ‘perceived space’ is composed of the materiality of the city its buildings, infrastructure and “routes and networks” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). This element is “empirically observable” (ibid, 143) and is the traditional focus of the planning and built environment disciplines. It also includes the “daily routine” practices of everyday life (ibid, 38) and the socio-economic processes by which the city is (re)produced in dialectical interaction with the other two spaces.

2. ‘Representations of space’ or ‘conceptual space’ are the imposed “order” of the city and is the realm of “scientists, planners, urbanists and social engineers” (ibid, 24-5). It is the space of technocratic drawings and policy documents and is the dominant space in any society (ibid, 38-9). It can, however, be contested and subverted in dialectical tension with the other two elements of the triad.

3. ‘Spaces of representation’ or the directly ‘lived space’ of the inhabitants of urban spaces are the coded or uncoded, verbal or non-verbal, images and symbols that overlays physical space (ibid, 39). It is a society’s dominated space, full of imagination and emotion, which produce “symbolic works” provoking “incursions into the imaginary”; although they tend to “run out of steam” (ibid, 42), their values can run counter to the dominant representations of space and may lead to the production of counter-spaces.

These moments in the production of (social) space are also represented in Figure Two. This framework promises a rich understanding of the complex and political nature of urban change and the attitudes people form in response to change. We can see, within one glance, the city as a physical entity, an institutional and historically situated entity and – regrettably, this by far the most neglected entity by planners – the city as a space symbolic and imagined by a broad range of actors. Lefebvre’s spatial triad has been utilised by a number of studies as a useful foundation for the exploration of urban change and the experiences and reactions that develop from it. Of most relevance to my thesis is its
application to studies of homeowners’ aversion and resistance to changes in their urban environment. Purcell (2001), for example, discusses how changes in urban form, such as increase in the presence of medium-density housing and commercial activities, can conflict with a resident’s ‘spatial vision’ – normative understandings and expectations of their locale. This conflict arises, then, through a divergence between the homeowners ‘conceptual space’ (how they conceive a residential area should look) and their ‘perceived space’ (what their residential environment looks like, or could look like). As their ‘lived space’ is produced through the continuous fusing of the other spatial moments, disconnect between them causes a disjunction from their normative conception of residential environments. In addition, Martin (2003) argues that this disjunction can lead to the creation of a ‘place-frame’, a spatial organisational discourse which motivates and unites residents to form a neighbourhood-orientated agenda.

![Diagram of Spatial Practice](image)

**Figure 2** A diagrammatic representation of the dynamic interrelationships involved in the production of space

Research conducted by Vallance, Perkins and Moore (2005) similarly uses Lefebvre to highlight the intricacies of negative perception to changes in the urban form in Christchurch. In this case a growing prevalence of infill housing types had generated significant antagonism from local residents. The authors argue that through a Lefebvrian evaluation these changes in urban form are about much more than just “bricks and mortar”, but are driven by “the imagined elements of the city … [which] become a central component of the politics of place” (Vallance, Perkins & Moore, 2005: 731; see also, Amin, 2004). Of pertinence to the controversy surrounding the Unitary Plan, the authors identify the existence of a distinctive suburban identity that many residents have accepted and perpetuated since European settlement. This particular spatial vision of ‘suburban New Zealand’ informs the spaces of...
representation and spatial practice of local residents. Conceived within the processes of colonisation and New Zealand’s distinct cultural development, these expectations and symbolic meanings of space have gestated over several centuries. On the other hand, abstract representations of space – such as zoning maps and policies – attempt to impose a formal order to the city and can change according to political whim, on a cycle of merely years. Consequently, the attitudes of local residents are unlikely to adapt as fast as the formal representations of space controlled by city authorities.

Arguably, then, it follows that those living in material spaces that are more diverse will potentially develop a spatial conception of residential environments that is correspondingly broader. People whose housing pathways have exposed them to residential environments beyond the low-density of traditional New Zealand suburbs may be more amenable to changes within their everyday lived space. Their conception of what defines a residential space and experience is more expansive. Further investigation of this notion and assessing the extent this pattern is identifiable in a group of Generation Y residents is something with which this thesis is concerned.

2.4.2 Applying the Housing Pathways Framework to Research

The contribution of Lefebvre’s socio-spatial philosophy and the development of this theory within urban research provide useful guidance to my own inquiries. While this research does not align with a Lefebvrian framework, his work is used in my thesis as a heuristic device in order to highlight the social and political nature of urban space.

This theoretical contribution is useful, since Clapham (2002a: 63) specifically positions housing pathways as “not a theory” but a “framework of analysis”. Instead, this framework acts to illuminate certain aspects of the housing field, namely, “patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space”. With my study incorporating the housing pathways approach within an application of Q methodology, it is of particular relevance that he also states: “theories may be developed from its use either from empirical enquiry or analytical reasoning” and that, neither “is it a research methodology, although it may provide a framework for one” (Clapham, 2002a: 64). Clapham’s pathways concept has since become a framework for a broad range of recent housing research; nonetheless his explicit disavowal of the approach as theory has led to fusions between housing pathways and a variety of quite different theoretical frameworks. Thus, my thesis employs the housing pathways framework in order to provide a structure from which to build theoretical interconnections between people’s housing experiences through the life course and their housing preferences.
Topics that have seen quite extensive investigation through using a housing pathways approach have been: paths into homelessness and the experiences of those with severe housing stress, accessing the social/public housing system, younger people’s pathways to housing access and ownership and older people’s transitional experiences of housing in later life stages. Castro Campos et al. (2016: 2) in their study of the anticipated housing pathways to home ownership for young people in Hong Kong detail examples of housing pathways analysis around the world: “Hirayama, 2010 for Japan; Ford, Rugg, & Burrows, 2002; Mackie, 2012; McKee, 2012; Clapham, Mackie, Orford, Thomas & Buckley, 2014 for the UK; Colic-Peisker & Johnson, 2012 for Australia; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012 for Slovenia”. In addition, recent research in Australia has considered the pathways of low-income households as they experience ‘mobilities of disadvantage’ (Wiesel, 2014). In New Zealand Severinsen (2013) has researched the pathways in and out of camping grounds for low-income residents living on the margins of housing provision. Conversely, Meesus and De Decker (2015) explore the pathways of Belgians attempting to stay in place and reason that not enough attention has been given to residential stability in housing studies.

Unlike a theory, a framework is not threatened by the possibility of a number of disparate interpretations. Instead, it enables inquiry that “foregrounds the meanings held by households and the interactions which shape housing practices as well as emphasising the dynamic nature of housing experience and its inter-relatedness with other aspects of household life” (Clapham, 2002a: 64). Since it is not a theory, this particular organising framework for the housing field cannot be tested empirically; instead it gains currency through its efficacy to housing research, adding new perspectives, stimulating discussion and developing substantive theory (Bengtsson, 2002).

2.4.3 Young People’s Housing Pathways

The housing pathways framework has been usefully applied to explore a great many different households experiencing and taking action in a variety of different housing contexts. In this thesis I draw on the framework to examine the differing pathway experiences of young people which shape their housing aspirations, lifestyles and attitudes; experiences that need to be considered when formulating policy responses to current housing related issues, such as affordability and levels of home ownership. The political and economic circumstances in which all young adults find themselves inexorably alter their life courses and, by extension, their housing pathways. This leads to the potential for comparison of pathways between and within generations. Of course, how each individual or each household is positioned in relation to this social and spatial landscape varies tremendously based on
particular circumstances. However, it is the lifetime housing careers of individuals and households on low incomes or who are otherwise vulnerable who will be most exposed to the impacts of a shifting policy environment and government approaches and practices (Beer & Faulkner, 2011: 7).

Understanding the complex and often chaotic character of young people’s contemporary journey into adulthood is a topic of increasing importance and a growing literature has attempted to utilise the housing pathways approach to understand the experiences and potential outcomes for this generation. In the UK, Ford et al. (2002) combined survey data with qualitative panel data and identified five housing pathways young people experienced as they transitioned to adulthood, with each route through the housing market differentially dis/advantaged. Distinct relationships were also found between pathways and tenure types, with some pathways offering more tenure choice than others. The meanings associated with different tenure types were also found to vary between the pathways. They found that ‘planned’ pathways perceived the private rental sector (PRS) as an acceptable stepping-stone towards a home purchase, however ‘unplanned’ and ‘chaotic’ pathways often saw the PRS as housing of last (or only) resort. This finding gives credence to the theoretical arguments constructed above and is of particular significance to consider when researching how attitudes can be shaped by contrasting residential experiences.

More recently Clapham et al. (2014) completed a comprehensive mixed methods study of the housing pathways of young people in the UK. This is perhaps one of the most ambitious applications of a housing pathways framework so far and operationalises a methodology that combines qualitative interviews with young people with quantitative analysis of longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). They identify a further four distinct housing pathways to the five detailed in Ford et al. (2002) and suggest there is significant heterogeneity within these pathways, with key differences caused by couple formation and the timing of entry into owner-occupation (if it occurs at all). Young people also demonstrate considerable agency in their housing choices “based upon aspirations, perceptions, and previous experiences ... [which] continue to heavily influence young people’s housing pathways” (Clapham et al., 2014: 2028). On the other hand, there is also evidence of convergence in some areas largely driven by the difficulty of accessing home ownership or the social rented sector (SRS, state housing). This has significant implications for housing policy, since it forecasts a continued growth in demand for PRS across Generation Y households.

Further applications of the pathways approach have focused on the challenges young adults face in accessing home ownership. Research of this type includes studies of: the multiple forms of capital
young people utilise to access the housing market in Holland (Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2015); the importance of family support to young people’s pathways to ownership in the UK (Druta & Ronald, 2016). Meanwhile, McKee (2012) considers the phenomenon of ‘generation rent’, a growing division between ‘housing poor’ young people and their ‘housing rich’ elders. She argues that there is a wide-range of social, economic and demographic influences on young housing pathways, which extend the issue to broader debates about welfare and inter-generational inequality, well beyond just housing policy. Another area of substantial research has been the instability and transience in pathways of significantly disadvantaged young people experiencing homelessness or severe housing insecurity with recent studies conducted in Ireland (Maycock & Corr, 2013), and Melbourne, Australia (Mallett et al., 2010). Studies have also examined the pathways of disabled young people as they negotiate the challenges of securing and maintaining suitable accommodation in the UK (Mackie, 2012) and of those leaving out-of-home state care in Western Australia and Victoria (Natalier & Johnson, 2012). These pathways studies identify the importance of social structures, institutions and individual characteristics as they act to either support or constrain the housing opportunities of young individuals. At the same time housing pathways research emphasises the subjective meanings and significant agency expressed by young people in making their housing choices.

### 2.4.4 Social Constructionism in Housing Pathways

Social constructionism has proven itself to be a valuable addition to research concerned with the understandings and discourses of particular housing contexts from the perspective of those actually experiencing it. However, there has been significant (and equally valuable) critique of the approach from both within and outside of the field and so over time social constructionist approaches have developed considerably. The aim of this section is to consider the development of social constructionism, with a particular emphasis on how it relates to housing research and the housing pathways approach. The section following will then attend to several critiques of social constructionism relevant to the housing pathways approach and then how the approach and its adaption into the theoretical framework of this research can attend to these issues.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Clapham (2002a) posits an approach based on social constructionism as a potential corrective to the atheoretical nature of much housing research and to recognise the inherent subjectivity involved in people’s experience of housing. Clapham is not alone in realising the potential value of the social constructionist theory to housing research. Since Kemeny (1992) made his case for a more theoretically engaged field of housing studies, there has developed a substantial body of work claiming social constructionism as a theoretical foundation. Indeed, this has
included the work of Kemeny himself in research on comparative national housing policy (e.g., Kemeny & Lowe, 1998). Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (2004: 2) have more recently argued that “social constructionism has emerged as an influential perspective”, while Fopp (2008: 172), who presents a number of lingering challenges (discussed below), accepts that social constructionism “is a significant advance in our understanding of housing”. Finally, Beer and Faulkner (2011: 12) note that, while a social constructionist research agenda has, at times, been advanced explicitly, as above, at other times its use is implicit within techniques such as discourse analysis.

Social constructionism is an amalgamation of several quite distinct strands of sociological thought. Its origins can be found in the symbolic interactionism and phenomenological work of the mid-20th Century, although many of its advocates have traced its roots back to the work of George Mead and Max Scheler – some still further back, to the 18th Century Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico (Lock & Strong, 2010). Within the sociological tradition social constructionism has been most influenced by perspectives from symbolic interactionism (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Shutz, 1967; Strauss, 1978) and ethnography (e.g., Geertz, 1973). In geography, social constructionism has played an important role in generating important epistemological discussions on the reification of geographical constructs. For example, constructionism has been at the forefront of a substantial debate on the implicit (re)production of scale within research (see, Marston, 2000). This scholarship has mostly been connected to the illuminating work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) and attempts to grapple with his highly influential thesis on the (social) production of space (as discussed above). While the philosophy of Lefebvre is rooted in Marxism, there have been several attempts at rapprochement between his work and perspectives such as social constructionism that might, at first, seem somewhat antithetical. A related strand of debate within geography has been the long-standing dualism in Western philosophy between nature and society (Castree & Braun, 1998). Social constructionist thinking has been influential in attempts to unite traditional (Marxist) geographies with contemporary epistemological debate (e.g., Castree 1995; 2002), as well as a number of other ‘hybrid geographies’ (Whatmore, 2002) that place nature as both an ‘artefact’ of human construction and a material reality (Haraway, 1992).

Geographers have therefore favoured the augmentation of existing ways of seeing the world with a social constructionist perspective. The objective reality of the world is not abandoned but must always be interpreted through epistemological constructions, as Castree and Braun (1998: 4) state, “it is something made – materially and semiotically, and both simultaneously”. This view reflects a reading of social constructionism that is variously termed ‘weak’ or ‘moderate’ and has been suggested as
broadly comparable to a critical realist perspective. This is in contrast to a ‘strong’ position that supposes there are no external circumstances that can be adequately referred to that are not either social constructions or are the constructions of others (Sayer, 2000)⁵. As will be clarified later, this distinction is of particular importance when considering several critiques of social constructionism that mistakenly confound the two.

It is clear that, although often treated as a coherent and unified theory, both in application and critique, in practice it is a rather dispersed body of work that should be adopted critically and carefully. Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (2004) identify four major stands of social constructionist research that have been most influential in housing research, these are: discourse analysis, social problems and policy narratives, symbolic interactionism, and the sociology of power. It is outside of the scope of this chapter to discuss each in detail, however, it is suggested that the housing pathways approach tends towards a perspective founded in symbolic interactionism. This strand of social constructionism concerns itself with uncovering the lifeworlds of individuals and groups through describing the construction of their shared understandings and experiences.

The symbolic interactionist perspective is highly applicable to my investigation of young people’s shared attitudes towards urban change. A resonant example can be found in the work of Smith and Bugni (2006). They review numerous social theorists associated with this perspective who have gainfully examined the interaction between identity and the built environment, identifying that “classical and, to a lesser extent, contemporary symbolic interaction scholarship reveals that the search for constructing, knowing, and performing the self often occurs in relation to designed physical environments” (Smith & Bugni, 2006: 126). In discussing how such a perspective can inform the work of planners and designers they emphasise the significance of incorporating resident perspectives and understandings and examining interactions with the shared symbols and meanings contained within the physical environment.

⁵ These distinctions are made in a monograph in which Sayer (2002) himself is trying to correct misrepresentations of (critical) realism in constructionist critiques. Arguably, while realism and constructionism are commonly construed as antonymous ontologies, their more moderate (and pragmatic) forms are perhaps best seen as two sides of the same epistemological coin. Critical realists accept a multiplicity of discourses that must be verified in the search for the casual powers of objective reality; while ‘moderate’ social constructionists accept the existence of an objective reality, but maintain it can only ever by understood through socially constructed narratives.
Clapham (2012) identifies considerable agreement on the basic tenets of the approach adopted by most housing researchers, which accords with the three premises first presented by Blumer (1969) for symbolic interactionism:

The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them. ... The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he (or she) encounters. (cited in Clapham, 2012: 5)

Thus, the social constructionist epistemology proposes that an individual’s experience is an active process of interpretation of the world that surrounds them rather than a passive material apprehension of an external physical world (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000). A fundamental part of this system for the transmission and interpretation of meaning is language. Language allows the transmission of meaning through time and space and from generation to generation and, with continual articulation and reception through socialisation, shared social knowledge informs our perception of objective reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

2.4.5 Critical Perspectives

There are a number of criticisms of the social constructionist position that have particular relevance to my research. One criticism is that ‘strong’ social construction (Sayer, 2000) explicitly or implicitly claims the nonexistence of objective reality, since ‘truth’ is only ever the product of convention or communal consensus. Essentially, this suggests a radical relativism where there no longer exists a neutral position to judge ‘values’ and even differing ‘truths’ are impossible to arbitrate (Fopp, 2008: 167). This leads to an infinite regress where “there is nothing that can be determinately asserted about social reality” (Collin, 1997: 97). Critique of this kind is commonly made by positivists and realists who argue there is a material reality that exists outside of language and discourse. They argue the alternative to accepting an independent reality only leaves us with a relativism that undermines our ability to determine anything at all (Bhaskar, 1979). As summarised in Archer (2000), the major issue from a realist perspective is that the constructionist position neglects the embodied nature of life experiences and its material relationship with the physical environment. A related criticism of so called postmodernist theory more broadly made by neo-Marxists such as Badiou (2001) and Zizek (2001), is that focusing on difference and diversity, while apparently transformative, is a reactionary practice; it therefore acts to impede any sense of universal solidarity and the possibility of radical social action (King, 2002). This critique has gained currency in the social sciences as it essentially accuses
proponents as guilty of a form of political quietism and passivity that presents the constructionist position as a poor foundation for critical social research (Fopp, 2008; Burningham & Cooper, 1999).

In response to this form of criticism, constructionist housing researchers Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi (2004) and Clapham (2002b; 2005) clarify, from the outset, that they do not deny the existence of an objective material world, but do claim that an individual’s access to the material world is mediated through language and discourse. While the above papers position their ‘weak’ constructionism slightly differently, the position taken here aligns with Clapham (2002b; 2005) (for an expanded discussion, see Fopp, 2008; Clapham, 2012). Nevertheless, both positions are quite distinct from Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) classical brand of social constructionism, which posits a quite total definition of the social construction of reality. This is a contention that “reality is socially constructed” and only exists in terms of actions and thoughts, meanings and interpretations of individuals, who act to create the totality of social knowledge in any particular environment in which they find themselves. Hence, the form of social constructionism used here, previously described as ‘weak’, should be considered as a critical application.

However, Clapham (2009: 15) rightly warns that, although this position overcomes some of the criticisms of the ‘strong’ position, “it places an obligation on its adherents to theorise the relationship between the world of meaning and the material world”. Clapham (2012) proposes Gibson’s (1986) work on ‘affordances’ as one possible avenue to better theorise the relationship between social meaning and material reality (see also, Clapham, 2011). The work of Latour (1996) and the growing field of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is another possibility, since it allows the researcher to incorporate material objects into the social world through the description of ‘material-semiotic’ social networks. As I have illustrated earlier in this chapter, I believe the relationship between the material and the world of meaning can better still be revealed through the radical urban geographical perspective of Henri Lefebvre, and in particular, his socio-spatial trialectic approach to the (social) production of space. As I have discussed, Lefebvre (1991) provides a sophisticated theoretical framework that has been found compatible with social constructionism and allows a conceptualisation of the relationship between the material, symbolic and experiential nature of space. Critically, flowing through this framework is also an overt theoretical explanation of how unequal power relationships constitute and are constituted by this social production of space.

The constructionist position is, on the other hand, correctly portrayed by critiques as antithetical to positivism. But it is false to assume that taking a constructionist position compromises the
transformative potential of housing research. Indeed, housing researchers have commonly utilised a social constructionist approach to renew and extend investigations of traditional, empirical questions. So while constructionism is anti-positivist, this does not imply a break with empirical work (Hastings, 2000). Furthermore, as was discussed in relation to Allen’s (2009) general critique of housing studies, seeking a multiplicity of viewpoints and presupposing that none is necessarily any ‘truer’ than the rest is an epistemological position that allows the struggle between competing viewpoints to be exposed. This has a direct bearing on our understanding of policy decisions and how different housing issues are framed.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the government policy practices of the UK, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere are increasingly portrayed as ‘evidence based’ (Murphy, 2016). Evidence based policy (EBP) is a form of governmentality, closely associated with neoliberalism (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013), that has ostensibly divested itself of outward ideological rationalities and cast aside the legitimacy of professional wisdom founded in tradition. Instead, the weight of ‘objective’ evidence is more and more revered as the justifiable foundation for government action (Mulgan, 2005). The EBP policy-making process has become increasingly transnational in character as ‘fast policy’ circuits are tied into local crises frequently exaggerated or invented “by actors associated with particular think-tanks, consultancies and international institutions: crises for which their answer is always some variant of neoliberal policy” (Prince, 2012: 191). Central and local housing policy formulation has, thus, become tied into and influenced by global flows of ‘best practice’ solutions and ‘governmental technologies’ that are justified through their apparent objectivity and transparency (Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014; Jacobs & Manzi, 2013). Recent research in New Zealand (Murphy, 2014; 2016) and Australia (Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014; Gurran & Phibbs, 2015) has identified the significant influence upon domestic housing policy of global flows of ‘evidence’ spread by international consultants (an example of the influence of international consultancies within the Auckland housing context is provided on Page 83).

EBP’s early beginnings can be found in the late 1990s and early 2000s ‘audit society’ that developed under the Blair and Brown-led Labour governments in the UK, where the use of especially quantitative evidence was extended from a method of verification to the central justification to legitimatise policy decisions (Prince, 2012). Decision making is cast as a depoliticised process whereby knowledge is produced outside of politics and in the research community (Clegg, 2005). However, the validity of the ‘evidence’ used in this approach and whether it has genuinely been informing policy directions has
been questioned (Peck & Theodore, 2010). The critique is succinctly summed up in the title of Marmot’s (2004) paper on the matter: “Evidence based policy or policy based evidence”.

Policy decisions are, thus, legitimised through claims of objectivity held within rationalistic, democratic and technocratic logics (Peck & Theodore, 2012). In turn, academic research and other forms of ‘professional’ or ‘expert’ knowledge have become cast as neutral arbiters of the facts, from which the correct policies are sanctioned. The growing bilateral relationship between public policy and the social sciences has been of increasing attention and concern (Saunders & Walter, 2005; Head, 2008). A major outcome of this relationship has been more direct ties between university research institutions and governmental and non-governmental funding organisations (or quasi non-governmental organisations, dubbed ‘quangos’ in the UK). This relationship, entrenched through the increasing expectations placed upon academics to secure grants, has influenced social science research and stymied opportunities for more critical forms of enquiry (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013). The financially circular relationship between policy and the academe has led May (2005: 256) to go so far as to accuse sociologists of effectively becoming “outsourced servants of the evidence-based state”. Regardless of whether this is exaggeration, since research outcomes are often complex and can provide contradictory data, decision makers are able to exploit differing evidence and expert opinion to build the case for their desired course of action (Marmot, 2004). Thus, whilst EBP is often promoted by housing policy makers to justify decision making, the choices they pursue remain closely tied to values and ideologies that are largely unrelated to ‘evidence’ (Jacobs & Manzi, 2013). Removing the pretence of ‘objective’ knowledge and ‘neutral’ social facts, which legitimises one course of action while quieting others, could lead to more open decision making and allow space for the political relevance of multiple competing viewpoints. I argue that housing pathways is an analytical framework capable removing these suppositions and allowing researchers to critically and methodically compare these differing viewpoints (Clapham, 2009).

Turning to another concept associated with the approach, it was perhaps a mistake for Clapham (2002a) to associate housing pathways with postmodernism – arguably a catch-all term that has provided more confusion than useful direction. Earlier in the chapter the relevance of the concept of post modernism was questioned with reference to a number of theorists who make the case that the forces and arrangements of contemporary society are best viewed as extensions and developments of those that have typified all of modernity. Somerville (2002) makes this argument specifically in relation to Clapham’s (2002a) framing of the pathways approach, suggesting there is no need to tie the framework into this potentially complicating and unpromising direction. In considering a
postmodern positioning of the framework, King (2002) makes the useful distinction between postmodernism as an epoch and as a mode of critique (associated with a particular group of thinkers, such as Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard etc.). The former is characterised as a contemporary era with distinctive social movements, cultural patterns and changes in consumption and production, while the latter is a critical approach. Since Clapham’s housing pathways builds on the work of housing careers research it incorporates traditional modes of analysis and attempts to order the relationships between conceptually fixed entities (such as government, the individual, dwellings, etc.), it actually does not strictly resemble a postmodern analytical framework.

So if the framework is indeed ‘postmodern’, it must be in relation to its subject matter. However, alongside the problems with conceiving contemporary society in this way, there is no need to associate housing pathways with a postmodern era. As Bengtsson (2002: 69) points out, “[t]he housing pathways approach is basically a micro model that integrates the constructionist aspects of housing with more traditional economics and geographical – ‘positivist’ – approaches to housing consumption”. As such, it is an analytical framework for critical research with no need to align itself to a ‘postmodern’ era. Housing has always had a symbolic meaning beyond its physical reality and, while modern society may present many distinctive tendencies, the housing pathways framework could potentially be just as illuminating in an historic analysis of housing consumption. Consequently Bengtsson (2002) and Somervile (2002) both consider it best to avoid labelling the framework as a form of postmodernism. Instead it can be utilised for its promising explanatory potential through a more traditional lens, albeit with a constructionist epistemology and a focus on subjectivity and symbolic meaning.

Considering Clapham’s (2002a) social constructionist and Giddensian influences his use of the ‘household’ as an organising concept within his framework is also curious. After all, the household is surely a social construction which merits critical deconstruction in and of itself and, in a world of growing individualism and volatility, is now perhaps of less relevance than analysis at the scale of the individual. Furthermore, considering the framework as a ‘micro’ constructionist model, focussed on the subjective and psychological aspects of life-planning, identity and self-fulfilment, surely the individual is the most suitable basic unit of analysis (Bengtsson, 2002). Even a decade earlier Kemeny

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6 King (2002: 76) makes the further point that postmodernist theorists would be unlikely to follow Clapham’s type of analytical framework, perhaps seeing the title of Clapham’s (2002a) paper “a postmodern analytical framework” as an oxymoron.
(1992) had questioned the utility of ‘the household’ as a concept, pointing to its ambiguity in definition and use within research. Clapham (2002a: 63) acknowledges as much, but retreats from further inquiry, stating “...there is no practicable alternative but to use the concept of household as the basic unit of analysis in housing whilst accepting that there are substantial difficulties in its use”. However, in later work Clapham (2005: 58) does express a more critical disposition towards the concept, while still maintaining, “[i]ndividuals pursue housing pathways that at some times may involve membership of one or more different households”. By way of resolution, he suggests “[t]here must be a twin focus on the individual pathway and on the pathway of the households to which persons belong during their life courses” (pg. 26). The twin focus on both individuals and households is a reasonable stance, however for the purposes of this study the individual is the principal unit of analysis. This is because, although membership of a particular household should not be disregarded in analysis, when considering the meaning of housing to young adults it is the pathways associated with an individual’s membership to a particular generation that is of primary concern.

There are of course limitations to this approach. All frameworks for research necessarily foreground some issues while leaving others under-examined and methodologies based in constructionist epistemologies are certainly not appropriate for the examination of all aspects of housing phenomena. A number of critiques of a housing pathways approach based in social constructionism suggest it has a limited capacity to inform policy and practice. It has been argued that constructionist research lacks generalisability and is therefore impractical to those making policy decisions (e.g., King, 2004; Nozick, 2001). However, as was discussed earlier in the chapter, the types of generalisation made from quantitative studies with large datasets and claiming representative sampling of a population are not without their issues either and without the aid of more in-depth studies can often provide confusing data and lead to incorrect assumptions. The combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques within a research project, as is accomplished in this thesis, can potentially represent inherently complex social phenomena more holistically and yet communicate this data more powerfully to policy makers. This is demonstrated in a recent study by Clapham et al. (2014) that combined BHPS data with qualitative interviews to construct a comprehensive understanding of young people’s housing pathways in the UK. The researchers were able to not only identify the aspirations and experiences of young adults following nine distinct housing pathways, but to also quantify the number of individuals following each pathway – a novel accomplishment. Meanwhile, Mackie (2012) applies a housing pathways approach to assess the different constraints and challenges negotiated by disabled young people as they leave home. This research determines three broadly experienced transitional pathways and subsequently makes recommendations to policy makers and practitioners that – if followed – are
argued will remove key barriers and afford greater choice to young people attempting to realise preferred housing pathways.

My use of housing pathways within this thesis is as a framework to emphasise the connections across the quotidian, experiential and subjective elements of people’s housing consumption practices. However, the broader socioeconomic and political circumstances that surround an individual are highly significant in structuring these choices and ‘affordances’ (Gibson, 1986) that shape their housing pathways. At a macro level these structures can influence large groups of individuals in similar ways, so that shared housing pathways comprising similar experiences and outcomes may be determined. One of the benefits of a pathways approach combined with Q methodology is that it permits an analysis of how these shared individual experiences can contribute to commonly held understandings and attitudes that may have important consequences on the value, aspirations, choices and outcomes of particular groups within society – something which should be a major consideration when making housing policy decisions.

2.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the reader to a key guiding framework for this thesis, namely, Clapham’s (2002a) ‘housing pathways’, defined by Clapham (2005, 27) as “patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space”. This approach has been chosen because it offers a conception of housing that acknowledges both its physical and socially constructed components within people’s lives. It is also an appropriate framework for research attempting to capture the influences that past residential experiences can have on future housing decisions. The pathways approach highlights the dynamic nature of the housing experience through the life course and offers a valuable perspective on the subjective and symbolic nature of housing choices. At a macro-scale, conclusions and discoveries made through housing pathways provide insight into the changing contexts within which many young people make their housing choices. Utilising pathways, Q methodology and interviews my research allows a mixed methods analysis of how young people who have experienced substantially different experiences of residential environments construct and position themselves towards the compact dwellings that policies of urban intensification encourage. It also reveals the subjective construction of people’s viewpoints in a holistic manner, emphasising the shared understandings, connections and relationships communicated by my participants.
As a complementary theoretical structure to the research, Lefebvre’s spatial triad of the (social) production of space was also introduced. His philosophy on urban space has been usefully applied in previous research to explain the emotional response that can emerge when local residents feel their neighbourhood is threatened. Vallance, Perkins and Moore (2005) identify the existence of a particular ‘spatial vision’ of the suburb related to the ‘New Zealand dream’ (Ferguson, 1994), a key theme within the next chapter. A resident’s spatial vision is nestled in history, culture and lived experience and evolves several orders of magnitude slower than policies and urban plans. As such, low-density detached houses with gardens symbolise respectable suburbia, morality and ‘family values’ for many people. Changes to conceptual space, through zone changes within plans, for example, immediately threaten such notions by introducing symbolic elements to the landscape that are anomalous and out of place. The process of acclimatisation to such symbolic changes to the landscape is therefore likely to be measured in decades and across generations.

The symbolic meaning of space presents a potentially productive conceptual convergence between contemporary uses of Lefebvre’s (social) production of space and Clapham’s housing pathways. Language has become capable of constructing symbols of greater complexity and levels of abstraction, but it is also capable of grounding these symbols as objective reality in everyday experiences. Collections of symbols and meanings that are mutually referential, that is, build upon each other, create a stock of knowledge that individual’s use in everyday life and can last for many generations. These discourses play an active role in people’s construction of their worlds: “meaning is produced, reproduced, altered and transformed through language and discourse” (Clapham, 2012: 7). Discourses are essentially coherent expressions of knowledge and understanding and can communicate subjective viewpoints towards phenomena. The systematic search for discourse that is possible through Q methodology can be seen as a technique for the extraction of such viewpoints and shared understandings. For the particular application of Q in this research, the shared understandings and viewpoints towards urban intensification are the focus, as is reflected in research objective one. Furthermore, as is reflected in research objective three, to construct a holistic appreciation of the construction of viewpoints towards a particular type of dwelling and urban space, the symbolic nature of these different residential environments must also be appreciated. Accepting a housing pathways approach into the theoretical framework also necessitates recognising a longitudinal dimension to the individual experience of different living environments through the life course, which may lead to a reinterpretation or reinforcement of understandings and shared viewpoints – as reflected in research objective two.
The connections between my guiding theoretical framework, as defined above, and Q methodology are further detailed in Chapter Five. However, firstly, it is expedient to consider the particular context within which members of Generation Y make their housing choices, define their preferences and develop their attitudes towards urban intensification. This context will be the focus on my next chapter, as it positions my research within New Zealand’s housing history and the contemporary housing situation facing Auckland.
Chapter 3

The Auckland Housing Context: Detached Aspirations and the End of a Dream

3.1 Introduction

This is the first of two chapters that provide a detailed account of the context of my research. Chapter Three charts the rise and fall of the ‘New Zealand dream’ of home ownership (Ferguson, 1994), placing particular attention on the role of government policy-making in establishing the privately owned detached dwelling at the centre of social and economic welfare. Following this historical account, Chapter Four provides an assessment of the response New Zealanders have had to urban intensification as a potential solution to the housing shortage. A key assessment of Chapter Four will be the alignment, or otherwise, of the goal of urban intensification with the desires and aspirations of New Zealanders for their current and future housing needs. I argue that to better understand housing aspirations and preferences it is expedient to adopt a model that incorporates the effects of lifecycle stage on stated choices.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section documents the social, political and cultural values of home ownership that were cultivated through the colonisation of Aotearoa by British settlers in the mid-19th century. Connections are made between the advent of particular socio-economic ‘crises’ as catalysts for government action within the housing market. The gradual retraction of the state from the housing market and direct support of home ownership is considered before finally discussing the politics surrounding the growing shortage of housing in New Zealand. The second section of this chapter focuses on debates surrounding the current housing ‘crisis’ and the character of future housing development in Auckland. Over the past several decades Auckland has experienced significant urban intensification, both as a strategic aspiration of local government and as a consequence of deregulation through neoliberal planning reforms. With the ‘New Zealand dream’ of home ownership intimately tied to the ideal of a standalone house and garden, increasing urban density is a highly controversial subject. An evaluation of the origins of the housing issues facing Auckland at the time of writing is provided, with the positions of both Auckland Council and the National Party-led Government and their distinct policy development characteristics examined in detail. A central theme of my analysis is how the policy agendas of both the Council and central...
government have led them to differing conclusions regarding the causes and solution to the city’s housing issues. Before summarising, I also introduce a number of additional perspectives on the potential causes and solutions to Auckland’s housing shortage and growing unaffordability.

Owning one’s own home is becoming less common in New Zealand. Throughout the 20th century levels of home ownership gradually increased to over 70 per cent during the 1980s. Owning a private standalone (detached) dwelling on a large section with a garden became enshrined in New Zealand culture as the ‘New Zealand dream’ (Ferguson, 1994). Whole generations have grown up and largely succeeded in achieving this dream. Home ownership became tied into the policies and strategies of national welfare provision, being seen as the platform on which to build respectable family life. High levels of home ownership have also offered security for a comfortable retirement and wellbeing in later life (Dupuis & Thorns, 1996). However, just as establishing New Zealand as a home owning nation did not happen overnight, neither did it happen without considerable market manipulation and careful guidance and support at all levels of society and governance (Howden-Chapman, 2015). Since the 1980s, changes in political and economic ideology, particularly towards a favouring of individualism, contractualism and the rule of a ‘free’ market have rapidly begun to erode these previously held values and expectations. One outcome has been a growing intergenerational inequality, as younger people struggle to compete with members of older generations, who benefit from their established capital within an increasingly deregulated housing market (Broome, 2009; Thorns, 2009). A younger generation of New Zealanders are currently seeking the social and economic benefits and security of home ownership achieved by many of their parents’ generation. However, as they reach the age that many of their parents were purchasing first homes, ‘settling down’ and starting a family, they are finding their similar desire more distant and difficult to achieve. The connection between household welfare and home ownership is a central component of this dilemma.

3.2 A History of Housing and the Dream of Home Ownership in New Zealand

High rates of home ownership have been a key social and political phenomenon in New Zealand. The country’s level of home ownership rose throughout most of the 20th century and as early as 1938 owner-occupation had already become the most common form of tenure. The migratory and economic expansion following the Second World War then contributed to a continuing suburban growth, maintaining a steady increase in the level of home ownership (Thorns, 2009: 174). The country has been ennobled through its image as an egalitarian society and often caricatured as a Pacific paradise (Mitchell, 1972). Famously, the historian Keith Sinclair (1969: 276) stated that New Zealand, although not classless, “must be more nearly classless ... than any other society in the world”. The
ownership of a private home, often modest in size and construction, but built on a large quarter acre section, became seen as a New Zealand birth right, with successive governments working to ensure adequate access to housing. Such imagery continues to play a powerful and important role in New Zealand society. Yet, from its zenith of 73 per cent in 1986, successive governments have overseen a dramatic decline in the level of home ownership – now having fallen to less than 65 per cent, a figure last seen in 1951 (Howden-Chapman, 2015: 22). The following section charts this rise and fall of home ownership in New Zealand, paying particular attention to the drivers of policy-making and reform. As will be discussed, the ideological position of each government is argued to be a critical factor in shaping the state’s evolving role in the provision of housing and support of home ownership. In particular, the divergence between administrations in regards to supporting housing provision through direct ‘supply-side’ interventions in the housing market or more indirectly through enacting ‘demand-side’ incentives.

3.2.1 Building the Dream

Felton Mathew, New Zealand’s first Surveyor-General, drew up his original plan for the colonial town of Auckland in 1841. However, the region of Tāmaki-makau-rau, as it was known by the indigenous Māori of the area, had already been extensively settled and inhabited since at least as early as 1000 AD (Bulmer, 2002; Shirley, 1979: 60). The Māori name for the region can be translated as ‘Tāmaki desired by many’ and akin to Auckland’s position within New Zealand today, even before European colonisation the area’s settlement is thought to have been of unique size, density and population for Aotearoa (Bulmer, 2002; Stone, 2001: 6). Archaeological evidence suggests settlements in the region were extensive and well planned following Maori holistic ecological principles of communal ownership and a strong cultural, economic and spiritual connection to the land (Higgins, 2010: 3). Settlements were designed to be highly ordered with integrated “communal open space, cooking and food storage, meeting houses, sleeping areas, rubbish dumps and burial sites” (Rolleston, 2006, cited in, Higgins, 2010: 3). However, with European colonisation by the British in the mid-19th century, a new group of inhabitants had begun impressing upon the land a very different culture, emphasising private ownership, contractual relationships and the unrestrained commercial speculation of natural resources.

From this point onwards European culture and in particular a frontier colonial spirit dominated the development of Auckland as it grew into a prominent mercantile city. Early British settlers were enticed to the frontier for many of the same reasons that residents of Auckland today may seek out new residential developments of the peripheries of the city – to seek a better place to live. New
Zealand was marketed to British migrants by developers such as Edward Wakefield, founder of the New Zealand Company, as a place of lush green and fertile countryside, fair weather, and with plenty of space for one to build a family home and make a living. This natural and rural frontier ‘dream’ destination strongly contrasted with the polluted, crowded and noxious experiences of the rapidly urbanising, industrial revolution Britain. This act of ‘imagineering’ (Wood, 2002) the country has played a prominent part in the creation of a ‘New Zealand dream’, something which is still deeply embedded within the ‘Kiwi’ psyche and continues to impact perceptions of urban life. This dream of New Zealand as a “land of milk and honey” and “a labourer’s paradise” was based on the 19th century British ideal that, with good hard work, everybody could (and should) secure a private plot of land on which to build their own family home7 – it would be both their goal and their reward (Ferguson, 1994: 26). Over time this dream has become institutionalised, enshrined in legislation and has influenced government decision-making on matters that extend well beyond housing policy (Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Ferguson, 1994; Thorns, 1986).

Reflective of the rural focus of settlers, for whom towns were simply seen as a place of embarkation or resupply for the real work of taming New Zealand’s wilderness, the early plans for Auckland were modest. As can be seen in Figure Three, the early town followed a design common to the American and Australian colonial tradition, with a mostly rectilinear or grid pattern and radial roads (Shirley, 1979: 60). Mathew’s plan for Auckland also included crescents, circles and town squares to better reflect the contours of the volcanic topography, such as the striking ‘Trafalgar Circus’ to the east of the town. However, under the prevailing laissez-faire temperament of the time most of these proposed adaptive improvements, including Trafalgar Circus, were abandoned in favour of more conventional quadrangular designs, as these were considered cheaper and easier to later subdivide (McClure, 2009).

Yet, by the time many settlers arrived, they found much of New Zealand’s productive land already taken by wealthy landowners and leaseholders and what remained was a harsh and undulating land of thick bush and dense forest (Ferguson, 1994: 26-30). Towns became a welcome respite from the realities of the New Zealand wilderness and increasingly provided viable alternative employment opportunities. Throughout the 20th century the country’s urban population has grown rapidly, a trend

7 This early ideal of building one’s own home on a privately-owned plot of land may be related to the modern-day high percentage of bespoke new build houses in New Zealand. These are houses that are individually designed and ‘tailor made’. As will be discussed later, it has been argued that the popularity of bespoke housing may be one of the contributory causes to slow construction rates restricting Auckland’s housing supply.
that continues today and has resulted in a highly urbanised population living in a country which maintains a symbolic rural imagery (Miller, 2002). The attractiveness of urban livelihoods, mixed with the dream of a rural lifestyle has seen small towns of the early 19th century grow into sprawling conurbations, of which Auckland is by far the largest (Higgins, 2010: 3, Miller, 2002: 212). The ‘New Zealand dream’ of owning one’s own home on a large section has over-time become an urbanised dream – it’s fundamental principles remain intact, yet the environments in which it has become enshrined are the garden suburbs of the 20th century (Schrader, 2000). Furthermore, the dream has had to be constantly fought for and managed by individuals and organisations, most notably the New Zealand government.

Figure 3 Felton Mathew’s (1841) original town plan for Auckland (McClure, 2009)

Government support for the ‘New Zealand dream’ and the creation of a home owning nation has materialised in a number of ways throughout the last century. These various activities generally fall under two major approaches: indirect support and direct interventions (Ferguson, 1994; Murphy, 2003a; Thorns, 1986). Favoured by economic liberals of New Zealand’s early colonial development, with a recent return to favour through the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 90s, indirect government involvement has been characterised by minimal interventions in the housing market. The
more prominent policy throughout the 20th century has been a direct approach typified by
government intervention in the housing market. Whether through actively promoting and providing
housing, or through motivating and enabling private construction companies, governments have
continued to support and place significant value on the private ownership of detached single-family
dwellings.

Depressions during the 1890s and 1930s diminished the illusion of New Zealand as an egalitarian land
of opportunity and generated questions of social welfare, once thought discarded upon departure
from the motherland. But old world problems returned, with high levels of unemployment and
poverty spreading throughout the young colony’s labour communities. Combined with the laissez-
faire ‘frontier’ politics of the time and a lack of any earnest government commitment to urban
planning, an evident urban ‘under-class’ emerged, living in crowded poor-quality inner-city boarding
houses (Ferguson, 1994: 34). Reports appeared in national newspapers of home owners taking in
boarders or even sharing houses between families to cover costs. The New Zealand Herald printed
stories of ‘foul dens’ of immorality and ‘work-weary mothers’ unable to protect their children from
the depravity that surrounded them (Tennant, 2000: 27).

Similar stories have been published in the media regarding the current housing affordability crisis in
Auckland. For example, Jones (2016a) reported that families unable to afford to buy or rent housing
were living in their cars, with Prime Minster John Key responding it was not acceptable to have people
living in such situations, because “that’s not the New Zealand that we want”. The situation has begun
to attract international coverage. Eleanor Roy (2016) reported in The Guardian that with increasing
rents “hundreds of families in Auckland are living in cars, garages and even a shipping container” and
that “[working] people are living in garages with ten family members”, or that “families are now forced
to choose between having a permanent roof over their heads, or feeding themselves and their
children”. The incapacity for working families to own their own home once again threatens the myth
of New Zealand’s egalitarianism and its association with the enduring ideals of the ‘New Zealand
dream’ (see, Kearns et al., 1991; 1992).

During the depression of the 1890s there is no doubt conditions for many families also worsened
considerably, yet Miller (2002) argues that reports focused on emerging ‘slums’ were exaggerated,
mainly as propaganda for advocates of urban renewal programmes that would later become known
as the ‘City Beautiful’ and ‘Garden City’ movements. The physical deficiencies of ‘cramped
accommodation’ were seen as inevitably associated with “moral and managerial deficiencies”
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(Tennant, 2000: 28). So while living conditions for the poor were often the focus of newsprint, the reaction was at its heart concerned with the threat to the ‘New Zealand dream’. As can be seen in the current housing crisis in Auckland, the inability or lack of confidence of working families to be able to afford their own home has also brought into question the notion of socioeconomic advancement through property ownership – and by association the enduring myth of New Zealand as an egalitarian society. The threat to home and family life in the 1890s forced the government to take action – a recurrent theme in New Zealand’s housing and welfare history. Tennant (2000: 24) contends, “there has probably never been a time in New Zealand’s history since colonisation when one group or another has not perceived the home and family life to be under threat”. However, the government response, the Municipal Corporations Act 1900, was indirect and largely unsuccessful in stimulating the construction of better quality affordable housing. The act attempted to persuade local authorities to provide new housing for working families, however, as many local councillors were private landlords themselves, they saw the expansion of new housing stock as harmful to their property income (Ferguson, 1994: 56-7). Instead, the act was mainly utilised to build well-manicured open spaces and new parks through ‘slum’ clearances, which only served to remove affordable housing stock (Ferguson, 1994: 60; see also, Miller, 2002). Even during New Zealand’s early colonial history it is clear that the building of houses and the construction of the family home is an inherently political process and will often provoke reactions from people far beyond those being housed.

It would prove to be another depression, the Great Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s, before the New Zealand government would take a more direct response and play a major role in providing housing for its citizens. The first Labour Government elected in 1935 introduced a new agenda with a much expanded conception of the state’s role in housing and welfare matters. Arguably sharing similar origins to the current housing crisis, the economic downturn of the 1930s had caused a sharp decline in building activities that resulted in an acute housing shortage. This supply-shortfall was quickly exploited by landlords who increased rates and sub-divided houses into small units, forcing many families to live in sub-standard and expensive accommodation (Schrader, 2000). Labour declared an aspiration to remedy the situation and improve the standard of living for all New Zealanders, with the provision of modern high-quality housing being the main tool for achieving this goal (Thorns, 1986: 183). John A. Lee, understudy to the Minister of Finance, Walter Nash, was tasked with designing a policy to meet this vision and in February 1936 he circulated a paper in which he proposed two methods to inject quality new housing stock into the market. First, state housing would be provided for renting and, second, mortgage finance would be provided to support home ownership. To this end, the State Advances Corporation (SAC) was established to direct lending schemes and, while the
emphasis was initially on state housing construction, the institutional context for supporting the ‘New Zealand dream’ of private ownership were firmly embedded (Murphy, 2000: 295). Significantly, this signposted the rejection of previous *laissez-faire* notions, with Lee arguing that the market was not incentivised, since it gained more from ‘over-crowding’ than from new building construction and, moreover, a decent house was a birth-right of all New Zealanders (Schrader, 2000: 125). Thus, when the market failed to deliver enough housing of the right quality it was the place of the state to build houses for those that were unable to provide it for themselves.

What followed was the most extensive state housing programme to have ever been undertaken in the country’s history. From 1936 to the election of the National Party in 1950, around 30,000 new houses were constructed by the state (Davidson, 1999; Ferguson, 1994: 155; Gatley, 2000: 140). Figure Four charts the introduction of direct state spending on housing as a proportion of total government spending; it shows how investment fluctuated during these years but peaked at over 17 per cent by 1950. In addition, the introduction of rented state housing was a serious departure from the ideal of private home ownership and also included the construction of some new dwelling types such as ‘multi-unit’ flats. However, the construction of state rental housing, and especially multiple dwelling buildings, was controversial, leading the celebrated architect Cedric Firth to note in 1949 that, “in a country such as New Zealand where the detached house is the ideal, any excursion into the erection of apartment blocks demands an excuse, even an apology” (cited, in Gatley, 2000: 140). Nevertheless, while these new dwellings were not (initially, at least) in private ownership, the design of the detached state house mimicked private housing and, thus, remained consistent with the ‘New Zealand dream’.

The contemporary debate in Auckland over urban intensification would suggest that the ‘dream’ of a detached house remains very much the ideal for many New Zealanders and excursions from it are still likely to cause controversy.

As will be discussed in the next section, the current National Government has remained, until recently, principally opposed to urban intensification as a solution to the growing unaffordability of housing in Auckland, arguing instead that the council’s restrictions on peripheral development are artificially escalating the cost of land within the ‘Rural Urban Boundary’ (RUB). Instead, the Government believes these restrictions should be lifted providing developers with access to more land and allowing the housing market to function unimpeded by local bureaucracy. This indirect approach to providing

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8 The Rural Urban Boundary or RUB is a boundary zone of restricted development that surrounds Auckland. It delimits the area of the city that is defined as urban and outside of which is considered rural.
affordable housing, through stimulating private construction companies to escalate their production of new dwellings, has long been the *modus operandi* of central government within New Zealand. The election of the first National Party Government in 1950 effectively signalled the end of this period of substantial investment into the nation’s housing. As today, the National Party of the 1950s strongly favoured a less interventionist approach to housing matters and returned the primacy of home ownership into policy practice. The Government wished to remove itself as a direct service provider of housing and so reintroduced state-supported loans through the State Advances Corporation in order to offer state housing tenants the opportunity to buy their state house from the government. The policy was popular and successful, in that it allowed many low-income state housing tenants to purchase their home on terms highly favourable to them. The result was the largest sale of state housing stock seen until the 1990s, with a mid-1950s peak of over 3500 state houses sold into private ownership in one year (Schrader, 2011).

![Graph showing investment in housing as a percentage of total government spending per year from 1937 to 1982 (Thorns, 1986: 184)](image)

**Figure 4** A graph showing investment in housing as a percentage of total government spending per year from 1937 to 1982 (Thorns, 1986: 184)

Through direct involvement in the housing market Labour’s ambitious state housing construction programme added over 30,000 new modern dwellings to the country’s housing stock. Subsequently, National’s equally effective state-supported loans scheme allowed many of these houses to be transferred into private ownership, and on favourable terms to the buyers. The outcome of Labour and National’s policies between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s was to create a nation of homeowners and to deeply embed the dream and ideal of home ownership in the New Zealand national psyche (Thorns, 2009). Alongside a strong post-war economy, home ownership became a
The 1960s would prove to be a turning point for state support of the dream. The election of the second National Government of 1960 to 1972 saw the proportion of the state budget spent on housing decrease rapidly and, as can be seen in Figure Four, this trend continued largely unabated through the 1970s and 1980s. The end of the post-war ‘golden age’ in New Zealand had begun as the two pillars of the country’s economic prosperity, the security of the British market and high export prices for its primary industry, wool, began to falter. In 1967 the export price for wool suddenly fell by over 30 per cent and three years later the UK, the primary market for its key agricultural industries, entered the European Economic Community (EEC) forcing an end to long-standing favourable trading relations.

The outcome was a restructuring of the New Zealand economy and economic policy, including promotion of manufactured goods exports, continued subsidisation of agricultural production, the reorganisation and rationalisation of inefficient industries, investment in new capital intensive projects, and the introduction of overseas borrowing and a reallocation of money from the welfare budget to finance these strategies (Thorns, 1986: 183-4) – this was Keynesianism writ large. Except for the short construction boom from 1972-74 – coinciding with the single-term Third Labour Government – through the 1970s, investment in housing reduced as state funding was shifted into other sectors of the economy. An important outcome of Labour’s single-term was the consolidation of the state’s various housing market activities into one multi-functional agency, the Housing Corporation of New Zealand (HCNZ), responsible for managing state rents and state mortgages schemes, as well as providing policy advice. Nevertheless, during the 1970s housing policy was increasingly targeted towards the most in need and the HCNZ assumed the role of a niche provider, specialising in low-income housing consumers (Murphy, 2000: 295). Although in 1978 the state still accounted for 38 per cent of the mortgage market, this proportion was in decline and housing policy was shifting away from direct management of the housing market through state lending and housing construction (Murphy, 2000).
During the 1980s New Zealand experienced a radical shift in political direction; new economic theories from the political right, that had begun to spread internationally, were fervently foisted into all aspects of government policy. The sheer speed and scale of its implementation has led to the period becoming internationally recognised as the ‘New Zealand experiment’ (Kelsey, 1995). The prominence of neoliberalism within government policy has had far-reaching and wide-ranging consequences for New Zealand’s economy that continue into contemporary debates surrounding the role of government within the housing market (Murphy, 2009). Neoliberalism is characterised by a free-market ideology, fiscal austerity and an emphasis on demand-side interventions. This ‘rolling back’ of the state to curtail government spending strongly contradicted the Keynesian supply-side economics of outgoing National Prime Minister Robert Muldoon, whose ‘think big’ deficit-funding had required heavy borrowing to invest in major industrial projects. The rise of a neoliberal ideology was highly influential in the policies of Roger Douglas, finance minister during the Fourth Labour Government (1984-1989). He introduced a tranche of radical reforms, becoming known as ‘Rogernomics’, which directed significant privatisation and corporatisation of many traditional realms of central governance, often through the creation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). However, under the administration of housing ministers Phil Goff and, later, Helen Clark, the management of housing policy would remain largely intact (Murphy, 2000; 2003; Thorns, 2006).

It was not until the return of the National party to power in 1991 that neoliberal reforms radically changed housing policy as part of a new welfare approach. ‘Roll-out’ neoliberalism, as opposed to ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism, reintroduced a role for state action, but as an enabler and creator of markets where they currently did not exist (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Through the Housing Restructuring Act 1992 the HCNZ was to be replaced by a new commercially-driven SOE named Housing New Zealand Ltd (HNZ) with sole authority over all housing policy (Murphy, 2003b; & Kearns, 1994; Thorns, 2006). The Act was eventually ‘softened’ so that HNZ became established as a Crown Housing Enterprise (CHE) and would be required to act ‘as profitably and efficiently’ as a comparable business, while also maintaining a sense of social responsibility and regard for the interests of the communities it served (Thorns, 2000). Other key aspects of the commercialisation of state housing were the transfer from income-based rents for tenants (set as a percentage of their income) to market-based rents, set to compete with the private rental market, and the introduction of the Accommodation Supplement to assist low income people into the private rental market (Murphy, 2003b; Thorns, 2006). The new goal
for the state was to increase ‘consumer choice’ in housing and support the market as the most efficient
and fair distributor of social welfare. These reforms fundamentally transformed the role of the state
in the housing market and effectively signalled an ending to the New Zealand Government’s long
history of direct supply-side interventions to support the ‘New Zealand dream’.

Consistent with this agenda, throughout its two terms of government (1990-1999) the National Party
oversaw the sale of around 16 per cent of HNZ rental housing stock, reducing the number of houses
from 69,928 to 58,866 (Murphy, 2003a: 121). Figure Five charts the total stock of government owned
housing from 1936 to 2009, it shows that by the end of the 1970s the government owned around
60,000 houses with a national population of around 3.1 million people. In 2014, Housing New Zealand
reported an ownership of around 65,000 homes (HNZ, 2014) – an increase of only 8.3 per cent – yet
in this time the population of New Zealand increased by 45 per cent to roughly 4.5 million people. The
government’s housing stock has therefore declined relative to the population and consequently the
state’s role and capacity as a provider of housing for the less economically secure in society has
diminished considerably.

Figure 5 A graph of the total number of state houses under Labour and National Governments from 1936 to
2009 (Schrader, 2012)
Strong pressure for the reforms of the 1990s came from the New Zealand Treasury, who argued that housing problems were essentially related to affordability and that “consumers should make the ultimate decisions on how to meet their housing need” (National Housing Commission, 1988: 112). The rationale was that the market would most effectively and efficiently allocate state housing consumers into the most appropriate dwellings to meet their needs and that tenants would be encouraged to ‘shop around’ for accommodation (Murphy, 2003a: 121). This proved to be an incorrect assumption, as tenants would often struggle to find appropriate dwelling to suit their needs, particularly due to the limited supply of smaller accommodation sizes for the growing number of single-adult and lone-parent households (Thorns, 2000: 136).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the need for a greater diversity of dwelling types, particularly smaller dwellings (1-2 bedroom), has been a continuing problem within Auckland and several studies have suggested a significant shortfall in well-located smaller dwellings (Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Waghorn, 2011; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015).

### 3.2.3 The RMA, a Radical Reform to Urban Planning

One of the most significant outcomes of the early 1990s reforms was the introduction of the *Resource Management Act 1991* (RMA), which instilled a new approach to land use planning and remains the principal legislation for urban planning and environmental issues today (McDermott, 1998; Memon & Gleeson, 1995). Argued at the time to be a radical and innovative approach to environment management (Freeman, 2004), the RMA was a compromise between a neoliberal free-market ideology and sentiments of environmental sustainability (Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Higgins, 2010; Memon & Gleeson, 1995; Murphy, 2008; Swaffield, 2012), although Thorns (2009: 176) is certainly not alone in judging that the “compromise between environmental and developmental interests ... probably satisfied neither”. The Act was intended to ‘streamline’ the consenting process, allowing for more public participation, while offering resource users and landowners more flexibility and less government intervention. However, alongside the *Building Act 1991*, the RMA is essentially pro-development legislation that attempts to mitigate environmental effects on a ‘land-parcel by land-parcel’ basis. In practice, the Act has proven to be reactive rather than strategic (Oram, 2007) and, as such, is argued to be incompatible with comprehensive long-term planning approaches (Witten & Abrahamse, 2011: 194; see also, Swaffield, 2012). The ‘effects-based’ nature of the legislation orientates its concern to primarily managing the bio-physical environmental consequences of activities, leaving absent the consideration of whether those activities themselves align with broader developmental aspirations for a city (Vallance et al., 2012).
The result was a proliferation of higher-density housing in the 1990 and early 2000s, most prominently as apartment blocks in central city areas. However, with less regulatory oversight, these new dwellings often lacked adequate planning, were of a low-quality construction and consistently underperformed for their residents (HNZC, 2004; Syme, McGregor & Mead, 2005; Waghorn, 2011). Proximity to transport connections and amenities were also often poor (Auckland Regional Growth Forum, 2007; Waghorn, 2011). In addition, the vast majority of apartments built in Auckland at this time were designed only for singles and couples, yet an increasing number of families have begun to inhabit these residences, leading to less than ideal living conditions (Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011). As is discussed in the next chapter, these examples have potentially damaged the reputation of higher-density dwelling types more broadly and are likely to remain in the collective memory of New Zealanders for years to come.

3.2.4 Changes in Government, Changes in Housing Provision

At the end of the 1990s the relationship between the National Party and its coalition partner\textsuperscript{10}, New Zealand First, had deteriorated and public opinion of the coalition was poor. The outcomes of the Government’s housing policies had also become suspect, with rising levels of housing poverty causing increasing expenditure from a government that had campaigned to limit spending. As Murphy (1997) notes, the Government itself had partly caused this predicament. By setting up HNZ as a commercial entity the Government had generated a necessity for the corporation to seek higher rents based on what they deemed the market would allow. This market increase caused a ‘rent gap’ between the tenant’s income and their rental cost, which then placed political pressure back on the Government to further increase the Accommodation Supplement to reduce housing-related poverty.

The result was a ‘fiscal blowout’ in government spending on accommodation support (see, Forrest & Murie, 1991; Murphy & Kearns, 1994). While costs increased, perversely, housing-related poverty was deemed by most measures to be increasing (Murphy, 2003a; Thorns, 2000). Alongside the reduction in direct state housing provision, likewise, the role of HNZ in the mortgage market continued to diminish. Partnerships with private sector institutions were sought to provide lending services for ‘first time loans’ to state tenants wishing to purchase their rental accommodation (Murphy, 2000). Home loan subsidiaries of large banks acquired much of the state’s mortgage portfolio, although mortgages

\textsuperscript{10} The 1996 New Zealand general election was the first to be held under the new mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system.
for Papakainga and Low Deposit Rural Lending schemes proved difficult to divest (Davey & Kearns, 1994). With the withdrawal of the state from the mortgage market and state housing provision through the 1990s, Maori, Pacific peoples and low income households were increasingly marginalised in the housing market.

There was a growing unrest at the deleterious effects of the National’s Government’s policies and as the party and coalition politically fragmented, Labour strengthened its position through ties with the Alliance Party and ultimately won the 1999 election to form a coalition government. The Labour party had campaigned on housing issues and with their return to power in 1999 they acted quickly to reverse several of the previous administration housing reforms. Firstly, the Housing Restructuring (Income Related Rents) Amendment Act 2000 re-introduced income related rents for state housing tenants – although incomes would now be assessed, with those exceeding a certain threshold required to pay additional rent up to a market rate. Secondly, the Housing Corporation Amendment Act 2001 combined the functions of HNZ and Community Housing into a new organisation, Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), which would have a structure similar to the HCNZ and would “give effect to the Crown’s social objectives by providing housing, and services relating to housing, in a businesslike manner” (HCAA, 2001, cited in Murphy, 2003a: 125). So while social objectives would now be a foremost concern, the organisation would still need to maintain fiscal priorities. The new legislation essentially created a hybrid system that contained integrated elements of the past few decades of reforms. Thirdly, Labour placed a moratorium on the sale of state housing and increased funding to the HNZC so it could maintain its existing housing stock. Additional funding was later provided to allow the acquisition of stock in areas considered to have greater need and by 2005 an extra 4,800 dwellings were in use by tenants (Schrader, 2005).

As can be seen in Figure Five, during the Fifth Labour Government’s term (1999-2008) state housing stock eventually returned to levels approaching those of the early 1990s. More recently, under the National-led Government (2008 - present) housing affordability has become a major concern and state housing per se has received less public and political attention. However, research has shown that state housing stock has gradually decreased during the three National-led terms (Mills et al., 2015). Resembling what in the UK has been termed ‘Third Wayism’ (Giddens, 1998), the National-led Government has tended towards partnering agreements between the state and community service providers in the delivery of housing (Johnson, 2013; Mills et al, 2015). The concept of ‘community’ has become an essential component in the progression of neoliberalised governments back into spaces of social affairs and partnering with community organisations is often claimed vital to the achievement
of ‘good governance’. Within this new political discourse terms such as, ‘community’, ‘partnership’ and ‘social investment’ are (b)ordered by existing economic objectives of ‘market activation’ and ‘contractualism’ (Larner & Craig, 2005: 407). However, this policy direction has led housing and health researcher Philippa Howden-Chapman (2015: 45) to express concern at the growing insecurity faced by HNZC tenants, who are “... among the poorest and most socially disadvantaged households in New Zealand”, but must now contend with a state housing system that is “essentially part of an integrated, insecure public-private rental market overseen by MSD (Ministry of Social Development)”.

The desire of the National-led Government to withdraw from involvement in housing construction and provision of affordable quality housing is reflective of the gradual abandonment of state support for the ‘New Zealand dream’. Parallel trends have been identified in Australian public sector housing since 1991, with successive Federal governments cutting funding to state housing authorities (Badcock & Beer 2000; Forster, 2006). Similarly, Australian housing policy has placed emphasis on ‘tenure-neutral’ assistance, such as rent rebates for welfare dependent households in the private rental section, akin to the New Zealand government’s ‘Accommodation Supplement’ (Yates, 1997). In addition, Australian public rental housing stock has also diminished considerably in recent decades, often through demolished older estates being replaced by privately owned dwellings. Consequently, public housing provides for only the most acute of housing needs and the majority of low-income households have become dependent on the private rental sector (Yates & Wulff, 2005).

In both Australia and New Zealand secure and affordable housing for families has historically been the cornerstone of social welfare and the aspiration to create a just and egalitarian society. The New Zealand economy and generations of citizens have benefited from the stability of a home owning nation. But those benefits have not been shared equally and as a younger generation aspires to own a part of that same dream it is increasingly finding itself locked-out of home ownership and the security and socio-economic welfare it can bring.

3.2.5 The Politics of a Growing Housing Shortage

As the National-led Government entered power in 2008 a number of significant and interconnected circumstances brought housing issues to the fore of media attention and public consciousness. The global financial crisis (GFC) or ‘credit crunch’, as it is commonly termed, swirled through international financial markets and caused the New Zealand economy to enter a long recession. Housing was at the heart of the GFC, with liberalised financial markets (and deregulated mortgage systems, in particular) its bloodline, carrying bad credit around the world. The collapse of the US subprime mortgage market,
where deregulation had caused high levels of indebtedness to accumulate amongst households with a high-risk of default, spread ‘toxic liquidity’ through global markets that became sewn into its eventual downfall (Aalbers, 2012). Although New Zealand was not directly exposed to the US sub-prime market, the fall in global cash flows caused a significant liquidity problem for New Zealand banks, which in turn had a significant impact on the national housing market (Murphy, 2011).

In addition the government was facing growing media attention directed at the unaffordability of house prices, particularly in Auckland, which created an unavoidable political dilemma requiring a suitable policy response. Prior to the GFC, New Zealand had been part of an international residential property boom promoted by a global decline in inflation and interest rates. The causes of fluctuations in house prices are complex and often highly politicised, as are their proposed solutions. Nevertheless, New Zealand’s property-price boom through the early-2000s is argued to be significantly related to the country’s lending and taxation regimes, which have tended to favour investment in property over other types of enterprise (Thorns, 2009). Similarly, Murphy (2014: 899) suggests the liberalisation of the mortgage market was significant in stimulating demand and investment in housing, causing real house prices to rise 80 per cent between 2002 and 2008. Rising household incomes in the buoyant economy of the early 2000s, in which New Zealand’s GDP per capita rose 14 per cent between 2000 and 2007, also increased the effective demand for home ownership and for ‘trading up’ to larger, higher quality or better-located housing (NZPC, 2012: 2). In addition, a supply-side factor has been the rising cost and availability of land, which the National Party, in line with the development industry, has consistently attributed to the protracted and costly nature of compliance with planning and development legislation – principally due to the RMA and limits to urban expansion (Murphy, 2014; 2016).

During the pre-GFC housing boom deregulation of the New Zealand economy caused an increasing flow of funds to be channelled into mortgage markets, with a rising percentage of this funding (up to 40 per cent) being sourced from overseas. As such, the expanding credit availability for mortgaging houses was being financed primarily through international money flows rather than domestic savings (Murphy, 2011). Throughout the 2000s the Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) has shown concern about the ‘over-investment in property’ in the housing boom and has actively attempted to moderate price growth through increases in the Official Cash Rate (OCR). However, this has mostly been with little success due in part to the rising popularity of fixed rate mortgages sheltering investments from short-term fiscal fluctuations and through banks extending loans to soften the impact of these adjustments (Shi et al., 2014; Thorns, 2009). The influx of international cash flows into the New
Zealand mortgage market undermined the Reserve Bank’s ability to control inflation through the OCR. Instead, the Reserve Bank’s attempts to moderate the housing boom through raising interest rates served to increase the influence of international funding in property lending, hindering other sectors of the economy and, perversely, helping to further promote cheaper fixed-rate mortgages (Murphy, 2011).

With the onset of the GFC the housing market temporarily cooled as the capital flows that had fed the boom constricted. Since New Zealand banks had drawn heavily on overseas funding to provide mortgage finance the down-turn in international financial markets caused them serious liquidity issues. The cost of further funding therefore increased as access to capital became more difficult. As a result, bank lending practices became more conservative, levels of investment demand eased and house prices began to fall (Murphy, 2011). Figure Six shows the three-monthly average change in house prices in Auckland compared to the rest of New Zealand. It can be seen that, while the GFC did cause a 9 per cent fall in nominal house prices from 2007-08, this deflation had mostly recovered by 2010. Following a second minor decrease in house prices, a product of the so called ‘double dip’ recession that New Zealand encountered during late 2010, house price inflation began anew. It is notable that at this point the Auckland house price boom as a phenomenon separate to housing inflation trends in the rest of New Zealand began. Since 2011, house price inflation in Auckland has soared above the rest of New Zealand, which until recently had seen only minor increases.

Figure 6 House price inflation for Auckland compared with the rest of New Zealand, from 2007-2015 (annual percent change, 3-month m.a.) (Kendall, 2016)
The tighter credit conditions combined with the economic slump also resulted in a corresponding decrease in the volume of building consents issued. Figure Seven displays the number of attached and detached dwellings and the total number of residential properties consented per year from 1991 to 2015. The graph highlights the peak of the boom between 2002-2005, with around 12,000 houses approved in the Auckland region per year, with an increasing percentage of which for attached dwellings – demonstrating the pre-GFC speculation in Auckland CBD apartment buildings. However, just two years later the total had fallen to less than half that amount – the collapse in attached dwelling consents being even more severe as investors and developers quickly resorted back to more familiar, traditional dwelling types.

![Figure 7 Change per year in residential building consents approved for the Auckland region, 1991-2015 (Data: Statistics New Zealand)](image)

Whilst the GFC caused a temporary cessation to house price inflation between 2007 and 2008, rates of residential property construction have fallen and remained low for significantly longer. Murphy (2011) correctly assessed that a downturn in supply at a time when increasing demand is expected – due to positive net migration, natural increase and changing family formation structures – offered the conditions for a potential new housing boom.

### 3.3 The Current Crisis: Causes and Solutions

In 2014, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OEDC) Economic Outlook report assessed that New Zealand had the highest price-to-rent ratio and the second highest price-to-
income ratio for housing in the OECD (OECD, 2014: 33). As New Zealand’s largest city, Auckland is a significant contributor to the country’s poor standing in housing affordability statistics. It was revealed by the New Zealand Productivity Commission (NZPC) that “[h]ousing affordability is lowest among those who are younger, single, have lower income and wealth, live in Auckland, or belong to an ethnic group other than New Zealand European” (NZPC, 2012: 58). The city’s affordability issues have frequently been connected to a shortage of appropriate housing throughout the region. In 1999, the Auckland Regional Growth Forum’s (ARGF) ‘Auckland Regional Growth Strategy’ (ARGS) submitted that the city would need to accommodate an estimated one million people by 2050, requiring a predicted additional 200,000 dwellings. However, according to Statistics New Zealand, based on 2013 figures, the population of Auckland will have already surpassed 2 million residents by around 2030, reaching a medium estimate of 2.229 million by 2043 – a population growth rate far exceeding those earlier estimates. Meanwhile, the Auckland Council have stated they now expect the demand for a further 330,000 additional dwellings by 2040 (Auckland Council, 2012). Thus, based on current data Auckland will have likely exceeded the ARGS projection nearly 20 years earlier than predicted and will require double the quantity of houses.

The government have been quick to refute claims that the housing situation in Auckland has become a ‘crisis’, preferring to label the situation as a housing ‘challenge’ (Patterson, 2016), and arguing “strong demand” and “an uplift in prices” are “good problems to have” (English, 2017). Nevertheless, housing market pressure and inflation of property prices in the city have far exceeded national levels, as is illustrated in Figure Six. Since mid-2012 house prices in Auckland have risen over 52 per cent, while prices in the rest of New Zealand have increased only 11 percent. In 2014 the average house price in Auckland was NZ$731,302, 51 per cent higher than the national average of NZ$481,497 (Murphy, 2016). By 2016, the average house price in Auckland had reached over one million NZD (NZ$1,045,207 as of October 2016), an increase of over 41 per cent in two years, putting Auckland house prices 59 per cent above the national average (QV.co.nz, 2016). A recent RBNZ study of historical house price trends in New Zealand concluded that “[t]he extent of this divergence is unprecedented” and that, while previous deviations between Auckland and the rest of New Zealand subsequently corrected, so far this does not seem to be happening (Kendall, 2016: 3).

There has been considerable disagreement as to the cause(s) of the current inflation in house prices and the related condition of falling housing affordability. The concept of affordability itself has become contested and has been argued to be difficult to define and measure in regards to housing (Brebner, 2014; Leishman & Rowley, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Thorns, 2009). The role of urban planning is also highly
disputed and the cause of on-going political manoeuvrings, with some arguing it is a tool for providing affordable housing (Austin et al., 2014; Calavita & Mallach, 2010; Crook et al., 2006) and others marking it as a major cause of housing unaffordability (Birrell et al., 2005; Cox, 2005; NZPC, 2012; Forster, 2006; Searle, 2004). A key conflict in the current politics of urban planning in Auckland has been the ideological and methodological clash between Auckland Council and the National Party-led Government over the causes and solutions of housing unaffordability. The Council’s restriction on peripheral development through a proposed RUB has been a site of particular contention. The conflict over the causes, responsibilities and consequent management of housing affordability in Auckland has arguably been a key element in shaping the crisis and current responses to it. To better understand the position of both central and local government in relation to the current housing ‘crisis’ it is prudent to examine more closely the recent history of their policy development.

3.3.1 Positioning Local Government

The Auckland Council’s current Unitary Plan (UP) has placed a strong emphasis on a policy of urban compaction and containment – that is, a focus on strategically using land within the existing urbanised area of the city more efficiently and limiting ‘greenfield’ development on the periphery. The UP defines existing urban centres that contain land use activities and amenities in areas suitable for ‘up zoning’ to achieve higher densities for the next 30 years (Auckland Council, 2012: 65). Crucially, the Council has proposed that 60-70 per cent of required new dwellings will be located within the existing Metropolitan Urban Limits (MUL) during this time and the remaining 30-40 per cent will be constructed within the new RUB that replaces the MUL. Concern over the expansion of cities can be found in New Zealand research dating as far back as Putt (1937) and Jones (1949), who argued for a similar form of rural urban boundary to “prevent sprawl” and to encourage “redevelopment and urban rehabilitation” (cited in Rowe, 2012: 82). Debate around urban sprawl and urban expansion is therefore not a particularly new phenomenon for Auckland, and more recently the ARGF’s ‘Auckland Regional Growth Strategy’ (ARGS), adopted in 1999, and Plan Change 6 to the Auckland Regional Policy Statement both introduced legislation intended to encourage urban intensification within the region. Over the last decade there have been attempts to encourage residential intensification around urban centres and along major transit routes, although, as discussed, much of the increases in density occurred ad hoc and in areas not designated suitable for intensification (Witten & Carroll, 2011: 80).

The potential for greater management and planning of future development across the Auckland region has been aided by the amalgamation of the four existing city areas of Auckland, three District Councils and the overarching Auckland Regional Council into a single territorial authority, Auckland
Council, in 2010. To conform to the requirements of the RMA and the *Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009*, the Auckland Council needed to produce a spatial plan to broadly guide the future development of the newly unified ‘Super City’. Published in March 2012, The Auckland Plan provides a vision for Auckland’s future over the next 30 years. It is a macroscopic aspirational document that proposes a direction and goal: “to be the world’s most liveable city” (Auckland Council, 2012: 2). The vision portrayed in the plan is implemented through the city’s new planning rule book, the Unitary Plan (UP). The UP was first drafted in March 2013 and following extensive public consultation was released as the Proposed Unitary Plan in September of that year. Subsequently, under the *Local Government (Auckland Transitional Provisions) Act 2010*, the government appointed a ‘Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel’ that reviewed over 13,000 submissions on the Plan from September 2014 to May 2016 and made its recommendations to the Council in July 2016. The Plan was then accepted by the Auckland Council and publically notified on 19th August 2016.

Together The Auckland Plan and the Unitary Plan establish the Council’s long-term vision. Supporting the city to follow a quality compact urban form is a fundamental part of that vision. This move is justified by Auckland Council on the basis that: “Denser cities have greater productivity and economic growth; It makes better use of existing infrastructure; Improved public transport is more viable; Rural character and productivity can be maintained; negative environmental effects can be reduced; It creates greater social and cultural vitality” (Auckland Council, 2012: 42). In pursuing a strategy of urban intensification, the Auckland Council are supported by a significant body of academic literature that emphasise the potential health benefits that planning compact living environments can have over allowing urban sprawl (see, Barton et al., 2015; Giles-Corti et al., 2010) and their contribution more broadly to environmental sustainability (e.g., Preval et al., 2016; European Commission, 2007; 1990). The Auckland Plan and Unitary Plan also align with models of planning practice developed in Australia and the UK, reflecting the increasing transnational mobility of planning policies, as discussed in Chapter Two (Austin et al., 2014; Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014; Murphy, 2014; 2016).

Haarhoff, Beattie and Dupuis (2016) find that the Auckland Council’s promotion of a higher-density compact city, embedded within the rhetoric of ‘liveability’, is comparable with the current urban growth management plans of all Australian and New Zealand cities. They provide the example of Perth’s urban growth plan, *Directions 2031 and Beyond*, which similarly states the aspiration for “a world class liveable city: Green vibrant, more compact and accessible with a unique sense of place”; and the Victorian Government’s *Activity Centre Toolkit*, which promotes higher-density and transit-orientated development in Melbourne, based on the idea that this will improve quality of life.
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(Gunder, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016: 4). Gunder (2011) identifies ‘liveability’ as a concept that in the past few decades has become associated with significant changes to planning systems in North America, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. These changes, he argues, have been propelled by a “dissatisfaction with restrictive regulatory land use planning codes … coupled with the rise of public choice theory and a neoliberal agenda supportive of market-driven values” (Gunder, 2011: 186). These policies are argued to all contain an implicit causal assumption that compact city forms of development enhance ‘liveability’ and ‘quality of life’ (Raman, 2010). However, how ‘liveability’ relates to urban density and other ‘quality of life’ or ‘well-being’ measures is unclear and seldom applied to policy making consistently (van Kamp et al., 2003). Indeed, as Haarhoff, Beattie and Dupuis (2016) point out, liveability and density are not necessarily related, as evidenced through the high degrees of satisfaction reported by residents living in a variety of density types (Woodcock et al., 2011; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015).

Nevertheless, many housing scholars agree that liveability is an important element of overall quality of life experienced and perceived by urban populations (Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; McCrea & Walters, 2012). Furthermore, housing satisfaction is seemingly accepted by urban scholars as a relevant measure that contributes to the quality of life experienced by residents, and is considered to be an expression of liveability. In regards to residential satisfaction, Yang (2008: 309) argues that it can be defined as “the degree to which people perceive their residential environment as able to meet their needs and further their goals”, something over which urban planners and urban designers can have considerable influence (Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016). Recent research has begun to provide a more nuanced exposition of liveability as it relates to urban density. For example, the work of N. Allen (2016) and Haarhoff, Beattie and Dupuis (2016) have both demonstrated the importance of local amenities in contributing to the liveability perceived by residents of higher-density neighbourhoods in Auckland. Both studies also emphasise the earlier work of McCrea and Walters (2012), who note that urban intensification can provide both opportunities and threats to urban liveability and, thus, when considering such strategies, urban planners need to be attentive to the subjective perceptions of liveability as expressed by the local residents themselves.

Therefore, notions of liveability expressed by residents of an inner-city suburb of Auckland may not correspond to how liveability is perceived by residents of a suburb on the urban periphery (Kyttä et al., 2015). Moreover, younger generation residents renting units in a suburban dwelling may seek different amenities or perceive the neighbourhood differently to the homeowner family next door. While it may seem axiomatic – and a fact that might be plainly obvious to both of these hypothetical
neighbours – an appreciation of the subjectivity contained within a term such as ‘liveability’ is essential for successful urban planning. This distinction has significant implications for how the Auckland Council’s goal to create the “world’s most liveable city” can be successfully realised through enacting a city-wide urban plan.

3.3.2 Positioning Central Government

New Zealand under the three terms of National Party power has witnessed a shift back towards a more market-based ‘monetarist’ macroeconomic agenda. The government has consistently deployed neoliberal tropes of ‘value-for-money’ and ‘economic efficiency and rationality’ in its justification and defence of reforms and policy-making. During its three terms of government since 2008 the National Party have introduced a number of reforms specifically related to urban development, with the overarching desire to reduce a perceived over regulation within the planning system (Murphy, 2016; MBIE, 2013a). Relating to Auckland specifically, the government introduced the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 and the Local Government (Auckland Transitional Provisions) Act 2010. The purpose was to form a single territorial authority for the region with a unified spatial plan. In relation to urban development more broadly, the government completed a two-phase amendment of the RMA through the Resource Management (Simplifying and Streamlining) Amendment Act 2009 and the Resource Management Amendment Act 2013. More recently, following the release of the Productivity Commission’s (2012) report on housing affordability, the government and Auckland Council have entered into a Housing Accord with the intention of ‘fast-tracking’ the provision of housing within the region to curtail house price inflation (Auckland Housing Accord, 2013).

The Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 and the Local Government (Auckland Transitional Provisions) Act 2010 were both introduced into legislation by the government to change Auckland’s governance structure, primarily to create a single authority, Auckland Council, with the responsibility of developing a spatial plan11 for the future growth of the entire region. A large proportion of the changes passed through these Acts were as a result of the findings of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Auckland Governance. The report, released in 2009 and commissioned three years earlier by the then Labour-led central government, was tasked to identify the failings in Auckland’s local governance structure preventing it from resolving the city’s persistent planning and development issues (Davey, 2009).

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11 A spatial plan is a public sector document that contains zoning regulations and definitions, and identifies future locations designated for growth and the distribution of land use activities, such as housing, amongst other concerns within a particular city or region.
2014: 19). However, the final iteration of the government’s legislation proposed a considerably more top-down structure than had been recommended by the Royal Commission, with the intention of establishing a central role for mayoral leadership to drive forward decision-making and policy implementation (Salmon, 2015: 18). It also provided the foundation for a “comprehensive and effective long-term “20- to 30-year” spatial plan for “Auckland’s growth and development” to “contribute to Auckland’s social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being” (Local Government (Auckland Council) Act, Section 79(2), 2009). In addition, in 2010 the ministerially appointed Urban Technical Advisory Group (UTAG) advised that, to overcome Auckland’s development and planning issues, the unitary spatial plan should be an integrated policy and planning framework between central and local government. The UTAG placed a strong emphasis on central government oversight, requiring: a Government Policy Statement (GPS) setting out objectives for Auckland to be prepared prior to development of the spatial plan; a central review of the plan every three years; and a Crown endorsement of the objectives of the plan prior to adoption by the Auckland Council (Davey, 2014: 105)12.

The government’s RMA reform agenda has similarly pursued greater efficiency and simplification of the decision-making process, particularly with regards to resource consents (Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014; MfE, 2013). Considering the critiques of the RMA discussed earlier, there has been a valuable recognition of urban issues within the reforms and the need for increased national guidance on urban policy. While the reforms cover a broad range of environmental concerns, the latest amendment phase, the Resource Management Reform Bill 2013, following the Productivity Commission (2012) report, places a clear emphasis on the need to increase land supply for development. To those ends, the amendments require councils to designate a supply of residential land for at least 10 years and, reversing the previous legislation, now include a presumption of permission for subdivision, as well as an overall expectation for increased speed and certainty (Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014: 193). Specifically, the Environment Minister, Amy Adams, declared “these reforms will ... provide benefits for housing affordability in the medium to long term by obliging councils to proactively plan for and manage urban growth” (MfE, 2013: 3).

12 However, despite support for these legislative linkages and a formal ‘sign-off’ by central government on the spatial plan, these elements were not included in the final legislation. While the government affirmed its engagement and ‘buy-in’ as crucial to the implementation of the plan, it shied away from a more formal role in the development process. Davey (2014: 303) reports the opinions of several commentators who believe this is because “central government hasn’t wanted to be accountable” for outcomes of the plan and due to a general “lack of desire amongst central government officials to have a planning sort of role”.

The New Zealand Productivity Commission’s (NZPC) inquiry into housing affordability, released in 2012, merits particular attention in the context of the government’s response to Auckland’s housing crisis. The NZPC report has played an important role in providing justification for the government’s policy-making regarding Auckland. Upon release, the report stimulated considerable debate around the issues of housing affordability. Using the Median Multiple technique of assessing affordability, developed and employed by Demographia, the report’s conclusions were strongly critical of the existing restrictions on urban expansion. The report was commissioned by the government in 2011 to undertake an inquiry to “evaluate the factors influencing the affordability of housing in New Zealand ... and to examine the potential opportunities to increase affordability” (NZPC, 2012: 1). In 2012 the Commission completed its analysis and presented a number of conclusions and recommendations to increase affordability. The report placed significant emphasis on the role of urban planning, and compact city principles in particular, in reducing housing affordability, stating:

> The prevailing approach to urban planning in New Zealand reduces housing affordability in our faster growing cities. The widespread planning preference for increasing residential density, while at the same time imposing restrictions such as minimum lot size and height restrictions, and limiting greenfield development, places upward pressure on house prices across the board. Constraints on the release of new residential land create scarcity, limit housing choice, and increase house prices (NZPC, 2012: 9).

While acknowledging dwelling density restrictions as playing a part in restricting housing supply and driving up prices – something which the Auckland Council’s compact city approach aims to reduce – the emphasis of the report was on land supply as the key constraint. Specifically addressing the Auckland Council’s compact city approach as “undermin[ing] the aspiration of affordable housing”, the report recommended an “immediate release of land for residential development ... [to] ease supply constraints and reduce the pressure on prices” (NZPC, 2012: 10). This conclusion aligns well with the National Party’s neoliberal ideology and reform agenda. The NZPC’s critical assessment of the New Zealand planning system also accords with current mainstream economic critiques of planning approaches circulating internationally (Gurran, Austin & Whitehead, 2014; Gurran & Phibbs, 2016). They also deliver an obvious challenge to the compact city aspirations of the Auckland Council (Murphy, 2016).

The Australian Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability concluded its extensive inquiry into housing affordability pressures in 2008 by similarly blaming the complexity of planning processes for causing long delays and high costs, which were subsequently being passed on to the homebuyer. However, the committee also emphasised the need to build affordable housing in areas where existing
infrastructure could provide for and attract new residents, since housing affordability problems would not be solved by more residential developments on the urban fringe (Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, 2008). Nevertheless, somewhat at odds with empirical data, the policy narrative in Australia has remained absorbed with supply-side issues, primarily blaming convoluted local planning systems as the culprit for falling housing affordability – leading Gurran and Phibbs (2016) to assert that much of the current public debate on the issue is driven by politics, ideology and vested interest.

As discussed in the previous chapter, with the rise of evidence based policy (EBP) as an influential practice in legitimising government decision-making, transnational flows of ‘best practice’ techniques have introduced global think-tanks, consultancies and institutions into local issues and policy debates as sources of ‘rational’ and ‘objective’ evidence. However, these outside sources of ‘objectivity’ often portray local political affairs as particular types of ‘crisis’, for which some form of neoliberal policy is commonly presented as the solution (Prince, 2012). Research conducted by Murphy (2014) has suggested Demographia, an international (US-based) consultancy, is an example of an international entity currently wielding significant policy-influence within New Zealand. Demographia annually release their Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, employing a single metric, median house price to median income, to produce a Median Multiple score. Cities are then categorised in regards to their score and whether the metropolitan planning regime implement significant or minimal land use restrictions. This data is then used to determine the relative affordability of each city using a fourfold classification: Severely Unaffordable (5.1 and Over), Seriously Unaffordable (4.1 - 5.0), Moderately Unaffordable (3.1 - 4.0), Affordable (3.0 or less) (Brebner, 2014: 211).

Notwithstanding the method’s recommendation by international agencies, such as the World Bank and the United Nations (Demographia, 2015: 6), the validity and generalisability of the technique has been questioned. In their review of the Demographia methodology, Phibbs and Gurran (2008: iv) argue that the survey is flawed through its reduction of the complexities of housing affordability to a “simple causal relationship between house prices and assumed planning constrains on land supply”. They also criticise the survey for its limited engagement with economic literature and dispute the inference that there is a consensus that “prescriptive planning” causes housing unaffordability. Meanwhile, Mattingly and Morrissey (2014) argue that the simplistic measures used in affordability assessments such as Demographia’s are flawed through their omission of transportation related expenditure. Examining the affordability of Auckland’s peripheral suburbs to those closer to
employment centres, they find that once transportation costs are included in a Combined Housing and Transport (CHT) index, outlying areas become relatively less affordable than many inner suburbs. Thus, the exclusion of transportation costs in Demographia’s Median Multiple metric inevitably biases their conclusions towards favouring peripheral development. While dwellings built on urban fringes may encounter reduced land and construction costs, households purchasing these ‘more affordable’ homes may in fact find themselves spending more than households residing in some central neighbourhoods, once CHT costs are included. Both Phibbs and Gurran (2008) and Mattingly and Morrissey (2014) warn that accepting the simplistic model provided by Demographia, which misconstrues and overstates a single contributory factor, will not lead to effective policy responses to housing affordability issues.

The flaws in its analytical method have not stopped Demographia becoming a prominent mouthpiece for opposition to the Auckland Council’s quality, compact city approach (Salmon, 2015: 23). The consultancy’s analysis and metric of housing affordability are now also closely associated with the policy-making of the National Party. Since within the Auckland Council there is currently support for containment policies across the political spectrum, the National Party has refrained from outright opposition of the approach. However, Demographia’s negative assessment of restrictive planning approaches, through ‘objective’ analysis, offers an authoritative ‘evidence-based’ justification for opposition and a platform for policy-making. Several National Party politicians have maintained strong support for the consultancy’s analysis and criticism of urban containment policies. Bill English, New Zealand’s deputy prime minister and finance minister at the time13, contributed an introduction to the 2013 International Housing Affordability Survey, asserting that he believed:

Land has been made artificially scarce by regulation ... it simply takes too long to make new land available for development ... Land use regulations and intrusive development rules have consequences. The Conservative government in the UK has recently taken first tentative steps to, as David Cameron put it, “[get] the planners off our backs” by increasing permitted activities by residents (English, 2013).

Murphy (2014) argues that the alignment between Demographia’s pro-market, pro-development logic and National’s neoliberal ‘market-based’ reform agenda has led to the consultancy and its analysis growing in significance within New Zealand policy debates. Beyond its connections to individual politicians and its metric having been used in the Productivity Commission’s (2012) analysis of affordability, Demographia’s influence has now extended directly into government legislation. The

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13 On the 12th December 2016, Bill English became the National Party leader and Prime Minister of New Zealand after John Key (2008 - 2016) announced his intention to resign several days earlier.
ministry responsible for housing policy, the Ministry of Business and Innovation (MBIE), has now specifically adopted the median multiple metric to access regional affordability problems in its *Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013* (HASHAA). On the other hand, the New Zealand Treasury has previously criticised the approach used by *Demographia* because it “fails to incorporate many factors that affect the affordability of housing”, particularly interest rates (Robinson et al., 2006). It would seem that criticism of the Median Multiple metric, and the existence of several potential alternative methodologies, has not stopped the government from adopting *Demographia’s* analysis and supporting their conclusion that land restrictions limiting urban expansion are the primary cause of house price inflation.

As such, the government believed it crucial to immediately release more land for development in Auckland in order to improve housing affordability. It was to these ends that in May 2013 the government announced it had signed a Housing Accord with Auckland Council that would facilitate ‘fast-tracking’ the resource consent process of up to 39,000 new residential dwellings over three years (Auckland Housing Accord, 2013). The Accord, signed under the *Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013*, was introduced primarily as a stopgap to provide an immediate influx of residential construction before full implementation of the Council’s Unitary Plan. Moreover, it challenged the high percentage of compact housing expected to be built within the existing MUL under the Draft Unitary Plan, which the government assumed unlikely to provide the quantity of housing required fast enough to reduce pressure on the housing market (Brebner, 2014: 230). Instead, the Special Housing Areas (SHAs) allowed the Minster for Housing and Auckland Council to ‘mutually’ approve areas for immediate development through a condensed consenting process that would supply a targeted amount of housing per year.

Given the growing public demand for government action, the Accord usefully provided an opportunity for the government to “look busy” addressing housing affordability, something Gurran and Phibbs (2015: 16) argue Australian Commonwealth and State governments have attempted to achieve whilst also furthering “key ideological and property development agendas around deregulation”. They suggest there is scant evidence that a focus purely on increased housing output, through reforms that remove planning restrictions, will have a meaningful impact on housing affordability for low income groups. This contention is certainly in line with Murphy’s (2016) assessment of the prospects for improved affordability for low income groups under the New Zealand government’s HASHAA. Murphy (2016: 11) asserts that the Accord effectively “short-circuited” the implementation of the Council’s Unitary Plan for a quality, compact city through facilitating the immediate release of land beyond the
MUL. The first SHAs have added over 8,000 hectares of rural land to Auckland’s urban footprint – consenting for development in three years what was intended to be spread over 30 years (Salmon, 2015: 26). To be sure, affordability is a criterion of the HASHAA and the first SHAs were required to contribute to the affordability of the region. However, the requirements for developers within SHAs to provide affordable housing are considerably less demanding than those proposed under the UP. This leads Murphy (2016: 13) to speculate that “providing dwellings at 75 per cent of the median regional house price offers no guarantee that the units will be affordable and there is no mechanism for ensuring that any affordable dwellings remain affordable”. Without specific criteria blocking ‘affordable’ housing from being bought by investors, these dwellings will potentially only fuel investor speculation and further reduce affordability – something that other recent state-supported developments have been accused of permitting (Murphy, 2008; Opit & Kearns, 2014).

Through the Housing Accord 10 tranches of 154 SHAs have been created within the Auckland RUB, with an average of 52 consents per month within the first two years and approaching 290 per month during 2016. At the close of the Accord on 16th September 2016, the total anticipated yield of the SHAs in Auckland is 56,000 new homes (MBIE, 2016). However, with the initial Accord now concluded, resource consents have been given for just 27,700 new dwellings, currently well short of the expected total, and with only 700 of the consented homes so far having been built (Slade & Carnegie, 2016). Nevertheless, on the 5th September, 2016, the Minister for Housing, Nick Smith, announced that, following the government’s “good progress”, he would be extending the SHA legislation for a further three years. The extension would “ensure momentum is maintained” as the Auckland Council transitioned to the Unitary Plan (Smith, N., 2016).

Whether or not the government’s direct intervention in the consenting process has been successful and worthwhile remains unclear, as the new houses generated by the SHAs are mostly far from completion. However, the impact of prioritising targeted housing numbers over commitment to the vision of a quality, compact city has been questioned. With around 50 per cent of new dwellings now projected to be built outside the MUL, the Accord has enabled a resumption and acceleration of peripheral development in Auckland, contributing to further urban sprawl and undermining the Council’s Auckland Plan (Salmon, 2015). There is also concern that allowing developments in SHAs to override the constraints proposed in the UP will negatively impact on the region’s environmental sustainability. Preval et al. (2016) found that most SHAs in Auckland are likely to have only a minor impact on improving the city’s environmental sustainability. Many are also predicted to be unlikely to encourage residents to use public or active transport and several larger SHAs on the southern fringe
of the city will likely generate significantly higher than average levels of CO₂ through long commutes. They warn that overriding environmental concerns to address supply issues, resulting in predominantly low-density peripheral developments, stands to jeopardise the Council and central government’s ability to meet their environmental sustainability goals.

Additionally, Murphy (2016: 15) questions the wider repercussions of the government’s “significant political intervention” in planning and consenting, traditionally the domain of local governance. Through the HASHAA, the National Party have repositioned central government as a key actor in local planning processes and this has led to their urban planning and housing reform agenda dominating the Auckland Council’s own local authority. Legislation securing special ministerial intervention above prevailing local planning controls has also been passed in Australia. Employing similar justifications, in 2005, the Government of New South Wales introduced planning reforms aimed at “establishing greater certainty in the assessment of projects” and “cutting red tape at all levels ... [to] ensure that the Government delivers quickly and efficiently on its infrastructure programs” (Knowles, 2005). The apparent regulatory strangling of private development enterprise was captured to validate legislation enabling an unprecedented level of ministerial influence within local planning (Gurran & Phibbs, 2014). However the reforms were widely opposed by local councils and communities, who perceived the policy as further evidence of the state’s lack of transparency and manipulation by major developers. The reforms were later partially repealed in 2011, although many provisions remained, albeit under different names.

Arguably the New Zealand Government’s legislation attempts to signpost a more mutual and collaborative approach with local government. Certainly, the rubric of an ‘Accord’ suggests a level of mutual cooperation between the two entities. However, significantly, the legislation also empowers the government to similarly intervene in the consenting process if it considers local government responses inadequate. According to Salmon (2016: 26), those involved in the Council planning process feared that to not comply with the government’s method of accelerating housing provision, particularly on Auckland’s fringe (beyond the MUL), would risk the UP and its implementation being overridden by central government. Indeed, in the Council’s own submission regarding the HASHAA legislation they argued that clauses allowing the responsible minister to override local government planning and consenting controls “do not respect the principles of local democracy or those that underlie the establishment of accord agreements” (Auckland Council, 2013a: 10). It is therefore debatable whether the on-going Housing Accord between central government and the Council suggests an emerging consensus over causes and solutions to the challenges facing Auckland.
In summation, the present National-led Government agenda, in line with its neoliberal inclination, is to reduce regulation and allow the market to guide development unimpeded by local planning restrictions. However, it should be noted that this position does not ostensibly contradict the overarching aims of Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan. Both entities equally pursue a more efficient planning process, the removal of restrictions on urban development and the up-zoning of a substantial portion of the city to allow greater development options for land owners. Such aims are certainly in accordance with the National-led government’s desire to remove impediments to the market and allow land owners more freedom from regulatory controls. While the government has chosen to frame their argument on reducing the land area restrictions constraining supply, it would seem logical to extend their argument also to those vertical restrictions reducing supply – such as zonal height limits. However, market deregulation to allow land owners more development options through building upwards has been particularly unpopular in certain parts of Auckland. In particular, this is the case in the North Shore and in eastern suburb electorates of Auckland, where many National and Act Party affiliated Councillors hold seats (e.g., Parminter, 2016; Willis, 2012). Several National Party-affiliated Councillors have spoken out to oppose the changes alongside vocal local residents (Hickey, 2016). Salmon’s (2015: 23) recent interviews with Auckland governance decision-makers confirm that “differences between Auckland Council and the government ... were not entirely of a principled nature, but were tilted by political considerations”. It seems fair to reason, then, that the current central/local government discord over the causes and solutions of the housing ‘crisis’ is much more of a convoluted political remonstration than a clash over technical planning differences.

3.3.3 Causes and Solutions: A General Assessment

The context of the Auckland housing ‘crisis’ discussed above certainly adds credence to the notion that it is often political and ideological positions that inform what causes are deemed to be most important or influential – and therefore which solution is believed most affective. Similarly, Adams (2011: 952) identifies planning for housing developments as a “wicked problem”, since it is the result of “elusiveness, subjectivity, uniqueness and complexity”. As a particular type of social problem, housing affordability has neither definitive formulation nor definitive solution. Instead, images of the problem gradually emerge alongside and are indeed shaped by potential solutions. There are many potentially influential factors involved in Auckland’s housing affordability problem – however the

14 Maslow’s (1966) adage, if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail comes to mind.
specific political environments of Auckland and New Zealand have led to the voicing of some causes and solutions over others. The purpose of this section is to explore perspectives on housing affordability issues that go beyond those arguments.

In both Australia and New Zealand it is commonly argued that a significant link exists between the decrease in housing supply over the past decade and the trend of house price inflation. Framing the problem as related to the supply of new houses to the market is often used to justify decreasing restrictions on urban sprawl as a solution. This argument has certainly been made in political debates over housing affordability in Australia and New Zealand. Examining Figure Seven on Page 75 we can see that there has been a chronic fall in the number of consents for new residential properties in Auckland over many years, reaching its nadir in 2011, and only beginning a gradual upswing towards pre-GFC quantities in 2015. As predicted, levels of demand for housing in Auckland have been rising, yet the supply of new housing has lagged behind, causing a serious shortfall in available residential dwellings for the city’s population. This shortfall has been predominantly in the construction of more affordable houses aimed at first-time buyers. As discussed earlier, while central government has gradually retreated from the provision of low-cost housing, private developers have shown a reluctance to cater for this segment of the market, partly due to the lower profitability associated with it (Howden-Chapman, 2015). Consequently, by 2013 the Auckland Council believed there to be an existing supply shortfall of between 20,000 and 30,000 new dwellings for the city, and the need for 13,000 additional new homes each year for the next 30 years to keep pace with demand (Auckland Council, 2013b). This number has recently been revised upwards by the Auckland Council to a shortfall of 40,000 homes for the region (Niall, 2016). However, the decline in new dwelling construction is indicated on the graph to have begun around 2005, several years before the GFC (RBNZ, 2009), which suggests there are additional significant factors beyond a decline in international money flows.

In an attempt to understand the key determinants of housing affordability more broadly, causes can be separated into those that concern supply-side issues and those that concern the demand-side. Demand-side impacts on affordability can include: household growth (in turn, affected by natural increases, immigration, household formation); real incomes; real wealth; tax concessions to both owner-occupied and rental housing; concessions to first homebuyers; returns on alternative investments; cost and availability of finance for housing; and the institutional structure affecting housing finance provision. On the supply-side, factors that affect the cost of provision, such as: the availability of land; land development processes and policies; infrastructure costs; the cost of construction; and property related taxes. According to Yates (2008: 203), affordability issues in
Australia are broadly related to general increases in the number of households and real household incomes and wealth per household, which have contributed to upward demand-side pressures. This structural increase in demand has interacted with the less than perfect elasticity of housing supply, creating upward pressure on real house prices.

Controlling this demand-side pressure on the housing market is something that the Reserve Bank of New Zealand has been actively trying to achieve. The Reserve Bank has shown serious concern at the rapid inflation of property and its deleterious effects for the economy, including the potential fallout from a housing price collapse. Graeme Wheeler, Governor of the RBNZ, recently stated that the banking system was “heavily exposed” to the property market and that “[a] sharp correction in house prices is a key risk to the financial system” (Jones, 2016b). In addition, Bassett and Malpass (2013) note that the large amount of capital invested into housing is unproductive for New Zealand’s economy. Investment tied up in housing stock reduces the capital available for more economically productive entrepreneurial investments. They argue that investment will continue since the housing market is essentially ‘rigged’ in favour of those who own property, stating “we should remember that individuals can get wealthy off housing, but the county cannot”.

It is peculiar, then, that Bassett and Malpass (2013) are oddly silent regarding the potential for New Zealand’s atypical tax regime to be a prime cause for such an investment imbalance. Instead, they argue that government imposed restrictions on the market are to blame, singling out the imposition of a metropolitan urban limit in particular. Yet, a number of commentators and researchers have suggested that it is the country’s lack of an adequate capital gains tax that is likely to have leveraged speculative investment into housing and away from other more productive investments (that incur greater levies) (Brebner, 2014; Howden-Chapman, 2015; NZPC, 2012; OECD, 2013; Oliver, 2000). Banks are heavily incentivised under the current tax system to focus on mortgaging activities, since returns on mortgages are perceived as more secure and of greater value. The lucrative nature of housing investment under the current tax system entices investment in the property market because it is intuitively perceived as “low risk” (de Bruin & Flint-Hartle, 2003: 280). As such, there is an increasing tendency for New Zealanders who already own a home to invest in a rental property – although the primary purpose of the investment is often for the expected accumulation of capital gains rather than the collection of rents (Broome, 2009). It is arguable that since the 1990s (de Bruin & Flint-Hartle, 2003: 277), housing in New Zealand society has come to be seen and treated primarily a financial asset, with new dwellings purpose built and sold as part of investment portfolios.
The RBNZ has attempted to use demand-side financial regulation to reduce the pressure placed on the housing market through property speculation. Prompted by data indicating property investors accounted for 43 per cent of mortgages lent in Auckland (with only 12 per cent made to first-home buyers), the RBNZ has stepped up the deposit requirements for property investors through their Loan-to-Value (LTV) rules in an attempt to ‘cool’ housing speculation (Spencer, 2016). Introduced in 2013 at a rate of 20 per cent, the existing LTV rules were then adjusted in 2015 so that a 30 per cent deposit would be required for a mortgage loan secured against a rental property in the Auckland region (thus, specifically targeting property investment) (Howden-Chapman, 2015: 26). In September 2016, this ratio was further increased to 40 per cent, a move some financial advisors have called an over-correction, and a “sledge hammer” approach that threatens to compromise market liquidity (Bolton, 2016). The Auckland-specific tighter LTV rules have also had a notable knock-on impact on house price inflation in neighbouring regions, particularly Hamilton and Tauranga, and so tighter lending limits have also been extended nationwide (Kendall, 2016).

A growing proportion of population increase in New Zealand has been through immigration rather than natural increase. This trend is particularly apparent in Auckland, where 39 per cent of the population were recorded as born overseas in the 2013 Census. International migration trends have fluctuated considerably over recent decades however Auckland has generally experienced the highest levels of international migration in New Zealand. Whether high levels of migration are impacting house prices is a controversial subject that can all too often become linked to racist discourses, for example, as argued by Collins (2015). Nevertheless, international research has shown a relation between regional housing affordability and changing levels of migration (Gonzalez & Ortega, 2013; Ley & Tutchener, 2001; Sánchez & Johansson, 2011; Siaz, 2007). In New Zealand, the NZPC (2012: 80) report on housing affordability identified international migration as placing an increased demand on the housing market, particularly for rental housing, but also on the market more generally. Earlier research by Coleman and Landon-Lane (2007) found that a migration inflow equal to 1 per cent of the population has been associated with 8-12 per cent increase in house prices after one year. However, they qualify that this correlation may not be causal, the two trends may be a co-occurrence, but not co-related, or migrants may have a ‘destabilising’ effect on the market through people’s expectations of house price changes. Maré and Stillman (2008), on the other hand, claim a much less significant

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15 It is interesting to note that while gains came from international migration, there was negative internal migration to the region, that is, more people living in New Zealand left Auckland than moved there (Salmon, 2015: 43). It suggests that increasingly New Zealanders are seeking to live elsewhere in the country to avoid the inflationary housing prices in Auckland (Goodwin, 2016).
increase in local house prices is caused through foreign-born immigrants (0.2-0.5 per cent). However, they found that the return migration of New Zealanders to a region was associated with a 6-9 per cent increase in local house prices (with a 1 per cent increase in local population).

Thus, there is evidence to suggest that migration may have played a role in increasing house prices nationally. Auckland could be particularly affected by international migration as the region receives by far the largest percentage of foreign-born migrants. Although the influence of migration on housing affordability is likely less significant than other factors, there were record levels of inward migration to the country during 2016. The record net gain of migrants this year is currently 70,300, at the same time, migrant departures have decreased, adding to the high net gain (Mitson, 2016). This rise in net migration gain may increase the relative influence of this factor in causing demand-side pressure on the housing market.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an historical account of the rise and fall of the ‘New Zealand dream’ (Ferguson, 1994) of home ownership. Within this account the role played by central government in supporting the ideal of home ownership is argued to be of particular importance. Specifically, the collision between two policy directions, supporting either direct or indirect actions within the housing market, has resulted in the construction of a home owning nation. However, changing political ideologies during recent decades have transformed the state’s role in society and significantly reduced its scope for supporting home ownership. Following this account, the second section of this chapter examined the potential causes and solutions to what has commonly been called the ‘Auckland housing crisis’.

Housing affordability has over recent years become a major political issue for the region, with real house prices in Auckland roughly doubling within a decade and rising to 59 per cent higher than the national average. The causes of the house price inflation have become the centre of a political battleground between the National-led central government and Auckland Council. Following the guidance of the influential consultancy Demographia and the findings of the NZPC (2012) report, the government have argued that restrictive local planning measures are chiefly to blame for inflating house prices through choking housing supply. It is notable that this conclusion supports the government’s wider reform agenda, characterised by a desire to remove regulation and allow greater market freedoms. This agenda presents a considerable challenge to the aspirations of the Auckland Council to follow a quality, compact city approach to development through its recently ratified Unitary
Plan. The Council have endeavoured to plan for development focused within the city’s existing MUL, supported by a staggered release of greenfield land over the next 30 years. However, through very vocal opposition from some Auckland residents and with a lack of central government support, this vision has been formidably opposed.

The government enacting of the HASHAA and signing of the Auckland Housing Accord has also diluted the Council’s vision through immediately releasing large tracts of greenfield land on the urban periphery. Although the rapid supply of land for residential property development will provide more houses for the region, this may only have a negligible effect on affordability. Moreover, the government’s intervention in local planning and consenting through the HASHAA has been argued to represent a significant power shift between central and local government. Nevertheless, in July 2016 the Independent Hearings Panel, having assessed thousands of submissions on the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (PAUP), made its recommendations, which were subsequently accepted by the Auckland Council. Tempered through considerable resistance, the UP has maintained an emphasis on urban intensification and the prospect of a greater variety of housing types to be built in high-demand suburban centres.

As to the causes of house price inflation, there are myriad factors likely involved in accelerating the growing unaffordability of buying and renting a house in Auckland. However, an increasing population of households (through natural increase and migration) experiencing greater wealth combined with favourable interest rates and tax policies has likely increased demand for additional housing within the region. Meanwhile, restrictions on property development, both through limits on land development and height restrictions, have contributed to a housing supply that has lagged behind demand. Since the causes of housing affordability issues are a combination of both supply and demand affects, any proposed solution that reduces house price dynamics to merely a single cause is unlikely to effectively resolve this issue – in fact, in may serve to exacerbate it.
Chapter 4

Going Up? Auckland’s Future Density and an Unpacking of Detached Aspirations

4.1 Introduction

The foregoing account has demonstrated the complexity of housing issues facing Aucklanders. These issues are multi-faceted and are the consequence of decisions and policy changes that can often be traced back many decades. Equally, decisions made in response to the current housing ‘crisis’ will have wide-ranging impacts on urban spaces, societal values and expectations, and many other facets of life for generations to come. The true complexity of an issue such as this is often difficult to grasp or adequately represent. For example, during the development of the Unitary Plan (UP), debate in the media has mostly focussed on simplistic arguments of whether future urban growth should be shaped by expansion upwards or outwards. It would seem that, in any case, following the trend of the last decade most new residential developments are likely to be of a higher density than is conventionally encountered in Auckland suburbs, irrespective of whether they are located within or outside of Auckland’s existing metropolitan urban limits (Haarhoff et al., 2012: 1). If higher-density dwellings are becoming a more familiar sight within the Auckland landscape it is important to consider to whom these dwellings will be attractive and what sorts of people may occupy them.

This chapter investigates the nexus between Auckland’s political and physical landscapes and how recent reforms to the region’s governmental structure have created the potential for greater leadership on urban planning issues. Specifically, I argue that the creation of a single territorial authority, Auckland Council, with a mandate to produce a comprehensive statutory planning document for the region, provides the opportunity for greater levels of planned intensification than has previously been possible. Following this discussion, the Council’s aspirations for a ‘quality, compact city’ are compared with data from a survey of New Zealander’s residential preferences and housing choices. Evidence of changing preferences and the trade-offs and pragmatic choices that New Zealanders make in seeking suitable, comfortable and affordable housing are considered. In particular, indications of increasing demand for more compact, higher-density dwellings are examined with a focus on this trend as it relates to the locational preferences of young adults.
Comparing these changes in demand with recent trends in housing construction, I argue that there is a significant oversupply of high-density apartments in Auckland’s CBD and of large standalone houses in the suburbs that are priced out of the reach of the majority of first-home buyers. Consequently, I make the case for encouraging ‘missing middle’ density dwellings, which could provide more compact and affordable housing in the places where younger New Zealanders desire to live. Adopting a life cycle perspective – informed by the ‘housing pathways’ approach discussed in Chapter Two – I argue that a greater supply of medium-density housing throughout the city would potentially support young people as they navigate through various housing transitions. The final part of this section summarises the major themes of this chapter and provides a brief reflection on several factors likely to be influential in shaping Auckland’s future landscape.

4.2 Enduring Aspirations and the Council’s New Plan for Auckland

During the last century and particularly during the post-war boom of the 1950s, echoing a trend evident in many Western cities, Auckland’s urban area rapidly expanded. However, a strong critique of suburbanised environments has developed in a number of disciplines (e.g., Davison, 2006; Frank et al., 2004; Mees & Dodson, 2007; Saelens, 2003), and in recent decades experimentation with alternative forms of urban development has increased. However, since the 1990s Auckland has experienced a rapid growth in various types of higher-density housing (Dupuis & Dixon, 2002; Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011), influenced by pro-development policies and legislation that have encouraged forms of residential ‘intensification’ (e.g., Auckland Regional Growth Forum, 1999). As such, the strong emphasis on housing intensification and compact urban growth laid out in The Auckland Plan (Auckland Council, 2012) is not surprising. However, once again, this policy direction has led to controversy and hostility from a vocal minority of Aucklanders, and this has attracted considerable media attention, much of which has focused on negative aspects of increasing densities and the animosity of Aucklanders towards anything other than detached housing (e.g., Orsman, 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2016; & Tutty, 2015; Quax, 2013).

Recently, there have also been reports of outrage at “out of scope” changes to the Unitary Plan to include “significantly more development of townhouses and apartments in suburbs which have traditionally had one dwelling per section” (Slade, 2016). Particular affront was reportedly taken as these changes were made “without consultation”, leading to claims that the council’s process was “undemocratic” and “tramp[ing] on people’s rights” (Slade, 2016). However, in the eventual High Court ruling, the zone changes were deemed legal and the appeals against them rejected (Albany North Landowners v Auckland Council, 2017). While accepting the judge’s decision, Sally Hughes,
chairwoman for the ‘Character Coalition’, declared that, although “it may have been legal … it was morally wrong” and “denied … ratepayers any form of natural justice” (Collins, 2017). The co-articulation of community and morality is a common trope in place-protective discourses, and is often used to frame arguments for the safeguarding of a public good against developments considered nefarious and inappropriate (Collins & Kearns, 2013). I argue the ‘New Zealand Dream’ of the quarter acre plot, the ‘leafy’ suburb and the detached house jointly form a cogent socio-spatial vision (see, Section 2.4.1) of what Baumgartner (1988) calls the moral order of the suburb. Thus, a distinctive suburban character and sense of morality congeal and frame the opposition of groups who identify material intrusions against those values.

In seeking local resident acceptance, in addition to the actual planned outcomes, the perceived morality and justice of the development consenting processes is suggested to be of significant importance. Examining the intensification process in Auckland, Dolan (2015), reports that the perception of a fair and transparent process to stakeholders and the public can be more important than focussing on specific outcomes. Equally, Salmon (2015: 54) comes to similar conclusions in his review of the challenges encountered during the Unitary Plan process, suggesting a “lack of social trust in Auckland may have been a barrier to achieving higher levels of residential density” during the proposal’s development. Although the council executed an extensive public consultation during the development process, it is questionable whether they have managed to achieve an effective level of social trust with the public in its intensification process. As the Council continues to advance its quality, compact city vision the level of trust and public ‘buy-in’ will likely prove crucial in confronting resistance.

With the final public notification of the UP in August 2016 coinciding with the election of a new Auckland mayor, former leader of the Labour party, Phil Goff, there is perhaps a chance to reenergise and reaffirm the council’s aspirations for a quality, compact city. Many political commentators agreed that the introduction of the new plan heralded a final goodbye to the “Half Gallon, Quarter Acre Pavlova Paradise” (Mitchell, 1975), but while some welcomed this ‘pivotal moment’ as the right move for a city that must move “Upwards, outwards and onwards” rather than “downwards, inwards and backwards” (Freeman, 2016), others have continued to malign the plan as a threat to the city’s character, heritage and lifestyle. The public debate surrounding the introduction of the UP has played out for over three years, with claims, opinions and much emotive diatribe spread in all directions, but with the Plan now finally operative (save for a few continuing appeals) it has, for the most part, been welcomed as a “bold step in the right direction” (Macfie, 2016).
Yet, while forms of land-use intensification have long played a part of Auckland’s urban growth, many negative perceptions of such housing types remain and studies have continued to report that Aucklanders’ “aspiration towards detached suburban housing remains strong” (Haarhoff et al., 2012: 200). Thus, while there are an increasing number of Aucklanders living in higher-density dwellings, there is evidence of an enduring preference for low-density standalone housing (DTZ New Zealand, 2005; Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; Witten & Abrahamse, 2011), even with the reportedly rising resident satisfaction in higher-density housing (Haarhoff et al., 2012; Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016). This seemingly resolute preference for low-density neighbourhoods certainly has a long history, and is a continuation of colonial and post-colonial ‘New Zealand dream’ of single-family home ownership discussed in Section 3.2. While more recent research has begun to unpack this seemingly fixed aspiration for detached dwellings (Saville-Smith & James, 2010; Mead, 2013; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015), it is also important to consider the reasons why such a perception may continue to exist, even after several decades of policies supporting urban intensification.

4.2.1 Familiar But Not Favoured

The current conflict between the Council’s ‘compact city’ aspirations and the apparent prevailing desire of Auckland residents for low-density standalone housing, risks undermining the plan’s intensification agenda – particularly given the government’s expressed support for the removal of restrictions on peripheral urban developments. Although it has been estimated that 40 per cent of Aucklanders will live in a form of attached housing at some point in their life (ARC, 2010) – and this proportion is continuing to rise – there are a number of concerning problems for the Council if the objectives of the Auckland Plan continue to be at odds with the aspirations of the majority of the city’s residents. It would be erroneous to consider a growing proportion of higher-density dwellings as a causal indicator of growing market acceptance. Rapidly rising house prices diminish the housing options available for people on lower incomes and may force a move into higher-density dwellings, not because it suits their needs, but because it is the only affordable option (Witten & Carroll, 2011). If the growing number of neighbourhoods with higher-density living spaces in the city were inhabited by people who aspired to live elsewhere, it could create transient communities and areas with high levels of tenant ‘churn’ and this would surely damage or waste the long-term potential of such places (Haarhoff et al., 2012). Therefore it is important to better understand the complexity of residents’ housing aspirations and the nature of their apparent aversion to higher densities. If people are indeed living in higher-density dwellings, but with aspirations for a different living environment, it is crucial
to consider the trade-offs residents are making, and what trade-offs are more or less palatable to this growing population of higher-density dwellers.

But as mentioned above, the construction of higher-density dwellings is nothing new to Aucklanders. To an extent it runs counter to the theme of The Auckland Plan that urban intensification has already been the *modus operandi* for some time. As shown in Figure Eight, during the 1990s there were already more building consents for infill housing than greenfield developments and through the early 2000s. Also, up until the GFC, consents were increasingly for attached residential buildings, which most commonly equates to forms of medium-density housing (MDH) in Auckland (see, Figure Seven). However, even with this increase in MDH developments, it seems that residents may not be *acclimatising* to higher densities.

**4.2.2 Deregulated Intensification: Auckland Apartments and Leaky Buildings**

One explanation for entrenched antipathy towards higher-density housing is the poor quality and inadequate planning of many such developments in New Zealand, as a consequence of the *laissez-faire* approach introduced during planning system reforms of the 1990s. Preval, Chapman and Howden-Chapman (2010) speculate that a lack of successful local examples of intensified urban environments in New Zealand may have led their respondents to be less likely to personally desire living in those environments. Their research indicates that housing preferences were often influenced by perceptions of current examples of higher-density housing, even if they did support some of the goals of intensification in principle. In contrast, those with more direct experiences of such developments are more likely to genuinely prefer them, beyond just approving in principle.
Chapter 4 Auckland’s Future Density and Detached Aspirations

Investigating this contention is a central concern to this thesis, with a particular interest in the housing aspirations of younger New Zealanders.

The RMA and Building Act 1991 have been implicated in the notoriously poor quality and bad planning of urban developments during this time (Dupuis & Dixon, 2002; Murphy, 2008). The loosening of planning controls during the 1990s led to a speculative boom in residential apartment building in Auckland’s CBD, causing a 92 per cent increase in the resident population of the city centre from 1991-2006. There was a high demand for such dwellings. The opening up of the central city allowed for more urban living in Auckland and offered affordable housing for local and international students, migrants and others working and studying in the central city (Friesen, 2009). However, many of the apartments and town-houses built during this time were of poor quality and design and have consistently underperformed for their occupants – potentially damaging the image of higher-density dwelling in Auckland (HNZ, 2004; Syme, McGregor and Mead, 2005; Waghorn, 2011). While most Auckland residents have never lived in or experienced these inner-city dwellings directly, stories of the ‘blight’ that ‘slum developments’ of ‘shoebox apartments’ was causing upon the city skyline proliferated in the media (e.g., Gibson, 2005; Orsman, 2005; Watkin, 2003).

The systematic failure of a novel weather-proofing system used in buildings during this time has also resulted in many apartments and several high-profile residential developments succumbing to what has become known as the ‘leaky buildings crisis’. This crisis remains an on-going legal, public policy and construction industry liability issue relating to numerous timber-framed buildings, mainly constructed between 1994 to 2004, that suffer from weather-tightness issues (Alexander et al., 2011). It has been estimated to have affected between 22,000 and 89,000 dwellings, with a total economic cost estimated as high as NZ$ 11 billion (PWC, 2009). The substantial number of buildings affected has led successive governments to seek resolution to the problem through “special legislative apparatus to deal with the sheer volume of cases and litigants” (New Zealand Law Commission, 2012, cited in Allen, N., 2016: 21), including passing the Weathertight Homes Resolution Services Act 2006. The RMA and the Building Act 1991 have been criticised for creating a regulatory environment in which such a catastrophic building-quality oversight could occur (May, 2003; Alexander et al., 2011; Murphy, 2014; Howden-Chapman, 2015). May (2003: 398) argues that the regulatory regime “... placed too much faith on self-correction of the market place as a means of control”, while Alexander et al. (2011: 38) suggests that the financial fallout from “the leaky building syndrome is an exemplar of the economic failure of light-handed regulation”. The Building Act 2004 was introduced as a regulatory response to the crisis and set clear performance standards for health, safety and sustainable development –
although the added regulation contained within the act has subsequently been implicated in Auckland’s current housing affordability ‘crisis’ through constricting the rate of housing construction at a time of increasing demand (Brebner, 2014: 217). Beyond the economic damage, Howden-Chapman (2015: 66) points out that “many people who purchased leaky buildings suffered severe psychological as well as financial stress”. Unfortunately, at a time when higher-density dwellings offer a potential fix to the drastic need for more affordable and sustainable residential housing stock they have become embroiled in a crisis that threatens to deepen consumer mistrust of these dwelling types.

Alongside the 1989 Local Government Act (LGA), the RMA has also reduced the capacity of local councils to influence urban development patterns. Devolution of administration under the LGA, with responsibilities being split between regional authorities and territorial local authorities (TLAs), has reduced performance capacities and impeded long-term strategic planning (Swaffield, 2012). The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) in particular has been criticised by planning scholars for a lack of guidance in the RMA’s implementation, resulting in minimal strategic co-operation between regional and local or city councils in their environmental planning (Ericksen et al., 2004; Vallance et al., 2012). The cumulative impact on urban planning has been a haphazard positioning of new developments and intensification in unsuitable areas without adequate access to public transport or amenities (ARGF, 2007; Waghorn, 2011). In 1999 the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (ARGS) was introduced by the Auckland Regional Growth Forum (ARGF) to promote cooperative strategic planning across multiple levels of local governance. Partly as a response to the negative outcomes of the fragmented existing governance structure, ARGS made explicit the desire for Auckland to grow in a manner that sustained “strong supportive communities; a high-quality living environment; a region that is easy to get around; and protection of the coast and surrounding natural environment” (ARGF, 1999: 2).

Despite the strategy explicitly stating that the most appropriate and desirable spaces for intensification were in urban centres and along transport corridors, it is highly debateable whether development patterns through the years subsequent to the ARGS followed this form. Indeed, the ARGF (2007) acknowledged by their own evaluation several years later that the strategy had largely failed to deliver a strong mandate for integration and management of growth. The city’s development through the significant growth of the 1990s and 2000s largely occurred without clear strategic direction or future planning considerations. It is therefore highly likely that this ad hoc residential urban intensification has done more harm than good in terms of transforming New Zealanders’ views towards urban intensification and higher-density living environments. It is within this context that,
once again, a comprehensive growth strategy, the Unitary Plan, is being implemented to encourage a more integrated and carefully planned intensification of the city. What could make the critical difference in this case, compared with the ARGS, is the amalgamation of the region’s TLAs and regional authority into the Auckland Council, with a legal responsibility to implement and manage a spatial plan for the region as a whole. Furthermore, the Unitary Plan is more than a growth strategy; it merges dozens of previous rulebooks into a single regulatory spatial plan – becoming the principal planning document for the region.

In sum, the planning reforms discussed here and the wider deregulation of the housing sector (particularly the removal of state controls over mortgage rates) have been criticised for resulting in declining housing affordability and home ownership for lower-income and even middle-income New Zealanders (Cheyne & Freeman, 2006: 464; Dixon & Dupuis, 2003; Thorns, 2009; Witten & Carroll, 2011). Furthermore, they are partially responsible for a history of higher-density housing developments in Auckland that have often provided inadequate and problematic living environments for well over a decade. The negative reputation of these earlier developments now threaten to undermine plans for a more dynamic and resilient urban future. Nevertheless, the ratification of Auckland’s Unitary Plan offers the chance for a more clear and integrated vision for the region as a whole. The implementation of a planning document with ‘teeth’ presents a novel opportunity for Auckland to achieve more appropriate forms of urban intensification and to produce better examples of higher-density living environments in the future.

4.3 Unpacking Housing Aspirations and Preferences

The discussion above has shown that, persistently, most Auckland residents profess an aspiration to live in a standalone house in the suburbs. However, it is becoming clear from recent research that there is an increasing proportion of residents within younger and older adult life stages who are willing to trade off density for particular neighbourhood characteristics (e.g., Allen, N., 2016; Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; Haarhoff et al., 2012; Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Waghorn, 2011). Even so, the detached standalone house remains the most commonly constructed residential dwelling in Auckland and New Zealand (see, Figure Seven). This section provides an overview of several factors considered to be influential in maintaining the prevalence of detached standalone housing in New Zealand. These factors include the character of New Zealand’s housing industry, enduring cultural norms, and recent history of urban planning policies. The argument presented is that cumulatively this situation has led to an increasing industry bias and preference for building large, expensive detached houses, not necessarily reflective of what many Aucklanders want or need. Following this discussion,
Chapter 4 Auckland’s Future Density and Detached Aspirations

the final section of this chapter will advance the contention that there exists a significant proportion of Aucklanders, particularly younger residents, whose housing preferences are not adequately provided for by the city’s current housing stock.

4.3.1 Are We Building The Housing We Want or Need?

One potential explanation for the continued prevalence of detached housing is the institutionalisation of cultural norms associated with the ‘New Zealand Dream’ of home ownership. Developers and construction companies are more experienced in building ‘greenfield’ detached houses and are geared towards the production of these types of dwellings (Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010). Murphy (2011) argues housing production in New Zealand is characterised by the ‘contract method’, where land is converted into individual sites and housing is constructed by individual builders contracted by individual consumers, which has a significant impact on the operation of the housing market. This individualistic character is arguably tied to the ‘New Zealand dream’ tradition of home ownership, with the ideal being the building of one’s own home on a privately-owned plot of land. Consequently there is a high percentage of ‘tailor made’ bespoke housing construction in New Zealand and this has been argued as one of the reasons why it has proven difficult to ramp up construction of new housing in Auckland following the GFC (Allison & Parker, 2014). Similarly, Eaqub and Eaqub (2015) argue the ‘cottage industry’ character of the house-building industry in New Zealand is a significant impediment to increasing the rate of construction. With over two-thirds of all house building done by ‘micro-firms’ of fewer than five employees or sole traders, most builders do not have the financial and labour capacity to build more than a few homes a year. The capacity, experience and expectations of builders limit the potential scope for ramping up production. Furthermore, the predominance of bespoke home building favours the construction of housing for higher income consumers and limits the construction of larger multi-dwelling buildings that could provide more affordable housing choices.

This situation is not dissimilar to the predominance of masonry (brick and stone) methods of construction in the UK. This is the traditional method for building housing in the UK and currently accounts for most of the existing stock and as much as 85 per cent of new build (Barlow, 2000; Ross, 2002). However, akin to bespoke housing in New Zealand, its preponderance is paradoxical, since its construction is costly, inflexible and inefficient compared to alternative methods such as pre-fabrication (Barker, 2003; 2004; Ross, 2002). Thus, there have been policy-based attempts to encourage the marketability of alternative methods in order to ‘ramp-up’ construction and create a more demand responsive supply of affordable and environmentally sustainable accommodation.
Lovell and Smith’s (2010) analysis of the UK housing market’s ‘lock-in’ to masonry methods provides some clues as to the causes of industry resistance to more efficient and cheaper construction of housing. They suggest that, while arguments against housing innovation are often based on financial costs and benefits, in practice, it is social and cultural economies that are critical in perpetuating the dominance of traditional construction methods. In particular, market inertia is achieved through an active performance of resistance to alternatives within the masonry industry assemblage.

Alongside intra-industry competition, builders and developers are influenced by their perceptions of the consumer-demand and marketability of different types of housing. So although there may be an increasing demand for more compact dwellings, there is a lag between acceptance of higher-density dwellings and the level of demand builders believe exists for such dwellings within the market. For example, Hobsonville Point has been developed in a public-private partnership between the government and several development and building companies as a leading edge residential development. The area includes detached and attached houses and several apartment buildings built at higher densities than found in traditional New Zealand suburbs (Opit & Kearns, 2014). Recently, Salmon (2015) has reported from interviews with Auckland urban policy decision makers who discuss Hobsonville Point, commenting: “a lot of those partners were quite sceptical about the typology they were being asked to provide ... they were almost coerced into providing [higher-density dwellings] by essentially a public institution and that process revealed that they perhaps didn’t know their market as well as they thought they did”. Salmon’s (2015: 28) research also reveals that the influence of the single family home as a “traditional cultural institution” has remained important in the plan-writing process, yet has become much less influential in “shaping actual market behaviour” as people make “pragmatic choices about housing type and location, and transport to work”. It would seem that while constructing standalone dwellings remains the focus of most developers and political conservatives, there is mounting evidence of a substantial and mostly unmet demand for alternative, smaller dwelling types.

While a pragmatic attitude towards housing may be shifting preferences towards more smaller affordable dwellings constructed at higher densities, the scale and planning of the Hobsonville Point development is currently unique within Auckland and the affordability of even a government-owned development such as this has been questioned (Austin, 2011; Opit & Kearns, 2014). It is now generally accepted that there is a serious shortage of affordable homes for those on modest incomes in New Zealand (Howden-Chapman, 2015).
This problem has worsened considerably over recent decades as new property construction has tended to be characterised by large, relatively expensive housing catering for the top end of the market. Census data from 2013 indicates the significance of this disparity across New Zealand, with around 70 per cent of new households composed of just one or two members, yet over 70 per cent of new houses constructed having four or more bedrooms. Although there is a growing shortage in supply of smaller two to three bedroom houses, some commentators have suggesting that unaffordability is a product of Generation Y’s unrealistic desire to live in larger houses. For example, one real estate company CEO stated that:

“Instead of a five-bedroom house, maybe it’s only a three-bedroom house … We’d all love to have four-bedroom homes with ensuites, games rooms, etc. but for your first home you can’t always literally have what you want” (Gibson, 2014)

It would seem that, rather than necessarily desiring such large houses, Generation Y are making choices and trade-offs within a market that is currently offering a limited supply of alternative options. Such comments are, however, indicative of the false perceptions that can arise between generations in a society increasingly characterised by an ‘individualisation’ of social problems, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The larger size of the majority of new-build housing is suggestive of the buyers that such housing is built and designed for. Dwellings with four or more bedrooms are large and expensive, and are not
typically aimed at single people, young families or first-home buyers. In relation to dwelling size, the price-range of new housing is seemingly also not aimed at the first-home buyer market. Figure Nine shows the supply distribution of new properties into the market per year, divided into property value quartiles. While 25 years ago around 30 per cent of new homes constructed were priced in the lowest quartile (most affordable), today this price band accounts for only about 5 per cent. Conversely, new builds priced in the upper quartile (least affordable) have doubled in the same time period, now accounting for nearly 60 per cent of total supply per year (NZPC, 2012). Similar trends have been reported in Australia. For example, Gurran and Phibbs (2015) note that following the GFC, between 2011 and 2013, house prices in Sydney rose by 41 per cent and that less than 6 percent of homes sold or built nationally during this period were assessed to be affordable for low-income households.

Providing more affordable housing has become a significant political issue in New Zealand. Encouraging the construction of a greater variety of housing shapes and sizes, catering to a range of household budgets, could contribute to improving affordability. Eaqub and Eaqub (2015) identify this growing gap between the needs of younger people and the current supply of housing as a serious issue for government to solve. They also argue that affordable housing must be provided in the places where people actually desire to live. Many New Zealand regions have stagnating or shrinking populations, so while there may be an excess of more affordable housing in these places, demand for housing will not occur there, but in the places that offer access to work, services and other amenities (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015: 36).

A recent example of the importance of locating affordable housing in the right areas is in Christchurch, where “[r]ows of attached housing ... sit awaiting buyers around the city’s commuter belt” (McDonald, 2017). While compact dwellings reportedly remain popular in more central areas, new master-planned estates on the urban periphery, such as Pegasus (www.pegasus-town.co.nz), have struggled to attract buyers. Poorly located higher-density subdivisions lead to negative perceptions of compact dwellings and can jeopardise their future desirability to residents and builders alike. For example, Mike Greer is the owner of the company building homes in the Pegasus estate. In an interview in 2014 he stated that he believed higher-density homes to be “the way of the future” (McDonald, 2014), yet, following the difficulty in selling compact housing located in this fringe development, he recently stated that they “certainly won’t be building any more of those” (McDonald, 2017). Therefore, it is of critical import that more affordable housing is provided in Auckland where there exists demand and not just limited to locations of least resistance. That is, intensification needs to occur in areas where
most people desire to live, not only where resource consents are more easily secured and local resident resistance is expected to be lower or less likely.

4.3.2 The Missing Middle in Density

As discussed in Section 3.2.5, changes to New Zealand’s regulatory policies and fiscal conditions during the late 1990s and early 2000s led to a boom in inner-city residential apartment construction in Auckland. However, this boom has seemingly outstripped residential demand in the centre, while the rest of the city has seen only moderate increases in density since the 1980s. Yeoman and Akehurst’s (2015: 5) ‘The Housing We’d Choose’ study for Auckland Council found that there was a significant oversupply of apartments relative to demand within the Auckland central area (essentially the CBD and the innermost suburbs, such as Grafton and Parnell). That is, there was found to be a greater supply of apartments in the central city than there were Aucklanders desiring to live in them. Since there is an oversupply of high density housing in the centre, which rapidly declines thereafter, it could be argued that there is a ‘missing middle’ in the city’s provision of housing.

Figure 10 The population density gradient of Auckland in 1981 and 2013 (people/ha across distance from CBD in Km) (Mead, 2013: 15)

Analysis developed by Mead (2013), for Hill Young Cooper Ltd, provides further evidence of this ‘missing middle’ in Auckland’s urban density. Looking at Figure Ten we see the density of people per hectare living in Auckland separated into 5km bands extending outwards from the CBD. While in the
CBD there is provision of very high density dwellings, resulting in a density of over 60 people per hectare, this rapidly declines to half that rate soon after a 5 km distance from the CBD. The graph also shows that the population density gradient of Auckland was previously lower across the city, but particularly in the CBD, where there was almost no resident population until the high-rise investment boom of the 1990s and early 2000s.

This undersupply of medium-density dwelling types is further evident when the spatial distribution of higher-density dwellings is examined across the Auckland isthmus. Figure 11 provides a map of the Auckland isthmus divided into census area units (CAU). Each CAU is shaded in 10 percent bands representing the percentage of dwellings where two or more dwellings are joined together (i.e. attached dwellings) that were present at the time of the 2013 census. Again, we see that outside of the CBD at around the 5km band the number of attached dwellings rapidly declines. While over 80 percent of dwellings within the first 5km from the CBD are attached (mostly high-rise, high-density apartments), less than 50 percent of dwellings are attached in first CAUs directly outside of this approximate perimeter, with most having less than a third of their dwellings being of an attached type and some around a quarter.

As with many cities, these central suburbs are some of the best serviced by the public transport network, with the greatest number of services and frequencies and the greatest density of jobs and amenities (Auckland Transport, 2015; 2016). The reduced cost of commuting to access the high proportion of employment opportunities and services offered in the CBD, particularly through use of public or active transport, has been shown to have a significant impact on levels of affordability (Mattingly & Morrissey, 2014). Consequently, when both housing and transport costs are considered, central suburban areas on the Auckland isthmus could hold the potential for a greater provision of more affordable housing than developments on the urban periphery. However, high land costs make the current stock of detached housing in these central suburbs highly unaffordable. A solution would be to increase the supply of medium-density housing across these suburbs in order to allow a greater access to the lower transport costs they could provide. There is also international evidence of an increasing desire on the part of residents to live in urban areas that reduce the necessity of using a private automobile through providing greater public and active transport options (Newman & Kenworthy, 2011; Litman, 2012). This trend has been most notable amongst the Generation Y age cohort (Goodwin & van Dender, 2013; Hopkins, 2017; & Stephenson, 2016) and has been associated with their preference to reside in areas that provide greater opportunities for socialising and access to an ‘urban lifestyle’ (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008; Litman, 2012; Walker & Li, 2007).
Thus, there would seem to be evidence of an undersupply of medium-density dwelling types located within the high-amenity central suburbs of Auckland. While densities have increased in the last decade, mainly through infill development (MBIE, 2013b), these central neighbourhoods remain predominated by detached housing types. A greater provision of low-medium density housing could provide a greater level of access to more affordable housing within these high-amenity neighbourhoods. Housing types such as low-rise apartments and terrace housing (also known as continuous frontage) could provide a greater diversity of dwelling types catering for the more diverse living arrangement and greater uncertainty of contemporary housing pathways, as discussed in Chapter Two. At the same time, these medium-density typologies provide less of a visible contrast to existing residential character and could therefore be less susceptible to the significant place-protective action (Devine-Wright, 2009) stimulated by proposals for medium-rise and high-rise apartment buildings.

![Figure 11](image.png)

**Figure 11** A map of the Auckland isthmus displaying percentage groupings of attached dwellings located within each census area unit in 2013 (Source: Statistics New Zealand)

The Opticos website (http://missingmiddlehousing.com/) called ‘Missing Middle’ is aimed at providing a collective resource for planners and architects seeking to implement low-rise attached housing types. It also provides a visual demonstration of the types of housing that might be expected within
the ‘missing middle’ and is displayed in Figure 12. These types are indicated to fit between mid-rise apartment buildings and detached single-family homes and include (from higher density to lower): multiplex apartments, townhouses, bungalow courts, courtyard apartments, triplex, fourplex and duplexes. Auckland already contains examples of these housing types across the city. However, they remain relatively rare in comparison to detached housing types. It would seem, then, in accordance with the research of Yeoman and Akehurst (2015), that there is currently demand for a greater supply of ‘middle’ housing types than is currently available.

Figure 12 A representation of the ‘Missing Middle’ medium-density housing types
(http://missingmiddlehousing.com/)

In the near future the provision of the ‘missing middle’ or low-rise attached dwelling types in Auckland can be expected to increase significantly. While opposition groups have commonly argued against the plan by drawing on imagery of inappropriate apartment buildings dwarfing neighbouring suburban housing, it is these low-rise ‘missing middle’ dwelling types that are most likely to eventuate as a result of Unitary Plan zoning changes (Sayes, 2016). On the one hand, through the consenting of Auckland’s Unitary Plan, these housing types are likely to become more common throughout suburban Auckland. Since, under the ‘Mixed Housing Suburban’ and ‘Mixed Housing Urban’ zones, covering much of the Auckland central isthmus, attached housing types are more clearly defined as permissible. Yet, on the other hand, the compounding of the many land use controls contained within the plan will likely serve to impede the development of larger residential buildings (such as high-rise apartments) from being commercially viable in most of these zones.

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16 The Unitary Plan zoning maps can be viewed at:
https://unitaryplanmaps.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/uprecomendation/
4.3.3 Is There a Demand for Higher-Density Living?

Building smaller dwellings at higher densities has been proposed by a number of researchers to be a strategic method of potentially providing more affordable housing options and creating more socially sustainable, healthy and resilient urban communities (e.g., Elkin et al., 1991; Howden-Chapman, 2015; Jenks, et al., 1996; Williams, et al., 2010). There is also evidence, as indicated above, of the existence of a growing subsection of New Zealanders for whom traditional suburban housing may not meet their needs. Associated with these needs is the rising cost of housing in New Zealand’s major cities. Smaller and more affordable housing types are becoming a pragmatic choice for those willing to trade off higher densities to attain housing in preferred and familiar neighbourhoods. However, it is argued that the majority of housing constructed in New Zealand is currently priced well beyond the means of most first home buyers and those with an average household income (Howden-Chapman, 2015). Instead of building more compact attached housing types as characterised in the ‘missing middle’ diagram above (see, Figure Twelve), large detached dwellings have remained in favour with builders seeking to maximise profits and minimise risk. This section problematises the notion of New Zealander’s overwhelming and enduring preference for detached housing and revisits the life course approach as a crucial element in understanding people’s housing preferences. As discussed in Chapter Two, the influence of life course factors in housing decision making is a key element in Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) ‘Housing Pathways’ model, the guiding theoretical framework for the thesis research.

Living in a detached suburban house with a garden is held as the traditional way of dwelling within New Zealand and is closely related to the ‘New Zealand dream’ of home ownership and the nuclear family. However, this preference to live in a standalone house is often envisioned as a long-term goal, in the same way that having a family is also an aspiration, but not necessarily an absolute preference at that particular time (ARC, 2010: 21). As such, it is crucial to realise – and therefore incorporate into our understanding of residential preference – the influence that life course and individual biographies have on people’s stated aspirations and preferences (e.g., Abu-Lughod & Foley, 1960; Kendig, 1984; Michelson, 1977; Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008; Wulff et al, 2010). If we look at preferences in terms of ‘life-cycle factors’ research has consistently found that, while families with children are most likely to prefer standalone dwellings in low-density neighbourhoods, those without children (young adults and older empty nesters) are “more amenable to city-style living” (Lewis and Baldassare, 2010; Schwanen & Mokhtarian, 2003; Senoir et al., 2004). New Zealand studies cognisant of the importance of lifecycle factors on residential preference report similar findings (e.g., Haarhoff et al., 2012; Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015).
Studies conducted in Auckland suggest that the city’s changing demographics are likely to cause a “future ... strong demand for low rise apartments because they hold broad appeal across a range of household types and lifecycle stages” (ARC, 2010: 41). Understood this way, research that suggests higher-density living environments are not the aspiration of most people neglects or misunderstands the crucial dimension of the life course. Howley et al., (2009: 7), for example, find that most people living in newer higher-density developments in Dublin have aspirations to relocate to lower-density areas, which leads them to argue that “policymakers still have some way to go before they can claim to have created residential environments that meet liveability as well as sustainability criteria”. But the residents are also found to be mainly young and childless, and so it could equally be contended that what liveability means is necessarily life-stage dependant. While Howley et al. (2009) acknowledge that most of their participants had chosen to live in these relatively high-density areas because they were attracted to them, they construe the participants’ desire to move to a lower density area at some point in the future as a failing of compact dwelling types.

This is not to suggest that more compact dwellings in higher-density neighbourhoods cannot be attractive to families with children and serve their needs better. Research conducted by Carroll, Witten and Kearns (2011) found that as the inner-city population of Auckland has grown there has been an increase in the presence of families with children living in apartment buildings in the city. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has so far been mostly ignored by local governments, urban planners and builders slow to recognise the existence of families living in these dwelling types (Easthope & Tice, 2011; Gleson & Sipe, 2006; Sherry & Easthope, 2016; Whitzman & Mizrachi, 2009). However, there have been positive steps made by the Auckland Council who affirm in their ‘City Centre Masterplan’ that they will “make the city centre more family-friendly, pedestrian-friendly and environmentally-friendly” and “meet the needs of a growing and changing residential population” (Auckland Council, 2012). It is critical that in the future the needs of these apartment-dwelling families are taken into account. For, if the current stock of apartment buildings does not perform for many of their residents, it raises questions about the social sustainability of such dwellings.

Appealing to a broader range of households is surely a valuable aspiration for planners and designers of compact dwellings and higher-density environments. However, a lifecycle model of housing preferences incorporates the process of moving house into residential preferences and so the desire to live in a different form of housing at a later stage is not in this case seen as necessarily a failing of compact housing – or a rationale for avoiding its construction (until, presumably, it appeals to all households at all life stages). Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) ‘Housing Pathways’ model presented in
Chapter Two, suggests that contemporary lives are complex and unpredictable, and so people’s housing trajectories have become less clear and less certain than in previous generations. As such, a greater variety of housing types is likely to better accommodate households as they face less material and temporal certainty and greater potential residential mobility. Furthermore, a greater variety of dwellings, particularly of more compact and affordable dwellings, spread throughout a city is critical to the formation and preservation of resilient urban communities. Providing households with the ability to dwell in familiar and desired neighbourhoods, even when facing lifestyle and life stage changes, helps sustain support networks, social and familial relationships, and health and wellbeing. Again, in ‘The Auckland Plan’ the Council does seem to recognise this link, stating the importance of allowing residents to “stay or return to established neighbourhoods where family connections are a priority”. To facilitate residential mobility within established communities the Council also suggest they wish to encourage a greater range of housing options so that residents can “trade size and amenity” within the same neighbourhood (Auckland Council, 2012).

Research conducted in Auckland for the Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ) (Saville-Smith & James, 2010: 117) supports this ambition, finding that “younger householders want dwellings that are located in places to which they are attached”, but they currently “see their preference for home ownership as largely unobtainable”. Appreciating the specific preferences of younger Aucklanders, constructing more affordable, quality, compact dwellings, that are well planned and extensively available, would help create more accessible urban environments and contribute to the resilience of communities more broadly. Furthermore, with a wider variety of high-quality apartments available, acceptable compromises can be made by people willing to trade-off the increased density with benefits of affordability, reduced traveling times and costs, and proximity to amenities (Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011).

There is statistical evidence of an existing demand for more compact housing types in New Zealand. A study of housing preferences completed in 2009 found that the percentage of Aucklanders who, when surveyed, indicated they would consider living in compact housing has remained stable at around 31-40 per cent for over 10 years (Environmental Awareness Survey, 2009). Since around 75 per cent of Auckland’s housing stock is low-rise standalone dwellings, Waghorn (2011) argues that this suggests demand for a greater supply of higher-density housing types than is available. Significantly, the housing preferences study also found that younger age groups were more likely to prefer smaller more centrally located houses. Similarly, research by Preval, Chapman and Howden-Chapman (2010) found that while smaller houses were not popular with people in their 30s or 40s with children, younger and
older individuals reported a greater interest in such dwellings. Since New Zealand has an ageing population and household sizes are expected to shrink in the coming decades, it is likely that the demand for more compact dwellings will continue to increase. More recently, Yeoman and Akehurst’s (2015: 5) research for Auckland Council confirms that, while the majority of households currently residing in Auckland still indicate a preference for detached dwellings, this demand is “more than satisfied by the existing stock of housing”. In seeking to assess how the city’s housing stock aligns with housing preferences, their research also suggests there remains a “significant under-supply of units and apartments” to meet demand in Auckland’s suburbs (Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015: 5). Taken together, then, there is considerable evidence that younger generations may be developing different aspirations to those of their parents’ generation; that they may be more amenable to trading off density for location; and that future demand for higher-density designs is highly likely to increase.

4.4 Conclusion

For over 20 years the position of Auckland’s local government towards future urban development has been one of broad support for the compact city approach. This aspiration accords with the move towards a compact city approach made by larger Australian cities and follows the development of a strong critique of low-density suburban environments within the social sciences and schools of urban planning. However, attempts to guide the city towards realising this aspiration have been challenging and often ineffective. Opposition from vocal community groups, journalists, bloggers and members of the media, and more recently central government, has compounded to largely obstruct the intensification of targeted locations, such as inner suburbs and town-centres. Instead, ‘deregulated’ intensification has occurred rather more sporadically and commonly in areas less suitable for increasing residential densities.

More recently, the ratification of the Unitary Plan has, perhaps, bolstered the potential for more appropriate forms of intensification. Nevertheless, The UP has continued to meet tough resistance from home owners in affluent neighbourhoods and from political conservatives. The Council’s commitment to intensification as a means to improving affordability and encouraging sustainable urban growth has been buffeted by a whirlwind of criticism. The Council’s approach has been blamed for escalating the city’s affordability problems and denounced for threatening destruction to the city’s distinctive residential landscape and historic suburban character.

Perhaps the biggest test for the Council’s plans, however, is whether compact dwellings can be built to a high enough quality and in the right locations to be attractive to a broad spectrum of residents,
while also being affordable for the city’s next generation of home buyers. New Zealand is not a country traditionally associated with higher-density dwellings and what history it has is mostly soured by poor quality buildings that have done little to endear them to their residents. It is not surprising, then, that research into housing preferences continues to indicate that the majority of New Zealanders aspire to buying a detached house. So, while higher-density dwellings may have become a more familiar sight on the urban landscape, it would seem at first glance they have yet to earn mainstream favour.

However, research into housing preferences at specific life stages has found that, while standalone housing is resolutely the preference of most families with children, younger and older generations are more amenable to higher-density dwellings and lifestyles (e.g., Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010). Examining housing preferences from a lifecycle perspective reveals the important distinction between a person’s aspirations for future housing and the choices and trade-offs that they make to meet their current housing needs. Many younger New Zealanders report their desire to buy a detached house just as that they wish to one day start a family. However, these same young adults may choose to live in higher-density dwellings and trade-off density to reside in preferred locations, attain an urban lifestyle or remain close to relatives and familiar neighbourhoods and communities during earlier life stages. Equally, older households whose children have left home are more likely to choose smaller dwellings that are more accessible and easier to maintain. Trends in residential mobility through the life course that indicate such preferences have been identified in recent studies of residential choice (e.g., Blaauboer, 2011; Feijten, Hooimerijer & Mulder, 2008; Hedman, 2013). Given the desire to remain in place, these residents and their communities are likely to benefit from having a range of housing types available within their existing neighbourhoods – allowing them to maintain social relationships and support networks.

It is troubling, then, that evidence suggests that the vast majority of housing does not serve the needs of these communities. Recent construction trends have favoured larger and more expensive houses, often on the urban periphery, that serve only the top quartile of the market – resulting in a serious shortage of more compact and affordable homes. Believed to be the most profitable and secure investment, and the most marketable housing type, arguably there remains a strong industry bias towards standalone housing. There is now a significant undersupply of medium density housing throughout the city, what has been termed the ‘missing middle’ of dwelling density. Evidence provided in this chapter also demonstrates the current oversupply of high density apartments within the CBD and the rapid reduction in population density and the provision of attached dwellings thereafter. The research of Yeoman and Akehurst (2015), Mead (2013) and Waghorn (2011) all suggest that, although
the detached house remains in high demand, current demand is sufficiently met by Auckland’s existing housing stock. Meanwhile, there remains an undersupply of medium-density housing types throughout the city. One of the principal aims of the Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan is to support the development of precisely these types of dwellings in high-demand areas where existing services and amenities can support increases in density. Considering the obstinate resistance to the Council’s ‘quality, compact city’ aspirations encountered in a number of suburbs, the lasting impact of this plan is still uncertain. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that the Council is acting only as a facilitator of intensification through its Unitary Plan; it is property developers and land owners who will enact these changes to Auckland’s landscape. Indeed, it is Auckland’s property owning communities themselves which will ultimately decide the shape of their neighbourhoods.

Having reviewed the broad history and recent trajectories of housing issues within Auckland, I now turn in the next chapter to outline the methodological approach I undertake in order to investigate the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of a group of young adults as they navigate through the city’s changing urban environment and inflating property market.
Chapter 5

Methodology: Theory and Rationale

5.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the theory and rationale behind this study’s mixed methods approach and describes the two research methods utilised within this study. It explains why such an approach was taken and how each of the research methods aligns with the objectives of this thesis. The structure of the chapter is as follows: first, an overview of the development of mixed methods research and its application within this thesis is provided; second, Q methodology is introduced and its distinctive logic and justifications are explained; third, Q’s existing and potential applications within human geography are reviewed; fourth, my second research method, qualitative interviews, are introduced and the nature and structure of my thematic analysis described. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research design.

5.2 Mixed Methods Research

This thesis employs a mixed methods research approach in order to address the research question. This approach allows for methodological choices that are driven by the nature of the research question and the objectives of the research without the limitations of aligning to a qualitative or quantitative paradigm. Within contemporary research there is a growing emphasis towards cross-disciplinary studies, increasing the demand and necessity for methodological plurality and capacity. An approach towards methodological plurality that has been growing in popularity since the 1980s has been ‘mixed methods research’ (MMR). Since the early 2000s there has been increasing interest in MMR within the social sciences as a pragmatic response to the so-called ‘paradigm wars’ that have largely presented quantitative and qualitative research as based on incompatible assumptions (Bryman, 2015). Proponents of the method (e.g., Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) have been keen to define the specific nature of the method and emphasise a number of key characteristics that distinguish good MMR. These aspects of MMR will be discussed below.

Simply put, MMR is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purpose of promoting breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007). Creswell and Plano
Clark (2007) argue it to be an intuitive and practical solution in situations where the mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study provides a better understanding of research problems than would be possible through either approach alone. With particular regard to social inquiry, Greene (2007) identifies that the “express purpose” for taking a mixed methods approach is because the multidimensionality and complexity of human experience requires more than a single perspective.

5.2.1 Conducting Appropriate MMR

Early definitions of MMR were methodological in focus and emphasised approaches that utilised several different research methods and paradigms in order to address common research questions (e.g., Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). While ostensibly still true, contemporary proponents, such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), suggest that over time MMR has become a discrete research methodology, developing its own worldview, vocabulary and techniques. Nevertheless, the historical argument for MMR and its central premise, that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a more comprehensive understanding of research problems, has remained a constant node for generative engagement.

In defining MMR, Creswell (2013) clarifies that mixed methods does not simply involve the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data, nor is it the collection of multiple forms of qualitative or quantitative data within a study. Instead, it is the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in a manner that integrates the data collection and analysis of both. Therefore, to realise the advantage of analytical synthesis offered by the approach, Creswell (2013) stipulates five defining elements of appropriate mixed methods research:

1. Collect and analyse persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data;
2. Integrate the two forms of data concurrently or sequentially, in a way that give priority to one or to both;
3. Uses the procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study;
4. Frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and a theoretical lens; and
5. Combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study.

The organisation of my own research methodology follows these defining elements closely. My research combines Q methodology, itself a hybrid methodology, and qualitative interviewing.
value of the mixed method procedure, using Q analysis alongside interview data, has become well established within Q methodological research practice (Gallagher & Porock, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012: 81). Ramlo and Newman (2011) identify Q as a form of mixed method that predates even the term mixed methods research. As will be discussed below, William Stephenson invented Q methodology as a technique to objectively study subjectivity, an ambition that would seem to inherently require a mixed methods approach. As Ramlo and Newman (2011) assert, Q would therefore seem primed for incorporation within the wider discourse of MMR and could offer productive new avenues for pragmatic research design.

A crucial element to consider in designing appropriate MMR is definition four: framing the procedures within a single theoretical lens. The epistemological engagement between my theoretical framework, housing pathways, and my methods, Q methodology and thematic discourse analysis of interviews strengthens the basis of the analysis and the validity of my findings. Principally, Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach is utilised to provide a guiding theoretical framework for the research design and analysis within this thesis. As will be elucidated in the next chapter, the pathways framing of influences on the housing experience was integral to both the construction of the Q research tool and the initial structure of the thematic analysis. This is because both the Q study and the thematic analysis are integrated to address the same research question: how do the residential experiences of Generation Y influence their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification? Through a statistically guided interpretive analysis the Q study primarily addresses the objective of revealing the housing preferences and attitudes of Generation Y towards urban intensification. While the thematic discourse analysis of the interviews examines Generation Y’s housing pathway experiences and interrogates how they intersect with those stated preferences and attitudes towards intensification.

In addition, while both Q and thematic discourse analysis are methodologically distinct their shared social constructionist ontology presents the opportunity for productive engagement towards a common research inquiry. Although Q is at its core a statistical procedure both methods share an interpretive and textual nature within their analysis. The statistical and interpretive elements within Q methodology are strengthened and made more meaningful through the corroboration provided by qualitative interviews and thematic analysis. I argue that the combination of both methods allows me to attend to my research question and theorise the connections between young adults’ previous residential experiences and expressions of their housing preferences and attitudes urban intensification.
5.2.2 Critiques of MMR

There is an on-going and lively debate surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of MMR and while proponents (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson et al., 2007) present substantial arguments for its value they also recognise its application is not unproblematic. As discussed above, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods can draw on their individual strengths and be applied in such a way as to limit their weaknesses. Numbers can help add precision to qualitative data (texts and narratives) and words can help contextualise quantitative data (statistical analysis) (Schmeltz, 2012). Furthermore, within social inquiry MMR can provide a more complete understanding of the complexity of the human experience through convergence and corroboration of findings.

However, a number of important critiques of MMR must be considered. Firstly, a practical disadvantage that is commonly noted is that a mixed methods approach is time consuming and challenging for a single researcher to carry out. Given that multiple methods must be learnt and implemented within a single study this is no doubt a challenge. However, such difficulties can be anticipated and overcome through adequate preparation. Moreover, a mixed methods approach should be sought to answer questions that cannot be adequately addressed through a single paradigm method. Thus, the benefits of MMR should outweigh the disadvantages before the study begins.

The embedded methods and paradigm arguments are two related critiques of MMR that remain a considerable point of debate. The first argument is that research methods are ineluctably rooted in epistemological and ontological commitments and are, thus, irreconcilable within a single study (Bryman, 2015). That is to say, the choice to conduct discourse analysis, for example, necessitates a theoretical framing (paradigm) of social phenomena that is multiple and constructivist and is therefore incompatible with methods of positivist inquiry. To attempt to conduct research of this type would necessarily involve positioning one of the research methods within an unfeasible and undesirable epistemology and ontology (see, Hughes, 1990).

Closely related to this critique is the paradigm argument. It posits that qualitative and quantitative research are paradigms in which epistemological assumptions, values and methods are inextricably enmeshed (Bryman, 2015). Taking this view would leave methods belonging to either paradigm as irreconcilable within a single study. However, the premise of both critiques, that there are fixed epistemological and ontological associations with particular research methods, is questionable. It
would seem that within contemporary research the demarcations between paradigms are no longer so clearly defined. As Bergman (2010, 173) explains:

on closer inspection ... it is difficult to sustain these differences because qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques do not necessitate a particular view of the nature of reality ... or determine the truth value of data or the relationship between researcher and their research subject

So, while it is undeniably true that different paradigms are by their nature incommensurable, forms of quantitative and qualitative data, as tools of analysis, are not essentially bound to any specific set of epistemological or ontological presuppositions. Furthermore, Bergman (2010) argues for the adoption of the term ‘worldview’ over paradigm in order to signal a more flexible and adaptive methodological approach that makes reconciliation between the two paradigms less problematic.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) argue that most research projects can be best described as positioned somewhere along a continuum between traditionally quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Instead of a linear continuum Ridenour and Newman (2008) describe a cyclic qualitative-quantitative continuum. They demonstrate that within the process of developing and testing theory both qualitative and quantitative researchers follow the same research cycle, involving: theory, literature review, hypothesis (theory), data, analysis, conclusions and hypothesis (data). What differentiates qualitative and quantitative research is where the project begins. Typically qualitative research begins with existing data and develops theories, while quantitative research tests theories through data analysis (see, Ramlo & Newman 2011). MMR presents the opportunity to ‘close the gap’ between both sides of the continuum, to both build and test theory. It is in this sense that mixed methods researchers see the approach as a ‘third research paradigm’ based on pragmatism.

Indeed, Q methodology can be seen as a manifest example of how a pragmatic methodology that contains both quantitative and qualitative elements can function synergistically. The use of Q methodology allows me to develop a data-driven hypothesis of the attitudes that young adults in Auckland may hold towards urban intensification. Meanwhile, my qualitative interviews give context to this data and allow me to theorise the connection between these attitudes and each of the participants’ housing pathways experience.

5.3 Q Methodology

This section provides a broad introduction to the development and foundation of Q methodology. Whilst the method was briefly introduced at the introduction of this thesis, some elaboration is
appropriate to provide a clear understanding of not only the application of Q within this study, but also of the broader logic and justifications contained within Q methodological research. It is, of course, important to always justify and consider any methodology used in research, but given Q’s relatively obscure status within the social sciences it is important to deliberate on such matters here. This chapter will consider the theory and rationale that empowers the application of Q to this study of young adults’ attitudes to urban intensification. To achieve this goal it will be important to refer to not only the original construction of the method by William Stephenson from the 1930s onwards and the basis on which it was founded, but also to comparable, more recent, applications of Q to fields of inquiry suitably relevant to urban geography. Relevant previous applications of Q have been vital to the construction of this study’s methodology, particularly as a guide to adapting Q to a discrete area of interest. Before this, though, I provide a brief overview of the historical development of Q methodology.

5.3.1 A Brief History of Q

Q methodology was developed by William Stephenson in the 1930s as an inversion of the more traditional factor analysis technique, known as ‘R’. Stephenson, holding a PhD in both psychology and physics, was highly familiar with the method as during his study at University College London he was employed and mentored by the celebrated British psychologist, Charles Spearman, who, at the turn of the century had invented factor analysis. Stephenson saw how R methodology, also known as ‘by-variable’ factor analysis, was commonly being used in the comparison of individuals in relation to particular psychological traits or characteristics, but had noticed that the atomistic nature of such measurements did not, and could not, fully reflect the personal characteristics or perspectives of any specific individual (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 10). The shortcomings of this technique motivated Stephenson to pursue a methodological system with a radically different ontological framework, and for quite different purposes, that would allow the psychological analysis of a specific individual’s traits, character and perspectives as a whole. His adaptation of factor analysis, first published in Nature (Stephenson, 1935), inverted the traditional by-variable technique so that instead of measuring a population of $n$ individuals through a number of $m$ tests, Q method would have a population of $n$ tests measured by $m$ different individuals (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 637). The attention therefore shifted from the test to the individual, consequently generating a ‘by-person’ factor analysis, or, as he called it, Q methodology. In essence, what was achieved by this technical manoeuvre was the ability to move beyond the atomistic analysis of traits across a population and to examine the perspectives of an individual, holistically.
Stephenson went further, developing his inverted factor analysis technique into an entirely separate and distinct research methodology. During this process of developing the technique and its theoretical underpinnings there was robust debate held between Stephenson and traditional R-technique researchers, most prominently with his recent colleague and employer Cyril Burt. Brown (1980: 10) describes the general reaction of Burt and the wider discipline of psychology to Stephenson’s novel ideas as “polite reserve”, a view that has “remained essentially unchanged over the years”. But the debate between Stephenson and Burt usefully functioned to clearly define Q as a completely new methodological approach, as “a complete break with the concepts of r-technique” with a focus on “an entirely new set of problems” (Burt & Stephenson, 1939, in Watts & Stenner, 2012: 14). Indeed, Stephenson had already alluded to the development of a distinct and separate methodology beyond the simple transposition of r-technique in his paper ‘The Inverted Factor Technique’ (1936).

Unfortunately, as Brown (1980) recounts, Q methodology is still erroneously tied to this inverted r-technique, which is necessarily limited, as (Stephenson, 1936) points out, to specific operations using units of measurement common to both rows and columns. The solution, which in essence created Q methodology as an entirely separate method of psychological analysis, was to present participants with a heterogeneous set of stimuli that they must actively engage with. Rather than passively being tested for traits, this method would allow participants to communicate their own subjectivity towards the specific topic of inquiry. The stimuli for their subjective response would be a set of items, the Q Set, which would be ranked directly by the participant using a “new unit of quantification” called “psychological significance” (Burt & Stephenson, 1939, in Watts & Stenner, 2012: 14). This psychological significance would be provoked from the participant by measuring their rank ordering of the Q set items as either greater or lesser than each of the others. This ranking process is known as the Q-sort, a process whereby the participant encounters each item individually and considers, for example, how significant, interesting or preferred it is and assigns it a corresponding rank compared to the rest (but more on this later). As Brown (1980: 19) explains, through this process a “fundamental transformation takes place” as the purpose of the research shifts from the measurement of “objectively scoreable traits which take meaning from the postulation of individual differences between persons, e.g., that individual a has more of trait A than does individual b” to one dealing “fundamentally with the individual’s subjectivity which takes meaning in terms of the proposition that person a values trait A more than B”. The outcome of this process is a data matrix where each row describes the subjective evaluations of an individual to each of the Q Set items. Critically, the placement of these items cannot be considered in isolation, as each
of the items is ranked or evaluated in relation to one other and, therefore, must be understood as a single, homogenous entity relative to the person who ranked them.

Through the development of Q methodology, as described above, Stephenson had achieved his goal of creating a methodological system capable of measuring the subjective traits, character and perspectives of individuals in a homogenous and holistic way. Three key elements are combined in Q methodology’s genesis: the initial adaptation of factor analysis by inversion of the cases and variable (the rows and columns of the data matrix), combined with a new unit of measurement, ‘psychological significance’, and the Q-sorting procedure conducted with participants. This specific form of data, collected through the Q-sort, “provides a sound and effective basis for the conduct of Q-technique factor analysis” allowing determination of levels of agreement and disagreement between any two people and a “direct and holistic comparison of their respective Q-sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 16). The resulting correlations (commonly displayed on a correlation matrix) can then, through factor analysis, be reduced to a smaller number of factors to which groups of persons who have rank ordered the Q set in a similar fashion are identified.

Despite the powerful potential of Stephenson’s new methodology and its radical new concerns, his efforts to establish this ontological break in psychology were mostly unsuccessful. However, during his later career in the US he continued to publish and teach Q methodology and importantly he wrote and published his definitive work on Q: The Study of Behaviour: Q Technique and its Methodology (1953). His influence in the US has been crucial in the continuation of Q, with many students being influenced by his ideas and applying the methodology to increasingly diverse domains of study. Perhaps most prominently, Professor Steven Brown of Kent State University and his book Political Subjectivity: Applications of Q Methodology in Political Science (1980), one of the most comprehensive guides to Q, particularly its statistical workings. However, Q returned to the UK and to psychology in the 1980s, with the work of Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers and their students inspired by a more constructivist and poststructuralist school of thought. So Q methodology had finally found a place in UK psychology, but now primarily as a discursive, constructivist and, therefore, essentially qualitative method. This reinvention of Q methodology as a qualitative research tool, but still with its robust statistical foundations, has in the last few decades led to its adoption within a broadening range of social science disciplines. As will be discussed below, this has increasingly been through application as a social constructionist research tool (Churruca et al., 2014; Curt 1994; Stainton Rogers, 1991; Stenner, 2008; Watts, 2008). Thus, the contemporary positioning of Q as a social constructionist method within
social research promisingly relates this technique with the housing pathways approach described in Chapter Two.

5.3.2 The Scientific Study of Subjectivity

Following the commentary above it should be clear that Q methodology has been developed as a technique for the systematic study of subjectivity. That being so, it is important to delineate the specifics of how Q theorises and measures subjectivity and how to clarify how this differs from other methods. While there are a number of methodologies that promise the potential to examine subjectivity, Q methodology offers several distinct advantages. Specifically, due to its hybrid nature, Q offers a more robust and precise technique for the measurement of subjectivity than purely qualitative or quantitative methods.

While part of the Q research instrument shares a superficial similarity to surveys using a Likert scale, the type of analysis conducted is markedly different. Surveys using a Likert scale allow a participant to assign each statement an independent rating, which is freely chosen. Conversely, the Q method collects data through participants ranking each statement across a distribution table. In essence, Q compels the participant to consider all statements collectively. Factor analysis has been used in surveys in order to group responses based on the distribution of how the participants rated each statement, whereas Q studies use a form of inverse factor analysis that groups respondents who share similar Q sorts.

There has been limited comparative research of these two techniques for studying attitudes. Thompson et al. (2013) used two similar random sample surveys, one applying a traditional survey questionnaire and the other requiring the participants to complete a Q sort, and found the results were comparable. More recently, Ho (2017) provides a comparison of the two techniques in the context of perceptions and attitudes in nursing research. Her study found the approaches were complementary, with Likert-type scales being economical and efficient to use, whereas Q provided greater depth and a more holistic measure of subjectivity. A drawback of the Likert scale survey data was a lack of transferability into practice and explanatory meaning, something the Q study excelled in. However, the Q study was more challenging to conduct and provided results that were limited in generalisability. As highlighted by Eyvindson et al.’s (2015) study comparing Likert with Q approaches, the critical consideration is what type of conclusion the research is seeking to achieve. If, on the one hand, the desire is to identify broad generalisable traits across a population then Likert scale surveys utilising factor analysis would be advantageous. On the other hand, if the focus is to identify the range
of viewpoints within a specific group and to differentiate the composition of these views, then a Q method approach is justified.

As will be discussed, in designing the methodology for this research, the concern was never to provide a statistically generalisable measure of the proportions of attitudes present within the Auckland population. Instead, it was to uncover ‘why’ and ‘how’ young people feel the way they do about different types of urban environment. In essence, my use of Q methodology to study attitudes to urban intensification places an emphasis not on the “constructors” (i.e. the participants), but on the “constructions” themselves (Stainton Rogers, 1995).

The Q method is built upon a number of founding concepts but has also later taken on new influences through its increasingly diverse applications. The following section proceeds to highlight the key concepts around which Q methodology has been built and how they orientate the scientific study of subjectivity. These include: operant subjectivity, concourse theory and abductive logic. Following this, the more recent reinvention of Q within the social sciences as a social constructionist research and its link to the theoretical framework of this thesis is discussed.

**Operant Subjectivity**

Q involves studying what Stephenson calls ‘operant subjectivity’ and this is of key importance to the theoretical construction of the method. The term ‘operant’ is taken from behaviourist psychology, a tradition somewhat at odds to the concerns of Q methodologists, but within which we find two qualities useful to the study of subjectivity. As Watts and Stenner (2012: 25) detail, operant behaviours are “produced and emitted spontaneously, without the need for special training, artificial induction or any form of external causations”. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, “an operant is defined, and made meaningful, by the nature of its relationship with, and impact upon, the immediate environment”. The search for operant subjectivity does not seek to reveal some form of introspective steam of consciousness, but a viewpoint, an opinion, cogent and specific to the individual and the environment in which it is formed.

In using the term operant in relations to subjectivity, this also directs our attention towards the outside environment on which an individual’s subjectivity can have an effect. Therefore it is argued that subjectivity is not something which is beyond analysis, an isolated realm of unconscious thought and impossible to connect to a world of real objects. Stephenson (1953) challenged these established notions of subjectivity in science, arguing that subjectivity is not (a) an immeasurable pure mental
experience or (b) measurable only by removing the subject itself from inquiry and reducing the study of people to external attributes (race, gender, class, etc.) (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 637). A person’s subjectivity is structured and structuring, ordered and ordering, and so can affect and influence the environment in which it is directed. For Q methodology, that environment is a set of stimuli (typically a set of statements) that the participant is encouraged to order to reflect their position towards a specific topic. Consequently, the participant exhibits their subjectivity through the structure of the stimuli, which can then be recorded, interpreted and compared by the researcher.

**Concourse Theory**

In Stephenson’s work developing ‘concourse theory’ he makes it clear that his interest lies in the structuring and “sharing of knowledge” (Stephenson, 1982: 240). Beyond this it is difficult to extract a consistent definition from Stephenson of what exactly a concourse is. However, following Watts and Stenner’s (2012: 34) guidance we can resolve what a concourse means to a Q study, at least methodologically, as they state: “a concourse is no more or less than the overall population of statements from which a final Q set is sampled. In other words, concourse is to Q set what population is to person sample (or P set)”. Similarly, Brown (1986: 58) tells us that a concourse is “the volume of discussion on any topic”. It is a representative subset of the total possible population of ideas on a given topic. Originally this volume of statements was referred to as a population or trait universe, but was later given the name ‘concourse’ (Stephenson, 1978).

To comprehend a whole universe of ideas, positions and opinions that may exist for a given topic and, therefore, the nature of the concourse itself, requires considerable investigation. It is therefore unlikely to become clear to the researcher before embarking on the process of its development. There is likely to be a considerable amount of material to consider, with each topic presenting its own uniquely structured array of relevant concerns. This may explain why it is difficult to find a consistent definition, since it will only become clear how any particular concourse is defined *a posteriori*.

**Abductive Logic**

Abduction is a form of logic, first formalised by Charles Pierce, whereby empirical facts are studied for the purpose of devising theories to explain them. This should be differentiated from inductive logic, which has the purpose of studying empirical facts to establish only a generally applicable description of observations. In wishing to develop explanations of phenomena, abduction seeks to explain why an observed phenomena is manifested in a particular way rather than in another. To this end, abductive reasoning directs observations to plausible inferences (plausibilities), but given that one cannot be
absolutely certain what each observation infers *ab ante*, a process of hypothesis generation is required to explore potential explanations. Further empirical analysis can then be undertaken using these hypotheses as a foundation for deductive testing.

A key strength in the application of Q methodology to an inquiry into the attitudes of a particular group is that it permits the emergence of shared views and understandings that may have been previously unanticipated. This encourages the abduction of new explanations and the development of more comprehensive theoretical understandings (Brown 1980: 31). Abductive logic has close ties to Q methodology, with its particular factor analytical technique being viewed as the technical or methodological extension of the theory of abduction, allowing the generation of “hypotheses *de novo*” (Brown, 1980: 134). It is therefore usefully applied to studies that begin with observed circumstances or effects and wish to pursue plasibilities and potential causes. The objective is primarily the seeking of new understandings or explanations “so as to bring unexpected but not unsuspected results to light, that is to make discoveries” (Stephenson, 1961: 10). In other words, abduction is the process of adopting the most plausible hypothesis or the best possible theoretical explanation.

**Social Constructionism**

Being a rather broad *catchall* term, social constructionism is quite difficult to define as it encapsulates a variety of similar (and not so similar) ideas around the nature of shared understandings and knowledge structures. As was discussed in Chapter Two there is a promising alignment between the housing pathways approach and Q methodology due to their common association with social construction theory. The theory and some of its criticisms were reviewed extensively in that chapter however it is necessary to briefly consider social constructionism’s specific application within Q methodological research.

Social constructionism has been the theoretical position underpinning a considerable amount of contemporary Q methodological research – particularly within European and British social psychology. During the early 1990s the work of Rex and Wendy Stainton Rogers (Stainton Rogers, 1991; Stainton Rogers, 1995; Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992) introduced Q into new fields of study. The method became reinvented as a social research method in the qualitative tradition capable of identifying existing viewpoints and knowledge structures towards a chosen subject matter (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 42). The participant’s sorting of the stimuli materials in regards to the topic at hand are seen as expressions of their subjective positions. The factors emerging from the data can be
interpreted as social discourses: commonly-held constructions, shared across multiple participants. This leads us to a critical quality of Q methodological research: it is not the “constructors” (i.e., the participants) who are the focus of this approach, but the “constructions” themselves (Stainton Rogers, 1995: 180). Therefore, in contrast to other research methods, the measures for analysis are not pre-specified by the researcher. Thus, Q provides a unique approach to the study of individual perspectives and understandings; able to reveal constructions from the participant’s point of view in a statistically rigorous way (Addams & Proops, 2000: 35).

Using Q methodology through a social constructionist lens therefore lends itself to the investigative aims of this study, since it allows the participants the ability to define the key areas for analysis and their relationship to them – rather than them being pre-determined by the researcher. Given that a starting point for this research has been the lack of understanding and attention given to Generation Y’s attitudes to urban intensification, it would seem appropriate to allow those attitudes to be represented in full, as they are presented by the participants, before defining categories for assessment. Thus, the assumption held in Q research is that individual subjectivities are likely constituted in complex intersecting ways that a priori binary categorisations such as gender (male or female), political persuasion (left-wing or right-wing), occupation (white-collar, blue-collar), etc., are unable to grasp or are even unable to be knowable in such a straightforward way (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 643).

In addition, Q has also been argued to be useful as part of a movement towards the democratisation of the research process. In more democratic research the categories of analysis are open to manipulation by participants and the researcher’s “exclusive power to signify the reality of the researched” is purposefully diminished (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 645). As discussed in Chapter Two the anti-positivist stance of social constructionism favours research that allows for a multiplicity of knowledge and perspectives, since none is necessarily any ‘truer’ than the rest. Social constructionist Q methodological research will often seek to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those who experience it and can therefore serve to legitimise alternative framings of ‘social facts’ and challenge mainstream understandings. The privileged position of the researcher is diminished since participants are freer in expressing and developing their response to the topic in question than in other research methods.

In essence, Q allows participants to physically construct (through manipulation of the statement cards) a representation of their own subjective standpoint towards social phenomena with minimal need for
the researcher to prompt or direct this activity. The discoveries that can be made through this type of social constructionist research can be profound. This is perhaps particularly true for studies of highly controversial and politically contentious issues, where there are often multiple conflicting points of view (Webler et al., 2001). These viewpoints are often constructed through different framings of ‘reality’ and claims to ‘truth’, which can be uncovered and analysed through Q methodological research. Thus, in highly politicised research, such as housing and urban planning, Q can contribute to a process whereby researchers render the understandings and attitudes existing within a certain group to policy decision makers in a way that is interpretable and meaningful.

Generalisability

Q methodology is capable of extracting a large amount of information from participants, but because there is no attempt – or need – to achieve a statistically representative sample, that information is not generalisable to a wider population in the same way that $r$-factor studies often claim to be. However, this is not to say that each individual subjective point of view can therefore only ever be understood in isolation. While there are likely to be as many distinct subjective perspectives on a topic as there are participants, Q works with the assumption that there will be identifiable correlations between these viewpoints. Q deploys a statistically-driven but ultimately interpretive process to explore the patterns of subjectivity that exist across and within individuals in relation to the topic in question. As Ellis et al. (2007: 523) state, it is in a sense better regarded as “a bridge between the positivist and post-positivist” types of analysis as it features “replicability and empirical rigour that is demanded by the former, yet it is focused on the subjective, self-referential opinions of participants that are required by the latter”. This character places Q somewhere in-between the qualitative and quantitative ‘divide’ and, hence, can often lead to it being criticised on both sides.

One of the most common criticisms of Q stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of its statistical procedure. Since the technique applies a form of factor analysis its results are often mistakenly assessed under the logics of traditional ‘R’ method research. As such, claims of inappropriate ‘population sample size’ and lack of ‘generalisability’ can be levelled at Q methodological research. However these criticisms are misplaced. Q research requires enough participants to establish the existence of a factor for the purposes of comparing it with another (Brown, 1980: 192). To do this one must follow a statistically rigorous procedure to identify with certainty that a particular opinion has been expressed by a group of participants. What proportion of a population aligns its views to those expressed by the participants is a completely different question and one with which Q is not
concerned. Put another way, the method follows a “completely different rationale” and seeks to achieve a set of aims quite distinct from other methods (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 72).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q Method</th>
<th>R Approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does the research design seek to accomplish?</strong></td>
<td>To enable a respondent to articulate a specific realm of his or her own subjectivity. To compare the subject positions of whole individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What questions are enabled?</strong></td>
<td>How are X and Y related in the opinion and subjectivity of an individual, where X and Y are claims drawn from the language and ideas of the individual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the purpose of collecting data?</strong></td>
<td>To query the categories respondents use to understand their world. To compare them in a controlled fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships among individuals or various traits?</strong></td>
<td>Across traits for a whole individual (intrapersonal correlation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How will the validity be determined?</strong></td>
<td>Validation through iterative interpretation of the results with subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What might the research discover?</strong></td>
<td>Surprise in Q comes from evidence of the association of ideas in individuals in ways that the researcher had not previously theorized or imagined.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 13** A comparison of Q and R methodology approaches (adapted from Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 640)

To further clarify its distinctiveness, Figure Thirteen describes Q’s aims, logics and outcomes in comparison to R methods. As should now be clear, Q is focussed on enabling each individual participant to voice their concerns coherently and completely (intrapersonal correlation), rather than to seek traits across the participant group predetermined to be relevant by the researcher.
(interpersonal correlation) (Stephenson, 1953). The results become validated through an iterative process of interpretation; where the researcher aligns statistical indications of correlation within and across participants with a theoretical framework and/or complementary data sources (as in my research, often through follow-up interviews). The discoveries that can be made through this technique are novel associations of ideas and concepts that individuals express that may not have previously been theorised or considered. R method discoveries, on the other hand, are based on the acceptance or rejection of an *a priori* hypothesis and/or the defining of agreement or disagreement towards a topic existing within a population. Thus, unlike R method, Q is primarily concerned with the discovery of ideas and the creation of theories to better understand how groups of people construct their attitudes, opinions and feelings.

Q is an intensive form of analysis which uses small numbers of participants: “thus, one can never claim that one’s subjects are statistically representative of some larger population” (Dryzek and Berejikan, 1993: 51). However, the major concern of Q methodology is not with population statistics, but with why and how people believe what they do. Representativeness, in Q, is a matter of the concourse, so that any factor (discourse) that is identified “will generally prove a genuine representation of that discourse as it exists within a larger population of persons; and this is the kind of generalization in which we are interested” (1993, 52). As Stainton Rogers (1991: 132-2) points out, the particular form of factor analysis used in Q methodology:

> ...compares each individual’s whole pattern of response with each other person’s whole pattern of response. Factors thus emerge out of systematic similarities between different people... In this way the analysis acts as a mechanism for identifying collective understanding, albeit articulated by individuals.

Q methodology is therefore also unique in that it is not the “constructors” (the participants) who are the focus, but the “constructions” themselves (Stainton Rogers, 1995: 180). In summation, Q methodology provides a unique way of addressing subjectivity, from the participant’s point of view, in a statistically rigorous way.

### 5.4 Q Methodology and Human Geography Research

This section of the chapter provides a review of the previous applications of Q methodology to research specifically within the discipline of human geography. Following this review, my examination of Q within this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the potential for the method within human geographical research.
5.4.1 A Review of Existing Q Studies within Human Geography

At the beginning of 2016, a search of the top 20 human geography journals finds a mere 23 articles discussing Q or with research utilising the methodology (see, Appendix One). Although this does evidence the relatively low utilisation of Q within the discipline, there are some clear fields of inquiry that have seen a growing application of the method. The articles included in the table in Appendix One reveal an active strand of environmental policy research applying Q methodology to explore a range of issues. Exploiting its strengths, Q has been most commonly applied within geography to a variety of studies on stakeholder perspectives (e.g., Brannstrom, 2011; Ching & Mukherjee, 2015; Claire et al. 2013; Cotton & Devine-Wright, 2011; Forrester et al., 2015; Jepson 2012; Lansing, 2013; Matthew, 2015; Ward, 2013). Within this collection are also a number of applications that specifically address public opinion and responses to local (Hall; 2008; Nijnik & Mather, 2008) and global environmental issues (e.g., Hobson & Niemeyer, 2011; Lorenzoni et al., 2007; O’Neill et al., 2013). Several studies have also applied Q methodology to examine perspectives towards wind energy projects of stakeholders (Brannstrom, 2011; Jepson, 2012) and host communities (Fast, 2015; Fisher & Brown, 2009). There are also research papers that have used Q to examine more abstract inquiries. These include, the perceptions of specific communities to particular concepts, for example: ‘rurality’ (López-i-Gelats, 2009) and ‘geoengineering’ (Cairns & Stirling, 2014); and towards particular discourses: ‘market-based instruments in conservation biology’ (Sandbrook et al., 2013) and ‘walking and cycling in urban areas’ (Jones et al., 2012).

Two key papers within the list below are Robbins and Krueger (2000) and Eden et al. (2005). Both these papers share the objective of introducing Q methodology to a human geography audience and given their publication in top geographical journals have likely been influential to subsequent Q studies within the discipline. This influence is also reflected in their many citations from a broad range of subsequent studies utilising Q.

Robbins and Krueger (2000) are critical of Q methodology’s early claims to absolute objectivity and researcher reflexivity in studying participant subjectivities. However, they argue that “in abandoning naïve empirical objectivity, to develop a truly hermeneutic science” geographers can introduce critical reflexivity into Q research and conduct theoretically informed iterative research. From this perspective, Q supports the democratising of research and an embracing of the relationship between the researcher and participants – rather than trying to eliminate it completely (Robbins & Krueger, 2000: 645). On the other hand, Eden et al. (2005) give a more detailed account of the nuances and practicalities of conducting a Q methodological study, which other methodology sections often do not.
include. The article provides straight-forward practical advice for geographers interested in Q and, as such, has been valuable to the use of Q within my own research. Eden et al. (2005: 421) conclude by affirming the method’s “intriguing” possibilities and encourage its wider application within geographical studies, with the caveat that it is “employed reflexively and creatively, with full awareness of its interpretative dimensions and not as a number-crunching exercise”. In alignment with the suggestions of these two papers, it is my intention to apply Q methodology to a novel area of study within a mixed methods research approach and in a critical and reflexive manner. I believe through this application the voices of young adults and their experiences and attitudes have been brought to the fore within a broader study of urban intensification in the context of Auckland’s contemporary housing issues.

Beyond the list detailed in Appendix One there are a number of other examples of Q’s use within human geography. However, there are only a handful of studies that have utilised Q methodology in urban research close to the interests of this thesis. Wolsink (2004), in her Q study of stakeholder’s spatial decision making in Dutch waste infrastructure systems, details the methodology’s previous use within geography to map participants’ preferences and argumentation in spatial decision-making (Steelman & Maguire, 1999; Webler et al., 2001) and for mapping preferences in planning and land use issues (Swaffield and Fairweather, 1996). Also, in their mixed methods application of Q to the study of public perceptions of walking and cycling for personal travel in English cities, Jones et al. (2012) found few studies within the field of transportation and mobility that had used the technique; only reporting Steg et al.’s (2001) use within an investigation into “instrumental-reasoned and symbolic-affective motives for car use”, van Exel et al.’s (2004; 2011) examination of medium-distance travel decision making, and the work of Rajé (2007) in exploring perspectives on transport and social inclusion.

5.4.2 Q’s Potential within Human Geography

The interpretive and cultural turn within human geography in the past few decades has seen a shift from quantitative to more qualitative work. This shift has questioned previously held essentialist notions and unproblematised assumptions of objectivity. Consequently, a number of novel methodologies have emerged that allow rigorous and reflexive research into new fields of study and the examination of difficult-to-measure phenomena (Hay, 2016; Robbins & Krueger, 2000). Focus groups and interviews are now popular methods for geographic research, with an antipathy towards quantitative approaches being suggested by some (Hamnett, 2003; Sheppard, 2001). However, as noted by Eden et al. (2005: 413), end-users and research funders continue to invite and preferentially
seek more quantitative methods, especially for those addressing policy-relevant issues. With its combination of quantitatively-directed methodological objectivity and anti-essentialist approach to subjectivity, Q methodology, it seems, would be the perfect tool for just such types of policy-relevant but subjective inquiry. It is perplexing, then, that there has been a dearth of geographical research employing the method (Eden et al., 2005; Robbins & Krueger, 2000). One of the chief aims of this thesis is that a subjective issue such as housing preference, with its obvious relevance to local and national policy concerns, can be examined through a humanistic lens, strengthened through the robust procedures of Q methodology.

Q is suggested to hold significant potential for exploring the social construction of the urban landscape. In their review of Q methodology from a human geography perspective Robbins and Krueger (2000: 645) suggest “Q allows us to query variations in the way people know the environment and posit relationships between environmental knowledge, identity, and power. More generally, the application of Q to these questions will serve to build an empirical geographic database of variations in the way people interpret the spaces they co-inhabit”, they conclude that “Q method is particularly appropriate for human geographies informed by anti-essentialist notions of the subject and constructivist accounts of social and natural reality” (ibid, 636). In regards to my own application of Q, this potential is supportive of the aims of this thesis to reveal the relationships between subjective housing experiences and attitudes towards changing urban environments.

Finally, as part of an MMR approach, Q methodology offers a route to further break down the too often taken-for-granted divide between quantitative and qualitative studies within geography. As Sheppard (2001: 545) argues the “bracketing of quantitative and positivist geography is not a necessary relationship, but rather a social product of disciplinary rivalries and debates”. Q methodology helps break-down this divide as it uses quantitative methodological tools to provide clarity and guidance to interpretations of people’s subjective opinions. With direct reference to Q, Poon (2005: 771) follows Sheppard (2001) in claiming a post-positivist geography should be open to quantitative research, which “like the rest of the discipline…finds increased resonance in the increased fluidity and multiplicity of methodology”. The potential of Q methodology, following O’Sullivan’s (2004) introduction of complexity theory, is due to its marriage of quantitative methods with abductive logic and sympathy to the Duhem-Quine theses that “logical positivism’s privileged ontological position in quantitative geography is misplaced, if not misguided”. Thus, its combination of the traits and strengths of both quantitative and qualitative geography serve to break down that dualism and
lead researchers to greater reflexive and critical awareness of the inherent logics and axioms contained within both.

5.5 Qualitative Interviewing with Thematic Discourse Analysis

This chapter now moves to a discussion of my second research method: thematic discourse analysis of qualitative interviews conducted with each of the study participants. Within the broader objectives of this mixed methods research, the primary purpose of these interviews is to examine the housing pathways of each of my participants and to consider the influences these experiences might have had on their attitudes towards urban intensification. Below I discuss the specific form of thematic discourse analysis I used within my study. The focus of this section is on the methodological rationale and justification for this form of analysis, while the next chapter will detail my application of these methods within the research.

5.5.1 Conducting Thematic Discourse Analysis

Simply put, thematic discourse analysis is the search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of a phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear & Gilksman, 1997). Practically, this involves the identification and classification of themes as they appear through a careful reading and re-reading of the data. In a sense it is a form of pattern recognition, where themes that emerge from the data become categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Before describing the form of thematic discourse analysis used within my study, I first briefly discuss how I define a theme in my analysis.

When conducting thematic analysis, the question of how to define a theme is an important but often overlooked consideration. King and Horrocks (2010), in their guide to interviews in qualitative research, suggest it is impossible to set definitive rules as to what defines a ‘theme’ in thematic analysis. Rather, they offer some useful guidelines for identification. Firstly, the process of identifying themes is always, to some extent, a subjective process involving the researcher making choices in regards to what they will include and discard from analysis based on some form of a priori theoretical or contextual interests. Secondly, a theme implies some level of repetition throughout the data and so an issue raised only once cannot be considered a theme (although this does not necessitate its exclusion from analysis). Thirdly, themes must be in some way distinct from one another so that each can be argued to specify something particular about the subject of analysis. This concise definitional guide provided useful direction for me in seeking to propose and identify themes.
Boyatzis (1998) also provided useful guidance in framing the thematic analysis process, which was defined as: the search for themes that may be generated, either inductively from the data or deductively from an existing theory and prior research, but quite often involving a mixture of both. My own research involved a careful mixture of analytical approaches: first, Q methodology primarily uses an abductive approach involving the iterative examination of plausible explanations for the Q-sort data; second, the thematic analysis of my interview data follows a hybrid analytic approach that is theoretically guided but also open to inductive findings.

5.5.2 Critiques of Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a common approach for the interpretation of qualitative data, but it is not without criticism. In particular, it has been argued that such an analysis lacks a clear theoretical base compared with other strategies such as grounded theory analysis (Bryman, 2015). Indeed, a broad criticism of qualitative research that certainly has bearing on my own analysis is that there is a danger for it to be a methodologically vague process that lacks rigour. Quantitative researchers sometimes perceive that in qualitative research ‘anything goes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 95). Baxter and Eyles (1997) suggest qualitative researchers have commonly sought to differentiate themselves from positivist-quantitative forms of evaluation, but have focussed less on seeking and defining what appropriate standards of rigour should be used alternatively. Researchers utilising a thematic analysis approach should be wary of these pitfalls and endeavour to avoid such criticism.

Of course, to be sensitive to your data and responsive to its specific character is an important and beneficial aspect of this form of analysis, but it is not necessary to abandon this flexibility in order to ensure methodological rigour. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that the best response to this quandary is to be clear and explicit about one’s procedure and to use it with consistency. Theory and method must therefore be applied carefully and critically with a clear and logical rationale for each stage in the analysis. With this advice in mind, the following section provides a detailed outline of the foundation and practice of the coding process for my analysis.

5.5.3 The Framing of Codes and Themes

The hybrid approach to thematic analysis described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) guided my analysis and ensured that flexibility did not jeopardise methodological rigour. They provide explanation of the six stages of their hybrid approach that incorporates the inductive ‘data-driven’
method of Boyatzis (1998) with the deductive a priori ‘template of codes’ approach outlined in Crabtree and Miller (1999) – as displayed in Figure Fourteen. The key to this approach is that it allowed my theoretical framework to guide the development of a coding scheme, providing a clear foundation for the analysis. This was combined with a process of seeking and recognising important moments within the text itself and considering these in relation to the existing framework.

Stage 1: Developing the code manual
Stage 2: Testing the reliability of codes
Stage 3: Summarising data and identifying initial themes
Stage 4: Applying template of codes and additional coding
Stage 5: Connecting the codes and identifying themes
Stage 6: Corroborating and legitimating coded themes

Figure 14 A diagrammatic representation of the stages undertaken to code the interview data (adapted from Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006)

For this study the code manual was developed from the guiding theoretical framework as previously described for my Q methodology analysis and generated through an adaption of Clapham’s housing pathways framework. Following Boyatzis (1998) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), each code in the manual was referenced by a label, a definition of what the theme concerned, and a description of what identified the presence of that theme. This process was completed for each of the categories described in my theoretical framework (‘aspirations and desires’, ‘lifestyles and values’, ‘neighbourhood and city’, ‘policy and regulation’, and ‘knowledge and understanding’). To demonstrate, an example of the coding manual for the category of ‘identity and internal to the household’ is displayed in Figure Fifteen.
The next stage of the process, testing the reliability of the coding was already partly achieved through their direct relation to the framework used for my Q analysis, which had already been established and validated for suitability to the topic in question. An additional test on reliability was the overview provided by my thesis supervisory team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code 1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15 An extract from the coding manual developed from the theoretical framework. Codes 1 and 2 relate to the category: ‘identity and internal to the household’

The process of analysis began with a full reading of the transcripts while making summarising notes of the major points of discussion throughout each interview. The codes from the manual were added as ‘nodes’ within the NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2015) qualitative data analysis software. Following this, a second reading of the transcripts was completed using the previously taken notes as a guide, but this time the coding manual was used to analyse the transcripts. This involved highlighting and assigning text within the software as representative of a particular code. Once the initial coding of the transcripts was complete the text related to each particular code was accessible as a group from within the software. Clicking on each ‘node’ then revealed all the text within the transcripts that had been coded as relevant to that particular theme. The inductive ‘data-driven’ coding process was achieved through re-reading the preliminary coded text and seeking new themes within it. As each new theme
emerged through this inductive process they were added as sub-nodes within the NVivo coding schema.

There were several advantages in taking this multi-level/stage approach to coding. One advantage is that I became very familiar with the perspectives of each of my participants through multiple readings of the data. Another advantage is that through subsequently re-reading the text, this time structured and displayed in relation to each theme rather than each participant, I was able to consider the data from multiple angles – both thematically and holistically during the coding process.

The final stages of the thematic analysis process involved connecting the codes and identifying themes across the data and then corroborating and legitimating these themes to confirm the findings. Clustering of themes and patterns within the data were sought using NVivo’s ‘matrix coding’ engine, which allowed me to compare the location of particular codes within the interview text and record where patterns were evident. These patterns included codes that strongly correlated and regularly recurred together across multiple participant interviews or codes that were repeatedly contextualised by participants in similar ways. Having been entered into the software, the housing history and demographic data from each participant’s questionnaire were subsequently queried for thematic patterns using the matrix coding engine. Therefore, the complete analysis process was essentially comprised of two types of comparison: firstly, seeking themes through the relationship between codes and, secondly, making connections between these themes and participant attributes recorded in the questionnaire.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter I have provided a methodological discussion of the theoretical justifications and epistemological and ontological presuppositions for the mixed methods approach employed within this research. In relation to my own research design I identify the nature of appropriate MMR and consider a number of important critiques of the approach. I argue that the amalgamation of Q methodology with qualitative interviews is well founded within social research and aligns well with the purposes of MMR. Moreover, the application of this mixed methods approach is justified through its pragmatic suitability to address my research question.

Next, I described my two research methods. Firstly, Q methodology was introduced. Due to its relative obscurity within social research, the specifics of this technique were reviewed in detail, including: its historical development, key concepts and logics, and notable applications within human geography.
The argument is advanced, both within this chapter and during the development of my theoretical framework in Chapter Two, that both Q methodology and Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach share similar rationales and concepts and, as such, can be usefully combined. Social constructionism and an anti-essentialist positioning provide an area of significant alignment between methodology and theoretical framework. Equally, housing pathways’ interest in discovering the relationship between people’s past residential experiences and their perceptions of housing is something that Q methodology is well placed to investigate.

Commonly interviews are conducted with participants following competition of their ‘Q-sort’. These interviews allow participants to express their thought processes and decision making while undertaking the Q methodology portion of their involvement. My research expands these interviews into an additional study designed to further probe the connections between my participants’ attitudes towards urban intensification and their previous housing experiences. Thus, my second research method is a thematic discourse analysis of the interview data. This method is argued to be an effective technique for revealing the potential connections and influences between experiences and attitudes. The specific method for coding the themes is described as a hybrid approach, following the guidance of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). Using NVivo, this approach to thematic coding was two-part: first, involving the development of a coding manual from my guiding theoretical framework for the research; and second, seeking codes emerging from the data and categorising them within the broader coding manual framework. Themes were identified using NVivo’s ‘matrix coding’ engine, which allowed me to examine the cluster patterns of codes within the data.

I argue that the combination of both methods allows me to attend to my research question and theorise the connections between young adults’ previous residential experiences and expressions of their housing preferences and attitudes urban intensification. With this justification for my MMR methodology complete I now move to a discussion of the development of the first of my research methods, Q methodology. The next chapter will detail the construction of this research method within this mixed methods approach in anticipation of the two empirical chapters that follow it.
Chapter 6

Q Methodology: Application to the Research

6.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter I provided a broad overview of my methodological approach, including the theory and rationale behind using Q methodology and interviews in a mixed methods study. The present chapter now turns attention to my specific use of Q within the empirical work conducted for this thesis. This procedural outline anticipates the presentation of the findings and analysis from my Q study in the next chapter.

This chapter is divided into six sections following this introduction and an overview of the methodological procedure. Each section will cover a specific methodological activity in the development and application of Q methodology for this research. This includes: development of the research question; development of the ‘concourse’; sampling to create a ‘Q-set’; participant recruitment for the ‘P-set’; procedure for conducting the Q-sort activity; and the post-Q-sort interview agenda.

6.2 Q Methodology Procedure Overview

Following an adaption of the methodology described in Nash (2007), Rajé (2007), Watts and Stenner (2012) and Brown (1980), the complete Q methodology procedure – including, research tool development, data collection and analysis – was comprised of six stages, presented in Figure Sixteen and detailed below:

- Development of a research question and the generation of a ‘concourse’, a broad population of statements that attempted to cover the full diversity of opinion towards the topic of investigation. Following this, a systematically selected sample of 40 of these statements was taken from the population preserving the diversity of opinion towards the topic. This is known as the Q-set and will be later ranked by the participants.
- Development of the participant sample framework. This involved delineating the population of individuals whose viewpoints the research is concerned. Once the framework was identified, purposive sampling techniques were utilised to recruit a representative sample of participants, known as the P-set.
• The administering of the research instrument (Q-set) to the research participants (P-set). This activity is known as the ‘Q-sort’ and involved each participant sorting each of the 40 statement cards along a continuum of agreement to disagreement under instruction from the research administrator. Subsequent post-Q-sort interviews were conducted in this study with each participant.

• Factor analysis of the Q-sort data. The sampled perspectives of the study topic are correlated by statistical factor analysis to identify clusters, known as ‘factors’, of shared viewpoints amongst the participants. The factors each model a particular perspective of the topic of interest, rather than modelling a particular group of individual participants or identities (Nash, 2007: 85).

• Factor interpretation follows and involves further examination of the perspectives to identify the underlying attitudes and values expressed in each factor. Each perspective is then given a specific name to represent the overall character expressed. Substantive analysis follows the factor definition process and involves synthesising all of the study data sources, including the post-Q-sort interviews and case study information.

The end product of the Q methodological procedure is the narrative presentation. Each of the perspectives identified through the factor analysis and synthesised with the interviews and contextual data are presented as a narrative reconstruction that is both generalisable and context-specific. The narratives recompose the holistic nature of the data collected and present it in a sensitive and organic manner.

In a corresponding order, the remainder of the chapter will provide a further dissected and more detailed account of the research tool development and data collection procedure, the first three stages of the research methodology. Meanwhile, the data analysis and interpretation, the last three stages, will be dealt with in the chapter following. However, first of all, the research question must be determined. This is a research question stated specifically in relation to the Q research component; however, it is of course necessarily tied to the broader research aims of the thesis.

6.3 The Research Question

The research question for the Q study not only indicates the topic for investigation, but also acts as the nucleus for the generation of statements from which to build the Q-set. It is also the eventual point of departure for participants during their Q-sort activity. Although clearly related to the multiple research questions of the study overall, it is important to define a single research question that the Q study specifically intends to answer.
The question which this study addresses through an application of Q is: what are the attitudes of young adults to urban intensification in Auckland? Following the recommendations of Watts and Stenner (2012: 52-6), this question should be posed to participants prior to conducting their Q-sort and articulated precisely and unambiguously. Adhering to this advice, the question posed to each participant at the beginning of the Q-sort – to which they would respond throughout the activity – was: “What is your attitude towards urban intensification in Auckland?”

Following the previous chapter’s discussion of the particular ontological and epistemological standpoint of this Q research it should be reinforced that this is an exploratory study, designed to allow the expression of personal viewpoints. Therefore, the research question is intended as a point of departure from which the study is designed to allow participants to self-categorise through the Q-sort activity. The research question does not provide a hypothesis with an a priori premise for deductive testing, but instead it is intended as the foundation for exploration and discovery through abductive reasoning.

Curt (1994) suggests there are three predominant domains of research which Q methodology may interrogate and on which a research question should focus:

- Representations of a subject matter;
- Understandings of a subject matter; and,
- Conduct in relation to it.

Typically, a Q study should also avoid crossing between these domains to preserve the integrity and clarity of the research – this has important implications for the construction of the concourse and Q-set, as will be discussed later. Representations are questioned in research that asks participants to consider how an issue or topic is commonly constructed, expressed or imagined within a particular group, cultural or institutional setting. On the other hand, studies of conduct investigate actions responding to a particular subject matter, or what policy and legislative changes might be considered in a certain situation. However, the domain of research interest for this study is the understandings participants have of a particular subject matter. Namely, their understanding of what urban intensification means for Auckland and their attitudes towards those potentialities. Watts and Stenner (2012: 55) guide such types of Q research to be “local and contingent...in relation to a person’s own life experiences, by focusing on a specific relationship, a specific set of circumstances or conditions, or by imposing a specific time frame”.
The aims of this research fit well within these parameters. In addressing the participants’ attitudes to urban intensification, they were asked to draw upon their own personal experiences of different residential environments. As the study took place during a period of (on-going) controversy and heightened awareness towards a plan for urban intensification in Auckland — especially with its relation to an escalating housing affordability crisis — there exists a distinctive set of circumstances ripe for this type of research. Indeed, Eden et al. (2005) recognise Q methodology’s specific strength “on topics over which there is much debate and contestation”. This certainly applies to the current Auckland context described in Chapters Three and Four.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

This research was undertaken in compliance with the regulations stipulated by the University of Auckland’s Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC). Approval was given for the research to be conducted by UAHPEC on 17th November 2013 and was valid for a period of three years.

The Q-sort activity and interviews were conducted with the participants in their places of residence or at a cafe chosen by them between the 3rd of February and the 30th June 2015. Participation in this research was voluntary and the research activities were recorded and transcribed without modification with the written consent of each participant. Before the research activity took place the participants were asked to read a two-page participant information sheet (PIS) (see, Appendix Four) and complete and sign a consent form (see, Appendix Five). The PIS provided each participant with information about the research, the length of time the activity would take and informed them of their right to withdrawn from the research during the activity. Confidentiality and anonymity procedures were also addressed within the PIS. Each participant was compensated for their time and effort in taking part in the research with a $20 shopping voucher. The funding for this research was provided by The University of Auckland and the Resilient Urban Futures research programme.
Figure 6.4 A diagram displaying the six-step Q methodology process, adapted from Nash (2007).
Figure 16 A diagram displaying the six-step Q methodology process, adapted from Nash (2007) (continued)


Identification of “clusters” of Q sorts around a factor

Interpretation of factors through synthesis of data sources

Presentation of each perspective as a narrative reconsiruption that is both generalisable and context-specific

Factor One is characterised by a preference for...

In contrast, participants clustering around Factor Two...

Factor Two and Factor Three both represent a viewpoint of...
6.5 The ‘Concourse’

With the focus of the study defined and the research question articulated the first major step in the development of the Q methodology research instrument was the generation of statements related to the topic in question. Describing the process of discerning statements, Brown (1980: 186) states that “[t]he selection of statements or other stimuli for inclusion in a Q sample is of utmost importance but remains more an art than a science, although there are scientific principles that can be called upon for guidance”. Similarly, Curt (1994: 128-9) later called the process “the one place where Q Methodology is noticeably a craft”. The research question is the primary guide for this process. The participants (the P-set) are defined by the research question as ‘young adults’ and so the object of study for which to develop the concourse of statements (and subsequently the Q-set) is therefore the ‘attitudes...to urban intensification in Auckland’. As discussed above, this gives the research a clear set of circumstances and an issue from which to seek the collective understandings of participants.

The basic concept of this part of the research process is to seek and record statements, each of which make a particular claim in regards to urban intensification. Capturing the diversity of opinion on this topic necessitates recording a large number of statements. The eventual goal is to select a broadly representative sample from this accumulation to become the Q set. The final sample of statements normally numbers from around 30 to 80 items so that it is practical for the participant to sort in a reasonable amount of time (Barry & Proops, 1999; Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993).

6.5.1 Statement Development Methods

Q is commonly operated as a ‘reconstructive methodology’, leading some researchers to argue that once a concourse of statements has been assembled it should be presented without amendment, in an attempt to minimise the influence of the researcher, beyond determining the scope of the study itself (Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993; Nash, 2007; Wolsink, 2004). Brown (1980: 190) also tends towards this approach, stating: “[t]he preferred items in most instances are those freely given by subjects, with as little tampering and modification by the investigator as is practicable”. An over-influence of the researcher in the statements risks shifting the analytical outcomes towards a disposition inculcated within the sample itself17. This stance is also seen as part of a ‘naturalistic’ approach (McKeown &

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17 Brown (1980: 190) paraphrases Denzin’s (1971) assertion that it is the researcher’s objective to “retain a certain naturalness and to minimise where possible the sociopsychological equivalent of Heisenberg’s
Thomas, 1988) and is most commonly taken in studies purposefully conducting qualitative interviews prior to the Q activity to generate quotes for the concourse (e.g., Barry & Proops, 1999). These researchers, thus, argue that Q is an interactive process primarily driven by the participants, rather than the researcher, and is therefore more democratic than other methods assessing public opinion (Dryzek, 1990; & Berejikian, 1993).

In determining the concourse development process for my Q study, I followed the advice of Watts and Stenner (2012), who emphasise that the Q-set can be effectively discerned through the use of a thematic structure. A thematic structuring is considered particularly defensible because “a clear sense of system and rigidity is brought to the sampling process ... and claims about the representative nature of the item sample are undoubtedly buffered by the application of defined quota sampling principles”. Likewise, Brown (1980: 38) contends that a structured statement development process guided by theoretical considerations can work to ensure that balance is achieved in the final sample. Even so, the process is open to both deductive and inductive approaches to data sampling, as “Q methodologists prefer to retain a little more fluidity in the sampling process ... [but] the process is nonetheless still likely to begin with the identification of the key themes and issues that define a subject matter”.

The specific statement development process carried out for this study was guided by a thematic structure developed from my theoretical framework. I made this decision because of the compatibility between housing pathways, my guiding theoretical framework, and Q methodology, as discussed in the previous chapter. The alignment of both this framework and the methodology leads to a logical combination of the two in structuring my statement development process. A further discussion of my guiding theoretical framework is provided in Section 6.6.1 and is diagrammatically represented in Figure Seventeen.

The concourse development approach undertaken for this research was thematically structured. It can therefore be understood as a quasi-naturalistic method, adapting relevant information from a wide range of resources (Rajé, 2007: 469). This involved scoping out the numerous different locations and media sources – both formal and informal – through which discussions of the city’s changing uncertainty principle, i.e., a situation in which the act of measurement overly affects the phenomenon being measured”.

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landscape were being held. The types of sources used for the concourse development are further detailed in Appendix Two.

6.6 The Q Set

Once a comprehensive concourse was developed the next step was to generate a Q-set that could be provided to the participants. The relationship between the Q-set and the concourse can be understood as akin to the sample of a population. In this case it is a sample taken from a population of possible statements on the topic of urban intensification in Auckland. This stage is essential not least because the sorting of hundreds of statements would be extremely time-consuming for participants. As explained below, effective sampling removes unnecessary repetition and confusion from the concourse, leading to the assembly of a representative selection of the discourses related to the topic at hand.

6.6.1 Q-set Development Theoretical Framework

In considering the concourse development approach for this research, a number of factors were important. Relying on the experience of a team of researchers to identify a comprehensive and representative sample required for a grounded theory approach was considered problematic for this study, given both the time constraints and relative inexperience of the researcher with using Q methodology. A thematically structured approach was, on the other hand, considered appropriate given the applicability of Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways framework to Q methodology. As discussed previously: the housing pathways framework is concerned with matters that Q methodology is well-suited to answer, and Q methodology is a research method capable of identifying extant social viewpoints and knowledge structures relative to a particular subject matter. Q provides an opportunity to represent meanings held by participants “in a systematic, holistic and qualitatively-rich fashion” (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 42). The Q-sort activity allows the participant to express their subjective position, while the interpretation of emergent factors allows identification and explication of the main discourses held within the data collected.

The housing pathways approach has been used in this research as a guiding conceptual framework. In considering its application to my sampling framework, it is useful to briefly restate the value of this approach to my research. Pathways offers a comprehensive framework from which to better understand the complex and inter-related influences on housing consumption – how the meaning of housing is subjectively and socially constructed through social discourses and individual practices and
experiences. To a study of young adult’s attitudes to urban intensification this is important, since it exposes how, beyond the material properties of a house, people’s interpretations of different potential housing choices are a product of socially shared understandings influenced by individual experiences through the life course. Hence, the housing pathway of a young adult through different residential environments can be argued to potentially inform preferences and attitudes to various housing types.

Following the expanded and holistic conceptualisation of the potential influences on attitudes towards urban intensification directed through the housing pathways approach, the sampling framework utilised in this Q study is composed of five separate but interrelated realms of influence. These are, ‘aspirations and desires’, ‘lifestyles and values’, ‘neighbourhood and city’, ‘policy and regulation’, and ‘knowledge and understanding’. These five realms of influence are grouped under two overarching themes, ‘identity and internal to the household’ and ‘symbolic and external to the household’, as shown in Figure Seventeen. These realms of influence will now be explained in more detail.

The first theme is comprised of influences associated with the individual that are internally held and subjectively experienced and concern the relationship between housing and personal identity. This involves the housing aspirations and desires of individuals, such as where they would prefer to live now or in the future, what their house will be like, if and when they would like to have a family, the jobs they would like to have and much more. While aspiration and desire are clearly related concepts, in this particular case aspirations are defined to represent pragmatic and considered ambitions, with desires suggestive of more abstract wishes and emotive senses. The lifestyle and values of individuals are also included within this realm of influence and relate to the patterns and habits of people’s lives that can be both consciously decided or automatically performed. Their values on the other hand are the internal logics and rationales that are closely related to the performance of lifestyle choices.

Secondly, influences that are external to the individual are considered. This is the realm of social discourse and the shared symbolic meanings of housing. Discourses regarding housing, the neighbourhood and the city are influential at multiple levels and also include the influences of public policy and legislation. The symbolic nature of housing, the neighbourhood and the city are contained within these discourses and become reified overtime through the social (re)assertion of particular ontologies. Sitting between the internal and external realms of influence on attitudes to urban intensification, and translating effects between them, the category of ‘knowledge and understanding’ reflects an individual’s interpretation of the external influences on their housing pathway and how an
individual’s own experiences can alter these understandings. Figure Seventeen diagrammatically displays this conceptual framework and the full Q-set categorised by theme is provided in Appendix Three.

Figure 17 A diagrammatic representation of the guiding theoretical framework generated through an adaptation of Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach

The framework used to guide this study, adapted from Clapham’s (2002a) housing pathways approach, is also aligned with Giddens’ (1984) work on structuration theory, as indeed Clapham’s original development of the concept was. The ‘internal’ elements of the framework represent that which is primarily agency-influenced – the subjective and perceptive elements of an individual’s attitudes. The ‘external’ elements of the framework represent the structural environment in which these attitudes are established or confronted – the policy and regulatory environment that surrounds an urban landscape or the shared symbolic representations of particular types of urban environment. An individual’s knowledge and understanding, the fifth element of the framework is also identified within Giddens’ work. Knowledge and understanding of housing develops though shared and accepted – but socially constructed – ontologies that define the way things are or how they should be. For example, conceptualisations of what a suburb should look like, who lives in apartments and where the appropriate place is to raise a family, are part of a shared ontology maintained through the constant (re)affirming of socially accepted practices and discourses. So, while there is a multiplicity of existing
positions on such matters, there will be those that are more widely shared or more dominant than others and so inform socially accepted norms of behaviour.

6.6.2 Q-Set Statement Quantity

The Q methodology literature provides a range of options and suggestions for what is an appropriate number of statements to include, but the majority of studies include somewhere between 36 to 80 items (Curt, 1994; Nash, 2007; Stainton Rogers, 1995; Watts & Stenner, 2012). While a larger Q-set may assure the researcher of a Q-set’s representativeness, it will potentially make the Q-sorting task unnecessarily time-consuming, taxing and complicated for the participant (Barry & Proops, 1999; Dryzek & Berejikian, 1993). An additional rationale for limiting the number of statements is the non-expert status of participants for my study also leads this researcher to believe an overly-detailed Q-set may be seeking an inappropriate level of topic perspicacity.

The number of statements included in the Q-set should therefore be enough to secure representativeness of the subject in question, but limited to avoid overloading the participant during the Q-sort. It is the theoretically guided and thematically structured technique that guides this decision and guarantees a representative quantity of statements. Usefully, Brown (1980: 189) provides an example of the dissection of a concourse into an appropriate and representative sample of items using a comparable thematically structured technique:

\[
\text{The investigator may elect to choose } m = 10 \text{ [statements] from each of the } 2 \times 2 = 4 \text{ cells ... for a total sample size of } (4)(10) = 40. \text{ The size of a } Q \text{ sample, then, is determined by the number of multiples of the basic design.}
\]

The “cells” discussed by Brown are in reference to the particular thematic structure of his research design. In this case, two categories which are then further divided into two subcategories, creating four distinct cells into which statements can be allotted. Brown indicates 10 items per subcategory as appropriate for this study, giving a total of 40 Q-set items to be assigned. The aim in selecting statements from the concourse is comprehensiveness for the whole Q-set and, likewise, within each category/subcategory.

To achieve a comprehensive selection across the thematic structure as well as within each ‘cell’ (theme), Brown (1980: 189) provides a logical system for selection:

Given the relative homogeneity of all statements within a specific cell (i.e., assuming a greater between-cell than within-cell variance), the selection of those 10 which are most different from one another
within the same cell (heterogeneity) is apt to produce the kind of comprehensiveness that is desirable in the sample as a whole.

By selecting within each theme those statements which are most dissimilar a sample is produced that approximates the complexity of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the constraining effects of the design are minimised and the sample can be logically deduced to be representative of the total diversity.

To create a practically-sized Q-set for my own study the concourse of over 200 statements was first reduced through the removal of statements that unnecessarily duplicated viewpoints. This initial reduction condensed the concourse to a more manageable 104 statements (see, Appendix Eight). The remaining statements were then apportioned into the thematic structure as discussed above. This process involved continuing to dissect the viewpoints presented in each of the statements and to allot them, where applicable into the five-part thematic structure depicted in Figure Seventeen. With the aim to arrive at a Q-set of around 40-50 items, each of the five themes were allocated roughly 8-10 items. In this way the structure of the Q-set would be representative of the variety of different influencing factors on attitudes to urban intensification.

The allocation process for the sample was also guided by the four key targets expressed in Stainton Rogers (1995: 139). These were:

1. Balance,
2. Appropriateness,
3. Intelligibility,

*Balance* in the sample was considered in a couple of ways. Firstly, balance was pursued across the five themes, as previously stated, to reflect the various influences indicated through the theoretical framework. The second consideration was for balance in regards to negative (anti) and positive (pro) assertions towards urban intensification. Although a level of balance was sought, it should be noted that balance does not necessarily imply that half the items should be negative in regards to urban intensification and half positive. A balanced sample is desired to ensure that the Q-set does not appear to be biased or value-laden towards any particular viewpoint (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 58). The *appropriateness* of the sample was achieved through ensuring that each of the statements was applicable to the research question and that the statements contained understandings of urban intensification; rather than a mixture of understandings with representations and conduct towards the topic, as this would serve to confuse the objectives of the research (for discussion refer to Section
5.3.2). The *intelligibility* of the sample is a less strait-forward process and requires the careful
determination of the research to refine the statements from their original form. As was considered
above, the statements are perhaps best left in their natural form, however, for the sake of clarity and
simplicity it was necessary to revise a few of the statements. This was most commonly to remove
multiple clauses from statements or to reverse negatively expressed statements – to avoid requiring
participants to contend with double negative during the Q-sort. Finally, the *comprehensiveness* of the
sample statements was again considered in relation to the topic in question and was guided through
the theoretical framework. The involvement of the researcher’s supervisors to provide guidance on
the sample section at this juncture, as well as in the later pilot study, were valuable checks on
researcher reflexivity.

6.6.3 Finalising the Q-set

Through the above process the statement population or ‘concourse’ was selectively condensed and
combined to create a comprehensive and representative sample. My adaption of the housing
pathways approach was applied to the statements as a thematic guide to direct appropriate coverage
of the topic. The five themes ranging from the internal and individualistic to those external to the
household, were used to select a roughly equal number of statements considered to cover each
theme. Once each theme was covered by roughly eight statements, each of which providing a distinct
perspective or attitude towards the research question, it was considered that the initial assembly of
the Q set was complete. The Q-set went through several iterations during this process, each time
further refining the sample. As mentioned, this honing of the sample first involved input from the
research team and was assessed lastly during the pilot study (discussed below). Eventually, the
outcome of this thorough and lengthy process was the complete Q-set of 40 statements. This Q-set is
displayed and arranged according to theme in Appendix Three. In preparation for the Q-sort activity
the Q-set statements were each randomly numbered and printed on durable pieces of card – the
associated number being crucial to identifying each statement during the factor analysis.

A final note in regards to the Q-set is that, while the researcher’s development of the sample is a key
component, it is still the participants’ understandings of the statements and their personal and
psychologically imposed structure upon them with which the study is primarily concerned. The
statements are, thus, better thought of as *suggestions*, because, as Brown (1997: 11) affirms, “the
supposed *a priori* meaning of the statements does not necessarily enter into the Q-sorter’s
considerations” – in completing their Q-sort “participants inject statements with their own
understanding”. It is to the participants of this Q study that our attention now turns.
Chapter 6 Q Methodology: Application to the Research

6.7 The P-set (Participant Sample)

Traditionally a relatively large number of participants are sought to take part in a small number of tests in most ‘R’ factor analysis studies. Since Q methodology utilises an inversion of the traditional factor analysis technique, which essentially reverses this relationship, a relatively small number of participants are asked to respond to a large number of tests. The ‘tests’ in this case are the statements provided in the Q-set, with each statement testing the participant’s response to the particular attitude expressed within it. The number of participants for each study depends greatly on the subject matter in question and how best to investigate it through the Q method. But put simply, all that is needed is sufficient participants “to establish the existence of a factor for purposes of comparing one factor with another” (Brown, 1980: 192). The adequacy of any participant sample size is ultimately measured by having statistically well-defined factors as an outcome of the study (Nash, 2007: 101). Discussion of the factor analysis method will be presented in the following chapter, but suffice to say, the analytical outcomes of this Q study represent viewpoints expressed by the participants of the study – and Q allows a lot to be said about them – but what it cannot say with certainty is the percentage of a population whose views will align with those of the sample.

What I am arguing here is that there is no necessity in Q methodological studies to include large numbers of participants – but enough of the right participants. Nevertheless, this can lead to questions of the generalisability of the research. As discussed in the previous chapter, Q methodology operates with a completely different rationale and towards a very different set of concerns compared to the majority of statistical analytical research (such as surveys and questionnaires). It is true that Q analysis alone cannot make statistical inferences about a population, but with a valid participant sample a different kind of generalisation can be made, one which reveals concepts, theoretical propositions and models of practice (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 73). This sort of generalisation is termed substantive inference by Thomas and Baas (1992/1993) to indicate it is the existence of typologies or sets of preferences that is being claimed, not the percentage of a population that holds them. Such claims do not require the large statistically representative sample sizes of R methodology approaches (to provide scalable results), but do require the inclusion of participants who reflect the range of views in the larger population through ‘theoretical’ or ‘purposeful’ sampling (Eden et al., 2005: 418) – and therefore providing relatable results.
6.7.1 P-set Sampling Framework

Accordingly, the objective in participant sampling for this study was to purposefully sample a diverse range of young adults living in the central Auckland suburbs. Alongside standard demographic categories, such as age, gender, occupation and education, particular attention was directed towards the current residential living situation of respondents. Specifically, these questions included: where the respondent resided in Auckland, what type of dwelling they lived in and their occupancy status. The distinctions made in these questions are theoretically supported by previous research and were, thus, considered potentially significant to the definition of factors. Whether they are in fact significant is an empirical matter, to be determined by the factor analysis (Brown, 1980: 194).

It was important to conduct Q-sorts with respondents from a wide variety of Auckland suburbs, both those more central and those further out, to include the different experiences such locations provide to residents and the potential influence urban intensification may have on their lives. Similarly, the type of dwellings respondents lived in was noted to ensure that study participants with experience living in different types of dwellings were sampled, particularly as this may have relevance to their familiarity with more compact living environments. Occupancy status plays a role in how the former two situations are encountered, as evidence suggests, it can have an impact on various aspects of residential experience (e.g., Manturuk et al., 2010; Rohe & Steward, 1996). Though home ownership is low and falling for young adults (Law & Meehan, 2013), young home owners could present divergent viewpoints that are valuable to the study and so their participation was crucial. Naturally each participant may have experienced different residential environments and situations before their current residence and, while it was not possible to know this prior to their participation, it was of central concern to the interviews.

6.7.2 The Sample Scope

The participant sample scope was classified as young adults aged from 25 to 35 living in Auckland. A common term used for young adults is ‘Generation Y’ and, although there are several associated definitions of Gen Y, an age range of 25 to 35 year olds would be agreeable to most understandings of the term (Bruce & Kelly, 2013; McCrindle, 2002; Pleffer, 2007). As discussed in Chapter Two, Generation Y hold attitudes and understandings of urban spaces that are distinct and should garner more attention from academic research and urban policy makers. Their housing pathways are also shaped by circumstances quite different from previous generations and intersect with a particular set of urban policy environments and economic conditions.
Since the focus of this investigation was embedded within the current debate surrounding suggestions of urban intensification in Auckland, with much of the outrage emanating from central suburban homeowners, recruitment of both young adults living in the central suburbs and those living outside of them was considered key to exploring the diversity of young adults’ understandings and attitudes towards urban intensification. Recruitment efforts were therefore focussed on young adults residing in inner and outer suburban Auckland.

6.7.3 Recruitment Techniques

A range of recruitment techniques were employed throughout the city in an attempt to achieve a heterogeneous sample of young adults living in Auckland. This included letter-dropping invitations to participate in suburbs purposefully selected for their different housing typologies and urban environments and posting flyers in public spaces, such as libraries, community and club spaces and a farmers market (see, Appendix Six). Subsequently, participants were recruited through snowball sampling methods (Goodman, 1961) and through posting on social media pages (Facebook and Twitter). Watts and Stenner (2012: 70) suggest Q research has a tendency of resorting to snowball sampling methods as research designs often need to be adaptive and practical in recruiting a heterogeneous participant sample. As such, it should perhaps more rightly be termed selective snowball sampling, as the technique allows access to an expanding range of individuals from which participants were selected. The snowball sampling and social media methods ultimately proved to generate more participants than advertising through letter-dropping and flyers and were, in addition, significantly less labour-intensive. With respondents being selectively sampled for their difference, such methods are worthwhile endeavours for Q studies of this type – perhaps especially so given the focus on a younger demographic.

As with the Q-set, a Q methodical study can never claim with certainty to have included all possible perspectives towards a topic within the P-set. However, as previously stated, the rationale for selectively sampling in this way is so that the participants can be argued to represent a broad range of perspectives and to not be unintentionally biased towards any one viewpoint. The P-set development was therefore monitored and actively shaped during the fieldwork phase to provide the greatest heterogeneity and coverage of young adult viewpoints in Auckland. Since the process of including participants (and therefore perspectives) in the research has no definitive indications of completion, the accomplishment of this task was determined by satisfaction with the diversity of viewpoints collected and by the constraints of time, resources and access to respondents. As is often the case for
Q research of this type, the *saturation point* – the point at which further data will not alter analytical conclusions – cannot be absolutely assured. However, by following the guidance of the sampling framework, and adequately covering all of the major sampling variables for the P-set, an appropriate saturation point was identified.

### 6.8 The Q-Sort Activity Procedure

The Q-sort is at the central activity of Q research. It is the point at which the Q-set (the statements) are introduced to the P-set (the participants). This section details the specifics of my Q-sort procedure, including the planning and practicalities of each activity. These activities are the pre-Q-sort procedures, including the creation of the ‘distribution table’, the Q-sort activity itself and the post-Q-sort interview subsequently conducted with each participant.

Before beginning the full recruitment process, it was considered beneficial to first conduct a small pilot study. The pilot study involved asking eight fellow PhD students to complete the Q-sort activity in full and take part in the interview. There were a number of advantages to running a pilot study for the Q-sort data collection and analysis phases: Firstly, the pilot Q study allowed an initial test run of the procedure and the Q-set. Secondly, it provided an opportunity for me to practice and refine the Q activity procedure with participants. It also established the amount of time the activity would take and helped to clarify the instructions given. Thirdly, there was the potential – supposing no major modifications – for the data from a few participants from the pilot to be included within the main study as members of particular demographic of young adults. Consequently, two participants from the pilot study were included in the full study.

#### 6.8.1 The Distribution Table

Following recommendations from Brown (1980), the 40 statement Q set required the construction of a distribution table on which each participant would place and rank the items according to their subjective position towards them. The table was designed with a fixed quasi-normal distribution that can be seen in Figure Eighteen. The table is referred to as ‘fixed’ because it constrains participants to ranking the 40 statements only within the confines of the table structure – meaning that they are unable to place more than two statements in the ‘+5’ column or more than three in the ‘+4’ column *et cetera*. Some participants may feel their choice is restricted by this measure, which has led some to argue for ‘non-standardised distributions’, allowing the participant to rank items as they wish (Bolland, 1985; Brown, 1971). However, the majority of Q methodological studies follow the standardised
distribution method used in this study, for, as Block (2008; cited in Watts and Stenner, 2012: 78) argues, “[it] permits a fully commensurate and less ambiguous comparison of Q-sorts” and from the researcher’s perspective “the employment of a free distribution provides us with no additional information”. From the participant perspective, Brown (1980) deduces that, due to the factorial nature of the sorting procedure, even a 33 item Q-set sorted across a nine-point standardised distribution table (+4 to -4) offers participants “roughly 11,000 times as many options as there are people in the world” – considerable room for the expression of individual subjectivity.

The table provided to participants has a quasi-normal distribution that broadens towards the edges of the table (+/- 3, 4 and 5). This *platykurtic* distribution was adopted to provide participants with more choice towards the extremes of the distribution, so as to create room for more strongly felt opinions and less neutrality. This is advised by both Watts and Stenner (2012: 80) and Brown (1980: 200) for topics that are likely to involve individual knowledge and for highly controversial topics. Following Chapter Four’s discussion of the current debate in Auckland regarding urban intensification and the city’s future development track, it was anticipated that participants would be relatively opinionated towards the topic.

### 6.8.2 Pre-Q-sort Procedures

Arrangements to take part in the research were made with the participants through phone or email communication and a mutually agreeable location was determined. The length of time the activity
took with each participant varied between 50 to 90 minutes. The Q-sort activity was relatively consistent in lasting roughly 45 minutes, however, the interview varied in length depending on the engagement of the participant and their time available.

At the beginning of the activity participants were provided with the PIS and consent form (see, Section 6.4). Having received their informed consent, the participants were asked to complete the participant questionnaire (see, Appendix Seven). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Questions 1 to 4 asked for the participant’s current and previous living situation, including: location, occupancy status, dwelling type and length of residency. Questions 5 to 10 were demographic questions, including: gender, ethnic group affiliation, age, place of birth, marital status and occupation or degree.

### 6.8.3 The Q-sort Activity

The procedure for administering the Q-sort itself is relatively simple, with the involvement of the researcher kept to a minimum. The purpose of this was to ensure that it was the participant’s subjectivity imposed, unsullied, on the statements through Q-sort process – with as little influence from the researcher as possible. Thus, apart from introducing the study and the Q-sort procedure, and prompting them to undertake each task, the participant was left to complete the activity undisturbed. I was careful not to give the impression that the participant was being observed as they undertook the activity. Each participant was reminded before sorting that it was their particular interpretation of the statement’s meaning that was of interest, but that, if necessary, they could ask for help with the definition or description of the statement.

Following an introduction to the themes of the study and the research question, each participant was then asked to consider their own experiences of different residential environments and start the process of ranking the statements according to their affinity with them. To make the process of sorting the 40 statements easier the participant was first instructed to read through each of the statements once and divide them into three groups: (1) those they felt aligned with their attitude towards urban intensification, (2) those they felt did not align with their attitude and (3) the remainder. The latter category was reserved for statements which the participant felt neutral towards or was unclear, meaningless to them, or which they were uncertain about.

With the three categories now assembled the next step was to rank order each category in turn, starting with the positive (agree with) category, followed by the negative (disagree with) and finally the miscellaneous category. At this point the participant was introduced to the distribution table as
displayed in Figure Eighteen and located on the reverse of their questionnaire form. The participant once again read through each of the statements they had indicated they felt affinity with, but now considered and compared their relative affinity with each before placing them in accordance to the table structure. It was sometimes helpful to remind the participant that their rankings were not fixed and could be changed later. This procedure was replicated for the remaining two statement categories. The neutral category was sorted last and filled in the spaces remaining towards the centre of the table structure. Due to indifference or uncertainty this category was sometimes more difficult to rank for the participant, however a little prompting to try and search for something about each of these statements which they either felt a small level of affinity with, or otherwise, was found to be constructive. An explanation as to what caused the participant difficulty with these statements was courteously sought, as the conflicts they were having could often prove to be valuable areas for discussion during the post-Q-sort interview.

Once all statements were sorted, participants were given the opportunity to inspect their complete distribution and to make any final changes they felt necessary. The ranking positions of each statement were then recorded by writing them down on the table laid out on the back of the questionnaire form (so as to keep both confidentiality locked together) (see, Appendix Seven). An identification code was allocated to each form that corresponded to the identification code printed on the consent form – this, again, allowed both forms to be linked confidentially. This ended the Q-sort process and with the statements cards still placed in rank order by the participant the post-Q-sort interview could take place.

6.9 Post-Q-sort Interview Procedure

In 1980, Brown (1980: 200) commented that the follow-up interview is “[a]n important step often overlooked in Q studies”. His advice seems to have been heeded, with interviews following the Q-sort activity now becoming a common practice in Q methodological research, particularly within the social sciences. This is for good reason. Interviews complement the Q-sort to further draw out the underlying attitudes and values involved in the participant’s decision making process, clarifying their rationale for statement sorting choices (Fairweather & Swaffield, 2001: 219). Conducting interviews following the

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18 Although I did not reveal to the participant that placement changes made towards the centre of the distribution at this stage would necessitate a rather lengthy re-ranking of the other columns due to the fixed nature of the distribution. I did not wish to dissuade them from making a change they felt necessary due only to the inconvenience of making the change.
Q-sort activity provides unique potential for accessing a greater depth of qualitative information from the participant at a time when they are most provoked into thought on the topic (Gallagher & Porock, 2010; Wolf, 2014). Obtaining this data was invaluable, because it revealed explanatory logics behind unanticipated choices made by each sorter. These logics can conflict with those held by the researcher or expressed in the literature within that field (Brown, 1980: 200).

As part of a mixed methods approach the interviews conducted for this research served two main purposes. The first purpose was to support the Q analysis through providing useful information to guide interpretation of the factors and development of narratives, the benefits of which are discussed above. The second purpose was to introduce an additional method for the investigation of my research objectives for this thesis. Therefore, alongside the Q analysis, thematic analysis was conducted from the interview data. The corroboration provided through using this mixed methods approach is strongly supported within social science research and is growing in popularity as a ‘third research paradigm’ (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The procedure for the thematic analysis conducted on the interview data was provided in the previous chapter. Meanwhile, the remainder of this section will focus on the interviews relation to my Q study.

The objective of the interviews for the Q methodology analysis was to seek explanations for participant statement rankings in relation to their own housing pathways and experiences. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and addressed the following:

- Placement of statements in positions +/- 5 and 4. Of interest here were the understandings, particularly those developed through residential experiences, which had led to the placement of particular statements towards the extremes of the ranking distribution.
- Statements placed towards the centre of the table were also of interest, especially those that had been indicated by the participant during to sorting to have caused uncertainty or difficulty in some way.
- Individual housing histories and experiences of different residential environments. Discussion of the participants’ previous housing situations and experiences took place with reference to questions 1 to 4 on the questionnaire and through links made, where possible, to their ranking of particular statements. Their experience of residential environments in cities or countries other than New Zealand and Auckland was asked specifically.
- In closing, the participants were asked if they had any final comments regarding their experiences that may have been provoked by the Q-sort activity, but that had not yet been touched upon.
The interview data was a valuable addition to the research and through synthesis with the Q-sort data allowed a better informed, more justifiable and comprehensive factor interpretation process. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and were entered into NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2015) for data analysis. The use of NVivo allowed for convenient storage and access of the interview data expedient to my use of them within the Q study – although the primary purpose of entering the interview transcriptions into NVivo was in preparation for my thematic analysis, which can be found in Chapter Eight. But for now, it is time to turn to the Q study findings, the first of my two empirical findings chapters for this research.
Chapter 7

Q Methodology: Analysis and Narrative Construction

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of my two empirical research findings chapters. Below, I present the data and analysis of my Q methodology study and in the next chapter I provide a thematic analysis of the interview data. The findings of my Q study are organised into three sections. First, I discuss the quantitative and statistical data from the Q analysis. Second, I describe my method for the analysis of the statements and the generation of the narratives. The third and final section of this chapter is divided into four sections: narrative accounts for each of the three discourses are defined separately before being considered simultaneously in a concluding synthesis section.

7.2 Quantitative Form Discussion

Data analysis began following completion of participant Q-sorts with a diverse range of young adults living in central Auckland suburbs. In total, 24 participants were recruited for this study through a range of methods. The participants were required to be between the ages of 25 to 35 and to have lived in Auckland for at least the previous year. Following best practice guidance for a Q methodological study of this type, a qualitatively diverse range of participants within this group was actively and specifically sought out. Given the study objectives, participants were recruited who resided in a mixture of living environments and densities in Auckland. The list below provides a brief overview of the demographic data for the participants:

Ages: Across a range of 25 to 35 years old.

Gender: Women (15 participants), Men (9)

Ethnicity: New Zealand European (12), New Zealand Maori (2), New Zealand Chinese (2), European (2), Fijian (1), Indian (1), Singhalese (1), Taiwanese (1), Chinese Canadian (1), Australian (1).

Place of Birth: New Zealand (16), Other (8; including, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, China, Australia, Fiji Islands, Holland, Italy).

Marital Status: Single (19), Married/Civil Union (5).
PQMethod version 2.35 (Schmolck, 2014) was used to analyse the Q-sort data. This software package is freely available online and was designed to compute and present data specifically for Q methodological research and as such it has been used extensively in Q-based studies. The software was used to run the analysis a number of times and several different solutions were generated for comparison. Many aspects of the data were considered, beyond the imperatives of statistical reliability of the solution, a priori knowledge of young adult Aucklanders’ attitudes to the topic and deductions of likely outcomes due to the structuring of the statements themselves were of particular importance. The latter point is attended to in more detail later in this chapter. However it is important to emphasise that the primary driver in seeking the best solution to the data was to attend to the data itself and be respectful and open to the direction it suggested. Being respectful and attentive to the data is a strong theme running through Q studies, which tend towards inductive research and hypothesis creation.

A three-factor solution was ultimately chosen to represent the data. This solution explains 55 per cent of the variance and includes 18 significantly loading sorts of the total 24 participants (see, Appendix Nine for the table of participant scores and factors). A participant sort was considered to define a factor if two goals were met: (1) there was a statistically significant correlation between that participant and the factor. A significant loading for this study was considered to be reached once a case exceeded the multiplier for statistical significance at level \( p < .01 \) (99 per cent confidence) divided by the square root of the number of statements: \( 2.58 / \sqrt{40} = 0.41 \). (2) That the factor explains more than half of the common variance or that the square root of the loading on that factor does not exceed the sum of the square roots of the remaining factor loadings (van Exel et al, 2011: 388). Through this measure, 13 participants significantly loaded purely on Factor A (including one confounded sort discussed below) and explained 34 per cent of the total variance (with an eigenvalue of 8.78). Factor B was significantly loaded purely by three participants and explains 11 per cent of the total variance (with an eigenvalue of 3.44). Finally, Factor C was significantly loaded by two participants (one of which was marginally confounded) and explains 10 per cent of the total variance (with an eigenvalue of 1.02).

Of the six remaining participants, two did not load significantly on any of the factors and were therefore unable to be included in the analysis. The other four loaded significantly on more than one of the presented factors and were therefore confounded. It is generally considered best to leave such significantly confounded sorts out of an analysis (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This is because their viewpoints align with more than one factor and therefore act to confuse those factors, leading to higher by-factor correlations and a less clear solution. However, Watts and Stenner (2005, 31.) have
recognised that confounding viewpoints can offer valuable perspectives for the analysis and should not be rejected outright. Given the small but heterogeneous participant sample for this study it was considered important to include as many perspectives into the analysis as possible. Thus, confounded sorts PN10 and PN17 are argued to be worthwhile inclusions to the analysis (see, Appendix Nine). Sort PN10 was included in the study as it strongly defined Factor C and only marginally co-aligned with Factor B. Sort PN17, although confounded, was interpreted as providing a valuable viewpoint, as it strongly positively aligned with Factor A and aligned negatively with Factor B. This situation resulted in a viewpoint that increased the variance between these two factors and reduced their correlation.

During the Q-sort activity each of the 24 participants provided a unique and subjective viewpoint towards the topic of urban intensification based on their own opinions and experiences of different living environments. Through Q’s inverted factor analysis technique the perspectives captured in the Q-sorts were subsequently reduced to three statistically significant ‘operant types’ (Factors A, B and C). The alignment of participants’ Q-sorts to each of the three emergent factors is displayed in Appendix Nine. The three factors are essentially discourses composed by subjective responses to each of the 40 statements provided to the participant in the Q-sort activity. Having determined that these three distinct perspectives exist within the data we can now move towards understanding the unique character and cognitive structure expressed by each of them.

### 7.3 Statement Analysis and Narrative Generation

Using the Q-sort data, the table in Appendix Ten displays a hypothesised ranking of the Q-sort statements for each of the three factors. Often called a ‘factor array’, this comparison provides an ‘ideal type’ Q-sort for the three factors, conforming to the distribution table structure provided to the participants and displayed in Figure Eighteen. This is a useful way to consider what we would expect the Q-sort of a person whose attitudes typify one of the factor viewpoints would look like and how this compares to the views of people who would align to different viewpoints. This technique was used in my analysis of the Q-sort data to generate the three narratives from each factor. Essentially, the narratives correspond to the structure of each factor’s ‘ideal type’ statement ranking and the cross-comparison between them. Each narrative is therefore primarily generated through an assessment of the ‘ideal type’ ranking of the statements, as displayed below.

For greater clarity, the following paragraphs provide an indication of the systematic interpretive analysis I undertook in order to generate a corresponding narrative for each of the factors. With reference to the table in Appendix Ten, Factor C, for example, ranks statement 4 ‘Urban intensification
is becoming a necessity for Auckland’ at +4, suggesting that this factor viewpoint indicates strongly that Auckland needs to be intensified in some way. Looking up the Factor C column we see that, in regards to statement 3, ‘I think that there is not as much need for urban intensification as is being suggested by its supporters’ there is moderate disagreement (rank -3), therefore, combining Factor C’s ranking of statements 3 and 4 we can now infer that this viewpoint aligns with the supporters of urban intensification that it is becoming something of a necessity for the city’s future.

Another axis for interpretation is the cross-factor comparison of statements. Going back to statement 4 once again, we see Factor A also ranks the necessity for urban intensification in Auckland quite highly (rank +3), however Factor B ranks this statement negatively at -1. Considering the highly positive ranking of statement 4 by factors A and C, Factor B’s contrasting viewpoint can be seen as distinct, suggesting at the very least scepticism towards the need for intensification in Auckland. Moving on in this manner, we can next assess the factor ranking of statement 5 ‘I think that most of Auckland’s residential areas should retain their existing character, while allowing some limited urban intensification’. We now find Factor B’s cautious agreement (rank +2) with this statement quite understandable and both Factor A and Factor C’s rank of 0 suggestive of the similarity of these two viewpoints. However, there is also significant disagreement between Factor A and C. In fact, as will be discussed in full below, further analysis reveals a person with a viewpoint aligning to Factor C would likely find themselves having more in common with a person aligning with Factor B – but disagreeing on this key topic (the necessity of urban intensification for Auckland).

The example above demonstrates the iterative and methodical process necessary to accurately and faithfully interpret the data extracted from the participant Q -sorts. It is crucial to be comprehensive and meticulous in generating the narratives in this way. As Watts and Stenner (2012: 149) attest, the viewpoints existing within the data will not emerge or be accurately represented through reference to only the highest and lowest ranked statements in each factor array. This type of interpretation is symptomatic of the atomistic methods that Q is employed precisely to overcome. The purpose of Q analysis is to be holistic and, thus, to always be aware of the whole configuration when considering each statement or factor array.

A person’s attitudes to any topic are a complex composite of biographical experiences, relationships and myriad other influences. We should not, therefore, be surprised in the complexity and the sometimes discordant nature of the viewpoints expressed in analysis. For example, Myers and Gearin (2001) argue that people often present internally inconsistent viewpoints within housing preference
As Dryzek and Berejikian (1993, 52) argue, “any apparent internal inconsistencies require explanation, rather than just dismissal or criticism”. Compartmentalising views and narrowing them to binary logics does not do justice to the intelligent and sophisticated nature of our thoughts (of course, neither should we abandon them to the realm of the mystical and incomprehensible).

The following Q analysis provides an account of three existing viewpoints towards the potential urban intensification of Auckland held by the young adults participating in this study. While only speaking directly for the viewpoints expressed by these participants and not claiming to be exhaustive, these three viewpoints are argued to display broad trajectories of thought with which it is likely many young adults would align.

7.4 Narrative Accounts

What I am arguing for, then, is a holistic understanding of people’s viewpoints and so it is best to move past the itemized presentation of data found in the tables and seek a narrative account of the factors, treating the configurations above as gestalt entries from which we can deduce a whole character (Watts & Stenner, 2005). Below, each factor is presented as a narrative, an account constructed from the rankings of the statements displayed for each factor in Appendix Nine. Because this narrative has been constructed with direct relation to those rankings, explicit reference will be made to the relative rankings and overall configuration of the statements. These references will be displayed in parenthesis within the text so that the ranking of a statement that has led to a particular assertion is made clear. For example: (40: +2) directs the reader to Factor A’s ranking of statement 40 at +2 and makes it clear that this statement’s ranking is relevant to the assertion being made. The post-Q-sort interviews with each of the participants allow my analysis to delve further into these viewpoints and help shape the narrative accounts. Reference to illuminating corroborative statements will therefore be made during the narrative accounts below. However, these interviews will be discussed in greater detail in relation to my thematic analysis in the chapter following.

7.4.1 Discourse A: Supportive Urban Lifestyle Seekers

Discourse A has an Eigenvalue of 8.78 and explains 34 per cent of the study variance. This discourse was shared by the largest number of participants, with 13 people loading significantly on this factor. They are all of European descent, being either New Zealand European (Pakeha), Australian, or European. It is important to note that all participants significantly associated with Factor A are single
and most are renting while living with flatmates. None have been married or in a civil partnership. Seven of the participants currently live in a detached dwelling, two live in a unit, with others living in an apartment, a split villa, and a semi-detached. Eight are women and five are men. Five are renting with flatmates, three live with their parents, two own their own home, two rent with a partner and one rents with the owners. Previous to this, all but one were either renting with flatmates or living with their parents.

Interpretation

Discourse A can be characterised as young adults who have a mostly independent lifestyle, being somewhere between leaving the family home but not yet forming a family of their own. Although containing members of Generation Y aged across the spectrum from 25 to 35, none have been married or in a civil union and all but one are currently, or have until recently, been living in rental properties with flatmates. In fact, a number of these participants have moved from renting with flatmates back to living with their parents, reflective of the non-linear nature of contemporary housing pathways in New Zealand (see, Section 2.3.1).

These young adults with more independent lifestyles express an attitude towards urban intensification that is firmly supportive. This is due to strong links made between intensified living environments and the types of benefits they envisage being available in such environments. These benefits are related predominantly to lifestyle and aspirations or desires for an environment which encourages a healthier life. Indeed, looking for a moment to the statement themes and comparing these to the statements that most distinguish Discourse A, we see that the top five statements are all related to the more personal viewpoints expressed in the statements categorised as ‘lifestyle / values’ and ‘aspirations / desires’ (see, Appendix Three for a table showing the Q-set categorised by theme). The affiliation with these statements is suggestive of Discourse A’s interest in and attraction to an intensified urban environment, influenced by tangible expectations of how such an environment will positively impact them directly in their everyday activities and routines.

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19 Split Villa is a name given to a detached dwelling, often a larger and older house that has been divided into separate dwellings through modifications to the building. This can be from simply blocking doorways to more substantial remodelling. This housing type is relatively common in Auckland’s established central suburbs where many were built between the 1880s and 1920s. These villas are in attractive locations and have therefore commonly been subdivided by property owners to gain more rent.
These expectations stem from an idea of what makes a good city (22: +4; 26: +3); this is referred to by several participants during reminiscences about cities around the world they have enjoyed living in more dense environments. Travel and experience of different ways of living can lead to a more positive demeanour towards diversity. As one participant noted, ‘there are ways to do [high density] that could be awesome. You know, I’ve lived overseas in quite a few places and I know how good it can be’ (PN3) and another states, ‘so, like, I guess, as discussed before, seeing places overseas, really made me realise that living in apartments could be desirable’ (PN18). In these cases, the experience of living in countries that have a long history of high-density living and provide well-built and suitably located urban living environments providing a high quality of life have allowed an expansion of the concept of high density (33: +4; 10: -2; 38: -1). This experience has exposed them to better examples of higher-density than those provided in New Zealand’s overwhelmingly low-density suburbs. As discussed in Chapter Four, many higher-density dwellings built in Auckland in recent times have done little to endear them to residents. Thus, modes of urban intensification, such as infill housing, are not seen by this group as necessarily related to negative social outcomes (34: -5) or low-value urban areas (21: -5); instead they have much more positive expectations for the future of intensified areas within Auckland.

Perhaps one of the most important of these expectations is the improvement and connection of intensified urban spaces with good public transport. The development of good public transport is a critical element of a good compact city for this group (39: +5). Several participants made this connection unequivocally and in confirmation of this, one participant, PN16 a 27 year old women living in Kingsland, spoke passionately about how she felt:

...that’s where the future of transport needs to be, so it would be silly to build intensive areas that would only require more motorways to get people in and out of them ... Also I think I just can’t logically imagine an intensive urban area that doesn’t have public transport and active transport, they go together, for me. Intensification and good use of transport is pretty much the same thing.

This group looks forward to intensification and compact city life because it is seen as synonymous with good public transport. This change is seen as advantageous to the group’s everyday life, as they currently use, or would prefer to use, public and active transport to move around the city and not to use a private motor vehicle (39: +5; 37: +1). At this stage in their lives members of this group would prefer not to use a car for everyday travel, even if this means living in a more compact dwelling (19: -1) – which is in strong contrast to Discourse B (19: +5) and Discourse C (19: +3) who would trade off traveling more by car to live in a standalone house with a garden.
Support for public transport improvements through a more compact urban environment reflects a quite practical desire for what this group feel would suit their lifestyles best (35+5). But members of the group also believe that a compact urban environment linked with good public transport is also environmentally more sustainable for the future of the city (13: +3; 40: +2). Discourse A distinguishes itself in strongly associating with statements around environmental sustainability. While all three groups agree to some extent with statement 26 (that urban intensification is about more than just providing housing but also is ‘about the future Aucklanders want for their city and for their children to inherit’), these young adults believe urban intensification to be the most appropriate future plan for Auckland (26: +3), seeing it as more environmentally sustainable (22: +4; 40: +2). As participant PN15, a 28 year old women living with her family in Parnell, an inner-suburb, states:

I feel like something I could quite easily feel strongly about in these questions was the impact on the environment and if it was to be that urban intensification was proven to have less of an impact on the environment than sprawl then I would be all for it.

Participant PN15 did not believe she personally had knowledge of what was best for Auckland, but she makes it clear that if urban intensification was shown to be more environmentally sustainable than low-density sprawl, as the Council believe it to be (Auckland Council, 2012), she would be fully supportive of such a plan.

Any plan for Auckland to continue to expand outwards at a low density strongly conflicts with this group’s position (32: -4; 29: -1). Unlike Discourse B and Discourse C, a growing number of apartments within the suburbs is not felt to be threatening to their lifestyle (33: +4; 36: -4). Neither do they believe high-rise apartment buildings should be restricted to just the city centre (24: -1) or that this would only be attractive to certain minorities (14: -2; 30: -2). Since Auckland’s existing suburban character beyond the inner city is distinctly low-density the viewpoint that emerges is one that advocates for a significant change of the city’s suburban character (31: 0; 5: 0; 32: -4).

Perhaps most importantly, they see urban intensification as one of the only possible ways for them to afford to live in the inner city (25: +3). At this stage in their lives these participants want to enjoy an urban lifestyle and this often means living close to places for studying, working and entertainment:

It’s never really interested me to live [in an outer suburb] ... I enjoy the fact [that], where I live at the moment, it takes me ten minutes to get from my front door to my desk by bike ... and that seems to me a lot more desirable than spending forty-five minutes in traffic going home to have a back yard to look at (PN17, 35 year old male renting with flatmates in Eden Terrace).
For these individuals looking for an independent lifestyle housing affordability is, of course, a concern. However they do not see building houses on Auckland’s urban periphery as an attractive solution to affordability problems (6: -4; 20: -3). This opposition to living on the urban fringe also includes the more compact newly-built master-planned developments (such as Hobsonville Point and Stonefields) (15: -3), as these participants state:

I don’t like the way they’re planned in terms of the building and street layout and so on ... Currently I live in infill housing in an existing part of the city and I think you feel like you’re somewhere ... I don’t know how else to describe it (PN8, 28 year old male renting with his partner in Mount Eden).

Those sorts of buildings, they’re characterless and dead really, it’s strong words to use, but that’s sort of it, you know. (PN18, 29 year old male renting with his partner in Grafton)

The impression conveyed by members of this group regarding master-planned estates is of lifelessness and artificiality. Also, a strong theme in the next chapter, for these young adults such places seem disconnected from the real city and unable to provide the vibrancy and authenticity of established communities in older more central suburbs. Instead, mid-density housing (the ‘missing middle’; see, Section 4.3.2) – more compact housing built in redeveloped areas within established suburbs – is seen as the most attractive (7: +2; 9: +1) and affordable (28: -1) place to develop new housing for this group. These ‘missing middle’ housing types allow these young adults to be closer to potential employment, education facilities and other amenities and services which are mostly found in existing areas within the city (35: +5; 22 +4). Furthermore, public transport networks are more established and viable closer into the city, which aligns with the interests of this group (39: +5; 19: -1) and their support of intensification (37: +1).

Discourse A, then, is distinctive in its positive attitude towards apartment living and urban intensification more generally. However this support comes with some feelings of concern (23: +1), born out of a number of conspicuous badly designed higher-density buildings currently found in Auckland and previous unpleasant experiences of such places. While there may be shared concerns, there is a mistrust of others in their communities who do not support urban intensification as they do (12: +1; 11: 0), believing it is something which clearly should be supported (3: -3). While being somewhat sympathetic to the desires of communities (17: +1) this seems only provisional (12: +1). When compared with the attitudes of the other two viewpoints (Discourses B and C), who both rated statement 17 at +4, it is clear that these young adults believe that the need to intensify the city and provide more housing within existing suburbs should be considered a priority.
7.4.2 Discourse B: Supporters of the Status Quo

Factor B has an Eigenvalue of 3.44 and explains 11 per cent of the study variance. There are three participants who significantly loaded on Factor B, participants who identify as Sinhalese Sri Lankan, New Zealand European and New Zealand Maori. These participants were all women renting in Auckland, two with their partners and one with her husband and son. The participants were living in a range of dwellings, including, a split villa, a unit and a detached house. All had experienced living in several different types of dwellings within Auckland.

**Interpretation**

Discourse B is characterised by a more family-orientated lifestyle, with each of the participants living with a partner or spouse. Two of the participants significantly loading on this discourse are over 30 and two have lived in their current residence for around two years. The two participants living with their partners rent medium density dwellings in inner city suburbs, while the participant living with her husband and son rent a detached house in an outer suburb about 12km from the CBD. Two participants were born overseas and one was born in New Zealand, but had experienced living outside New Zealand.

The general stance of this discourse is of opposition to urban intensification and a desire for Auckland to continue to grow in a character analogous to its existing environment – that is predominantly low-density suburbs being built on the city’s urban fringe. Discourse B is distinguished by a strong preference for regional centres outside of Auckland to be the focus of development (8: +5) and for these areas to continue to follow a low-density style (32: +3), which they see as fitting most New Zealanders’ lifestyles (30: +2; 14: 0). This viewpoint is accepting of the need for some level of intensification (3: -2), particularly to provide more housing options for young people (26: +1), but any such plan should not over-ride the disapproval of local communities (17: +4). Likewise, having a greater variety of residential environments, like apartments, is seen as potentially valuable (16: +1), but these should be restricted to central city areas only (24: +1). The central city is seen by adherents to this viewpoint as being the only space suitable for higher-density types of developments, a place in which possibly some young adults do wish to live (25: 0), but it is not their choice (19: +5).

This sentiment is affirmed in the quote below from participant PN6, a woman renting a detached house in an outer suburb with her husband and son:
It’s good to have more variety, but at the same time I don’t agree in living in apartments. There’s a place [for apartments] in the CBD, there’s already high density high rise buildings so maybe expand that a little bit, but not build ugly building like that [in our suburb]. (PN6, 33 year old female renting with her family in Glen Eden)

As this participant also confirms, the discourse expresses a strong dislike for forms of higher-density living. Beyond a stated preference for low-density standalone housing (19: +5), there is a strong aversion to higher-density housing typologies (9: -3; 34: +1) and a distrust of any claimed benefits of apartment living (28: +3; 33: -2)

While Discourse B disagrees that urban intensification should only occur close to public and active transport routes (37: -1), this is certainly not because they believe it should be built outside of these places as well, but rather that any forms of higher-density outside the city centre would impinge on the existing nature of the suburbs, which they wish to preserve (32: +3; 5: +2). Furthermore, unlike Discourse A, the connection between urban intensification and better public transport is not seen as essential (39: 0) or likely to change Auckland’s high private car usage (40: -3).

I’m not really for urban intensification, I don’t like the feel of it … you can’t build up a bunch of houses and expect people to live in them … I think it makes for happier living if you provided housing that people actually want to live in, that people feel good about living in (PN11, 30 year old female renting with her partner in Grafton).

Maybe if you take away their car, yes, ... but I don’t think people’s behaviours will change just because they’re housing situation or environment changes, unless they are compelled, even forced to change their way of life (PN6, 33 year old female renting with her family in Glen Eden).

This group perceive Auckland’s low-density suburbs to already be a high-quality living environment for its residents (29: +1; 32: +3; 7: -2) and so to change the existing character of the city, and particularly its suburbs, is seen as an undesirable (27: +2), unnecessary (4: -1) and destructive move (7: -5; 10: +2). Likewise, claims to the environmental sustainability and community benefits of urban intensification are strongly disagreed with (13: -5; 35: -2). Instead, a carefully planned (1: +3) expansion of the city’s periphery (20: +4; 8: +5) – following the existing low-density suburban character (15: -3) – is seen a suitable long-term plan (11: -4) that best fits both the city (32: +3; 29: +1) and their future families’ interests (19: +5; 6: 0)

However there is some deeper complexity to this attitude. It would be untrue to assume these young adults completely reject urban intensification in Auckland. Although an intensified living environment is not their choice of dwelling and neither do they wish to see Auckland follow a path of significant
intensification, there seems to be some concessions made towards the likely quality of these dwellings (38: -4; 23: -1). Their dislike for urban intensification, it would seem, does not stem from a perceived lack of quality associated with this housing. Equally, there is also a confidence (shared by all three discourses) that intensification in their suburb is unlikely to cause any great reduction in the quality and value of housing in their home suburb (21: -4).

Members of this group accept the likelihood of a balance between urban expansion and intensification in Auckland’s future growth (31: +4). However the desire held within this discourse is that the right balance would be to firmly favour suburban expansion over further (re)development of the existing urban area (5: +2; 9: -3; 20: +4; 18: 0).

7.4.3 Discourse C: Intensification Inevitable, But Not for Me

Factor C has an Eigenvalue of 1.02 and explains 10 per cent of the study variance. There are four participants who significantly load on Factor C, however, only two who load purely on Factor C (and therefore not conflated). These two participants are both men renting houses in suburbs 10-12km outside of the Auckland CBD. Both had experienced living in detached dwellings for most of their lives; however one participant was currently renting with his family in a split villa, while the other was renting a detached house with flatmates. One participant was born in Fiji and of Indian Fijian decent and the other was born in New Zealand and of Maori decent.

**Interpretation**

Discourse C reflects a quite complicated viewpoint that does not outright reject urban intensification (17: +4) but is nevertheless highly sceptical of its potential benefits for the city (12: -5) and for their own lives (19: +3). This discourse is also quite confused regarding statements related to the future of Auckland’s urban development and growth. There is certainly concern shown towards the potential negative outcomes of urban intensification in the city’s suburbs (24: +3; 34: +1), but there is also a desire for more housing choices within those suburbs (16: +4; 29: -3; 32: -1). This complexity can be best described as an acceptance of the need for urban intensification when the city is perceived more abstractly (as a whole) (4: +4; 26: +2), but considered for their personal living situation their preference is resolutely for low-density detached dwellings (19: +3; 10: +2).

This viewpoint expresses an interest in a clear plan for the future of Auckland (23: -4; 1: +5; 26 +2), particularly if this includes a more diverse housing stock (16: +4; 31: +4), of which intensified building types could be a part (30: -2). Intensified housing is not rejected as a necessarily unattractive (27: -4)
or inferior (38: -1) dwelling type, that is, if carefully located in appropriate parts of the city (36: +1; 24: +3). Most importantly, it must also be reflective of the wishes of the local community (17: +4). Even so, they do not believe urban intensification will be likely to help or improve the quality of life for local residents (10: +2; 33: -2; 7: -2). In this sense, Discourse C sees the intensification of Auckland as producing building types that are neither better nor worse than other types of existing dwellings. The benefit of allowing intensification, as they do believe to be necessary (4: +4; 3: -3), is primarily to provide a greater variety of housing throughout the city (31: +4; 16: +4). This position is reinforced by their neutrality towards more conservative statements wary of future development (5: 0; 11: 0) and their disagreement with some of the more alarmist statements rejecting intensification (18: -5; 23: -4; 27: -4; 30: -2). It should be noted, and as will be discussed subsequently, a key point of difference between the viewpoints expressed in Discourse C and those of Discourse B is the former’s disagreement with those more extreme statements above that Discourse B is inclined to agree with.

One possible explanations for this is that Auckland’s suburban character is not idealised in Discourse C as it is in Discourse B. Adherents to this viewpoint display less attachment to Auckland’s existing suburban environment (32: -1; 5: 0) and do not express desire for it to be specifically protected from future development (29: -3). Furthermore, while a standalone house with a large garden is desired (19: +3), there is a mild interest in some of the potential benefits of more compact urban environments (39: +1; 13: +1; 35: 0).

There is perhaps less of a connection to traditional suburban Auckland in this discourse due to a desire for more private outdoor space then is considered affordable anywhere but on the periphery of the city (28: +3). Unsurprisingly, then, apartment living is strongly disliked (24: +3; 33: -2; 36: +1), along with a generally negative attitude towards infill housing (9: -2; 34: +1). This is likely why Discourse C is the only viewpoint of the three discourses that is not explicitly averse towards living in master-planned estates, rather than infill housing within an existing part of the city (15: 0). Such developments are commonly found on the outskirts of cities and can provide more outdoor green space, and so living on the peripheries is relatively desirable, hence, they may not feel exiled to the urban fringe (25: -1), rather, they are attracted to it (20: +2; 8: +2). This attitude is summed up well by participant PN23:

I would never live in an apartment. I would rather have my own nice piece of land out in the middle of nowhere or [with] a nice back yard ... you’ve got all this free space to do whatever you want ... Heaps of space out there to run around and do whatever and as a kid, you know, you can have all these adventures that you can’t have when you are in the city (PN23, 27 year old male renting with his family in St. Heliers).
The slight agreement with statement 13 (+1), agreeing that urban intensification supports Auckland’s future growth more sustainably, seems to be in conflict with the strong disagreement that people living in higher-density areas can have more sustainable lives (22: -4). What might explain the difference in this viewpoint is a belief that people will not be changed by their environment and so, while it may provide opportunities for healthier lifestyles, this might not actually affect individuals. This view is consistent with their scepticism of the benefits of compact developments, believing it is up to individual lifestyle choices as to whether people will live more sustainable and healthier lives.

The attitude of Discourse C is, then, resolutely uninterested in urban intensification and an urban lifestyle. However, this has not led them to dismiss such developments completely from the city, as there seems to be an acceptance of the need or, at least, inevitability of intensification within the city. In either case, it would seem that young adults expressing this viewpoint are attracted to environments and amenities that are not closely associated with urban lifestyles. As such, they may choose to live on the urban periphery regardless of the level of urban intensification within more central suburbs.

### 7.4.4 Synthesis

This section asks what do the Discourses hold in common, where are the lines of division? Each of the three Discourses discussed above offer a unique viewpoint held by young adults in Auckland towards the city’s urban intensification. Each discourse is a collective subjective expression based on responses to prompts to respond to and recall individually experienced housing pathways and emergent attitudes to different living environments. However, there are a number of moments of consensus between these three distinct viewpoints. This section will identify where the moments of collusion and lines of division lie between the three viewpoints.

To begin, discourse B and C offer viewpoints that principally align in their dislike of urban intensification, both believing it will not improve their lives (19: B +5, C +3) or their neighbourhoods (10: B -2, C -2). Nevertheless, a notable line of division between discourse B and C is their approach to intensification’s impact and benefit to the city as a whole, rather than for their own personal situation. For example, while Discourse B contends that urban intensification and the buildings it encourages will make Auckland’s suburbs look uglier (27: +2), Discourse C disagrees with this statement (27: -4). Furthermore, Discourse C is concerned that low-density suburbs do not necessarily benefit all Aucklanders (29: -3), whereas Discourse B moderately agrees with statement 29, suggesting that Auckland’s low-density character should be protected, since it benefits all the city’s residents (29: +1).
Discourse C also aligns with A, rather than B, in their lack of outright agreement that the city’s residential areas should retain their low-density character, compared to group B’s much clearer agreement (5: A 0, B +2, C 0). This distinction between discourses B and C is also evident in disagreement towards statement 32 (32: B 3, C -1): while Discourse B is strongly in favour of Auckland continuing to grow as it has previously, Discourse C moderately disagree with this statement. Hence, these two groups share a lack of desire to live in intensified environment, but disagree over whether such a policy will be beneficial to Auckland as a whole.

Indeed, this disagreement between the viewpoints expressed in discourses B and C is further strengthened by their position towards statement 4. The attitude of holders of a Discourse C viewpoint towards urban intensification may not be of personal preference but there would seem to be an assertion that it is necessary for the city as a whole to take this path (4: C +4). Meanwhile, those who hold a Discourse B viewpoint disagree (4: B -1), believing quite the opposite: that intensification does not support growth in a positive way (13: B -5, C +1), nor can it have a positive influence on the appearance of the city’s suburbs (27: B +2, C -4).

Statement 18 reveals further areas of consensus between Discourses A and C, regarding concerns that the character and connections of close-knit communities will be lost in suburbs where there is an influx of high-density dwelling residents. Discourses A and C indicate a significant disagreement with the concern voiced in this statement (18: A -2, C -5). Discourse B, while not indicating outright agreement, their neutrality (10: 0) does suggest this is perhaps more of a concern to them than for the other two discourses. A shared relative lack of concern or outright disagreement with this statement across the three discourse groups may be partially a result of young adults’ lower civic engagement and social capital compared to those in earlier and later life stages (Delli Carpini, 2000; Jennings & Stoker, 2004).

Outright criticism of those who support continued low-density suburban expansion is mostly avoided by the participants. However the positionality of the viewpoints displayed in the three discourses toward statement 11, which argues those who support continued development on Auckland’s rural boundary is quite telling in this regard. Discourse A’s strong support of urban intensification and Discourse C’s guarded acceptance of such a policy does indeed lead them to scepticism of those who, instead, wish the city’s growth to be focussed outwards through urban expansion rather than intensification (11: A 0, C 0). When this ostensibly neutral response is compared with Discourse B’s strong disagreement (11: -4), it becomes apparent that this viewpoint clearly represents those
advocates of the suburban expansion that might be considered inappropriate or a short-term solution by the two other viewpoints.

Finally, it is notable that there were several areas of broad agreement found across the three discourses. These ‘consensus’ statements are important to consider, since they represent a region of thought and opinion towards urban intensification where young adults would seem to present a more united ‘generational’ attitude. Firstly, there was a consensus regarding the need for a well thought out plan for Auckland’s future development (1: A +4, B +3, C +5) and an acceptance that some level of intensification would likely occur (3: A -3, B -2, C -3). One reason for support for a balance between urban expansion and intensification (31: A 0, B +4, C +4) is so that a greater choice housing types could be provided within the city (16: A +2, B +1, C +4). One the other hand, there was also some agreement regarding the importance of local communities and incorporating their voices into planning decisions – although this was of more importance to those who found compact residential environments largely unappealing (17: A +1, B +4, C +4). Secondly, while there was disagreement regarding the aesthetic appeal of higher-density dwellings (27: A 0, B +2, C -4) and urban lifestyles (9: A +1, B -3, C -2), this was not related to their perceived quality (38: A -1, B -4, C -1) or their potential impact on local house prices (21: A -5, B -4, C +4).

The analysis I present within this chapter statistically demonstrates the existence of three distinct viewpoints towards urban intensification. Whilst therefore evidence of an alignment of views amongst my participants, to attend to my research question it is necessary to consider how such attitudes have arisen. The configuration of viewpoints above is also suggestive of the importance of the individual and subjective elements of housing experiences in shaping attitudes towards urban intensification. The veracity of this proposition is attended to in the next chapter, where I present the findings of my thematic analysis of the participant interviews.
Chapter 8

Thematic Discourse Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides findings from my thematic analysis of the interviews. This data was obtained from the short semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the 24 participants. As discussed previously, the interviews involved questions related to each participants housing pathway experience. Of particular interest were the types of housing that participants had previously experienced and where these had been located. Further details of the specific approach to, and conduct of, the interviews can be found in Chapter Six.

The discussion of my thematic analysis within this chapter is structured as follows: first, my analysis and data management methods for the interview data are described; second, the coding schema for the analysis is reviewed; and third, in the remainder of the chapter I discuss the most prominent themes extracted through the analysis. Particular attention is given to any connections found between the participants’ individual housing pathways and their attitudes towards urban intensification. My concern is with how their previous experiences of different residential environments may have influenced participants’ opinions, housing preferences and choices.

8.2 Thematic Analysis

Analysis of the interview data began with the full transcription of audio recordings made during the interview with each participant. While transcription is a resource intensive activity, the interview lengths were relatively short, ranging from 15 to 25 minutes and transcribing was completed through a professional service. I used NVivo 11 (QSR International, 2015) to facilitate my thematic analysis of the data. The use of NVivo allowed the convenient organisation, storage and retrieval of my interview data as well as thematic coding and intermeshing of this data with the housing history and demographic data provided by participants in the questionnaire. This process allowed me to approach the data from a variety of analytical angles and examine potential connections across my data sources in a practical and time efficient manner.
8.2.1 Data Management

The transcribed interviews were imported into the NVivo software as separate text documents and labelled by their identification code (PN1-PN24). An individual ‘case’ file was created for each participant and linked to the corresponding transcript source file. The questionnaire data was also entered into NVivo through use of the software’s ‘case classifications’ feature. This allowed the creation of a set of attributes relating to each of the questionnaire sections, which included the demographic questions (gender, ethnicity, marital status, age group and place of birth) and the previous and current living situation section (locations, occupancy status, dwelling types and lengths of residency). Each participant’s questionnaire responses was entered into the software and linked to the previously created ‘case’ file. Since the case files held links to both the interview transcripts and the questionnaire data it was then possible to query relations between themes emerging from the interview transcripts and demographic and living experiences questionnaire data.

Access to this wealth of information was facilitated through the use of NVivo, as well as by using more traditional pen and paper to make notes on findings and potential lines of enquiry. The combination of these techniques supported a comprehensive analysis of all the data sources. With several readings through the data and reflection on it, I was able to generate categories and sub-categories of codes (called ‘nodes’ within the NVivo software) and examine these with ‘matrix-coding’ queries that linked the codes to the attributes recorded for each participant. Those connections between nodes and attributes were then grouped together to form the primary themes that are presented in this chapter.

8.2.2 Coded Themes

The final coding schema developed through the thematic analysis of the interview data is displayed in Figure Nineteen. This coding schema includes the seven a priori codes that were derived from the theoretical framework and 32 inductive sub-nodes that emerged during the data analysis. As each sub-node was discovered through a reading of the interviews it was categorised according to their relation to the theoretical framework. In this way the data was thematically coded in regard to the broader research objectives of the study, but also inductively as they emerged through the analysis process. A comprehensive description of the thematic analysis method and its position within the methodology of this research is provided in Chapter Five. With this overview of the coding complete I now report and provide a discussion of the findings of my thematic analysis.
8.3 What are the Influences on Generation Y’s Attitudes towards Urban Intensification?

The remainder of this chapter details the findings from my thematic analysis and are discussed in three main sections that relate to the key themes emerging from the data. My analysis in this chapter is primarily based on the 24 interviews conducted for this research. However, where appropriate, relevant literature is also cited to support and evaluate claims and findings from the interviews. Throughout this discussion individual voices from the interviews are used to help explain and connect my thematic analysis to individual subjective experiences and narratives expressed by participants to describe their views. The particular backgrounds, circumstances and experiences of several interviewees are conveyed in greater detail in order to illustrate the interconnections across different
themes and to illuminate the holistic nature of their perspectives. Hence, while all 24 individual viewpoints were fundamental to, and influential in, developing the outcomes of the thematic analysis, a carefully selected handful of individual voices are utilised to present the findings in more detail.

In addition, the three discourses emerging from the Q analysis described in the previous chapter are utilised to examine and interrogate the perspectives offered by participants in the interviews compared to their particular discourse affiliation. Links are made between interviewee perspectives and the broad groupings of opinion towards urban intensification as determined through the Q analysis and expressed in Discourses A, B and C – with Discourse A, ‘Supportive Urban Lifestyle Seekers, representing a largely supportive view of urban intensification; Discourse B, ‘Supporters of the Status Quo’, characterised by a family-orientated view exhibiting a strong preference for low-density dwellings and antagonism toward urban intensification; and Discourse C, ‘Intensification Inevitable, But Not for Me’, offering a complex mixture of scepticism and personal distaste for, but acceptance of, the inevitability of intensification within Auckland’s existing suburbs.

8.4 Places to Be, Places to Go: Transport Decisions, Location, Convenience, Trade-offs and Habits

Decisions related to transport options are a highly influential factor in the attitudes of these young adults towards urban intensification and are significantly related to housing preferences and choices. Although their specific positioning towards the different factors related to transport decisions varied, discussions involving transport as an important part of housing decisions were common across all the interviews. The transport decisions code was found to be thematically closely related to convenience, location, trade-offs, options and choices, other places and behaviours and habits.

The convenience of being close to the places young adults want to go, whether that be for work, entertainment, socialising, shopping or other activities was frequently discussed as being one of the most influential factors in the housing choices they made. However, transportation convenience was defined in a variety of ways in the interviews, with some of the participants seeing convenient transport options as being the ability to easily drive from place to place during their day, while others indicated convenience was having walking or cycling options and making driving less necessary – since that was seen as an inconvenience.
An example of this view is provided by Paige. She discussed with me how she enjoyed her time renting with flatmates in a detached house in Arch Hill, an inner city neighbourhood within the suburb of Grey Lynn, because it gave her a number of transport options depending on her plans for the day.

When I was living in Arch Hill I still drove to work each day because ... it was easier than catching public transport because it was just not connected very well. But during the weekend I could happily leave my car sitting in the street and walk to the places that I wanted to and walk to meet my friends or catch a bus into the city or those things much more easily than I could where I am now, which was good. I enjoyed that (Paige/PN5 F26-A).

Paige, a secondary school teacher, finds driving to work more convenient than taking public transport, due to a lack of connectivity between the routes to her work and her need to reliably arrive at work on time each day, a common theme amongst the interviewees. Since she lived near the city centre driving out to her place of work was relatively easy. Outside of work, Paige found living in the inner suburbs supported her lifestyle, allowing her to walk to local places or catch a short bus ride to the city centre.

However, a change in employment meant that Paige decided to move back with her parents, who lived in a detached house in a suburb on the western urban boundary of the city.

When I lived in ... Arch Hill before I moved back with mum and dad it was quite nice to be able to walk to places but I can’t really do that where I live now in Titirangi because it would take me hours and I certainly couldn’t get to work without a car because to take public transport would mean I would have to take a train and probably several buses and it would probably take me three hours (Paige/PN5 F26-A).

Living on the periphery of the city reduced Paige’s transport options and necessitated the use of a private motor vehicle. While both houses were traditional detached dwellings, the difference in location and density of the local neighbourhood stimulated Paige to consider her preferences for housing in the future:

I guess you kind of look into the future and a standalone house with a garden is especially something that I would value anyway because my parents have always grown a lot of their own vegetables and things like that so having a garden is something that I would want, but I also wouldn’t necessarily want to have to travel by car every day (Paige/PN5 F26-A).

Paige, like many young adults, has inherited a desire for a detached house with a garden from her recollection of enjoying living in such dwellings during her childhood. However, contemporary transport issues have led her to re-evaluate that aspiration and to at least consider the option of trading off a higher-density living environment for more transport convenience.
Similarly, Liam enjoys the lifestyle of residing in an inner city suburb as this allows him to commute quickly to work by bicycle and complete his weekly activities without “having to get into a car, drive, go through traffic, or get a car parking space”. Renting a detached house with flatmates in Eden Terrace provides convenience to Liam and is something he believes will continue to appeal to him, even if that means buying and living in a smaller dwelling.

... I enjoy the fact that where I live at the moment it takes me 10 minutes to get from my front door to my desk by bike and that, to me, is a lot more desirable than spending 45 minutes in traffic just to have a back yard to look at ... [it’s] just a much more enjoyable proposition really (Liam/PN17 M35-A).

When I asked Liam about why he felt attracted to living in a central area and avoiding driving a private motor vehicle he expressed how such a lifestyle made sense to him and recounted how he had experienced this living and working in London for several years during his 20s:

Well I lived in London for a couple of years ... I lived next to one town centre ... within walking distance, so I didn’t own a car. I could go there for groceries, [or] Saturday morning the market, catch the bus back if we had a lot of stuff and where I worked was located next to another transport stop close to the city so commuting was quite simple ... it made sense, I never needed to drive when I was there (Liam/PN17 M35-A).

While living in foreign countries it is more likely that people will need to rely on active or public transport options, at least for an intermediate period of time. Choosing to use active and public transport was more common for interviewees who had travelled to popular ‘OE’ destinations. For example, Liam found that during his time living and working in London it was not necessary to own a car because he lived in a convenient central urban area near public transport nodes. Having now moved back to Auckland he has found it possible to continue this lifestyle by living in an inner suburb of the city. Previous research in Auckland has suggested a link between people’s experiences of living overseas, particularly in their formative years, and the transport decisions they make later in life (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008). Liam states his positive experiences of walking and using public transport in the UK – a popular travel destination for many New Zealanders – and this has likely had an influence on his transport decisions and possibly his housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification.

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20 The acronym ‘OE’ stands for ‘overseas experience’ and is a New Zealand term for a working holiday that can last for an extended period of time, typically one year, but can often continue longer. It is a persistent cultural tradition that has customarily associated with trips to the UK and/or around Europe, but has more recently also begun to include countries in Asia.
Renting a unit with her partner in the inner city suburb of Mount Eden, Ana, potentially has similar opportunities to Liam for walking or using public transport. However, she expresses a quite different attitude to ‘convenience’ in relation to transport options. Ana works part-time as an administrative secretary in a nearby suburb and is also studying through enrolment in an online university course. These involvements mean she leads a busy and diverse lifestyle, with a number of different activities throughout most days. As such she feels she needs to travel by car to give her a level of flexibility:

I think with what I do in one day it would be a lot of time and a lot of organisation ... time which I don’t really have and organisation is just an extra, you know, on top of everything else that you do (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

Clearly convenience is, then, understood in a number of different ways by these young adults. When I asked Ana whether she could envisage herself walking, cycling or using public transport in order to take advantage of living in a central suburb, close to the city centre, she felt that driving was just something she was used to doing and had no need or desire to change:

I feel like it’s from living in New Zealand or being born in New Zealand and growing up in New Zealand, it’s not a big deal to drive a car...it’s just how I’ve been brought up and how I have done everything for the last however many years. I haven’t had a need for public transport because I have had a car...You turn 16, you get a learners licence and eventually a full licence and then you drive everywhere (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

Ana displays a strong preference for driving a car. This is expressed as the extension of habits and behaviours inculcated from an early age through a particular type of New Zealand lifestyle. Other interviewees made similar statements regarding driving. For example, Ethan (PN2) mentions that: “it’s just a New Zealand psyche. You own a car. It’s almost a necessity unfortunately”. These findings align with previous research in the city that has found use of the private automobile deeply tied into the sociality of Auckland life. For example, Bean, Kearns and Collins (2008: 2845) found that the attitudes of their participants were shaped through their upbringing and previous experiences and “could not imagine their lives without access to a car and used them habitually”. So it is likely that Ana’s childhood and current situation have led her to see driving as the most practical and efficient use of her time. Given the continuing perception of public transport in New Zealand – and particularly in Auckland – as being infeasible and unreliable (Murray et al., 2010) many others will likely make similar decisions.

Ana’s decisions regarding transportation also have a bearing on the potential housing choices she will make in the future. When looking towards her prospective housing options, Ana is quite clear about where she wants to be:
I think it’s obvious that I would like to live in a house, probably not in the city or the surrounding suburbs. I would think for example maybe like Ellerslie or even a bit further out, but not too far away. … I don’t really have any need to be in the city … [and] it would be more expensive to live in the city if I did want to buy a house. I think just the lifestyle of living out of the city I prefer (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

When it comes to making a decision where to rent or perhaps to consider buying Ana will also need to consider her preferences and make trade-offs in relation to location, housing type and price. However, due to her strong preference for driving, Ana seems more likely to favour a dwelling further out – even if this would necessitate more hours spent in her car per week – since this is seen as the most convenient transport option for her and part of a New Zealand lifestyle.

On the other hand, the viewpoint illustrated by the quote below from Ilsa suggests that some young adults are less concerned with living in a particular location and are more internally focussed on private pastimes. Ilsa currently lives in the central city, but she is much less attached to an inner city lifestyle than Liam or Paige. Instead, Ilsa is more concerned with the private space of her own home and her enjoyment of growing vegetables in her garden:

Like, it’s not so much about the location of where I live. If I was to buy a house myself I would probably go somewhere like Titirangi and it doesn’t matter to me that I might have to catch the train to come into the city because my quality of life would be better that way. But if I could live in the city and have a vege garden that would be fine too. It doesn’t really matter where I am (Ilsa/PN11 F30-B).

It is worth noting that Ilsa and Paige both discuss the outer suburban community of Titirangi, but from quite different perspectives, which perhaps highlight the different importance placed by some young adults on location and transportation convenience. In the interviews, both participants discussed this suburb fondly. However Paige makes a specific reference to the undesirable commute time and necessity to drive or take a long multi-stage journey on public transport, whereas Ilsa – who also mentions the need to take a train into the city from Titirangi – suggests this does not matter to her because of the quality of life she can attain from being more self-sufficient and having more living space.

Paige and Liam’s stories are representative of the viewpoint of many interviewees whose attitudes are significantly loaded on Discourse A in the Q methodology analysis. These young adults express a potent desire to stay close to the city centre. While not necessarily living in the CBD, they do wish to be able to stay within a relatively short bus journey from the city centre (around 10-20 minutes) and be within walking distance of shops and other services and activities. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they still need to drive, but that they preferred not to if possible. Although living in
detached houses within the inner city suburbs was quite common, often these dwellings were smaller with little or no private outdoor space and were mostly jointly rented with flatmates. Nevertheless, the benefit of living in these dwellings was that it provided them with more convenient transport options and a desired type of lifestyle.

The statements below from Jack and Daniel also reinforce this type of viewpoint. Jack, a lawyer flat-sharing in a central suburb, is highly supportive of intensification and conveyed to me his enjoyment of an urban lifestyle. Jack previously lived in a large apartment building in a city in southern France and enjoyed the “really good location” as it was “close to lots of amenities, a train station, shopping malls, bus and tram stops, and a really nice park”, even though it was, as he puts it, “extremely high density”. Having had a positive experience with the higher level of density living in several European cities, Jack directly expresses his comfort with the potential of higher-density living in Auckland:

If I had the choice between living in an apartment that was close to the city near a bus or train station that I could walk to quickly and then get to different parts of the city quickly using public transport and not own a car ... that would be my preference ... I would rather that than have my own house on the fringe of the city and have to drive an hour to get to the city (Jack/PN14 M25-A).

When asked whether he felt that he could see himself living in a higher-density residential environment in the long-term future, he states that it is far more likely he will live in a detached house, but not due to his own preference but because “apartments are just not that common in Auckland”. Yet, if there were more apartments available “[he] wouldn’t be opposed to living in an apartment if there were plenty around”. A lack of housing choice is an important recurring theme that will be discussed later.

Daniel, a student renting a split villa (see footnote, Page 171) with his partner in the inner city suburb of Grafton, is a few years older than Jack and is now looking to move somewhere more affordable but also with more space for the two of them. Similar to Jack and several other interviewees, Daniel has enjoyed the lifestyle experienced in higher-density dwellings while living in countries other than New Zealand that have a longer history of building apartment-style housing:

Seeing places overseas really made me realise that living in apartments could be desirable. I think before I’d seen places like ... Berlin and Scotland I hadn’t realised that living in apartments could be a nice place to be and so that was a real eye opener for me. Living in central Auckland, as I do now ... it’s nice as well [our place] is a nice high ceiling apartment, close to everything, and it’s well-built. Yeah, it would be nice to have more space, like a back yard and stuff like that, but being where we are, me and my partner, in our lives at this point in time it’s not possible really (Daniel/PN18 M29-A).
Daniel suggests that his ‘eye opening’ experience of living in apartments overseas exposed him to a particular way of living that he may not have previously considered desirable. Since moving back to Auckland he and his partner chose to live together in a central city area and have found an apartment that helps them attain an equivalent lifestyle in New Zealand. However, when considering their future housing aspirations, Daniel’s apparent desire for more space may see them seeking a different style of housing further out of the city. He discusses his decision making process, agreeing that it is likely they will have to move further out of the city to find more space. However, this trade-off between location and dwelling size is made more difficult for Daniel because of the limited transportation options in outer suburbs:

Yeah, so currently I don’t have to [drive], I can take the option of walking or cycling if I want to go somewhere nearby, whereas … if I lived out on [the periphery] … it is just so far away from everything. We’d have to drive to get anywhere … We’ve been looking at other places for example, further out and quite often [that’s] the deterrent (Daniel/PN18 M25-A).

The situation Daniel describes is likely similar to many young adults in their late 20s, who may be moving into another stage in their life course, involving the formation of long-term partnerships and family formation. Such changes will be closely related to transitions along their housing pathways. What can be seen from my discussion with Daniel is a level of difficulty and uncertainty in deciding the right time to make that transition. This is clearly not helped by the perception (and likely reality) of poor public transport links to those areas further out of the city, casting them as isolated places far from the lifestyle they currently enjoy.

While comparing her lifestyle living in central Wellington to living in a central suburb of Auckland, Chloe expresses this youthful sentiment rather well:

Well just as a young person, if you lived any further out than … a half an hour walk … you would constantly be, like, apologising to people. Like, you’d never expect anyone to come round to your house if you had a party. You might assume that people wouldn’t show up because it was so far away (Chloe/PN16 F27-A).

Clearly, for some younger people there is a perception that to not be living close to somewhere can have a negative impact on their social lives. There is then a lifestyle that emerges from these discussions that has influenced these young adult’s perceptions of urban intensification. In this case, an important advantage of living in a higher-density environment is that it can provide greater transport choices and convenience for young adults which supports their lifestyles or as Madeleine (PN12 F32-A) puts it: “I just think it’s a nice way of living in terms of either taking public transport or walking to work. It’s just sort of a nice way of being in the world”.
The influence of transportation in other places was also mentioned several times, particularly in regards to the efficiency and reliability of public transport in other cities, such as Melbourne, Shanghai and London. Auckland public transport options were strongly criticised by all participants, but especially by those who had experienced living in other big cities. The habits and behaviours young adults develop in relation to transport can also be influential on their preferences for different housing types and locations. Some young adults such as Ana – who are also more aligned with the viewpoint expressed in Discourse B – suggest they feel what can perhaps be described as a ‘predisposition’ towards driving in Auckland. While others – who align more with Discourse A – discuss their strong desire to avoid travel by car, even if this necessitates living in a smaller dwelling.

The highly auto-orientated patterns of contemporary social life is well evidenced (Sheller & Urry, 2000; Urry, 2004) and is also clearly reflected in the interviews, with regular use of a car for work necessary for most participants. However there is evidence from several countries of a declining use of private motor vehicles (Newman & Kenworthy, 2011), most notably amongst Generation Y (Goodwin & van Dender, 2013; Hopkins, 2017; & Stephenson, 2016). The narratives of interviewees like Liam, Jack, Daniel and Chloe suggest that driving a car is also becoming less favoured by some younger New Zealanders and that walking can be an important social activity for Gen Y. Living within walking distance of local places of significance as well as living in locations that encourage social interaction through active transport options are important considerations in young adults’ transport choices (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008; Litman, 2012) and are therefore suggested to be related to the neighbourhoods in which they would prefer to reside (Walker & Li, 2007).

8.5 Living in Communities Here, There and Elsewhere: Communities, Sociability and Privacy

The desire to live in an identifiable ‘community’ in Auckland was expressed by most of the participants at some point during the interview. Commonly these places were in Auckland’s inner suburbs, such as Mount Eden and Ponsonby. A few participants mentioned areas further out, such as Pakuranga and Hobsonville Point that had communities of particular meaning or interest to them. A key area of difference between the participants was in their expression of the concept of community in the interviews – what it meant to them and how a place with community was defined in their understanding.
8.5.1 A Suburban Lifestyle and Community Aesthetic

For some participants, preference for neighbourhoods defined by traditional New Zealand detached houses with large gardens was closely related to the concept of community. In contrast, the construction of apartment buildings was seen as largely detrimental to community. When Ana discusses her preference for low-density neighbourhoods she reminisces back to her experiences growing up in the low-density suburb of Pakuranga:

Yeah it feels like a closer community I guess ... I realise how much nicer that was compared to how I live now ... I would never see an apartment building and so coming to Mt Eden where its full of apartment buildings I see a difference in ... the way the community is. You don’t have that same feeling of saying “hi” to your neighbour and that sort of thing (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

Ana associates the visible presence of apartment buildings with a lack of social interaction and sees this situation as reducing the closeness of the local community. Interestingly, Mount Eden is an inner-city suburb that is commonly thought to have a strong local community, but it seems that living in this suburb has not generated such feelings for Ana, which she relates to living in and around the suburb’s apartment buildings.

Rashmi also discusses the negative social effect she feels apartments have on local communities. While currently renting a detached house in the western suburb of Glen Eden with her husband and young child, Rashmi has experienced urban living in several other countries, including Australia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. She uses these previous experiences to explain her aversion to apartment living and reveals that she may consider moving out of Auckland if the city environment further increases in density:

To be honest if Auckland is going to become more high density I might actually think of moving down to Hamilton because I would want a big garden and all that. And that’s one reason I moved back from Melbourne, I didn’t want the high densities with no garden and no community spirit (Rashmi/PN6 F33-B).

The potential to move to the smaller city of Hamilton, about 1.5 hours south of Auckland, is considered by Rashmi as she seeks to secure a low-density neighbourhood environment for her family. One of the reasons for her negative attitude towards higher-density dwelling types is her previous experiences of living in a high-rise apartment in Bangkok. She describes how the physical design of apartments can make socialising difficult compared to low-density neighbourhoods:

I was living in an apartment in Bangkok for ten years when I was younger and you hardly even know your neighbours ... when you’re living in an apartment. I mean you have windows facing out to the
streets and you don’t get to see the people because you walk into your apartment and that’s it, you know. But because [in Auckland] you are out in the garden and you get to see neighbours and you see them driving out. That is better for your life (Rashmi/PN6 F33-B).

Rashmi’s experiences of apartment buildings in Bangkok have led her to a wholly negative perception of higher-density lifestyles. She sees the plans for urban intensification in Auckland as threatening to introduce similar experiences to her current living situation. As discussed earlier in this thesis (see, Section 4.3.2), it is unlikely that intensification in Auckland will lead to an urban landscape comparable to Bangkok’s for the foreseeable future – with any new compact dwellings mostly taking the form of low-rise medium-density apartments. Yet, in studies of NIMBY (not in my back yard) opposition to more affordable compact housing, there is a persistent perception held by suburban residents of such dwellings as high-rises (Pendall, 1999; see also, Ruming, 2014). The image and imagining of the high-rise block of flats is a common signifier to suburban residents of traditionally low-density cities for the threat of redevelopment in their neighbourhood (Filion, Bunting & Warriner, 1999) and the influx of certain stigmatised ‘others’ (Hastings, 2004).

For Rashmi apartment living closed her off from other people, only allowing her to anonymously gaze over the distant lives and activities of others, without social contact. Conversely, she has found living in a detached house in Auckland allows her to enjoy feeling more socially connected. Everyday activities in the outdoor areas of her house are potential sites for social interactions that can enhance her feeling of community. How much interaction Rashmi actually has with her neighbours is unclear, but it seems the ability to see her neighbours encourages feelings of wellbeing. Her house and suburb have become very familiar and so even just observing her neighbours can provide a sense of comfort in the neighbourhood.

Perhaps more important is that Rashmi wants to have an outdoor space for her son to play and as a place to have family gatherings. Although local parks can also potentially provide such spaces, she finds it more convenient and comfortable to have a private outdoor space for her family to enjoy at home:

They [children] can’t stay inside all the time so it’s good to have a big garden and they can run around, throw a ball, whatever … and have a barbecue or something, have that family time. You can go into your garden to relax … rather than having to go out, especially when you have kids. My son couldn’t play in the little tiny concreted back yard in Melbourne but he can play here (Rashmi/PN6 F33-B).

During the several years her family relocated to Melbourne she realised her strong desire for the residential green space she had enjoyed while living in Auckland, particularly with her son. This was
eventually one of the reasons her family decided to return to New Zealand and search for a house that had a big garden. Having now found a place like this in Auckland, Rashmi is therefore concerned that urban intensification may change what she currently enjoys about her neighbourhood.

A related concern that other participants express is the threat to the existing community’s privacy that high-rise apartments are thought to cause. Kahu explains how he believes communities deserve the right to oppose high-rise dwellings because of the impact it can have on their neighbourhood:

It’s quite important for the community to have a huge say on what [housing] should be available to them, because high-rises just increases the overcrowding ... and people around here like their privacy (Kahu/PN23 M27-C).

The loss of privacy that Kahu suggests leads people in his suburb of St. Heliers to oppose intensification is a well-known and enduring aspect of New Zealand’s suburban culture (for example, Mitchell, 1972). Vallance, Perkins and Moore (2005) found that privacy and access to sunshine were the aspects suburban residents of Christchurch most treasured about their neighbourhood. In their case study they also revealed that residents who had experienced the development of multi-level apartment buildings adjacent to their property “hugely resent[ed]” what they saw as an invasion of their privacy and a “theft” of their landscape. This loss of privacy was primarily due to the private outdoors spaces of their property becoming under observation from the windows and balconies of dwellings in the higher levels of adjacent apartment buildings.

### 8.5.2 Children and Childhood Experiences

Kahu is a university student studying at a tertiary institution in the city centre. He rents a split villa with his wife and young child in the eastern suburb of St Heliers. Kahu’s views closely align with Discourse C in the Q analysis and one of the primary characteristics of this viewpoint is an acceptance of the need for urban intensification at a city-level, while personally finding these dwellings and urban spaces unattractive. We can see this attitude is evident in the way Kahu answered my question of whether he was concerned about urban intensification in his suburb:

Yeah, I guess so, but like I don't think that it would be too much of a problem ... I guess it depends on who you are ... I know there is a need [to intensify] but there needs to be a balance (Kahu/PN23 M27-C).

So even though there is some concern suggested it seems that he can accept the necessity for urban intensification in the city. However, for his own housing needs Kahu finds higher-density dwellings highly unattractive and quite contrary to his desired lifestyle.
When I asked him to describe what experiences had influenced his preferences, like a number of the participants, he referred back to the places he had experienced in his childhood:

Well to have a large property is pretty much what I have always had as a kid growing up, having the free space in the back yard to run around ... it’s quite important to me. Even having a large garden, because my father had a huge garden and he has passed that [desire] on to me. It just makes more sense to have space in the back yard, [rather] than to fill it up with another house (Kahu/PN23 M27-C).

Following this response, I asked Kahu whether he found living in his current residence at all problematic, given that it was at a relatively higher-density than the places he was describing. He responded:

Yeah because I mean this place is kind of large but there’s not much grass on this piece of property ... It does make it a lot easier, if you have got a family, to have a place ... where you’ve got a lot of land, where you can just run around with the kids ... You have a lot more experiences outside the city than you do here in the city ... It’s a nice house, but I [would] prefer a nice big back yard ... I would never live in an apartment ... it’s just not my thing, I guess (Kahu/PN23 M27-C).

It is not surprising then, that once he finishes his studies, Kahu wants to move with his family to live in a house further out on the urban periphery of Auckland. He admits that “with jobs it might be a bit harder” and that this would be particularly so if he would need to commute into the city “because the traffic is horrendous” – but this is a trade-off Kahu is likely willing to make in order to attain his “own nice piece of land out in the middle of nowhere, or [a house] that has a nice back yard”. In these statements, Kahu clearly expresses aspirations for a lifestyle that is unlikely to be supported by an increasingly compact urban landscape. His desire for a large amount of private green space will almost certainly necessitate moving to the urban periphery of Auckland, something which he is evidently well aware of and likely to accept.

Considering how higher-density dwellings are framed in the attitudes expressed by Rashmi and Kahu, it is interesting to note that such environments are seen as capable of both reducing social interaction between people, but also of reducing people’s privacy. This somewhat contradictory framing of urban intensification presents an environment in which people are at once less social, but more exposed to others. Perhaps the key to understanding this situation is that when Kahu discusses higher-density dwellings he is speaking as part of an existing community who are likely to be oppositional to apartment construction to prevent disturbance to the urban and social landscape they value (for example, through organisations such as, saveourstheliers.org.nz). On the other hand, when Rashmi talks about a lack of social interaction, as a result of not being able to see or know her neighbours, she
is speaking primarily from her own experiences while living in an apartment herself and feeling an unfulfilled desire to be part of a community.

My discussions with these participants revealed the quite negative view towards urban intensification and apartment living that some young adults hold. The interviews revealed the influence that childhood and children can have on attitudes towards urban intensification. Rashmi and Kahu have young children and state their preference for dwellings with private outdoor spaces so that they can safely and easily allow their children to play and enjoy time with the family. Urban intensification is associated with dwelling types – primarily apartment buildings – that are perceived, or, as in Rashmi’s case, have been found to not provide the private outdoor green spaces in which they can enjoy family activities or let their children play. These findings certainly support the life-course residential preferences thesis that families with children are most likely to prefer standalone dwellings and find compact dwellings unappealing (see, Lewis & Baldassare, 2010). Conversely, Carroll, Witten and Kearns (2011) found that there has been a growing presence of families with young children living in apartment buildings within Auckland’s inner-city. There is then, as Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways approach suggests, considerable complexity involved in contemporary housing trajectories, choices and residential preferences.

Ana and Kahu also identify how their own childhoods have influenced their attitudes towards urban intensification. Growing up in traditional detached houses in New Zealand, Ana and Kahu both recount their enjoyment and fond memories of their activities and experiences in low-density neighbourhoods. Ana emphasises the positive social character of her local community when growing up and how she now misses that in her life, while Kahu discusses his enjoyment of having plenty of space for outdoor activities and how this has continuing importance to him. In both cases, these youthful experiences have shaped and continue to shape these young adults housing pathways as they seek and hope to replicate their childhood experiences in their future housing choices for themselves and their family.

8.5.3 Seeking Community

However, the experiences of apartment living for other young adults have been quite different and several participants conveyed much more positive attitudes in their interviews. In contrast to Ana and Rashmi’s experiences of the unsociable aspects of apartment living, Emma recounts her time spent living in apartments in Vancouver as being highly social:
I suppose living in an apartment … sort of creates its own community. A lot of the time when I was in Vancouver, lots of the places [I lived] they … did things that they sort of did together. Like they had a pot luck Christmas lunch [and] those sorts of things … it’s great if it’s done well, if it’s brought by … the residents themselves (Emma/PN3 F33-A).

In Vancouver, Emma found apartments could be a social environment with activities organised to foster social interactions and a sense of community. She suggests that the confines of an apartment building can create a form of community, since all the residents have at least one thing in common, they must all share the same building they call home. Occasional social events and community activities can bring the residents together and provide an opportunity for them to meet their neighbours.

This could perhaps go towards reducing the potential isolation that people like Rashmi feel while living in apartments. However, Emma does qualify her positive account of the social nature of apartment dwelling, as she states:

I think to live in an apartment you do have to be a bit of a go-getter, you do have to be a social sort of person. I mean it’s not to say that unsocial people can’t live in apartments but … to get the most out of things you do have to get to know your neighbours. Whereas I don’t think that houses in this area, I don’t even know the neighbours down the driveway. And everybody, you know, you don’t see them that much … they’ve got their own little house and their own little world (Emma/PN3 F33-A).

The social nature of apartment dwelling should not, therefore, be taken for granted, but instead Emma believes has to be desired and enacted by the residents themselves.

In contrast to the experiences of Ana and Rashmi, Emma has found living in a detached house in a low-density suburb of Auckland to be much less social than when she lived in apartments in Vancouver. Emma currently owns a standalone house in an outer suburb of Auckland and to help with paying her mortgage she lives with a flatmate who rents one of the bedrooms. In the quote above she explains how living in a neighbourhood of detached houses has caused her to feel disconnected from her neighbours, because each house becomes its own “little world”. The way in which Emma describes her suburb is not suggestive of the community atmosphere which other participants attribute to the low-density neighbourhoods and so this account offers a quite different perspective of the connection between community and dwelling type. One potential explanation for this discrepancy is that while Emma discusses her experiences living in low-density neighbourhoods as a young adult, Ana and Kahu recollect their positive experiences and enjoyment while as children – with all the potential sentimentality that may go along with such reminiscence.
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The experiences of a sense of community and definitions of it are highly subjective and specific to particular places and people. Another potential explanation for these differences is that Emma lives in a new suburban estate on the periphery of Auckland, whereas, commonly a sense of community is most associated with more established neighbourhoods. Several interviewees who live or have recently lived in established suburbs, particularly those in the inner city, state their desire to continue to reside in them for this reason. For example Paige had, until recently, enjoyed living in the inner city neighbourhood of Arch Hill but, as discussed earlier, she then had to move to the outer suburban community of Titirangi. She describes below her desire to buy a house in the community in which she grew up in:

- I have kind of always considered that when I grow up and buy a house I’d always want it to be in West Auckland, because that’s what I kind of like and that’s what I’ve grown up with ... But I understand that [s] ... not necessarily going to be a realistic thing for me in the current state of housing because I can’t afford it and I probably won’t be able to afford it. But if there were other options provided to cater to different needs within that community then it would, I guess, reduce house prices a little bit at least or give other options that might be affordable (Paige/PN5 F26-A).

As with Ana and Kahu, Paige’s childhood experiences shape her housing aspirations and will likely influence her future choices – particularly when she considers where she would like to buy her own house.

Paige would like to buy a house in West Auckland, where she grew up and, as stated previously, living in “a standalone house with a garden” is something she would “especially...value”. However, it seems this is becoming less likely due to the growing unaffordability of housing in Auckland and in the neighbourhoods in which she would like to live. However, unlike Ana and Kahu, Paige seems to place more importance on location and on living within the community with which she is familiar and attached. Consequently, Paige wishes there were “other options”, a greater variety of housing within the vicinity of that community, so that either prices might fall, or so she could trade-off density for a desirable location. That is, she suggests she might accept “other options” that could provide more affordable housing, so that she could live within that community.

Paige’s desire to reside in a familiar community even if that meant possibly having to accept living in a smaller dwelling is shared by several other participants who all significantly align with Discourse A (a viewpoint broadly supportive of urban intensification). Jack, who currently lives in the central
Auckland suburb of Sandringham, states his preference to live in an apartment or some form of medium density housing in an already existing community:

I would rather live in an apartment or, like, a high density home close to an existing community. So, like, if they did some medium density housing near the Mt Eden Village I would much rather live there than in one of these estates ... one of the things I like about Ponsonby or Mt Eden or Sandringham is that they have developed over time and so they’ve got their own personalities. They are real communities (Jack/PN14 M25-A).

What Jack is searching for is an existing neighbourhood that already appears to have a well-defined community, a place which has a specific character and history. He contrasts this to “these estates”, which is in reference to statement card 15 from the Q-sort that posits a preference to live in compact master planned estates rather than infill housing. Jack disagreed with this position and mentioned his desire to live in existing communities. He cites Mt Eden as an example, which is an attractive neighbouring suburb well known within Auckland as a creative and vibrant place with a long history (see, www.aucklandnz.com/discover/mount-eden). The cost of buying in the area reflects its reputation with the average estimated price for the majority of detached houses in the area currently at well over $1M NZD. Jack wishes that more reasonably priced apartments or medium density houses were available so that there would be more opportunities to affordably buy and live in such highly valued neighbourhoods. He sees the alternative of finding affordable housing out on the urban periphery of Auckland as decidedly unattractive and asserts that he would not live there: “even if I had a nice house with a big lawn, cus they seem kind of plastic to me and, like, there is no authentic sense of community”.

People’s identities have been shown to be closely related to their housing and its image to themselves and society and the search for authenticity as an important part of locating a positive image and identity through housing (e.g., Bonney, Mc Cleery & Forster, 1999; Gutting, 1996; Winstanley, Thorns & Perkins, 2002). Jack therefore dislikes new houses on the urban periphery because he feels their newness is inauthentic; he sees them as “plastic”, a material that perhaps implies their tackiness and artificiality to him. Florida (2002) suggests authenticity is related to a resident’s search for established neighbourhoods, historic buildings, a unique cultural significance, or local scene, with the comingling of old, long-time residents and young, new residents. Being able to remain living in a place with a strong sense of local character and culture has also been found to be important to wellbeing. From their study of two Brisbane suburbs, McCrea and Walters (2012) report that residents often develop strong emotional attachments to their local suburbs and that this anchors their desire to stay. However, in this case, urban intensification was seen as a threat to local culture and communities by
residents of West End (an inner-city Brisbane suburb), because it was associated with gentrification and declining housing affordability. On the other hand, for inner-city suburban Aucklanders the threat of gentrification through urban intensification is likely less of a concern, since most inner suburbs have already become gentrified affluent areas.

The younger generation are also concerned about the location in which they live. Bruce and Kelly’s (2013) study of the housing aspirations of Generation Y in Australia found that the preferences of younger adults were orientated towards more desirable locations, even if this came at the expense of housing quality. There was also a belief that social standing and career advancement were linked to the image and style of their home and especially its location. Therefore it would seem that Jack’s desire for authenticity in a locality is likely shared by many young adults and performed through their housing location choices. Thus, although urban intensification may change the form of these central neighbourhoods over time, it would seem that having more compact dwellings offers these young adults an opportunity to live, or continue living, in locations and communities with which they are familiar, have significant attachment and find an authentic sense of place.

Considering the views towards community and location expressed above, there is a broad disparity between those whose attitudes more align with Discourse A and those who align more with Discourses B and C. Analysis of the interviews reveals the suggestion of two quite distinct understandings of the concept of community. Some participants discuss community as a particular type of landscape reflected in dwelling typologies and the design of the residential environment. Specifically, detached housing types in low-density suburban environments were seen by some participants as a neighbourhood characteristic that suggested to them it was likely to have a greater level of social interaction and sense of community. Conversely, the presence of apartments were believed to detract from this type of community environment, primarily through causing an influx of unknown new residents to the area, while simultaneously removing opportunities for interaction due to the expected design flaws of compact dwellings. The participants who articulated this concept of community aligned most closely with the views towards urban intensification expressed in Discourses B and C – that is, a strong personal preference for low-density dwellings, an idealisation of Auckland’s suburban character and/or substantial scepticism towards urban intensification and its proposed benefits.

Those participants whose views aligned more with Discourse A (defined by positive attitudes towards urban intensification and urban lifestyles) commonly discussed community more in relation to specific
locations rather than building typologies, especially those neighbourhoods that had meaning to them personally. This concept of community as a meaningful location was expressed by participants in relation to their desire to remain living in and around such locations. Due to the growing unaffordability and unavailability of housing in many of these central areas, these young adults express frustration at their inability to buy a house in the more vibrant and well-connected parts of Auckland. For these participants, the option of buying a house and moving to the urban periphery is seen as an uncomfortable but likely decision they will have to make. One of the only ways they might be able to continue to reside in more central areas is to accept a smaller dwelling type in a neighbourhood more densely developed than they may have experienced growing up. A number of participants express their willingness to consider more compact dwellings if that would allow the possibility of them living within their desired neighbourhoods and communities. However, most report their present disappointment at the difficulty to find such dwelling types available or at a price they are likely to be able to afford.

8.6 Urban Intensification and the ‘New Zealand way of Life’: Continuities, Transformations and Evolution

In seeking the connections between people’s experiences of different living environments and their attitudes towards urban change, the influence of New Zealand’s cultural environment is a potentially significant factor that requires greater examination. New Zealand research has shown that, although there has been rapid growth in higher-density housing typologies (Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011; Dupuis & Dixon, 2002), a strong preference for low-density standalone dwellings has remained (DTZ New Zealand, 2005) – even with resident satisfaction in higher-density dwellings having risen considerably (Haarhoff et al., 2012). One potential explanation for such a situation is the continuing cultural importance of the ‘New Zealand Dream’ of home ownership (Ferguson, 1994) and a ‘New Zealand way of life’ that has traditionally centred around the image of the nuclear family living in a detached house on a quarter acre section – or as Mitchell (1972) famously put it the New Zealand ‘quarter-acre pavlova paradise’ lifestyle.

A common point of discussion within the interviews was the definition of ‘a New Zealand way of life’ and how this related to the participant’s own experiences and lifestyle. The discussion was often prompted by a questioning of the participant’s placement of Q-sort statement card number 30, which reads: “Urban intensification goes against the New Zealand way of life” and was originally added to the concourse from an article in the North Shore Times on 4th December 2012, entitled “Call to arms over housing intensification plans” (Willis, 2012). This particular statement card was regularly found
placed towards the centre of the distribution table, indicating some level of uncertainty or ambivalence towards the sentiments expressed by the card. Noticing this common occurrence I began using the placement of this card to seed discussion with the participants about New Zealand lifestyles and cultural expectations and how these were impacted by the dynamics of urban landscapes.

Thematic analysis of these conversations revealed three distinct conceptualisations of the term the ‘New Zealand way of life’ and how they relate to attitudes towards urban intensification. As mentioned previously, the importance of childhood experiences living in low-density neighbourhoods was influential in shaping the future aspirations of some participants who wished to replicate those experiences in their own life. Similarly, these participants also connected these experiences and how they understood a ‘New Zealand way of life’ was to be interpreted and secured. A second conceptualisation of the ‘New Zealand way of life’ suggests a more mixed or hybrid understanding. These participants believed a desirable ‘Kiwi’ lifestyle could be achieved through a variety of different housing typologies and residential environments, not just through the ownership of a standalone house with a big garden. The expression was also explained by a third group of participants as a constantly evolving concept that was perhaps currently in the process of transitioning to mean something new that related more to the contemporary lifestyles of a younger generation of New Zealanders.

8.6.1 A Low-Density NZ way of Life

Whether having a more positive or negative attitude towards urban intensification, many participants commonly expressed their belief that most New Zealanders were likely to find higher-density dwellings unattractive. This is particularly true for those participants who expressed a more fixed conceptualisation of New Zealand lifestyles. The ‘Kiwi’ aspiration to live in a standalone house with a garden in a low-density suburb was seen by these young adults as pervasive within New Zealand and as a materialisation of New Zealand culture inscribed into suburban landscapes. The desirable aspects associated with this type of residential environment were broadly defined by interviewees as having large outdoor spaces for relaxation and activities, living in a sociable and supportive community, knowing your neighbours, living close to local schools, and being able to easily access rural areas and ‘natural’ wilderness environments. For participants who see these desirable neighbourhood characteristics as only associated with low-density neighbourhoods, urban intensification and higher-density living environments are considered unlikely to ever become part of a conventional ‘Kiwi’ lifestyle.
The concept of a New Zealand lifestyle is therefore seen by these participants as broadly related to suburban spaces and standalone housing, which resonates with the aforementioned characterisations of Ferguson (1994) and Mitchell (1972). For example, Vishal, who rents a detached house with flatmates in an eastern suburb, states that “to [his] understanding it’s pretty much all New Zealanders thinking that urban intensification is not part of their life anyway” (Vishal/PN10). He admits he enjoys the “quiet” and “less crowded” character of his suburb because the houses in the area are almost all “separate houses with [their] own gardens on its own”, which he prefers “more than living in a compact or high-rise apartment building... surrounded by hundreds of people”. This attitude accords with his Q-sort alignment with Discourse C and emphasises his personal desire for a low-density suburban lifestyle. For him that’s the ‘New Zealand way of life’ and he believes it is also what most other New Zealanders would aspire to.

Olivia, on the other hand, aligns with Discourse A and is more supportive of urban intensification and enjoys an urban lifestyle, living just outside of the central city. She desires this type of lifestyle because, as she states, “I want to be able to walk out of my front door and walk across the road and get food and go to my favourite bar and, if it’s the morning, go to the market”. However, like Vishal, she agrees with statement 30 that urban intensification does go against the ‘New Zealand way of life’.

Yeah, I do agree with that. [It’s] just a gut feeling that I have ... the majority of New Zealanders you ask, without letting them think too much about it or giving them too much research or anything, would ... say keep the suburbs as they are ... they would have a negative response to [intensification] initially before you gave them any kind of information (Olivia/PN15 F28-A).

She feels that most New Zealanders are probably largely predisposed against urban intensification and therefore do not desire the type of lifestyle that she enjoys. However, Olivia seems to keep the possibility of a change in general perception or attitude open if the right information is disseminated to the population and if it shows that “it’s proven ... [and] it’s going to be significantly and environmentally beneficial” – then, reconsidering, she finally concludes: “but nothing’s going to fly if people don’t like that sort of thing”.

While personally exhibiting quite different lifestyles and housing preferences, Vishal and Olivia both agree that most New Zealanders are unlikely to be supportive of urban intensification. In the case of Vishal, he believes most New Zealanders desire what he desires, a standalone house in a low-density suburban residential neighbourhood. Olivia personally enjoys living in a mixed-use neighbourhood with a greater variety of dwelling types, but supposes that most New Zealanders would not be likely
to desire such a lifestyle. In discussing their lifestyles and what they believe most New Zealanders would desire, they conceptualise the ‘New Zealand way of life’ as relatively constant.

New Zealand, as a country, is imagined in a number of ways that are also associated with what participants assumed to be commonly held values and aspirations of many of its citizens. As such, this imagery also has implications for the way New Zealanders live their lives. The environmental tropes of being ‘clean and green’ and, more recently, ‘100 per cent pure’ are enduring markers of New Zealand and have their genesis in colonial mythologies and post-colonial international branding and tourism (Bell, 1996; Kaefer, 2014). But these brands are also internalised ‘at home’ by New Zealanders themselves and have become a dominant part of national consciousness (Coyle & Fairweather, 2005). This imagining of the country informs several aspects of New Zealand culture and lifestyles, including attitudes towards the appropriate place for child rearing and family living. Ana, as discussed earlier, has strong aspirations to live in a low-density neighbourhood in a detached house and this aspiration is closely associated with her desire to replicate the household experiences of her childhood. She believes New Zealand is characterised by this type of family lifestyle:

... I feel like New Zealand is seen as a nice family sort of country, so you grow up in a house and you have a back yard and a driveway ... And I think being from New Zealand I am used to not living in a unit or an apartment. I am used to living in a house with a back yard. I think that is really different to how I live now (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

Ana contrasts her current living environment, a unit in an inner suburb, with her previous experiences living in a detached house with a back yard. She seems to suggest that being a “nice family sort of country” leads New Zealanders to aspire to such dwellings. Furthermore, she relates this type of lifestyle to the clean and green imagery associated with New Zealand’s environment:

Yeah. I think especially when people view New Zealand they see like the fields and clean green sort of image and it’s got to be expected everywhere that there is going to be compact living, but I think it’s not something that you would expect in somewhere like Auckland (Ana/PN19 F26-B).

While Ana accepts that higher-density residential environments are likely to be found in every city, she states it is something she would neither expect nor associate with living in Auckland. This understanding once again suggests an enduring connection between low-density neighbourhoods and New Zealand urban environments. Whether urban intensification occurs (or has occurred) to any extent in New Zealand cities, this viewpoint implies a largely static conceptualisation of a ‘New Zealand way of life’, which leaves little scope for the acceptance of higher-density living environments and lifestyles.
8.6.2 A Mixed/Hybrid NZ way of Life

This conceptualisation of the ‘New Zealand way of life’ as it relates to urban intensification is representative of a more supportive viewpoint held by participants. Similar to the viewpoint described above, a hybrid understanding of the ‘Kiwi’ lifestyle suggests that there are enduring aspirations and values commonly held by New Zealanders that influence housing choices and attitudes to different urban landscapes. As already mentioned, there are particular neighbourhood characteristics that the interviewees commonly associated with living in New Zealand and were imagined to be generally desirable to most people. However, what distinguishes this conceptualisation is a belief that these attractive neighbourhood characteristics are attainable through a variety of dwelling types, not just low-density detached housing. Two interviewees go further, believing that higher-density dwelling types may actually enhance such characteristics and support attaining a desirable ‘New Zealand way of life’.

Several interviewees expressed this belief quite unambiguously when considering whether urban intensification went against a ‘New Zealand way of life’. For example, Madeleine who earlier expressed her interest in apartment living and, having previously enjoyed living in several inner city apartments in Auckland and Wellington, states that she finds such dwellings convenient and “a nice way of being in the world”. Furthermore, she believes she can secure many aspects of the “Kiwi dream” in an apartment:

As I mentioned, I am kind of interested in well-designed apartments, so I think that, you know, the sort of Kiwi dream of the big house and the garden, surely you can get a lot of those things that you really want but just in a well-designed apartment (Madeleine/PN12 F32-A).

Madeleine seems to be suggesting that a big house is not essential to enjoy the activities and experiences commonly expected with a traditional detached house. Similarly, Jordan, a post-graduate university student renting with his partner in Mt Eden, likes to have an outdoor space for social occasions and working on his hobby projects. He discussed with me how he had previously assumed he needed a conventional detached dwelling to “do the things that I have grown up doing in a house with a yard”. However, since moving into an attached dwelling consisting of a row of units, each with a small front yard, he has found this not to be the case:

I think often people associate … being able to do the things that they can do in a house with a garden because it has a big garden … but they don’t necessarily deconstruct why they like that garden and they may well be able to do those things that they like doing … in a smaller garden or in a communal area or something like that (Jordan/PN8 M28-A).
Speaking from his own experience of moving into a medium density dwelling, Jordan conveys how the assumptions and expectations he previously held about living in such places were altered. Having moved from Melbourne to attend university in Auckland, Jordan wanted to live close to the city centre, so he could enjoy cycling to his various weekly activities. However, now living in this environment, he has come to realise that many of his activities at home did not require as much space as he had anticipated. As such, he states that “those things don’t necessarily take up that much space” and so what has become most important is that he can efficiently “use the space, rather than necessarily living in a house or an apartment”. What matters to Jordan is that his dwelling is practical and supports him in his everyday activities through its location and its design.

Other interviewees suggest that alternative higher-density dwelling types can help support a ‘New Zealand way of life’, even perhaps more so than the low-density detached housing others believe to be intrinsically part of that lifestyle. As discussed earlier, both Liam and Paige align with a Discourse A attitude towards urban intensification in the Q analysis and this is further reinforced through themes that their interviews yielded. Liam is quite sceptical towards the concept of a ‘New Zealand way of life’ from the outset and ranked statement 30 with an accordingly high level of disagreement in his Q-sort. When I enquired as to how he felt about the idea of low-density suburbs being related to a ‘New Zealand way of life’ he responded:

I’m not sure how … getting a massive house goes along with [a New Zealand lifestyle]. I think you could look at other qualities that are desirable in this idealistic ‘New Zealand way of life’, such as being able to walk and cycle to school. Having a community, being friends with your neighbours and all these other things that can exist whether you live in a house with a big back yard or whether you live in some other situation (Liam/PN17 M35-A).

In conceptualising a ‘New Zealand way of life’ Liam discusses several experiences and activities that he believes constitute this “idealistic” lifestyle. These qualities align well with the ways that many other interviewees express their understanding of this concept. The argument Liam makes is that he sees no intrinsic link between these qualities and “a massive house…with a big back yard”. His view is that he can enjoy those qualities of living in New Zealand by residing in a variety of different dwelling types. This view is in contrast to the notion, conveyed earlier by Rashmi, that there are intrinsic physical properties detached houses with gardens possess that lead to the production of increased sociality and neighbouring activities.

Paige shares a similar viewpoint to Liam, but goes further, suggesting that building more low-density detached housing actually works against the ‘New Zealand way of life’ because it creates urban sprawl:
I think that urban sprawl is more going to go against the New Zealand way of life ... People like to be able to get out into the rural areas and see the sheep [and] if we keep expanding Auckland then that’s going to disappear. Therefore having the ability to ... [experience] the New Zealand way of life is going to be reduced, if that makes sense. I think by intensifying somewhere like Auckland you are more likely to preserve that New Zealand way of life that exists outside of the city (Paige/PNS F26-A).

For Paige, being able to easily get out of the city to experience rural and wilderness areas is an important part of her understanding of a New Zealand lifestyle. In arguing that the ‘New Zealand way of life’ is threatened by a housing type many others consider intrinsic to it, her viewpoint offers a salient counter-discourse to oppositional viewpoints towards urban intensification. A focus on access to spaces outside of the city makes urban intensification appealing because it allows cities to develop and grow without a significant expansion of their existing urban footprint. By building more apartments within the existing area it could help to secure this way of life by allowing Auckland to continue to be surrounded by rural land, nature reserves and other green spaces. What Madeleine, Jordan, Liam and Paige all suggest, then, is that what they commonly believe to be a ‘New Zealand way of life’ can be maintained, protected or even potentially enhanced through the intensification of existing urban areas.

8.6.3 An Evolving NZ way of Life

This final conceptualisation of how urban density relates to a ‘New Zealand way of life’ is once again mostly articulated by participants whose viewpoints align with Discourse A (supportive of urban intensification), although a few also align with Discourse C (sceptical acceptance of urban intensification). Consequently it is related to an attitude towards urban intensification that is broadly positive or at least accepting of its inevitability for the city as the population grows. This conceptualisation therefore suggests that what defines a ‘New Zealand way of life’ is likely to evolve as the experiences of its population change through the increasing presence of a greater diversity of urban dwelling types.

An example of this viewpoint comes from Jack, who, as discussed earlier, has previously had positive experiences with higher-density environments. He disputes the statement’s implication that there is just one New Zealand way of life. So, while he recognises the predominance of detached dwellings in the lives of many New Zealanders, he questions the idea that this situation will necessarily endure:

It’s sort of a little bit artificial to say that there is one New Zealand way of life isn’t it, I mean every New Zealander is different ... and just because the majority of us live in houses with a back yard doesn’t mean it needs to always be like that. It ... doesn’t mean it’s going to be like that forever. You’ve got to
change with the times ... [Auckland] will just change and develop and there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s not a negative thing (Jack/PN14 M25-A).

Jack emphasises that as times change and cities develop it is to be expected that the experiences of those urban dwellers will also change, but he is careful to assert that he does not see this as a “negative thing”. We also know that Jack would like to see a greater diversity of dwellings within the inner suburbs so he could more likely afford housing within those desirable neighbourhoods. Given this, we may assume that, more than accepting the inevitable, Jack likely welcomes a “change with the times” as an opportunity to gain access to affordable housing in desirable neighbourhoods he otherwise might not be able to.

Ethan is another interviewee who feels that a changing urban environment is also transforming what is understood as a ‘New Zealand way of life’. He states:

Well I mean I agree with that statement to a degree in that, yes, the traditional New Zealand way of life is a quarter acre block, big back yard and a fully detached house, but times have changed. That’s not necessarily the case anymore ... [It’s] probably, I would say, how the majority view things but as you get increased migration, people from overseas that just completely think otherwise ... Even kiwis growing up in Auckland now are starting to have different opinions (Ethan/PN2 M34).

Again, with changing times these participants believe there are now more diverse lifestyles available in New Zealand and that living in a detached house with a big garden is perhaps only one of several attractive options for city dwellers. Ethan believes the majority of New Zealanders still aspire to own a conventional house but thinks this is changing due to more migrants living in Auckland. However, he also feels that younger ‘Kiwis’ are beginning to desire different lifestyles as well. He later expands on this point, stating:

I think that [detached housing] is what New Zealanders’ traditional thoughts around what a family home should be is ... but young kiwis that are growing up now, I think they’re more used to more a high density lifestyle and living arrangements ... [and] I don’t think it’s only those without children either (Ethan/PN2 M34).

Ethan believes that New Zealanders younger than himself are likely to have more experience living in higher-density environments and therefore more likely to see such living arrangements as normal – potentially, even young families. This aligns with the research conducted by Carroll, Witten and Kearns (2011) in Auckland that found a growing presence of apartment dwelling families with children in the inner-city (see, Section 4.3.3). What remains to be determined is whether these families will remain living in more compact dwellings and find their needs and desires satisfied by them.
It is perhaps telling that, conversely, this is not what Ethan wants for his family. Ethan is 34, married and lives with his family in a detached house that they have owned for six years in Onehunga. Thus, although he is broadly supportive of urban intensification, he has decided it is not what he wants for his family, although he does believe that there are other people who “would be quite happy to live in the middle of town, in an apartment with children”. Consistent with a Discourse C viewpoint, Ethan accepts urban intensification as an expected form of development for a growing city and supports these changes because he believes it will suit a growing number of people’s lifestyles – although not his own.

Patrick is also a homeowner and lives with his partner in a detached house in the western suburb of Glen Eden. Like Ethan, he also agrees that urban intensification does, to some extent, go against the ‘New Zealand way of life’. However, he feels that this attitude towards urban intensification needs to change:

I kind of agree that it does [go against the New Zealand way of life], but I don’t think that it should, so I am kind of confused how to answer that one ... but I feel Aucklanders still want to live in a section with a back yard (Patrick/PN13 M29-A).

I asked Patrick, since he lives in a detached house and feels that most other Aucklanders desire this too, why he feels that this aspiration should need to change, he replied:

It would be good if we were to move towards kind of building up big urban areas in the city and other places as well ... Really, it almost kind of has to at this point. You know, you have people that still want a section and things like that, so it’s going to be hard, but I guess with younger people coming up they will get used to living in apartments and things like that (Patrick/PN13 M29-A).

From this statement we can see that Patrick feels the move towards urban intensification is perhaps less a choice and more an unavoidable reality. So, although he imagines many people in Auckland may still want to live in a detached house with a section, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to achieve that aspiration. While Patrick states that “younger people will get used to living in apartments”, it would seem that he feels this is more an acceptance through necessity rather than desire.

What defines this conceptualisation is, then, an acceptance of urban intensification in Auckland as a natural progression for a city or an unavoidable necessity. In either case though the viewpoint expressed by Jack, Ethan and Patrick is that people’s urban lifestyles will most likely adapt to these changes. Therefore the ‘New Zealand way of life’ is likely to be understood and imagined differently in the future, as urban dwellers’ experiences and expectations evolve. On the one hand, Jack supports
these changes because of his previous positive experiences and hopes to one day afford to buy a place to live in a vibrant inner city suburb. While both Ethan and Patrick, who have less previous experience with higher-density dwellings and both now own detached dwellings outside of the central suburbs, discuss urban intensification as more of a necessity for the city, but these are not places where they personally desire to live.

8.7 Summary

This chapter has presented results of my thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with participating young adults living in Auckland. I have identified and discussed a number of themes emerging from the data. Specifically, my thematic analysis sought to identify the existence of prominent connections between these young adults’ various personal experiences of different residential environments and the attitudes they express towards urban intensification. This section summarises the major analytical findings and outcomes detailed within this chapter.

Transport options and decisions were found to be particularly important to these interviewees when discussing their housing choices and preferences. Attitudes towards high density environments were shown to be related to different conceptions of ‘convenience’ in regards to transportation. Interviewees who align more with a Discourse B viewpoint and are therefore unlikely to desire an inner-city ‘urban’ lifestyle seem to understand convenience as the ability to easily drive to nearby suburbs to access local services, amenities and jobs. A number of recent studies into transport choice have shown that personal access to a private motor vehicle is one of the strongest barriers to young adults developing an active transport lifestyle (Simons et al., 2014). Since it is well established that there exists a culture of car ownership in New Zealand (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008), with 89.9 per cent or households having access to at least one car (Statistics New Zealand, 2001), the lifestyles and routines of younger adults are likely shaped by an expectation of car ownership and driving. It is possible, then, that many young adults, like Ana, who have become habitually tied to the use of a car are more likely to perceive its use as convenient and dismiss alternative transport options. In regards to housing preferences, if driving becomes an established part of life, significantly longer commutes may become a more likely trade-off for access to affordable standalone housing. This finding is supported by the URBAN study in Auckland, which found that people who preferred low-density suburban neighbourhoods commuted approximately 1.5 km further than those who favoured more urban residential environments (Badland et al., 2012).
A second understanding of transport convenience emerging from the analysis strongly contrasts with the viewpoint above. More closely aligned with a Discourse A viewpoint, participants with this understanding regard the need to travel by car as an inconvenience and instead desire the ability to walk and cycle or take short journeys on public transport. This viewpoint is potentially shared by many other young adults as recent research from Denmark suggests this age group are more likely to live in high walkability and bikeability (easy to travel around by bicycle) neighbourhoods, have poorer access to cars and were more focussed on affordability than access to green spaces (Christiansen et al., 2014).

In Auckland, the URBAN study found most residents wished to live in a more walkable urban neighbourhood and that 26 per cent of their sample would prefer to live in a more walkable environment than they currently resided (Badland et al., 2012). Crucially, they also found that participants preferring a more walkable urban setting were more likely to be younger and living in rented dwellings. Since Auckland neighbourhoods with higher walkability and better public transport links are predominantly found closer to the city centre, these young adults are more likely to trade-off density for access to these central locations. However, a common theme across all participants was the criticism of public transport for its lack of convenience and reliability.

In alignment with research conducted by Bean, Kearns and Collins (2008), overseas experiences were commonly referred to by many interviewees as a time when they had encountered more walkable environments with better public transport options. These places often also provided opportunities for participants to reside in a greater diversity of residential environments. Experiences in such locations were mostly positive and were suggested by some to have been influential in leading them to hold more favourable impressions of higher-density dwellings and lifestyles. However there were also a few participants who provided a quite different perspective from their overseas experiences of higher densities. In these cases experiences of apartments in other countries were stated as a specific reason why New Zealand was an attractive place to live. To them, attractiveness was due to the low-density character of New Zealand cities, which allowed them to avoid having to live in or around apartment buildings. Obviously, the perception of urban intensification leading to the building of higher-density buildings in suburban Auckland would be particularly worrying for people who share such aspirations.

Conversely, there were a number of interviewees who directly stated their strong support for greater urban intensification in Auckland. Corroborating the Q analysis findings, the participants who voiced more positive opinions in the interviews were also those whose Q-sorts had most closely aligned with Discourse A in the Q analysis. In the interviews these participants were able to expand on this shared viewpoint, articulating their knowledge of the benefits of apartments and their interest in living in one
– provided it was of a high quality, comfortable and practical. Supporters of urban intensification have been found to exhibit the greatest knowledge of the broader benefits of such developments compared to those who oppose or are ambivalent towards them (Ruming, 2014). The preference of these young adults for living in higher-density dwellings was also significantly related to the desire to gain access to particular neighbourhoods and communities that had special meaning or character to them. However, these participants also shared their impression that in the future, in order to own a house, they would most likely have to move to the urban periphery. A number of reasons were given for this likelihood: Paige and Daniel both indicated they would need more space as they looked to ‘settle down’ somewhere; Jack, on the other hand, felt that he would likely be forced out of the city as there were seem to be insufficient apartments currently available within the central suburbs. An additional component is that the limited transport options further out of the city put more pressure on these young adults’ decision to either remain renting in the inner suburbs or find a more affordable house further out. The prospect of car dependency and long daily commutes will likely require a significant readjustment from the ‘urban’ lifestyle available in the central suburbs.

My thematic analysis also reveals the important influence that childhood experiences and children can have on young adult’s attitudes towards urban intensification. Youthful experiences were often invoked to explain the feelings that the participants had towards their current living environments and what they desired for the future, particularly when they considered their own family (or the potential of having children). Childhood experiences have been found to be particularly potent in shaping adult attitudes towards different landscapes and residential environments in New Zealand (Collins & Kearns, 2010) and elsewhere (Aero, 2006; Blaauboer, 2011; Feijten et al., 2008). Apartments were commonly viewed as places unsuitable for families with children, especially by those who suggested links between low-density neighbourhoods and a strong sense of community. Although apartment living for families is common in much of the world, in New Zealand and Australia preference for the detached single-family home has meant that higher-density dwellings have traditionally been seen as unsuitable for children. Since this view is pervasive, it has become materially reinforced by developers of compact dwellings, who seldom consider the needs of families with children nor provide designs to support their lifestyles (Carroll, Witten & Kearns, 2011).

The concept of community was differently expressed by a number of the interviewees. My analysis identified two distinct conceptualisations of the term community, which impact on where it is believed to exist and how it can be attained. The notion most associated with Discourses B and C viewpoints from the Q analysis is of community as intrinsically related to a specific environment, namely, low-
density neighbourhoods and detached dwellings. Community is discussed by these young adults as a characteristic of this particular physical and aesthetic landscape. It is also the residential environment seen as most appropriate for children and families to live. Those young adults aspiring to live in places with community as understood through this definition are mostly led to the urban periphery or places beyond Auckland’s city limits, as they seek standalone houses with large private outdoor space in ‘quiet’ neighbourhoods. The alternate conception of community, expressed by those more aligned with a Discourse A viewpoint, defines community as related to specific places, which are believed to contain desirable and/or meaningful authentic communities for that participant. Where these places exist is highly subjective. It can relate to communities in desirable suburbs, particularly those near to the city centre, which are considered to be socially vibrant and amenity rich, but it may also be meaningful places that the participant has personal connections with. A trade-off of higher-density for better access to a desired location is more likely to be considered by young adults who hold this conception of community. Making this trade-off in Auckland can be problematic, as evidenced by the several participants wishing to live (or remain living) in these neighbourhoods, but who express frustration at the lack of potential alternative housing options available to them there.

The expression the ‘New Zealand way of life’ was discussed to some extent in most interviews. The interviewees broadly understood such a lifestyle as involving access to large outdoor spaces for relaxation and entertaining, a social and supportive neighbourhood community and nearby rural and wilderness environments. The relationship between a ‘New Zealand way of life’ and urban intensification was approached in several distinct ways by the interviewees. Often those more aligned with Discourse B conceived of this way of life as static and inseparable from low-density neighbourhoods and detached housing. As such, change in attitudes towards urban intensification was seen as unlikely, due to the continuing importance of such neighbourhoods in defining New Zealand lifestyles. A mixed or hybrid understanding of the phrase similarly conceived the popularity of such a way of life as relatively fixed, however these participants felt it was could be achieved through a variety of different living spaces, including more compact dwellings. Some participants, especially those significantly associated with Discourse A, argued that urban intensification, rather than being detrimental, can enhance and protect the New Zealand lifestyle. Reasons given were that increasing densities and building compact dwellings can allow more people to live closer to amenities, be active by walking and cycling and to limit the development of rural land through urban sprawl. A final understanding was explained by a number of participants, with viewpoints mostly aligning to Discourses A or C, as an evolving ‘New Zealand way of life’. Analysis of the interviews revealed that these participants felt it likely, or even necessary, that Auckland would become denser over time –
whether they personally support it or not. However, in either case, they believed that New Zealanders would likely adapt and definition of this way of life would, over time, likely adjust as the urban environment changes around them.
Chapter 9

Discussion

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I critically evaluate my research findings and consider their implications. I revisit the three discourses revealed through my Q study and reflect on the implications of these Gen Y attitudes to societal trends and urban theory. I then review my research findings in regard to the housing pathways approach and housing preferences research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the contribution to knowledge my research makes.

9.2 Research Findings and Their Implications

The central concern of this thesis has been to bring attention to a cohort of housing consumers whose experiences and preferences have historically been overlooked or misunderstood within contemporary housing debates. My research has developed a theorisation of young adults’ housing consumption through the life course in order to capture the diversity and subjectivity of their housing experiences. From an examination of these various pathways I hypothesised links between these common experiences and shared attitudes towards urban intensification. The following three sections discuss the collective findings from both research methods and highlight their implications for research of Generation Y’s attitudes towards intensification and housing preferences.

9.2.1 Three Viewpoints toward Urban Intensification

A key objective of my research has been to reveal shared viewpoints held by young adults living in Auckland towards urban change within their city. Specifically, this involved using Q methodology as a technique to uncover the complex and subjective construction of attitudes towards urban intensification held by young adults participating in my study. The existence of shared viewpoints was determined through the statistical workings of the Q technique. The distinctive character and orientation of each viewpoint was uncovered through an abductive process of interpretation of this statistical data. My Q study asked: what are the attitudes of young adults to urban intensification in Auckland? The outcome of this Q study was the identification of three distinct shared viewpoints existing within the young adults participating in this research.
These three distinct viewpoints were explicated in the form of narrative accounts corresponding to each viewpoint. Consequently, Discourse A ‘Supportive Urban Lifestyle Seekers’ was revealed to be a distinctly positive and supportive attitude towards urban intensification, both for their own housing needs and for the city more generally. If not specifically sought out, compact dwellings were viewed as appealing, largely due to previous positive experiences (commonly overseas) and the access to desirable neighbourhoods and familiar communities they afforded. Discourse B ‘Supporters of the Status Quo’, on the other hand, was oriented broadly in contrast to that viewpoint. These participants expressed a strong desire for Auckland to continue to grow in a low-density character, as these environments were believed to be most accommodating to the ‘New Zealand lifestyle’. This discourse conveyed distrust in the proposed benefits of more compact cities and a disinterest, since they perceived the city to already be a ‘high-quality’ urban environment. Lastly, Discourse C ‘Intensification Inevitable, But Not for Me’, presented a complex expression of intensification’s inevitability with a dislike for higher-density lifestyles and a preference for a less urban residential environment. This viewpoint was more accepting of urban intensification in a more abstract sense – if it was considered for the city in general – since it seemed an inevitable development trajectory. However, such places were conveyed as resolutely undesirable at an individual level, since they would not provide the type of lifestyle these participants aspired to.

The cognitive positioning of the three discourses in regards to their support of urban intensification for the city and for their individual lifestyle is graphically represented on the conceptual space diagram in Figure Twenty. The diagram illustrates the conceptual divergence between the viewpoints, with Discourse A and B plotted in distinct contrast to one another and with Discourse C positioned in partial agreement with B, but less clearly opposed to intensification for the city more broadly. The plots indicate the considerable disparity between the three viewpoints regarding urban intensification and its relation to their expectations for their city and their own lifestyle.

The diagram also reveals a potential fourth attitude that might be held towards urban intensification, which was not identified within my Q study. This hypothetical viewpoint would be positioned in the lower right quarter of the diagram and represents a viewpoint broadly unsupportive of urban intensification within their city, while finding such environments appealing for personal needs and lifestyle. This attitude was not detected within my sample of young adults living in Auckland; however, that is not to say that it does not exist. In addition, such a viewpoint may exist more prominently
within other age cohorts. It is plausible that older individuals would hold such an attitude due to their changing needs and living situation during this time.

![Figure 20](image)

**Figure 20** A conceptual space diagram illustrating the positioning of the factors in relation to their level of support for urban intensification for themselves and for the city.

Changes in housing preference during older age have been shown in a number of studies, emphasising the significance of changes in health, mobility and household composition (Abramsson & Andersson, 2016). Paradoxically, Clark, Deurloo and Dieleman (2006) and Wulff, Healy and Reynolds (2004) found little evidence of older residents downsizing, which would suggest that these apparent changes in preference are often not acted upon. One explanation is that older people’s desire to stay in place (Wulff, Healy & Reynolds, 2004) is actually further reinforced with their changing needs through the growing importance of social and familial networks and local area knowledge. Hence, it is possible that an individual may find themselves desiring to live in a compact, low-maintenance dwelling close to local amenities, yet, conversely, wishing for their urban environment to remain unchanged. Further research is necessary to determine this hypothesis. But as Myers and Gearin (2001) recognise, while such a viewpoint might seem contradictory, many people hold internally inconsistent housing
preferences, which further stresses the need to design research capable of discovering and accurately representing this complexity.

Through the content of the shared narratives presented in Chapter Seven and the individual accounts expressed in Chapter Eight, I have indicated that each viewpoint represents a distinct subjective experience of housing that either reinforces or disrupts attitudes towards particular types of residential environments. Those experiences and the attitudes that arise are, however, constructed through much more than just the materiality of the house. As Dowling and Mee (2007: 161) attest, houses are also homes: “sites of emotional, cultural and social significance ... saturated with the meanings, memories, emotions, experiences and relationships of everyday life”. Attitudes towards the places houses are located are therefore likely to contain symbolic significance and relate to, and have influence on, identities and the dynamic experiences of housing pathways.

At the beginning of this thesis I discussed the complexity of contemporary housing pathways and the subjective and contingent nature of housing experiences. That six out of the 24 participants in my study configured the Q statement cards in a way that did not significantly load on any of the three factors reaffirms the abundance of attitudes towards housing issues. It also indicates the diversity of housing pathways that are likely experienced by this generation beyond those expressed in my study. This is also suggested by Clapham et al., (2014), who found nine distinct pathways experienced by young people in the UK.

It is important to therefore restate that my aim in this thesis was never to exhaustively detect every possible attitude or pathway. This would have been an unrealistic goal given the complexity of each individual housing experience. Nevertheless, the intra-discourse commonality discovered through the analysis is striking, given the astronomical number of possible configurations of the statements that could have been configured (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). It is illuminating to consider that 13 of the 24 participants, for example, organised the statements in a manner that was significantly correlated with Factor One. Considering the available possibilities this occurrence is unlikely to be a random outcome (at $p < .01$, 99 per cent confidence) or a product of the methodological procedure. Moreover, it would also seem doubtful that such a significant consensus was the result of spontaneity on the part of the participant during the Q-sort activity. It is much more likely that commonalities shared by participants within each discourse have steered them towards expressing similar attitudes towards urban intensification.
9.2.2 Drawing Conclusions from the Alignment of Generation Y Attitudes

Traditional models of house and home have largely been based around culturally prescribed, normative conceptions of the ‘traditional’ nuclear family (Kendig, 1984). Theoretical interpretations of residential mobility and decision-making have previously considered housing as related to the material attributes of dwellings, such as their location, value and size/configuration (Buckle, 2017; see also, Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Kemeny, 1992). Related to these assumptions, residential mobility was conceived of as a continual upward progression through the housing market, with households able to attain home ownership and progressively more expensive housing alongside advances in their professional careers (Beer & Faulkner, 2011). However, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, contemporary housing pathways are both more complicated and diverse than were revealed through earlier interpretations. Equally, under conditions of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000; 2005) and heightened individual exposure to risk (Beck, 1992; 2000; & Beck-Gemsheim, 2002) the pathways that younger generations experience are more unstable and unpredictable, with less institutional securities than for previous generations (Colic-Peisker & Johnson, 2012).

This research underlines the findings of several other recent studies (e.g., Allen, N., 2016; Lewis & Baldassare, 2010; McCrea & Walters, 2012), that found attitudes towards urban intensification are not clear-cut and contain complexity contingent on a number of subjectively composed factors. A contribution of my research has been to highlight the key influence of past residential experiences on attitudes to changing urban environments. These members of Generation Y hold a variety of viewpoints regarding more compact urban environments, of which my study identified at least three. While these three viewpoints are distinct and offer distinct narratives, the holistic nature of my analysis has revealed considerable tension existing within each of them and also moments of notable consensus. Although there was considerable disagreement regarding the attractiveness of more compact urban environments and lifestyles, there was a broad acceptance of the need for a clear plan for Auckland’s continuing development and an acknowledgement that urban intensification would likely be part of that future. There was also a general agreement that future development should provide a greater variety of housing types – although where these new dwellings should be located was a more contentious issue.

Discourse A was typified by participants with a more independent lifestyle; that is, young adults who were most commonly renting with flatmates and none of whom were married or in a civil partnership. The statements which most clearly defined this viewpoint were mostly centred on the ‘lifestyle and values’ themed statements associated with an interest in, and expectation of, the perceived lifestyle
benefits of urban intensification. Hence, this inclination is indicative of the keen desire for an urban lifestyle amongst these participants. During the interviews these participants mostly expressed an interest in living in compact dwellings at this time in their lives. However, discussion was less focused on the materiality of such dwellings (their construction or design) and more on the location they provided proximate access to, which supported access to their desired lifestyle. For example, on Page 192, Chloe’s and Daniel’s statements both provide an example of the connection Generation Y make between their residential location and their lifestyle and social lives.

The move from fixed production-based (class) identities to those constructed more through consumption habits (lifestyles) has become a central theme across a variety of contemporary sociological debates (Goss, 2004). Equally, within geographical scholarship a similar transformation has occurred, with the geographies of consumption becoming much more than just the outcome of production and productive spaces (Jackson, 1999; Mansvelt, 2005; 2008). Consumptive practices have become everyday moments of identity composition; as Seabrook (1978) argues, the whole experience of growing up in society has transformed from the experience of working class communities to the culture of the shopping precinct (see, also, Kearns, Murphy & Friesen, 2001). Thus, housing has become more than just a material and economic entity; it is a symbolic element in the construction of identity through consumption (Bonney, McCleery & Forster, 1999; Bruce & Kelly, 2013; Ronald, 2008; Rowlands & Gurney, 2000). Higher-density central urban/suburban neighbourhoods, particularly those along public transport lines, and proximate to a multitude of amenities, services and networks, are becoming significantly associated with Generation Y households in a number of cities (Glaeser et al., 2001; Moos, 2014a; 2016). Through providing access to diverse activities and spaces, in addition to employment and education opportunities, these spaces allow young adults to compose a collage of individual consumptive practices and articulate a distinct lifestyle and identity.

The concept of ‘lifestyle’ could be misjudged or misinterpreted in this context as a concept relevant only to consumptive behaviours – choosing a particular type of clothing or car, or socialising in one space rather than another. However, consumption and production must be understood as part of a dialectic relationship – consumptive behaviour cannot exist autonomously from the means of production (Goss, 2004). As argued by Miles, Cliff and Burr (1998), consumption is a means to an end for young people, in that it provides certain freedoms for the construction of identity, connections and relationships. Yet, this consumptive performance of individual ‘choice’ takes place in a ‘risk society’, where the operations of power and responsibility are unequally located (see, Section 2.3.2). The value of an ‘urban lifestyle’ for these participants cannot, therefore, be considered in isolation,
but must be conceptualised as an everyday articulation of identity within the context of on-going social and structural change.

Moving to Discourse B, this viewpoint is positioned largely in contrast to the urban lifestyle expressed in Discourse A. It is characterised by an opposition to urban intensification and a strong desire for Auckland’s suburban landscape to maintain its low-density form. As part of the ‘New Zealand dream’ (Ferguson, 1994), the detached house and garden are believed to epitomise the ‘New Zealand way of life’ and be the most appropriate residential dwelling for New Zealand suburban life. As such, these participants view Auckland’s existing residential environment to already be of a high-quality and provide the type of lifestyle they desire. Accordingly, proposed changes to this environment are seen as undesirable, unnecessary and damaging to the city’s existing amenity.

The orientation of Discourse B against compact dwellings and in favour of more traditional standalone suburban housing does suggest that this viewpoint may be indicative of a more family orientated lifestyle (see, Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010). With the current age profile of Generation Y somewhere between early 20s to mid-30s, the existence of a more ‘urban’ independent viewpoint and a more ‘suburban’ family-orientated viewpoint is perhaps to be expected. It is worth considering that my Q study has likely identified the transitional nature of this life stage: from pre-family formation ‘late-adolescence’ to family formation and ‘settling down’.

There is a growing awareness of the important influence that life stage can have upon stated housing preferences, both internationally (e.g., Lewis & Baldassare, 2010; Mulder, 2007; Schwanen & Mokhtarian, 2003; Wulff et al, 2010) and in New Zealand (Saville-Smith & James, 2010; Haarhoff et al., 2012; Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015). This body of research broadly emphasises the existence of a young adult cohort living an independent lifestyle and for whom compact housing is seemingly attractive, provided that it is located proximate to local services and amenities. However, the same research also identifies the continuing aspiration of young families with children for traditional detached housing. The findings of this research certainly support this tendency.

The discovery that three women each living with their partners over the age of 30 share Discourse B may suggest that these aspects are indeed important to the defining of this narrative. However, it should be noted that several other female participants who are married or living with a long-term partner did not significant associate with this discourse – revealing that particular socio-demographic characteristics cannot be considered the only defining aspects of this discourse. This contention is also
made by Rajé (2007) in her study of transport preferences. Hence, what is most notable in this research is that people belonging to different social categories can express similar viewpoints but that there can also be considerable diversity of opinion within any particular social group.

Discourse C, the third viewpoint identified through the Q analysis, presents an attitude of urban intensification that sits somewhere between the two other discourses. This cognitive positioning is represented in the conceptual space diagram displayed in Figure Twenty. The viewpoint expresses a general indifference to urban intensification in the city, with some acceptance of its inevitability, but also considerable scepticism towards its claimed benefits. However, when considered less abstractly, in relation to their own housing preferences, dwelling types associated with urban intensification are considered unfavourably.

At the same time, this viewpoint would seem to be less associated with a ‘spatial vision’ (Purcell, 2001) or ‘place-frame’ (Martin, 2003) idealising the existing suburban landscape of Auckland, as was discernible in Discourse B. Participants aligning with Discourse B typically characterised Auckland’s suburbs as low-density in nature and viewed the standalone house as an intrinsic component of New Zealand’s residential environment. Vallance, Perkins and Moore (2005) identify this suburban spatial vision as rooted in the distinctiveness of European settlement in New Zealand. This distinct New Zealand suburban ‘spatial vision’ is therefore tied into wider ‘colonial mythologies’ that have presented the country as ‘pure’ and ‘clean and green’ (Bell, 1996; Kaefer, 2014). These symbolic imagined elements of the city and its urban form have been argued to play a central role in a ‘politics of space’ (Lefebvre, 1991) that can erupt through neighbourhood activism over contested urban transformations (Purcell, 2001; Vallance, Perkins & Moore, 2005).

It is useful to consider Lefebvre’s spatial triad in relation to my finding that young adults continue to express an aspiration for physical and social elements associated with low-density suburban environments. This aspiration is stimulated through an impression and interpretation of New Zealand suburbia that is inherently spatial (Purcell, 2001). Auckland suburbs offer a space of representation for New Zealanders to interpret and express cultural meaning and values (Leary, 2009). These meanings and values are intrinsically linked to the spatial practice of those suburbs, their materiality and everyday routines. The spatial triad directs attention to the mutual influence of suburban spatiality with its meaning and value to residents, leading to what Purcell (2001) defines as homeowners’ shared ‘spatial vision’.
For the study participants who aligned with Discourse B, this suburban ‘spatial vision’ was constructed through specific types of imagery, produced through the fusing of both material and performative components. For example: the grass of a ‘backyard’ garden; the outdoor privacy it can provide for social activities or children’s play; the act of waving and saying ‘hi’ to neighbours, or just being aware of their presence in the neighbourhood. In addition, broader themes of appropriate places for families and ‘green’ ‘open/free spaces’ were expressed, as well as the primacy of the private motor vehicle. Through the persistent and active association of these components within a suburban spatial vision this idealised construction of the ‘New Zealand suburb’ remains potent and influential component of people’s attitudes towards urban intensification.

Returning to the attitudes expressed in Discourse C. In Section 8.5.2 I contend that participants aligning with this discourse articulate a preference for large properties with significant private garden space that are unlikely to be available or affordable in Auckland anywhere other than on the city’s periphery. As such, individuals with viewpoints aligning with Discourse C are unlikely to aspire to reside within more centrally located suburbs, which command higher rents as a trade-off for amenity and a more urban lifestyle, but mostly offer smaller lot sizes and less private space.

Examining this viewpoint further, childhood experiences were found to be a prominent framing for expressing preferences of detached housing and backyard gardens, this was particularly so during interviews with Discourse C aligned participants. Previous studies of residential environmental choice over the life course have noted the significant influence that childhood experiences can have on residential preferences (Blaauboer, 2011; Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008). Blaauboer (2011) emphasises the importance of a broader life-course perspective to identify these influences and take into account the interdependency between family members, their linked lives and shared life-course experiences. These shared experiences can lead to return migration to the previous residential locations, however they can also manifest in preferences to live in residential environments that to some extent reproduce those locations. Reflecting on their desire to live in a low-density suburban neighbourhood several of my participants, such as Kahu and Ana, frequently referred to their childhood experiences as foundational in the development of their aspirations for, and expectations of, those residential environments.

In their examination of residential choice patterns through the life course, Feijten, Hooimeijer and Mulder (2008) use three spatial concepts compatible with Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) housing pathways framework, these are: activity space, social space and awareness space. An individual’s
residential experience through the life course – essentially, their housing pathway – contributes to each of these three spaces. For example, they identify activity space and social space as elements of the urban inner-city that are particularly important to single people and those attending or finishing tertiary education. This is because they provide a greater variety of urban activities, facilities and places for socialising, for those with a more independent lifestyle. In contrast, suburban and rural areas, they suggest, provide a better social space for the more family-orientated. In addition, awareness space refers to the types of residential environments that people can identify with and envisage themselves living in. In their application of this framework, Feijten et al. (2008) assert that awareness space can trigger a move to familiar residential environments and that a greater exposure to different environments alters awareness (negatively or positively) and can potentially transform attitudes and preferences.

Regarding this research, the expansion of people’s awareness space can be considered a part of the process of ‘acclimatisation’ to higher densities, but only if experiences of higher density have been positive. In my research, this process was particularly evident amongst Discourse A participants who had experienced higher density residential environments in countries other than New Zealand. For example, Jack and Daniel recount their positive experiences of apartment-dwelling while living in European cities during their ‘OE’ travels (overseas experience, see footnote page 188). This influence of overseas experiences on people’s perceptions of compact and walkable residential environments was also recognised by Bean, Kearns and Collins (2008) in their study of social attitudes and values associated with walking and driving in Auckland. Thus, overseas travel is likely to widen an individual’s ‘awareness space’ of residential environments and potentially augment the process of acclimatisation to density.

Considering the attitudes expressed in Discourse C, Feijten et al.’s (2008) study found that suburban and rural experiences during childhood had a particularly notable influence in shaping preferences people had for such environments later in the life course. The sentiment and association placed on childhood experiences in Kahu and Ana’s narratives clearly support this contention. Both participants express a level of dissatisfaction with their present medium-density residences and a desire to return to a more rural (for Kahu) or suburban (for Ana) residential environment in the future. At the same time, both participants did not state an intention to move to such environments in the immediate future and during the interviews both implied their current environment offered a level of convenience. For Ana, living in a unit in Mount Eden does allow her to go back and forth between home, work and university throughout her day, which would likely be less feasible when living further
out of the city. Equally, Kahu is content with where he currently resides because of its convenience for traveling to study at a tertiary institution in the city centre.

These findings emphasise the value of combining a mixed methods research approach with a housing pathways framework in uncovering the complexity of residential preferences through the life course and the subjective meanings attached to them. Housing preferences and attitudes towards high-density residential environments are dynamic and contingent on changing circumstances and housing pathway experiences through the life course.

9.2.3 Generation Y’s Housing Pathways and Housing Preferences

‘Housing pathways’ has proven to be a suitable framework for the holistic analysis of the complex and inter-related influences that previous experiences have on housing consumption. Through utilising this approach my research highlighted the subjective and symbolic nature of people’s experience of home. Through its application I have demonstrated that what housing means is subjectively and socially constructed through discourses, practices and experiences. This approach foregrounds the social meaning of housing to people and emphasises the dynamic nature of their housing experiences (Clapham, 2002a). It also emphasises how alternative political and economic constructions of housing, as a commodity and a financial asset in globalising property markets, can disrupt these subjective meanings and experiences. This conflict, between “housing as lived, social space, and housing as an instrument for profitmaking” (Madden & Marcuse, 2016: 4), poses a contemporary challenge for society, one with significant bearing on the future housing pathways, everyday experiences and aspirations of Generation Y (See, Rogers & Koh, 2017).

It is clear that liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000; 2005) and the processes of individualisation and globalisation (Beck; 1992; 2000; & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) have impacted the life courses and housing pathways of young people considerably. For some young housing consumers, this destabilisation of societal norms has provided growing opportunities and loosened previous social restrictions on their residential mobility, while for others it has only increased uncertainty and marginalisation (Colic-Peisker & Johnson, 2012). Consistent with Clapham et al.’s (2014) findings in the UK, the young adults participating in this research did exhibit considerable knowledge and determination in making housing choices based upon their aspirations, perceptions and previous residential experiences. Yet, at the same time, young New Zealanders also face significant constraints within their housing pathways. As examined at the beginning of this thesis, a growing inter-generational inequality has emerged within the New Zealand housing market. Historical politico-economic trends and financial-regulatory
contexts have enhanced the ability of older generation to own property during their life course, while creating barriers for Generation Y to achieve similar home owning aspirations. For, although research in Australia has suggested that Generation Y may still be managing to enter the property market, they are also more likely to subsequently fall out of it (Beer & Faulkner, 2009).

These trends are suggestive of young life course trajectories that are more unstable, insecure and ambiguous. With home being identified as an increasingly important part of identity construction and social positioning (Bruce & Kelly, 2013; Bonney, McCleery & Forster, 1999; Ronald, 2008; Rowlands & Gurney, 2000), such trends are troubling. Beyond the financial incentives, home ownership in New Zealand provides a form of ‘ontological security’ (Giddens, 1984; 1990), which is wrapped up in cultural and symbolic meaning (Dupuis & Thorns, 1996; 1998), and therefore remains a critical place of refuge from the flux of ‘liquid lives’ (Bauman, 2000; 2005).

Indeed, a culture of home ownership remains prominent in New Zealand (Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; Witten & Abrahamse, 2011), signifying success and social respectability as well as providing considerable financial gains and long-term security for some. The presence of this home ownership culture was evident in the responses of my participants. Although the ‘New Zealand way of life’ was defined in three distinct ways during the interviews (as stable, transforming or evolving), a continued aspiration for home ownership was prominent within each of these discourses. Equally, frustration at an inability to buy a house was commonly expressed by participants who did not own a home. In the interviews, they described how this frustration was amplified by the lack of affordable compact dwellings within the inner-suburbs, often the places in which they currently rented housing. The statements of Jack and Daniel typify this viewpoint. Both participants conveyed to me their enjoyment of an urban lifestyle and willingness to trade-off dwelling size for location, but recognised the likelihood that they would be forced to the periphery to seek home ownership.

Location was reported to be of key importance to the housing preferences of all my research participants. Homes in familiar and connected places, in desirable neighbourhoods and socially connected communities were highly desirable to these young adults. My participants explain their connection to place through the characteristics they provide: familiarity, security and wellbeing. The social and subjective elements of space, such as community and identity, offer a sense of security and safety and of meaning and constancy in a world increasingly characterised as insecure and unpredictable (Bauman, 2000; 2005). To an extent the feeling of assurance that home and home ownership can bring is illusory, transitory and fragile as global trends have proven capable of quickly
and irresistibly enveloping and devastating locally held securities and structures of stability. However, their illusive nature does not necessarily lessen their meaning or significance.

For most Discourse A participants a central residential location was a key part of their identity and lifestyle. Previous research has theorised that youth identity formation places increased relevance on housing consumption as part of a ‘lifestyle package’ (McKee, 2012; Ronald, 2008; Rowlands & Gurney, 2000). In my interviews lifestyle was stated as a key factor for participants expressing a strong desire to reside close to city centre. In New Zealand, previous studies have closely associated the attraction of living in more compact dwellings for young people with access to more central locations and amenities (ARC, 2010; Environmental Awareness survey, 2009). The phenomenon of Generation Y locating within higher-density central city neighbourhoods has been more broadly associated with distinctive changes to inner-city demographics in a number of cities in North America, Europe and Australia (Colic-Peisker & Johnson, 2012; Kabisch, Haase & Haase, 2010; Moos, 2016; 2014a). Moos (2016) labels this process as ‘youthification’, where higher-density areas remain youthful as younger residents continually move in as others move out. He identifies this process as being driven by a combination of lifestyle, demographic, macro-economic and housing market changes and recommends further clarification of these drivers. My research emphasises the particular relevance of lifestyle factors on youth residential mobility and indicates potentially generative theoretical links between studies of youthification and the housing pathways approach.

In addition, this research has revealed the particular importance of lifestyle factors in relation to changing youth-mobility patterns. Living in the central suburbs afforded my participants the ability to easily travel relatively short journeys either by public or active transport to accomplish daily routines. This finding is in accord with recent research into Generation Y’s mobility trends, which has found a distinct, but currently not fully understood, reduction in auto-mobility amongst this age cohort (Hopkins, 2017; & Stephenson, 2016; McDonald, 2015; Moos, 2014b). Nevertheless, the need to drive was common and most participants reported the regular use of a private vehicle, whether they lived closer to or further from the city centre. Several participants, particularly those less supportive of urban intensification, discussed use of a car as a necessity in their daily routines. New Zealand research has previously suggested that such routines are socially embedded and become habituated early in life (Bean, Kearns & Collins, 2008). Ana’s account of the everyday use of her car provides a clear example of this embedding within routines and expectations. Thus, a suspected mutually-reinforcing relationship exists between routine use of a private vehicle and an acceptance of living in areas further away from the centre with less active or public transport options. Previous research in New Zealand
has found association between housing preferences and travel behaviour that support this contention (Badland et al., 2012). Potentially, acceptance of daily automobile use by those individuals wishing to avoid compact residential environments provides them with more locational possibilities enabling them to seek the lower-density detached housing environment that they desire.

Conversely, a more compact residential environment is something that interviewees associated with Discourse A were willing to accept if it permitted them access to a desired neighbourhood. Two key aspects of neighbourhoods were found to influence their desirability to participants:

1. A familiarity with the area and the existence of a supportive social network. Childhood experiences and family connections to an area were expressed as particularly important to participants. Thus, these features imbued certain neighbourhoods with significance and meaning to an individual.

2. The perception of an area as having a sense of community and a distinct character. Neighbourhoods that were considered to contain these elements were in older ‘historic’ central suburbs and had lively local commercial ‘hubs’. As such, locations closer to the city centre were often stated as places possessing these characteristics.

Both of these aspects highlight how housing preferences can be informed by subjective experiences and personal connections through individual housing pathways. These characteristics of a neighbourhood, particular to the individual, are a form of residential inertia, produced through location-specific capital and socialisation (Blaauboer, 2011). As discussed earlier, the research of Blaauboer (2011) and Feijten, Hooimeijer and Mulder (2008) indicate the influence of early life-course socialisation on residential environmental choices made later in life. However, the consequences of these early experiences are varied, as is evident from the heterogeneity of responses to my Q study.

On the one hand, participants aligning with Discourses B and C seem to be attracted to low-density neighbourhoods and detached housing as these residential environments accord with their expectations of a ‘New Zealand way of life’ and as an appropriate family social space (Feijten, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2008). On the other hand, those participants aligning more with Discourse A are more attracted to specific places to which they have become meaningfully connected (location-specific capital) or they perceive to have a distinct appealing character, as discussed above.

These findings are supported by several other recent studies of housing choice in New Zealand. In her study of the choices and trade-offs that residents in higher-density housing make, Allen (2016) found that participants wishing to start a family or who already had families were the most likely to desire...
standalone housing. Conversely, interviewees at all other life stages and of varied ages were mostly indifferent to the specific typology of their home and were, instead, concerned more with its quality and its proximity to urban amenities. Similarly, Haarhoff, Beattie and Dupuis, (2016) reported that satisfaction with higher-density housing was as much a product of residential location and neighbourhood character as it was of the dwelling itself. Lastly, the sense of place, authenticity and emotional connection to older more established suburbs that attracted several of my participants to their residential location (e.g., Jack and Liam’s experiences) aligns with research conducted by McCrea and Walters (2012) in Brisbane. My research supports their findings that people develop strong place-based attachments to their neighbourhoods that are emotionally charged and entangled with expressions of identity and lifestyle. How these aspects of local neighbourhood liveability are impacted by urban intensification must be better understood if such policies are to lead to attractive residential environments and resilient urban communities. All three studies emphasise these subjective elements of the housing experience and recognise the need for further research into the development of perceptions and attitudes towards intensified residential environments, to which my thesis contributes.

9.3 Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of this thesis broadly contribute to research on urban intensification, young housing pathways, and residential mobility. This study provides new insight into Generation Y’s attitudes to urban intensification and residential preferences through a mixed methods research application of Q methodology, novel to the field of housing studies. My research highlights the subjective nature of housing experiences and indicates the broad range of attitudes and preferences to different residential environments that they generate. Understanding and considering the unique and diverse housing aspirations of Generation Y is crucial if we are to develop cohesive, inclusive and resilient urban environments for the future.

Growing complexity and the decline of traditional societal structures and institutions propel the need to embrace new concepts and theoretical frameworks within housing studies. Although quantitative analysis remains a dominant influence within housing studies, following Kemeny’s (1992) critique, a number of researchers have continued to argue for and develop more sophisticated and specialised theoretical engagement within the field. My research builds upon the recent theoretical developments within studies of housing decision making through the life course. Specifically, I engaged with Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) ‘housing pathways’ concept to provide a framework for
new insight into the relationship between young adult’s residential experiences and the attitudes they develop towards alternative residential environments.

My research has responded to Vallance, Perkins and Moore’s (2005: 731) contention that, due to the “strength of emotion” expressed by residents regarding changes to their urban environment, it is “essential” to better understand how such responses develop. Furthermore, it acknowledges Ruming’s (2014) critique that urban research and policy needs to further investigate and unpack resident perceptions of higher-density dwellings. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the search for socio-technical solutions (Backstrand, 2004) that are sensitive to the holistic nature of individual experiences and knowledge (Vallance, Perkins & Dixon, 2009). I employed an MMR approach with the capacity to systematically analyse and interpret subjective viewpoints and connect them to individual housing pathways. While a number of studies have indicated Q’s considerable potential for examining urban phenomena (e.g., van Exel, et al., 2011; Rajé, 2007; Wolsink, 2004), the method remains underutilised. My use of Q methodology to investigate the attitudes of Generation Y towards urban intensification further demonstrates the analytical possibilities of this method within studies of housing and urban phenomena more broadly. In particular, my research emphasises its value in approaching controversial issues and in revealing complex and misunderstood viewpoints.

As part of an MMR design, combining the Q data with a thematic discourse analysis of interviews with the participants also allowed hypotheses to be developed and examined regarding the connection between shared discourses and previous residential experiences. Such an approach is well-positioned to further investigate novel inquiries into the relationship between people, place and mobility, as demanded by the new mobilities paradigm (Cresswell, 2006; & Merriman, 2011; Sheller & Urry, 2006) and life course approaches to residential mobility (Buckle, 2017).

Within the New Zealand housing context, this thesis also contributes to the on-going debate concerning the future of New Zealanders’ home ownership culture and the housing preferences and aspirations of Generation Y. As identified by Haarhoff et al. (2012: 202), “[w]e need to better understand what the necessary ‘trade-offs’ are between the suburban lifestyle (whether affordable or not) and the urban lifestyle envisaged for a majority of future Aucklanders”. My Q study identifies the existence of at least three distinct viewpoints among young Aucklanders towards urban intensification and urban lifestyles. Through the interviews I also revealed that each of these viewpoints is built upon differing residential expectations and experiences, which are tied to a number of trade-offs that young adults make in their housing choices. My research suggests that young adults
trade-off access to desirable location based closely on their everyday mobility habits and transport choices. Those seeking to live in more central urban areas suggested private car use was something they avoided and an inconvenience, while those with a preference for detached housing were more likely to make trade-offs between commute times and access to low-density neighbourhoods on the periphery.

Lastly, my research further substantiates the existence of a group of younger generation Aucklanders who are willing to trade-off higher density housing for access to desirable locations that are closer to urban amenities, jobs and education providers, and greater transport options, as suggested by a number of other recent studies (e.g., Saville-Smith & James, 2010; Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Waghorn, 2011; Yeoman & Akehurst, 2015). The findings reveal the existence of a group of Gen Y Aucklanders who seek an urban lifestyle and wish to remain living in the inner-suburban neighbourhoods and communities with which they are familiar. To suit this preference, they state their willingness to consider more compact dwellings as a more affordable and appealing alternative to living on the city’s periphery. These attitudes are often based on residential experiences gained overseas, in countries with more established compact residential environments and higher-density lifestyles. These young adults are also the most likely to support urban intensification, as they recognise that such policies could offer them more affordable, quality housing in the places they enjoying living.
Chapter 10

Conclusion

10.1 Research Summary

This thesis has examined how the residential experiences of Generation Y influence their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification. It is grounded in the context of the Auckland Council’s plan for a quality, compact city involving significant urban intensification and utilises a mixed methods approach guided by Clapham’s (2002a; 2004; 2005) ‘housing pathways’ framework. Utilising this approach has allowed me to investigate the relationship between individual residential experiences through the life course and the subjective attitudes towards different urban environments that they generate.

My research focussed on Generation Y. Although extensive research has been conducted into other aspects of Gen Y’s experiences, there remains limited scholarship regarding the underlying motivational factors, such as attitudes and values, which influence their housing preferences (Collen & Hoekstra, 2001; McKee, 2012; Thomas, 2009). This gap is despite the significance of this cohort’s current life stage in relation to home ownership. Additionally, contemporary society has become characterised by processes of ‘individualisation’ (Beck & Beck-Gemsheim, 2002; Giddens; 2001) and conditions of ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000; 2005). Consequently, Generation Y have developed a distinct set of values that in many respects provides a considerable contrast to the ‘baby boomer’ generation, e.g., individualism versus collectivism; the societal influence of institutions and authorities; voluntarism versus determinism (Parment, 2013; Sheahan, 2005). As a result the potential impact of the values, attitudes and behaviours of this generation on the housing market has so far been insufficiently researched. While it is becoming clear this generation is facing considerable challenges in securing suitable, affordable housing (e.g., Beer & Faulkner, 2009; McKee, 2012; Merlo and McDonald, 2002), Clapham et al. (2014) show that young people also demonstrate considerable agency in their housing pathways, influenced by their aspirations, perceptions and experience.

10.2 Reflections on the Research and Areas for Further Investigation

Given the originality of a mixed-methods application of Q methodology within housing studies it is appropriate to consider the efficacy of this technique to my research and to the subject more broadly.
Overall, Q is well-suited to the study of housing preferences and attitudes towards urban change. The technique’s key advantage to the research matter is through its interpretive and inductive/abductive approach. It is interpretive in that the discovery of factors is a product of the meanings that the participants attach to the statements based on their own subjective positions, rather than through a priori categorisation. This aspect of Q allowed members of Generation Y to express their housing preferences and attitudes towards urban intensification in a holistic manner, without imposing presupposed categorisations. Since these viewpoints have been operationalised through the Q-sort procedure and statistical analysis, practical and theoretical hypotheses can be made about the construction of these viewpoints in a way that would not be possible through a purely qualitative method alone (Nash, 2007).

Q methodology is capable of revealing perspectives that can be difficult to represent through conventional survey techniques, but that are likely to be present within the wider population. However, confident assertions or predictions about the prevalence or strength of these perspectives, or the likelihood that certain groups will identify with a particular perspective cannot be made (see, ‘Generalisability’, Section, 5.3.2). So while this research has uncovered the existence of three distinct viewpoints towards urban intensification expressed by a group of young adults living in Auckland, it is not possible to confidently predict the corresponding prevalence of each viewpoint within the wider population of Generation Y Aucklanders. This is not to say that a level of speculation regarding the likelihood of such viewpoints amongst the population cannot be made. But it is the place of future research to investigate the hypothesis that young adults with similar experiences and holding comparable conceptualisations of ‘convenience’ ‘community’ and the ‘New Zealand way of life’ will hold attitudes towards urban intensification consistent with the three discourses expressed in this thesis.

One of the limitations of both my Q-set development and thematic analysis was that the process was completed by one person – although feedback and oversight was provided by the supervisory and wider research team. While providing a level of consistency to the method, this process did not allow for the contribution of multiple perspectives from a range of viewpoints to the analysis. Such viewpoints could have helped to expose the thematic development process to a broader examination and potentially have added new lines of inquiry to the research. In considering the use of this methodology in future studies it would be of benefit to allow more individual perspectives into the Q-set development and subsequent analysis. Developing the Q-set through interviews conducted with the research participants before commencing the Q-sort activity might have allowed the language and
the framing of the statements to be more familiar and intelligible to the participants. However, developing the Q-set this way might have consequently narrowed the thematic diversity of the statements. The possibility of conducting such interviews was aired early in the development of the methodology. However, due to the nature of a doctoral study and the limited resources available, it was considered more productive to only conduct interviews following the Q-sort process. I believe the rich data and discoveries made through the post-Q-sort interviews validate this decision.

In their assessment of Q methodology’s application to human geography, Eden et al. (2005) identify Q as a “way to energise methodological debates” and “deconstruct the qualitative-quantitative dualism” since, through its novelty the method must be applied “consciously and reflexively ... unlike more familiar methods”. I believe my mixed methods application of Q methodology has demonstrated its potential for examining phenomena within the field of housing studies. In conducting my research I have also attempted to undertake a reflexive approach and have been careful to demonstrate my methodological and analytical decision-making process. Further investigation into the applicability of Q to housing issues is surely warranted.

Beyond researching the outcomes of policy-making regarding housing and urban intensification, it is worth considering utilising Q as a practical tool in actual planning and decision-making practices. The method could have a particularly valuable role in preventing or resolving conflicts between urban planners and local residents as highlighted during the implementation of Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan. The use of Q as a public consultation technique has previously been successful in environmental planning (e.g., van Eeten, 2001; Steelman & Maguire, 1999). A small pilot Q study was also conducted in Dunedin by Johnson and Weller (2007) to examine New Zealander’s perspectives on ‘liveability’ within cities, revealing considerable definitional diversity. It would seem worthwhile to consider ways in which the methodology could complement conventional consultation techniques or serve as an alternative. As is evident in my account of the controversy surrounding the Unitary Plan in Chapter Four, the potential to harness a technique capable of statistically verifying and exploring the existence of a wide range of viewpoints and agendas would seem to be a worthwhile endeavour. In this situation, Q could provide strong evidence towards identifying conflicts and charting promising directions towards resolutions.

In this way, Q could allow for a wider range of perspectives to influence policy-making than is often possible with the dominance of evidence based policy (EBP) and its ‘objective’ knowledge justification. Q destabilises such claims through demonstrating the subjectivity of viewpoints and the multiplicity
of ‘social facts’. Instead, Q provides the opportunity for research that is open to multiple understandings of a social issue and de-legitimises the primacy of dominant perspectives within policy decisions (Clapham, 2009). The removal of these suppositions allows research to critically and methodically compare the differing viewpoints that inform policy decisions.

My second research method, qualitative interviews conducted with participants after each Q-sort, proved to be an indispensable part of the broader analysis. The interviews supported my Q analysis through guiding my interpretation and providing a greater depth of understanding of the decision making during the sorting process. Moreover, through a thematic analysis of the interviews data an additional line of analytical inquiry was also opened. The corroboration of the findings from both sets of data during the analysis strengthens my conclusions. Equally, through abductive reasoning and statistical analysis, the identification of three distinct viewpoints within the participant group helped to frame my thematic analysis and to hypothesise potential connections between the viewpoints expressed in the Q study and the themes emerging from my analysis of the interviews.

Considering the justification of my research methodology, specific to the mixed method approach, the most crucial element was the framing of the procedures within a single theoretical lens. The epistemological engagement between housing pathways and Q methodology and my thematic discourse analysis through social constructionism strengthened the basis of the analysis and the validity of the results. The factor interpretation was more rigorous, accurate and meaningful by inclusion of the interview data within the analysis and subsequent narrative assembly process. The validation provided through a combined qualitative and hybrid approach, as deployed in my research, is a productive avenue for further methodological investigation.

Turning to my theoretical framework, housing pathways offers an expansive conceptualisation of housing experiences and proved to be adaptable to the purposes of my investigation. In particular, pathways highlighted the relationship between my participants housing experiences through the life course and the wider societal processes that shaped those experiences. The epistemological positioning of this research within a social constructionist perspective was found to be compatible with both my theoretical framework and the research methodology. While this epistemology has been critiqued within the social sciences for its relativism and lack of policy relevance, my research demonstrates that to a large extent these criticisms are unwarranted. It not only provides the conceptual space for attitudes and experiences of groups often ignored to be expressed, but also to be interpreted and utilised to generate theory on their terms. The outcome of this research has
significant bearing on intensification as an urban development strategy. If we are truly interested in building better homes for the future and creating resilient urban communities, being attentive to young people’s housing experiences and their aspirations should surely be a key part of these goals.

10.3 Acclimatising to Urban Intensification: Urban Planning Policy Recommendations

The Auckland context, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, provides a clear example of the political nature of urban intensification. While urban intensification has been argued as a remedy to the ills of urban sprawl in many cities around the world, significant local opposition would seem to be an almost inevitable consequence in reaction to such policies. In this thesis I have considered the controversy that has shadowed the Auckland Council’s Unitary Plan and its quality, compact city aspiration. The motivation for my research has been to identify and examine the views of the city’s younger generation towards plans for urban intensification in their city. Based on the finding of this study I make the following recommendations for policy makers and planners pursuing strategies of urban intensification.

Firstly, my study highlights the subjective nature of housing preferences and attitudes towards urban change and highlights the influence of previous residential experiences on future housing preferences. While housing research has recently begun to recognise the subjective and symbolic aspects of the built environment and to consider their influence upon housing consumption, they remain largely overlooked in urban planning and policy praxis. Compact dwelling designs that neglect the symbolic aspects of suburban residential environments in countries like New Zealand, which have long connected such places with low-density detached housing, are liable to continue to meet considerable resistance. In addition, with an increasing number of young people predicted to experience compact housing, if these residential environments are poorly designed or located, the experiences they engender will likely reinforce existing attitudes and expectations towards such urban forms. This thesis highlights the long-term prospective influence of negative residential experiences on housing preferences. Conversely, my research also indicates the potentially transformative influence on expectations and future preferences that good examples of higher-density urban forms can have.

Secondly, a related consideration is that, given the momentum that individual housing preferences gather through the life course, the process of acclimatising to higher densities is likely to be gradual, measured in the scale of decades and generations. While a number of my participants believed ideas surrounding the ‘New Zealand way of life’ were evolving, the culturally-tied aspirations for access to large outdoor spaces for relaxation and entertaining, a social and supportive neighbourhood and
community, and nearby rural and wilderness environments remained a prevalent influence on the housing preferences expressed. However, participants who were supportive of urban intensification felt that these aspirations were compatible with a compact city approach. Yet, if plans for urban intensification are interpreted as incompatible with these desires, negative reactions towards such residential environments are likely to continue. Understanding the nature of this resident ‘place-protective action’ (Devine-Wright, 2009) as part of a ‘spatial vision’ (Purcell, 2001) could help in resolving such conflicts. It would be expedient for urban planners and developers to consider designs that reflect these symbolic and social elements of the built environment when planning new higher-density residential environments. Including design elements that maintain these features would serve to minimise the dissonance experienced by residents when confronted with urban plans that break with traditional notions of suburban residential environments.

Thirdly, researchers and policymakers involved in urban planning must be cognisant of the considerable heterogeneity that exists within contemporary housing pathways. Housing preferences cannot be adequately understood through traditional models of residential mobility, but must instead acknowledge the subjective, dynamic and contingent nature of people’s housing transitions (Beer & Faulkner, 2011). As such, to better accommodate the housing needs of younger generations, future urban environment should accommodate the diversity and volatility of young peoples’ housing pathways. My research reveals that young adults develop significant attachment to particular locations or environments and desire to stay within these familiar neighbourhoods and supportive communities, even as their life stage or circumstances change. However, recent trends in housing construction have not provided diversity, but have tended towards producing large houses unappealing or unaffordable to most young adults. To counter this trend, building more low-rise medium-density dwellings around existing urban centres, known as ‘missing middle’ housing, should be encouraged within urban planning. These dwelling types are more compatible with New Zealand’s existing residential environment, but provide for a much greater diversity of lifestyles and preferences. Thus, a greater diversity of housing stock within existing neighbourhoods and spread throughout the city would provide more housing choice and support young people’s housing transitions.

10.4 Concluding Remarks

This research was inspired by the recent controversy that has surrounded plans for Auckland’s future development. In particular, the vocal opposition from some residents to the council’s plan to follow a quality, compact city approach for future development, which has successfully gained considerable political traction and media attention. In addition, research continues to indicate that the “aspiration
towards detached suburban housing remains strong” in Auckland, even though the city has a history of more compact housing types (Haarhoff et al., 2012: 200; see also, DTZ New Zealand, 2005). This resolute preference for low-density, related to colonial and post-colonial ‘New Zealand dream’ of single-family homeownership (Ferguson, 1994), remains a strong influence within New Zealand culture. However, over the last decade, research has indicated a growing preference for alternative, more compact residential environments among younger and older cohorts (Allen, N., 2016; Haarhoff et al., 2012; Haarhoff, Beattie & Dupuis, 2016; Preval, Chapman & Howden-Chapman, 2010; Waghorn, 2011).

My research provides further indication that Generation Y are more accepting of urban intensification than previous generations. I contend that as young people experience a more diverse residential environment their expectations and perspectives of different housing options are broadened. Thus, a process of generational acclimatisation is likely to occur, where conceptual change in what residents perceive to be appropriate and appealing housing will, in time, evolve and transform. Conversely, a rapid change in residential preferences and aspirations for detached housing in low-density neighbourhoods is unlikely. My research highlights the enduring influence of previous residential experiences in the construction of housing preferences, particularly those related to family spaces and early in the life course. The lag between changes to planning documents, as representations of space (with their potential to transform physical landscapes), and the aspirations and expectations of Generation Y in their everyday lived space, will remain a cause of dissonance if urban planning fails to be cognisant of the subjective and symbolic elements of housing consumption (Vallance, Perkins & Moore, 2005).

Recognising these elements of housing consumption, a number of researchers have suggested that Generation Y are delaying home ownership due to high expectations for their first home and a reluctance to sacrifice their desired lifestyles to achieve this goal (Bruce & Kelly, 2013; see also, Pleffer, 2007; Thomas, 2009). It may be true that Gen Y have high expectations for their housing, particularly as a key part of their identity and lifestyle preferences, but it is important to consider that these trends are also as a result of the inadequate supply of desirable or affordable housing choices for this generation. While they may have a high expectation for their first home, my research suggests that many Gen Y housing consumers are also more amenable to more compact housing types, as long as they are of a high quality and located in areas that fit with their lifestyles. As such, the provision of more appealing, compact and affordable housing in inner-city suburbs could provide this age cohort
with more opportunities to afford satisfactory housing in the places where they wish to live or wish to remain living.

My research also revealed alternative viewpoints towards compact housing, mostly held by those participants with a more family-orientated lifestyle. Generated in part through their own childhood experiences, these young adults expressed a preference to live in detached housing and enjoy the use of a private garden with their own family. While a preference for low-density neighbourhoods will almost certainly necessitate living on the urban periphery for many young families, in the interviews these participants indicated their acceptance of this prospect and the expectation of long commutes. Such circumstances were seen as, not only inevitable, but an established characteristic of New Zealand life.

However, despite the prevalence of detached housing in New Zealand, the majority of detached dwellings currently being constructed on the urban periphery do not necessarily serve the needs of this group of Gen Y housing consumers either. Closely linked to the traditional ‘New Zealand dream’ of home ownership, two to three bedroom houses with outdoor green space were seen by many of my participants as the ideal dwelling type for raising a family, irrespective of their attitude towards urban intensification. However, since the early 1990s newly constructed housing on New Zealand’s urban peripheries has been dominated by large, expensive housing consisting of four to five bedrooms, whilst section sizes have diminished (Howden-Chapman, 2015; NZPC, 2012). Such housing types are not aimed at first-home buyers, nor, according to my research, are they likely to be attractive to Generation Y housing consumers. Notwithstanding their high cost, these types of houses do not align with the residential experiences that my participants’ state they aspire to. Rather, as this thesis has demonstrated, Gen Y citizens in Auckland are leading the way in actively or aspirationally acclimatising to higher-density living.
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Murphy, L. (2014). 'Houston, we've got a problem': the political construction of a housing affordability metric in New Zealand. *Housing Studies, 29*(7), 893-909.
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Parsell, C. (2012). Home is where the house is: the meaning of home for people sleeping rough. Housing Studies, 27(2), 159-173.
Pinson, G. (2010). The knowledge business and the neo-managerialisation of research and academia in France. In C. Allen, & R. Imrie (Eds.), The knowledge business: the commodification of urban and housing research (pp. 197-217). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.


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References


Appendix 1 A list of articles containing research using or discussing using Q methodology from the top 20 human geography journals, as ranked by Times Higher Education (with data provided from Thompson Reuters from its Essential Science Indicators Database).

Global Environmental Change
Lansing 2013 Not all baselines are created equal: A Q methodology analysis of stakeholder perspectives of additionality in a carbon forestry offset project in Costa Rica
O’Neill et al. 2013 On the use of imagery for climate change engagement
Ching & Mukherjee 2015 Managing the socio-ecology of very large rivers: Collective choice rules in IWRM narratives
Hobson & Niemeyer 2011 Public responses to climate change: The role of deliberation in building capacity for adaptive action
Cairns & Stirling 2014 ‘Maintaining planetary systems’ or ‘concentrating global power?’ High stakes in contending framings of climate change
Lorenzoni et al. 2007 Barriers perceived to engaging with climate change among the UK public and their policy implications

Annals of the Association of American Geographers
Brannstrom et al. 2011 Social perspectives on wind-power development in West Texas

Landscape and Urban Planning
Nijnik & Mather 2008 Analyzing public preferences concerning woodland development in rural landscapes in Scotland

Environment and Planning A
Fisher & Brown 2009 Wind energy on the Isle of Lewis: implications for deliberative planning
Matthew 2015 Stakeholder perspectives on shale gas fracking: a Q-method study of environmental discourses
Jones et al. 2012 Moving around the City: Discourses on Walking and Cycling in English Urban Areas

Professional Geographer
Brannstrom 2011 A Q-Method Analysis of Environmental Governance Discourses in Brazil’s Northeastern Soy Frontier


**Geoforum**

Robbins & Krueger 2000  
Beyond Bias? The Promise and Limits of Q Method in Human Geography

Claire et al. 2013  
The "balance discourse": A case study of power and wetland management

Lopez-i-Gelats et al. 2009  
The rural in dispute: discourses of rurality in the Pyrenees

Sandbrook et al. 2013  
What do conservationists think about markets?

Hall 2008  
Identifying farmer attitudes towards genetically modified (GM) crops in Scotland: Are they pro- or anti-GM?

Ward 2013  

Jepson 2012  
“We Don’t Take the Pledge”: Environmentality and environmental skepticism at the epicenter of US wind energy development

**Area**

Eden et al. 2005  

**Applied Geography**

Forrester et al. 2015  
Combining participatory mapping with Q-methodology to map stakeholder perceptions of complex environmental problems
Appendix 2  Concourse development sources

The debate and controversy surrounding the Auckland Council’s proposed Unitary Plan discussed in Chapter Three, which provided inspiration for the study itself, also provided a rich source of opinions and statements from which to draw a comprehensive and balanced Q set (Watts & Stenner, 2012: 58). Accessing the various forms of media concerned with urban intensification in Auckland revealed a substantial repository of contextually-grounded material from which to develop the concourse. Following Barry and Proops’ (1999: 340) research design, contextually-grounded materials were prioritised for selection, but supported by statements from academic literature to fill the gaps within the concourse. Favouring statements from the Auckland-context and within the public-domain helped to “reduce the risk of missing the respondents’ meanings or confusing them with alternative meanings derived from an external frame of reference” (McKeown and Thomas, 1988: 25).

The exact source materials for the concourse statements can be categorised into four domains of discourse: academic papers; governmental and non-governmental reports and policy documents; articles from online and print news media; and online social media. The sources for these four domains of discourse are further detailed below:

**Academic papers discussing residential preference in regards to urban intensification:**

**Reports and policy documents from governmental and non-governmental agencies relating to housing policy and urban density in Auckland:**
ARC, 2010; ARGF, 1999; Auckland Council, 2012; Saville-Smith & James, 2010; Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012; CityScope Consultants Ltd, 2011; Haarhoff et al., 2012; Lees, 2014; Lupis, 2013; Sharpin, 2006; Turner et al., 2004.

**Articles discussing the subject of Auckland’s density and urban intensification were also included from online and print media:**
The New Zealand Herald (www.nzherald.co.nz); Stuff (www.stuff.co.nz); Central Leader (centralleader.realviewdigital.com); North Shore Times (northshoretimes.realviewdigital.com); Auckland Now (www.aucklandnow.co.nz); Western Leader (westernleader.realviewdigital.com);
Dominion Post (www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post); Rodney Times (rodneytimes.realviewdigital.com); Metro Magazine (www.metromag.co.nz).

Social media, including comments sections on media websites, blogs, and publically viewable Facebook groups and twitter feeds providing discussion and opinion on urban intensification in Auckland:
Facebook.com; Twitter.com; Voakl.net; Publicaddress.net; www.3news.co.nz/campbelllive; www.tvhe.co.nz; auckland2040.org.nz; www.kiwiblog.co.nz; pc.blogspot.co.nz; www.transportblog.co.nz; kohimarama.net.nz; onehunga.net.nz/blog; thedailyblog.co.nz; bra.org.nz
## Appendix 3

The 40 Q set statements sampled from the concourse sorted thematically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy / Regulation</th>
<th>Neighbourhood / City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Statement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hoping for the best is not good enough; we must have a well thought out plan for the future of Auckland's urban development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Urban intensification is becoming a necessity for Auckland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To help lower to middle income Kiwis be able to buy a house we need to continue building new houses on Auckland's urban periphery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>So that Auckland continues to be a high quality living environment, it is important to promote a more compact urban environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Regional centres outside of Auckland's urban area should be the focus of future growth rather than intensification of existing urban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Those who advocate for Auckland to spread beyond its current boundary are only thinking about short-term solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I worry about the changes being planned for Auckland because of the terrible errors made in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I support some intensification of up to a few storeys in urban centres, but high-rise building should be restricted to the city centre only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Urban intensification of up to four storeys outside the city centre is a ridiculous idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I only support urban intensification that is close to public transport and active transport routes (cycleways and walkways).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Statement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think that most of Auckland's residential areas should retain their existing character, while allowing some limited urban intensification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>High quality infill housing will rejuvenate areas and enhance lifestyles, if done properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I agree with the need to plan for some form of future intensification, but this must be done in a way that is reflective of the desires of local communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>My concern is that the character and connections in close knit communities will be lost as areas are filled with residents of higher-density dwellings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I worry that intensification in my suburb could cause the value of house prices to fall dramatically and we might be left living in a slum area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Urban intensification and the sort of buildings it encourages will make Auckland's suburbs look ugly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>High-rises and apartments won't solve the issue of affordable housing in my area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>We should protect the low density nature of Auckland's suburbs because all Aucklanders benefit from it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle / Values</td>
<td>Aspirations / Desires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Statement</td>
<td>No. Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I’m worried that my quality of life and the character of my neighbourhood will get worse through encouraging a more compact form of building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urban intensification will provide houses that will mostly attract new migrants and those without children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>We need a greater variety of homes so that Aucklanders can have more choice in where and how they live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Even if I needed to travel a lot by car, I would still prefer a stand-alone house with a big garden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>People living in higher density areas that are close to jobs, amenities and services can have a more environmentally sustainable life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>It’s about providing choice for young people; who don’t want to be exiled to the urban fringe to find affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Urban intensification goes against the New Zealand way of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I look forward to more well designed apartments because of the improved quality of life they can bring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I’m interested in the benefits that living in a more compact community can bring (such as being able to walk to the shops or to work).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a fundamental disconnect between the Auckland Council’s wish to accommodate future generations in a more compact city, and where those Aucklanders will actually want to live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Many of those who oppose urban intensification do so out of self-interest, rather than genuine concern for the future of the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I would prefer to live in a more compact ‘master-planned estate’ (such as Hobsonville Point or Stonefields) rather than infill housing within an existing part of the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban intensification is not just important to provide housing, it’s about the future Aucklanders want for their city and for their children to inherit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>What we need is a balance of both urban expansion and intensification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I want Auckland to continue to grow as it has previously, with mostly detached houses at a low-density.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I would prefer to live close to public transport and become less dependent on using a car.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge / Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Information Sheet

Acclimatising to higher densities in Auckland: Examining how young adult’s living environments influence their attitudes towards urban intensification.

Simon Opit

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to know why this research is being conducted and what being a participant in this research will involve. Please take the time to carefully read the following information sheet and feel free to discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact us if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you would like to take part. Thank you.

Project description

This research is being conducted as part of the researcher’s (Simon Opit) doctoral studies at the University of Auckland. This research is interested in what people living in Auckland think about urban change, and in particular the urban intensification of residential areas in Auckland. I’m investigating young adults’ differing views on this subject and how the places in which people live can affect their perspective of certain types of residential urban environments. I would like to identify patterns of similar attitudes that exist across the many different residents of Auckland. The results will be included the researcher’s doctoral thesis, published papers and in a summary of findings, which you can request to be sent via the consent form.
Project procedures

Your involvement in this research will be through participating in an activity called a ‘Q sort’. For the Q sort you will be provided with a range of statements and asked to place these on a grid ranging from most agree to most disagree. The statements will cover the many different opinions people have about urban intensification and by placing each statement on the grid you will indicate your relative affinity with each of them. After this you will be asked a number of short questions concerning the viewpoints indicated in the Q sort, as well as your current and previous living environments and a number of demographic questions. With your permission, your responses to these questions will be audio-recorded. You can, however, ask for the recording device to be turned off at any time. Your participation in the Q study will last approximately one hour. As a participant of this research you will receive a $20 shopping voucher as koha.

The recorded data will be stored on the researcher’s computer in an encrypted file, and will be kept for a period of six years. The Q sort will be conducted in a place mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher.

Right to withdraw from participation

Your consent to participate in this research is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to provide any information. You may withdraw from the activity at any time and request your data to not be used. However, as this research does not record any information that will personally identify you, once you have completed the activity it will no longer be possible to remove the data you have provided from the study.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Any data you provide will be kept in a securely encrypted file. No information that personally identifies you will be recorded for this research. At any time in the thesis where information or quotations from your Q sort and interview are used, a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, for your name and the names people you mention.

Contact details and approval wording

Researcher:  Supervisor:  Head of Department:
Simon Opit Prof. Robin Kearns Prof. Paul Kench
sopj002@aucklanduni.ac.nz r.kearns@auckland.ac.nz p.kench@auckland.ac.nz
0210475248 093737599 ext 88442 093737599 ext 88440

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711
APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17 Nov 2013 for (3) years, Reference Number: 010840
Appendix 5  Consent form

CONSENT FORM

- Q SORT -

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Acclimatising to higher densities in Auckland: Examining how young adult's living environments influence their attitudes towards urban intensification.

Simon Opit

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary.

- I agree to take part in this research.  (please tick)  
- I understand that my answers to the questions asked after the Q sort will be audio-recorded.  
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time during the Q sort and interview.
• I understand that no information that will be traceable back to my participation will be recorded and that the information I provide will be stored on a computer in an encrypted file.

• I understand that after the activity is complete it will not be possible to remove the data I have provided from the research.

• I understand that data will be kept for a period of 6 years and after which it will be destroyed.

• I understand that this research will be used as part of an assessed piece of university work and in addition will be presented in a summary of findings sent to participants, and in papers reporting the research in academic journals.

• I am happy to provide an email address to which I would like to receive a summary of findings for this research once it is complete.

Name __________________________ Email __________________________

Signature ________________________ Date _________________________

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn 83711

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17 Nov 2013 for (3) years, Reference Number: 010840

ID:
Invitation to participate in research on the attitudes of young adults to urban intensification

Should Auckland continue to expand its urban area outwards or increase its density? This has become a controversial topic for the city, attracting a lot of media attention and conflicting opinions about what is best for Auckland. I believe young people’s opinions on these matters are often undervalued, yet it is they who will inherit a city shaped by these decisions. For my research I would like young adults to share their own attitudes towards the plan to intensify Auckland by asking for their reactions to a variety of statements on this topic.

If you are aged between 25 and 35 you are invited to share your opinion on the best way for Auckland to grow. The research involves taking part in an interview lasting approximately one hour, where you will be asked to express your feelings towards different statements about urban intensification and discuss your own experiences. A $20 shopping voucher will be provided to all participants as koha.

If you would like to be interviewed as part of this research or have any other queries regarding this research then please contact the primary researcher or the university using the contact details below.

Kind Regards,
Simon Opit

Contact details and approval wording

Researcher: Simon Opit
simon.opit@auckland.ac.nz 021 0475248

Supervisor: Prof. Robin Kearns
r.kearns@auckland.ac.nz 093737599 ext 88442

Head of Department: Prof. Paul Kench
p.kench@auckland.ac.nz 093737599 ext 88440

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7559 extn. 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17 Nov 2013 for (3) years, Reference Number: 010840
Pre-Q sort Structured Questions

Answer questions 1 – 4 for your current and previous place of residence:

1. Which suburb do/did you reside in?
   Current

Previous

2. What is/was your occupancy status and who do live with (e.g. Renting/Owner; Living alone/flatmates/Parents/Children)?
   Current

Previous

3. What type of dwelling do/did you live in (e.g. detached/semi-detached/apartment)?
   Current

Previous

4. What is/was the length of time you were living in this dwelling?
   Current

Previous

Questions 5 – 10 are demographic questions

5. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. No response

6. What ethnic group/s do you affiliate with?

7. What is your age?

8. Where were you born?
   a. In New Zealand
   b. Overseas (please state)
   c. No response

9. What is your marital status?
   a. Single, never married
   b. Married
   c. Separated/Divorced
   d. Widowed
   e. No response

10. What is your occupation/degree?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be socially sustainable, there need to be equitable distribution and consumption of resources and assets, harmonious social relations, and acceptable quality of life.</td>
<td>Ancell &amp; Thompson-Fawcett 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable housing policies should...maximise choice in housing services (such as tenure and residential location).</td>
<td>Ancell &amp; Thompson-Fawcett 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification will increase the costs of new housing relative to the city perimeter, greenfields developments.</td>
<td>Saville-Smith, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intensification reduces quality of life and neighbourhood liveability.</td>
<td>Saville-Smith, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householders living in dwellings located in high density and mixed use environments have activity patterns that are more environmentally sustainable.</td>
<td>Saville-Smith, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strategic approach to [intensification] needs to encompass infrastructure provision, particularly transport systems (both public and private), as well as design and quality controls on new developments, and housing diversity.</td>
<td>Sharpin 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s not just about housing, it’s about the future form Aucklanders want for their city and for their children to inherit.</td>
<td>Beattie, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not going to address Auckland’s growth issues simply by concentrating on housing supply through zoning more residential land in peripheral locations without thinking about the communities we are actually creating.</td>
<td>Beattie, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense densification within high value inner urban zones...will have only a modest impact on the transport and housing circumstances of those in dispersed suburbia.</td>
<td>Dodson, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planners should consider the benefits of restricting very high density development in central city zones by setting building heights far below current</td>
<td>Dodson, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The layout and spatial configuration of neighbourhoods affects social cohesion more than density does.</td>
<td>Ramen, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If traditional neighborhoods are sufficiently attractive and safe, and if suburb-inclined households can be convinced they are so, these households might be willing to consider choosing a traditional neighborhood instead, all else equal.</td>
<td>Lovejoy et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification towards moderate and high-density residential forms is widely unpopular with the public as shown by the continuing “marketing success” of conventional suburban sprawl.</td>
<td>Randall, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a dwelling has greater architectural merit, the more willing [people will be] to live in it, even at higher densities.</td>
<td>Randall, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence...suggests that majority residential preferences are substantially out of alignment with the policies promoted by those preaching the virtues of an urban renaissance.</td>
<td>Senior et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a clear clash between the high-density aspirations of the compactionists and the desires of local communities to protect their quality of life.</td>
<td>Breheny, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market forces [are] unsuitable or insufficient to adequately define the form of the city.</td>
<td>Preval et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Urban intensification should be accompanied by more radical measures to constrain traffic generation within intensified areas.  

**Policy Docs/Reviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continued expansion is likely to lead to increasing inefficiencies and continuing damage to Auckland’s natural resource base.</td>
<td>ARC 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is in the interests of the Auckland region...[to have] a compact urban form...a variety of housing and mixed use activities.</td>
<td>ARC 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure that Auckland retains a high quality living environment...promoting compact urban environments that have high amenity and are well integrated [is important].</td>
<td>ARC 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of sustainable energy use and development, the effects of climate change and protecting the region's natural and cultural heritage [are becoming] increasingly important.</td>
<td>ARC 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infill housing will bring social problems later.</td>
<td>HNZC 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density is a market choice and not an index of social standing.</td>
<td>HNZC 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased density and commercial activities should be encouraged in and around urban centres.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of centre retail development should be limited.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The supply of affordable housing [should] be encouraged as part of development proposals within urban centres.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much of the required housing stock [should] be provided by master-planned developments that...[include] housing types suited to greater densities than traditional &quot;house and garden&quot; suburban living.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are &quot;prepared to accept&quot; more affordable, attached, intensified houses as long as the houses are well designed and the area has high amenity.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[There is] a fundamental disconnect between where the Council wishes to accommodate future generations of Aucklanders, and where those Aucklanders will actually want to live.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are “plenty of private sector investors...if only we can remove the roadblocks that are slowing down the process and driving up costs”.</td>
<td>Lupis 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[It is appropriate] to focus higher intensity development around the town centres and along arterial routes.</td>
<td>Skellern, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are huge benefits about being able to walk to the shops and work, and live in a vibrant community.</td>
<td>Skellern, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More intense development around the town centres makes sense.</td>
<td>Forbes, 2012 (WL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need alternatives to the stereotyped apartments and residential units.</td>
<td>Stuff (08/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I agree that there needs to be medium density in some of our centres, plenty of amazing cities around the world have done this without building past two or three stories in the suburbs as a rule.</td>
<td>Bergin, 2013 (AN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those simply scaremongering and opposing everything, while refusing to give any other ideas or alternatives is unhelpful and doesn’t help with the process of including the views of the wider community and being realistic about our growing city and ageing population.  

Hills, 2013 (AN)

“...The idea of high-rises is driven by a small group of vested interest developers and business people.”  

Trayes, 2013 (RT)

High-rises and apartments won’t solve the issue of affordable housing in my area.  

Trayes, 2013 (RT)

I’m not against intensification, we just need a bit more balance.  

http://metromag.co.nz/

### Blogs/Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There will always be nimby types who don’t want their neighbourhood to change; but that doesn’t mean that if higher-density living was built it wouldn’t be popular. You can’t bring change without making some people unhappy.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High density housing is the only affordable answer just about anywhere you look in the world when talking about cities.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aucklanders should be provided with a choice - if they want to live in expensive large houses on the edge of the city [or] if they want cheaper, more affordable housing closer to the centre then that should be available to them as well.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where there are good quality apartments and town-houses near amenities and good public transport hubs, Aucklanders are keen to move in.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there are already commercial shops and buildings there then having a new apartment with residents would only add vibrancy, value and prosperity.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of young people and a lot of retired people want to live where they can give up their car, live close to public transport, and live in town.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think we need more high density and apartments near the CBD provided they are nicely designed but also more expansion on the fringes for larger homes. You can do a balance of both surely.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to live in a house I don’t need to, I have all these outdoor activities on my door step - I don’t need it in my back yard.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up is not sacrificing lifestyle; done properly it enhances lifestyle.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland cannot keep spreading out forever, people will just have to accept that intensified housing is going to be the new normal; well designed and planned they don’t need to be eyesores or ghettos in the making.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The urgency that is being applied to the implementation of the Unitary Plan indicates that shoddy quick builds will be the order of the day.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have plenty of room in both Auckland and New Zealand to grow our cities out if care is taken; we are not about to run out of green space any time soon.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How hard is it to develop land just a further 10 km in every direction? Can fit a lot of homes with minimal expansion. That’s not too scary, is it?</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-density housing is becoming a necessity in New Zealand</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only people who are ‘fear’ the Unitary Plan are the selfish, the ignorant and the naïve.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we need is high quality infill housing that will rejuvenate the area instead of make it an eyesore for the communities who live in the area.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A great deal of those who oppose the [Unitary] plan do so out of self-interest rather than genuine concern for the future of the city.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The root of the problem is not a shortage of housing in Auckland, it's a lack of incentives for people to live in other parts of New Zealand.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do see the sense in a more compact city but it’s going to have to be a combination of out and up.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland is fast becoming an over populated concrete jungle, this will eventually result in mass exodus with people escaping to live in nicer parts of NZ.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aucklanders are entitled to more choice in where and how they live.</td>
<td>NZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unitary Plan should be about a renaissance of 'dead areas' and creating new, better neighbourhoods - not destroying existing communities.</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification is not what the people of Auckland want.</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People that live in apartments tend to be the young and restless, the dispossessed, and the transient.</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland Council should be thinking further afield than just Auckland’s urban/suburban area and working with government to spread the population north and south.</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[We need to focus] intensification into those areas with infrastructure which can appropriately support it.</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was not a pleasant surprise when I saw our quiet suburban street is earmarked for the highest form of intensification.</td>
<td>CL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concern is that the character and connections in close knit communities will be lost.</td>
<td>CL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think four storeys in a suburban street is a ridiculous idea.</td>
<td>CL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the core of it is that a plan is being created which will be foreign to the New Zealand way of life and will be imposed upon us, to our everlasting detriment.</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification will provide a greater variety of homes, therefore providing more affordable solutions.</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not against an intensification plan for Auckland [but the] council needs to rethink the plan and identify appropriate locations for intensification based on infrastructure and community feedback.</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we should be aiming for is ‘density done well’, and seeing how we can allow more people to enjoy the benefits of these areas.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you’re against urban sprawl and that means lower to middle income Kiwis can’t buy a house.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have different tastes and a whole lot clearly don’t have a taste for living on the edge of the city.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people want a big house, with lots of green space, close to the city.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban limits do cause constrained supply...but without them in current conditions here in New Zealand the high amount of non-market driven sprawl that will be generated by these factors and other factors will be much worse.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of people would prefer to drive less and rely more on walking, cycling and public transit, provided that those are high-quality options.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who advocate...for Auckland to spread beyond its current boundary are still only thinking in the shortest of terms.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.transportblog.co.nz">www.transportblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the restrictions on density that exert the biggest stranglehold on our cities.</td>
<td><a href="http://pc.blogspot.co.nz/">http://pc.blogspot.co.nz/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no problem with building up. as long as we are building out too.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz">http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want intensity, I want an expanding supply of high quality, well designed apartments, I want a greater concentration of people and all the life they bring.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz">http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great cities don’t happen by accident and hoping for the best is not good enough, we must have a well thought out plan in place.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz">http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If we don’t plan and prepare now for future growth, our quality of life may be strained under the weight of numbers competing for too few houses, space on our roads, social infrastructure and access to a clean, healthy environment.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz">http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of Auckland’s residential areas which should retain their existing character, while allowing some limited intensification.</td>
<td><a href="http://auckland2040.org.nz">http://auckland2040.org.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional areas such as Helensville and Warkworth, should be used as an alternative for accommodating Auckland’s growth, rather than predominantly by intensification of the existing urban area.</td>
<td><a href="http://auckland2040.org.nz">http://auckland2040.org.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It doesn’t matter which way you cut it, putting up high rise apartments in urban areas is not going to make the place look good; they are pretty ugly in the city, they are going to be ugly in the suburbs.</td>
<td>AN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are repeatedly told of a myth that building more roads &quot;induces&quot; traffic so that congestion gets worse, not better, if we build more roads. I have never been able to understand why anyone would be fooled by such nonsense.</td>
<td>DP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A real concern is the intensification of already established areas. Perhaps let them be and do it in outer areas yet to be created.</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiwis need to wake up to the fact that growth containment urban planning is based on a pack of lies that are totally the opposite of reality.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tvhe.co.nz/">http://www.tvhe.co.nz/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing to build cities outwards rather than up...eats up productive or otherwise valuable land, and the cost to existing ratepayers in delivering basic infrastructure further and further out becomes prohibitive.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to live where I live for a long time yet, and I welcome that vitality around me.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[I'm] in agreement with the need to plan for and provide for intensification. The caveat is to do it transparently, in consultation and with concurrent facility and infrastructure improvements.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[I’m] in agreement with the need to plan for and provide for intensification. The caveat is to do it transparently, in consultation and with concurrent facility and infrastructure improvements.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s about providing choice for young people, we don’t want to be exiled to the urban fringe to find affordable housing.</td>
<td>Campbell Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s not a lot of confidence out there, because there have been terrible errors made in the past.</td>
<td>Campbell Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density done well is what we want here in Auckland.</td>
<td>Campbell Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s less about being a NIMBY, it’s about saying it’s all our backyard, once it’s gone it’s gone.</td>
<td>Campbell Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want intensification that is carefully planned and considered with infrastructure investment in place before intensification becomes a problem for the city.</td>
<td><a href="http://voakl.net/">http://voakl.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland is a beautiful city, yet it is handicapped by car dependency, poor quality urban developments, air pollution, and limited housing choices.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not against sprawl entirely. I just don’t think it should be the only option.</td>
<td><a href="http://publicaddress.net/">http://publicaddress.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small houses and no gardens mean ill health, discontent, and a lack of interest in the home.</td>
<td>Vallance et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The value of [our house] could plummet quite dramatically. What concerns me is that we’ll be left living in a slum area.</td>
<td>Vallance et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided it is of good quality the Council should encourage infill housing.</td>
<td>Vallance et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infill housing goes against the New Zealand way of life.</td>
<td>Vallance et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NZH = The New Zealand Herald; FB = Facebook; CL = Central Leader; NST = North Shore Times; WL = Western Leader; AN = Auckland Now; DP = Dominion Post; RT = Rodney Times
Appendix 9  A factor matrix table with defining sorts indicated by an ‘x’ and bold font type. Eigenvalues and the explanatory variance are shown underneath each factor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Q-sort</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PN1</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN2</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN3</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN4</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN5</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN6</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN7</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN8</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN9</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN10</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN11</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN12</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN13</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN14</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN15</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN16</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN17</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN18</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN19</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN20</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN21</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN22</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN23</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN24</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Eigenvalues        | 8.78 | 3.44 | 1.02 |
| Expl Var (%)       | 34.00| 11.00| 10.00|
**Appendix 10**  By-factor Q-sort rankings of the forty statements provided to each participant in this study for sorting. Bold type indicates the highest factor ranking for each statement and underlined bold type indicates the lowest ranking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Factor A</th>
<th>Factor B</th>
<th>Factor C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hoping for the best is not good enough; we must have a well thought out plan for the future of Auckland’s urban development. There is a fundamental disconnect between the Auckland Council’s wish to accommodate future generations in a more compact city, and where those Aucklanders will actually want to live.</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think that there is not as much need for urban intensification as is being suggested by its supporters.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Urban intensification is becoming a necessity for Auckland. I think that most of Auckland’s residential areas should retain their existing character, while allowing some limited urban intensification. To help lower middle income Kiwis be able to buy a house we need to continue building new houses on Auckland’s urban periphery. So that Auckland continues to be a high quality living environment, it is important to promote a more compact urban environment. Regional centres outside of Auckland’s urban area should be the focus of future growth rather than intensification of existing urban areas. High quality infill housing will rejuvenate areas and enhance lifestyles, if done properly. I’m worried that my quality of life and the character of my neighbourhood will get worse through encouraging a more compact form of building. Those who advocate for Auckland to spread beyond its current boundary are only thinking about short-term solutions. Many of those who oppose urban intensification do so out of self-interest, rather than genuine concern for the future of the city.</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Factor A</td>
<td>Factor B</td>
<td>Factor C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Urban intensification allows us to support Auckland’s future growth in a sustainable and positive way.</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urban intensification will provide houses that will mostly attract new migrants and those without children.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would prefer to live in a more compact ‘master-planned estate’ (such as Hobsonville Point or Stonefields) rather than infill housing within an existing part of the city.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>We need a greater variety of homes so that Aucklanders can have more choice in where and how they live.</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I agree with the need to plan for some form of future intensification, but this must be done in a way that is reflective of the desires of local communities.</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>My concern is that the character and connections in close knit communities will be lost as areas are filled with residents of higher-density dwellings.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Even if I needed to travel a lot by car, I would still prefer a stand-alone house with a big garden.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>We have plenty of room in Auckland and New Zealand to grow our cities outwards if care is taken.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I worry that intensification in my suburb could cause the value of house prices to fall dramatically and we might be left living in a slum area.</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>People living in higher density areas that are close to jobs, amenities and services can have a more environmentally sustainable life.</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I worry about the changes being planned for Auckland because of the terrible errors made in the past.</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I support some intensification of up to a few storeys in urban centres, but high-rise building should be restricted to the city centre only.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>It’s about providing choice for young people; who don’t want to be exiled to the urban fringe to find affordable housing.</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Urban intensification is not just important to provide housing, it’s about the future Aucklanders want for their city and for their children to inherit.</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban intensification and the sort of buildings it encourages will make Auckland’s suburbs look ugly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Factor A</td>
<td>Factor B</td>
<td>Factor C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>High-rises and apartments won’t solve the issue of affordable housing in my area.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>We should protect the low density nature of Auckland’s suburbs because all Aucklanders benefit from it.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Urban intensification goes against the New Zealand way of life.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>What we need is a balance of both urban expansion and intensification.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I want Auckland to continue to grow as it has previously, with mostly detached houses at a low-density.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I look forward to more well designed apartments because of the improved quality of life they can bring.</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Infill housing will likely bring social problems.</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I’m interested in the benefits that living in a more compact community can bring (such as being able to walk to the shops or to work).</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Urban intensification of up to four storeys outside the city centre is a ridiculous idea.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I only support urban intensification that is close to public transport and active transport routes (cycleways and walkways).</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>The plan for urban intensification means low-quality developments will be the order of the day.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I would prefer to live close to public transport and become less dependent on using a car.</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Urban intensification will help Auckland reduce its car dependency and air pollution.</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>