

## **The Framing and Reframing of Public Issues in New Zealand**

**Michael Hanne.**

The way in which we describe any major social problem largely determines the kind of policy we eventually consider for dealing with it. Refer to a slum neighbourhood in a city as a “cancer” and you will be inclined to cut it out; whereas, if you refer to it as an “undernourished community,” you will develop a policy to “feed it up.” In thinking and communicating about issues, we rely on “heuristics” – mental shortcuts – mostly in the form of metaphors and stories, to simplify complex



information and ideas. Whether it’s poverty, crime, housing, health or the climate crisis, the metaphors we employ to describe the problem embody certain world views and tend to generate policy narratives that fit with those views.

Progressive, socially responsible ideas are inherently more complex than their rivals, which makes finding shortcuts to convey them harder. Partly for this reason, public discussion of major issues in New Zealand today tends to be “framed” by the simpler heuristics that fit the dominant neoliberal world view.

In this webinar, Michael Hanne explores the ways in which two issues, Poverty and the Housing Crisis, are generally “framed” in public discussion in New Zealand. He offers critiques of that framing and asks

how they might usefully be “reframed” in a socially more responsible way. He ends by inviting the audience to talk about other issues they feel need to be reframed.

**Michael Hanne** founded the Comparative Literature Programme at the University of Auckland and directed it for 15 years. His research over the last 25 years has focused on the key roles played by narrative and metaphor in disciplines as diverse as medicine, politics, the law, and education and he has convened conferences on these topics in New Zealand, the US, and the Netherlands and edited books from each. Most recently, he has been looking at how metaphors and stories have been used to frame discussion around major issues in New Zealand. Chapters and articles he has published can be found at: <http://narrativemetaphornexus.weebly.com/>

**Venue:** Zoom only (no actual meeting place).  
**Zoom Link:** <https://aut.zoom.us/j/95909465407>  
Meeting ID 959 0946 5407