

Aleksandra Zubrzycka-Czarnecka¹

0000-0002-7765-1907

Department of Policy Research Methodology, Faculty of Political Science
and International Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland

Emotions in the policy-making arena: shaping housing responses to flooding by political subjects

Abstract

This paper examines how Prime Minister Donald Tusk used emotional appeals to frame housing-related policy responses during the 2024 flood crisis in Poland. The study is based on a Qualitative Content Analysis of six public speeches delivered between September 13 and September 25, 2024. Drawing on elements of Szarfenberg's Beyond the Rational Calculator (BRC) tool, it focuses on three housing-related policy areas and their affective framing: evacuation, reconstruction, and long-term state responsibility. The analysis identifies three findings. First, evacuation was framed not primarily as coercive state action but as a morally necessary and emotionally justified act of protection, legitimised through fear, solidarity, trust in rescuers, and collective memory of earlier floods. Second, reconstruction was presented not merely as technical recovery but as a forward-looking moral project in which rapid aid delivery, coordination, and continued institutional presence served to reassure affected communities and stabilise uncertainty. Third, Tusk's speeches constructed a broader image of the state as an enduring moral guarantor of housing protection, dignity, and continuity in disaster settings. The findings also suggest that citizens' reception of this

¹ **Corresponding author:** Aleksandra Zubrzycka-Czarnecka, Department of Policy Research Methodology, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw, ul. Nowy Świat 67, 00-927, Warszawa, Polska; email: a.zubrzycka@uw.edu.pl

© The Author(s) 2025. Open Access. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



message may have varied depending on their previous experiences with political messaging, public institutions, and disaster-related state support, shaping whether it was interpreted as reassuring, persuasive, or contestable. The article argues that the speeches combined affective legitimisation with emotional containment. Since the study is limited to six speeches by a single political actor, its claims remain exploratory, and it should be understood as a proof of concept rather than a definitive account of emotional governance.

Keywords: housing policy, political subjectivity, affective legitimisation, emotional containment, disaster governance

Introduction

Flooding is a natural disaster that poses a significant challenge to social policy, directly affecting social needs and well-being. The discussion of flooding as a social policy issue aligns closely with Walker and Burningham's (2011) analysis of flood risk, vulnerability, and environmental justice. They argue that flood risk is socially stratified, with lower-income and marginalised groups often more exposed to risk and having fewer resources for recovery. Effective flood response must, therefore, address both immediate relief, such as emergency housing and food assistance, and long-term resilience, including infrastructure adaptation and climate mitigation, in order to prevent social exclusion and worsening inequalities, particularly among marginalised communities. Beyond material needs, flooding also triggers emotional and political responses that shape social policy development, including housing-related interventions.

Housing occupies a politically charged position in social policy because it links material welfare, inequality, citizenship, and state responsibility. Housing research has traditionally focused on institutional arrangements, material provision, affordability, socio-economic inequality, and the role of the state in securing access to adequate housing (Spicker, 2012). More critical approaches have expanded this perspective by showing how housing systems are shaped by welfare regimes, ideology, lived experience, and the relationship between the state, the market, and the family (Schwartz, 2012).

However, the emotional and symbolic dimensions of housing policy remain less developed, particularly in disaster settings. Floods do not only destroy physical infrastructure; they also generate fear, loss, attachment to place, resistance, hope, and expectations of care and recognition. These emotions shape how housing-related interventions are justified, contested, and made legitimate. Yet the role of emotions as instruments of governance in housing policy responses remains underexplored.

This article addresses this gap by examining how emotions are mobilised in the political framing of housing-related responses to natural disasters, focusing on the 2024 flood crisis in Poland. It poses the following question: How did emotional appeals by the Polish Prime Minister shape housing-related policy responses during the 2024 flood crisis? It is examined through a case study (Stake, 2003) and Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier, 2012) of six public speeches delivered by Prime Minister Donald Tusk between September 13 and September 25, 2024. The analysis focuses on the

affective framing of three housing-related policy areas: evacuation, reconstruction, and long-term state responsibility.

Conceptually, the article draws on selected elements of Szarfenberg's Beyond the Rational Calculator (BRC) diagnostic tool, situated within Levels 1–2 of the Dynamic Process Model of Social-Affective Citizenship (SAC). These frameworks allow political speech to be analysed not merely as commentary on policy, but as part of affective governance, through which housing-related interventions are framed, legitimised, and contested. More specifically, the analysis uses the concepts of affective legitimisation and emotional containment to examine how political speech justifies disruptive housing-related measures while also acknowledging, regulating, and stabilising collective emotions. In this sense, the article contributes to the BRC/SAC perspective and to a more affectively sensitive understanding of housing policy under crisis conditions.

The paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, it presents the theoretical framework, study context, and research methods. It then analyses how emotional language is used by a policy actor at the macro level of the policy-making arena to frame housing-related policy instruments in response to flood-related events. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Theoretical background: Beyond the Rational Calculator (BRC), affective legitimisation, and emotional containment

This article draws on the Beyond the Rational Calculator (BRC) diagnostic tool developed by Szarfenberg in this volume. The tool conceptualises political actors along three axes: motivation, agency, and affective orientation. The Knight–Knaves dimension concerns whether policymakers are guided primarily by the public good or by self-interest and electoral calculation. The Queen–Pawn axis captures the extent to which they possess agency to shape agendas or are constrained by institutional, political, and media pressures. The Rational Calculator–Feeling Subject dimension concerns the role of affect: while the Rational Calculator relies on technical reasoning and policy instruments, the Feeling Subject treats emotional messaging as integral to problem definition, legitimacy, and public debate.

This perspective challenges the assumption that emotion is irrational or disruptive in public decision-making. It is consistent with Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus et al., 2000), which argues that emotional signals, especially anxiety, can enhance political attention, reflection, and reassessment. Therefore, emotional engagement, when structured and acknowledged, may strengthen rather than weaken public reasoning. In this sense, Szarfenberg's figure of the Feeling Subject captures the integration of affective and rational logics. Legitimacy, especially in social policy, depends not only on institutional design or economic rationale, and moreover, on emotional resonance: the capacity to address care, responsibility, and shared purpose.

The BRC model is particularly useful for analysing housing policy under disruptive conditions such as natural disasters. In such contexts, policy is not only a matter of regulation, resources, or technical coordination, but also of affective governance. Flood-related housing responses require public compliance, acceptance of disruptive

measures, and trust in institutions, especially in relation to evacuation, temporary displacement, reconstruction, and compensation. Emotions, therefore, are central in how policy interventions are justified, made intelligible, and rendered legitimate.

I use the concept of affective legitimisation to describe the process through which policy decisions, institutions, or political actors gain public acceptance by mobilising social emotions such as fear, empathy, anger, pride, or solidarity. In this understanding, legitimacy is grounded not only in legality, technical effectiveness, or rational consent, but also in emotional resonance, symbolic gestures, and empathetic interaction. In housing-related crisis governance, affective legitimisation helps explain how disruptive interventions, such as evacuation or reconstruction, can be framed not merely as administrative necessities, but as morally and socially justified actions. Drawing on Comer's (2024) analysis of affective legitimation, I understand emotional appeals not as opposed to rationality, but as intertwined with it: institutions may appear legitimate when they present themselves as both caring and competent, compassionate and effective.

Emotional containment, understood as the effort to acknowledge, absorb, and redirect collective emotions in ways that preserve trust, order, and institutional credibility is closely related to this. Following Maor (2025), emotional containment does not simply suppress emotion. Rather, it reframes emotional responses so that fear, frustration, and loss can be channelled into socially constructive forms such as solidarity, confidence, and cooperation. In housing policy, this may involve reassuring statements about reconstruction, visible coordination efforts, and affective appeals to shared sacrifice. At the same time, emotional containment may also serve more strategic or manipulative functions when political actors downregulate emotions that are inconvenient or threatening to their authority (Zubrzycka-Czarnecka, 2025).

This study also builds on two strands of literature at the intersection of housing and flood risk. First, studies of post-disaster housing governance show that housing is not a static sectoral concern, but part of a dynamic and contested field of crisis governance, marked by tensions between centralised procedures and the needs of affected communities (Jacobs & Williams, 2011; Williams et al., 2009). Second, emerging research on the emotional and psychological dimensions of disaster experience shows that flood-related housing insecurity is shaped not only by material vulnerability, but also by trauma, fear of loss, and attachment to place (Rahman et al., 2025; Ewenson & Sanderson, 2025; Woodhall-Melnik & Weissman, 2021).

In light of this research, I conceptualise housing policy in the context of flooding as a multi-layered field of governance shaped by institutional capacity, risk mitigation, socio-economic inequality, and emotional meaning. Rather than treating housing as a bounded policy sector, I understand housing instruments as embedded in broader processes of disaster response, state accountability, and emotional governance. The analysis focuses on three types of housing-related intervention: evacuation and displacement, reconstruction and repair of accommodation infrastructure, and state-led public engagement and compensation related to housing loss.

Read through the SAC lens, the BRC tool is not only a typology of political subjectivity. It is also a diagnostic instrument for identifying what kinds of citizens are implicitly imagined, addressed, and governed through policy design. In disaster

housing governance, the gap between the Rational Calculator and the Feeling Subject is especially visible. Evacuation and reconstruction are typically justified through risk calculations, engineering expertise, and administrative procedures, yet affected residents may experience home through attachment, memory, fear, and loss. Affective legitimisation and emotional containment can, therefore, be interpreted as macro-level techniques intended to bridge this gap. They translate technical necessity into relational promises to see, respect, and protect citizens, while also regulating the emotional register of citizenship by encouraging solidarity and trust, downregulating panic and anger, and managing the distribution of blame.

Finally, although the article draws selectively on crisis communication and crisis leadership (Howarth, 2011; Maor, 2025), framing (Entman, 1993; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016), and representative claim-making (Saward, 2010), it remains grounded in housing studies. In this article, a frame is understood as an interpretive pattern that gives meaning to a housing-related policy response by linking it to emotions, values, responsibility, and expected forms of citizen conduct. Framing refers to the process through which political actors construct, reinforce, and adjust such patterns in public speech.

Study context

Between September 13 and October 4, 2024, Poland experienced a catastrophic phase of the flood triggered by a Genoa low-pressure system, which brought prolonged and intense rainfall to Central Europe (Bujalski, 2024). The flood affected several voivodeships: Lower Silesian, Lubusz, Opole, Lesser Poland, Subcarpathian, Silesian, and West Pomeranian (Pajdała-Kusińska, 2024). In some regions, particularly in southwestern Poland, rainfall totals exceeded 400 mm over just three days, surpassing the annual average in many areas of the country (Powódź, 2024). The intense rainfall caused the Oder River and its tributaries to overflow, leading to widespread flooding.

Cities and towns such as Kłodzko, Łądek-Zdrój, Stronie Śląskie, Głuchołazy, Prudnik, Nysa, Bystrzyca Kłodzka, Szprotawa, and Lewin Brzeski were severely affected, with major infrastructure damage and substantial disruption to everyday life. Residential areas were inundated, resulting in large-scale evacuations and significant property losses. The flood caused nine confirmed deaths in the affected areas: likely one Czech citizen who died on the Czech side of the border, one German citizen, and seven Polish citizens (Boryń, 2024). The greatest damage occurred in the Lower Silesian, Opole, and Lesser Poland voivodeships.

In response to the disaster, the Polish government declared a state of natural disaster between September 16 and October 16, 2024 in the affected regions and implemented emergency measures to support those impacted (Panufnik, 2024). At the same time, the crisis exposed significant shortcomings in the crisis policymaking system (Powódź, 2024). Delayed warnings, inadequate preventive measures, and insufficient coordination among institutions were identified as key factors contributing to the scale of the losses. Although flood hazard maps and flood risk mitigation plans were available, many local governments had not fully incorporated them into their

development strategies. Moreover, while important hydrotechnical investments, including retention reservoirs in the Kłodzko Valley and the Racibórz reservoir, had been implemented, they proved insufficient to handle the unprecedented volume of water.

A nationwide telephone survey found that 1.6% of Polish residents were directly affected by the flood, while a further 9% experienced flooding in their immediate neighbourhoods (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 1). The highest impacts were reported in the Opole and Lower Silesian voivodeships, where 53% and 47% of respondents, respectively, reported nearby flooding (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 1). Medium-sized cities of up to 100,000 residents were particularly affected, alongside smaller towns (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 1).

The disaster also highlighted the role of emergency services. The State Fire Service and Territorial Defence Forces were positively evaluated by 94% of survey respondents (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 2). Local authorities also received favourable evaluations, with 59% of respondents approving their efforts, while central government actions were rated slightly lower, at 55% (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 2). A survey conducted by Opinia24 for RMF FM also showed regional variation in assessments of the government's response (Filipek, 2024). The most critical evaluations came from residents of the Lubusz and Silesian voivodeships, where only 36% of respondents believed that politicians from the ruling coalition had risen to the challenge. In Lower Silesia, 41% of respondents assessed the government's intervention positively, while the highest approval was recorded in Opole, where 50% believed that the government had handled the crisis effectively.

Public perceptions of the central government's response also varied significantly according to political and ideological orientation. Respondents with left-wing or centrist views were more likely to approve of the government's actions than those with conservative views (CBOS Flash, 2024, p. 3). Although this article does not trace the long-term political consequences of the flood, the crisis already revealed marked regional and partisan differences in evaluations of the government's response. This suggests that disaster policymaking became not only a matter of emergency coordination, but also a site of broader political legitimation and contestation. These differences are analytically important for situating Poland as a comparative case of housing governance, disaster response, and political legitimacy.

To locate the 2024 flood response within SAC's Level 1, the Ecosystem of Provision, it is useful to distinguish the different logics through which housing-related support was delivered and experienced. The formal bureaucratic locus included state-led emergency policymaking, such as evacuation coordination, emergency aid, reconstruction programmes, and administrative rules governing eligibility, timing, and compensation. At the same time, the crisis activated community-based loci, including informal mutual aid, neighbour-to-neighbour care, and place-based moral economies in which staying, protecting property, and preserving community memory carried strong normative value.

Formal community arrangements, especially local authority coordination of civic initiatives and volunteer mobilisation, mediated between these spheres in practice, even when they remained less visible in central political speech. Market dynamics, including insurance, contractors, and building supply chains, also shaped the feasibility

and pace of repair and rebuilding, intersecting with state programmes and household resources. This article focuses on how the Prime Minister framed and attempted to coordinate the bureaucratic–community interface, because it is here that the emotional governance becomes especially visible and politically consequential.

The Polish case is analytically relevant for several reasons. First, emotions are not usually foregrounded as an explicit analytical category in housing studies, even though they are present in public debate and in the political framing of housing issues. Moments of crisis make the emotional dimension of policymaking more visible, particularly when policy decisions concern home, loss, displacement, security, and reconstruction. The 2024 flood case is, therefore, especially useful because it shows how emotional appeals can become a salient component of political legitimation in a field where they are not usually treated as central to housing policy analysis.

Second, Poland exemplifies a post-socialist model of housing policy that is broadly characteristic of the Visegrád region and, more generally, of parts of Central and Eastern Europe. This model is marked by high levels of homeownership, limited public housing provision, relatively low public spending on housing policy, as well as strong cultural attachment to ownership and the home. In the context of flood response, these features are particularly important because evacuation, displacement, and housing loss affect not only material security. They are deeply rooted norms of autonomy, belonging, and property-based stability.

Third, the Polish case can be read not only as a national example, but also as an instance of how a post-socialist housing regime responds to a flood crisis. Its broader analytical value lies in making visible the tensions that arise when a highly ownership-based housing system confronts large-scale disruption and emergency intervention. In this sense, the case is useful for comparison with countries representing other housing-policy models, allowing future research to examine how different welfare-housing configurations shape the emotional legitimation, institutional delivery, and public reception of flood-related housing measures.

Consequently, its relevance lies less in statistical representativeness than in what Stake (2003, pp. 145–147) terms “naturalistic generalisation”: the capacity of a well-contextualised case to illuminate patterns, tensions, and dynamics that may be recognisable in other settings, even where the institutional model differs. Therefore, the example of Poland is useful for understanding a national flood response and for analysing how ownership-based, post-socialist housing regimes manage legitimacy, displacement, and reconstruction under conditions of crisis.

Research strategy

This study applies the BRC framework selectively rather than comprehensively. While the model is designed to capture the broader policy chain, including administrators and frontline workers, the present analysis is limited to the central political level and adopts a top-down perspective focused on one actor: Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Residents’ perspectives, media messaging, and frontline implementation are not systematically incorporated, and the study does not assess how Tusk’s speeches

were received. Future research, inspired by the SAC framework, especially Levels 2 and 3, should integrate residents' experiences and extend the BRC tool to additional actors in order to identify potential affective inconsistencies across levels of governance.

To keep the SAC framework analytically visible despite the top-down, speech-based design, each coded segment is read as performing two functions. First, it positions the policy actor along the BRC axes: Knight/Knave, Queen/Pawn, and Rational Calculator/Feeling Subject. Second, it articulates a mediation claim addressed to citizens, which can be interpreted in terms of recognition, dignity, and security (Szarfenberg, 2026). The analysis, therefore, attends not only to which housing-related instrument is discussed, such as evacuation, reconstruction, or compensation, but also to the implied citizen subject position and the affective trigger being activated.

Where the speeches invoke solidarity, civic duty, suspicion, anger, or resistance, I treat these as indicators of SAC's affective citizenship dimensions: governance and regulation, differentiation and hierarchy, expectation and solidarity, and contestation and resistance. This dual reading strengthens the study's contribution to SAC by showing how macro-level emotional governance anticipates and attempts to shape citizen experience.

The SAC framework is applied selectively. Its sub-frameworks – ECPA, which examines causal mechanisms at the micro level, and ELP, which traces the long-term effects of policy on collective emotions – are omitted. A comprehensive application of SAC would require combining both approaches to capture individual-level dynamics and systemic emotional shifts at Level 4. In SAC terms, the case engages primarily with the bureaucratic logic of state-led evacuation and reconstruction, while intersecting with informal community dynamics of resistance, memory, and attachment to place.

Although Critical Discourse Analysis is not adopted in a strict sense, Schreier's (2012) Qualitative Content Analysis was used to reconstruct affective frames and ideological assumptions in political speeches. This method is compatible with some diagnostic aims of discourse-oriented research, while offering a more structured and replicable approach consistent with the study's constructivist orientation (Frysztacki, 2009). QCA was chosen because it combines interpretive depth with systematic coding, making it suitable for analysing how emotions were embedded in crisis policymaking and translated into housing-related policy responses. The choice of QCA was also informed by its established use in housing studies (see: Bate, 2020; Fang & van Liempt, 2021).

The research question guiding the analysis was: How did emotional appeals by the Polish Prime Minister shape housing-related policy responses during the 2024 flood crisis? Since the study examines political framing rather than citizens' reception, public speeches were selected as the primary source material. Survey-based methods would be more appropriate for a subsequent reception-oriented study than for the present analysis of macro-level affective governance.

The case study focuses on Donald Tusk, leader of the Civic Platform. Six speeches delivered during key stages of the 2024 flood crisis were purposively sampled from his official YouTube channel: two from the initial stage, September, 13–14; two from the middle stage, September, 20; and two from the concluding phase, September, 24–October, 4 (Table 1). This sampling strategy allowed for a manageable dataset while capturing variation in framing across the crisis.

Table 1. Corpus of analysed speeches

Speech no.	Date	Crisis phase	Title
1	Sept. 13, 2024	Initial phase	Donald Tusk and Tomasz Siemoniak: Press conference after the briefing with the services, Wrocław
2	Sept. 14, 2024	Initial phase	Donald Tusk: Briefing after the briefing with the services in connection with the flood threat, Nysa
3	Sept. 20, 2024	Middle phase	Donald Tusk: Flood crisis headquarters in Nowa Sól
4	Sept. 20, 2024	Middle phase	Donald Tusk: Flood crisis headquarters in Szczecin
5	Sept. 24, 2024	Concluding phase	Donald Tusk: Evening crisis headquarters in Wrocław
6	Sept. 25, 2024	Concluding phase	Donald Tusk: Measures taken to prevent the effects of flooding, Warsaw

Source of the texts: Official YouTube channel of Donald Tusk.

The QCA coding frame combined deductive categories informed by theory with inductive categories derived from the data (Schreier, 2014, pp. 174–176). The term “coding frame” is used here in Schreier’s methodological sense and should be distinguished from “frame” as an interpretive pattern in political speech. Data were categorised using a codebook with one theory-driven main category: the use of emotional language by a political actor at the macro policy-making level in relation to housing policy during flood events. This was subdivided into three subcategories: legitimisation of forced actions, with a focus on evacuation; emotional mobilisation of public support for reconstruction; and the transformation of collective emotion into a moral frame of enduring state responsibility for housing in disasters.

Six additional data-driven subcategories contextualised these findings within broader emotional and socio-political dynamics. The segmentation of material (Schreier, 2012, pp. 126–145) was thematic and researcher-driven, with sentence fragments or full sentences treated as units of coding. Only Tusk’s statements were analysed in depth; statements from other actors were coded as context.

The material was coded by the author in two rounds using the coding frame. Because this was a single-coder study, formal inter-rater reliability was not assessed. To enhance coding consistency, the coding frame was piloted and refined before the main analysis, category definitions were specified in a codebook, and coded passages were revisited in a second round of analysis. Ambiguous cases were resolved by returning to the full speech context and by checking consistency with the conceptual definitions of the categories.

In addition to the empirical coding frame, the analysis involved a second-order theoretical interpretation of coded segments. After the empirical coding identified the political and emotional functions of speech segments, these segments were interpreted through the lenses of the BRC dimensions, affective legitimisation, and emotional containment. Table 3 summarises this theoretical interpretive framework.

Table 2. Empirical coding frame

Main category	Subcategory	Type	Working definition
Use of emotional language by a political actor at the macro policy-making level in relation to housing policy during flood events	Legitimisation of forced actions (evacuation)	Theory-driven	Speech segments in which emotional appeals are used to justify, morally elevate, or normalise evacuation or other disruptive housing-related interventions.
	Emotional mobilisation of public support for reconstruction and repair		Speech segments in which emotional appeals are used to support rebuilding, repair, aid delivery, and longer-term housing recovery.
	Transformation of collective emotion into a moral frame of enduring state responsibility		Speech segments in which emotions are used to construct the state as a long-term guarantor of housing protection, dignity, continuity, and care in times of disaster.
Contextual emotional and socio-political dynamics shaping housing-related policy framing	Resistance/mistrust toward state action	Data-driven	Segments referring to refusal, suspicion, antagonism, disinformation, or low confidence in state actors or emergency measures.
	Historical memory of previous floods		Segments invoking earlier floods, past helplessness, or prior resilience as interpretive resources for the current crisis.
	Institutional continuity/state presence		Segments emphasising that the state, services, or recovery institutions will remain active beyond the immediate emergency.
	Solidarity/civic reciprocity		Segments invoking mutual help, sacrifice, unity, civic responsibility, or national cohesion in response to flooding.
	Coordination/delivery/planning		Segments emphasising procedures, aid delivery, logistics, timelines, technical organisation, or institutional management.
	Leadership accountability/political responsibility		Segments in which the Prime Minister claims responsibility, direction, or visible leadership over crisis response.

Table 3. Theoretical interpretive framework

Lens	Dimension	Definition	Analytical focus
BRC	Knight	Public-good orientation	Solidarity, protection, welfare
	Knave	Self-interest orientation	Image management, political gain
	Queen	Visible agency	Leadership, control, responsibility
	Pawn	Constrained agency	Institutional or crisis constraints
	Rational Calculator	Procedural reasoning	Technical delivery, coordination
	Feeling Subject	Emotional resonance	Legitimation, reassurance, trust
Affective legitimisation	–	Moral-emotional justification	Making intervention publicly defensible
Emotional containment	–	Regulation of collective emotions	Stabilising fear, uncertainty, and mistrust

The theoretical framework was not used as a first-stage coding scheme, but as an interpretive layer applied to empirically coded segments. The collected data were then interpreted in relation to selected elements of the SAC framework discussed earlier in the article.

The method's strength lies in combining interpretation with systematic coding. Rather than counting occurrences of specific frames, the analysis focused on their contextual meaning and policy implications. This approach made it possible to identify potential moments of affective dissonance, where political frames appeared to sit uneasily with contextually documented tensions in affected communities.

Coding consistency was strengthened through clear coding rules, a piloted coding frame, and repeated coding rounds. Validity was enhanced through constant comparison with the source material, attention to full speech context, and theoretical triangulation. Limitations include the narrow scope of the study – one actor, six speeches – and the absence of reception analysis. QCA itself also requires careful coding frame design and is sensitive to researcher subjectivity. Nevertheless, by systematically analysing Tusk's emotional strategies, the study demonstrates how emotions are mobilised in crisis policymaking and offers an entry point for future applications of the SAC framework.

Because the study is based on a single case, one political actor, and a speech-based dataset, its findings should be understood as analytically exploratory. The analysis identifies patterns in the linguistic construction of emotional governance, but it does not allow for definitive claims about reception, causal effects, or the broader validity of the framework across cases.

The author used generative AI, specifically ChatGPT, in two ways. First, it was used as language support for mechanical tasks, including paraphrasing and reformulating sentences, improving clarity and readability, harmonising terminology, and minor reference reformatting. Second, it was used as a scholarly assistant in an advisory capacity, for example, to consult on the coherence of successive stages of the project. All AI outputs were reviewed, verified, and edited by the author. The overall logic and

intellectual contribution of the article, including the identification of the research problem, selection of theoretical frameworks and methods, choice of sources, design of the analytic and interpretive strategy, and revisions made in response to peer review, remain the result of the author's work. AI was used in line with responsible-use principles, including accuracy checks, source verification, privacy protection, and intellectual property safeguards. The author retains full responsibility for the content.

Findings: How did emotional appeals by the Polish Prime Minister shape housing-related policy responses during the 2024 flood crisis?

The findings are organised around three thematic clusters, each linking a housing-related policy instrument to a specific emotional framing strategy. For each cluster, I first examine how the Prime Minister's speeches frame the policy issue. I then interpret this framing in terms of affective legitimisation and/or emotional containment, before identifying the SAC dimensions these speech acts may invoke or anticipate.

Given that the study is based on a speech-based analysis of a single political actor, these claims should be read as interpretive inferences rather than as direct evidence of citizens lived experience or reception. This structure does not replace the QCA categories. Instead, it clarifies how those categories connect to the SAC architecture and why crisis messaging should be analysed as part of the welfare–citizenship regime.

Emotions as legitimisation of forced actions (evacuation from home)

Prime Minister Donald Tusk consistently framed evacuation from home as both emotionally necessary and morally imperative. His speeches drew on urgency, danger, collective memory, and national duty to justify state recommendations and encourage voluntary compliance with emergency measures. Evacuation was thus presented not as a bureaucratic imposition, but as an expression of collective care rooted in civic responsibility and affective solidarity.

To anchor this framing in collective experience, Tusk invoked past traumatic events: “In Wrocław in 1997, I remember precisely the floods of 2010 as well”. This appeal to historical memory activated an emotional register in which present measures, including evacuation, could be understood as ethically necessary responses shaped by lessons from earlier disasters. At the same time, Tusk explicitly acknowledged the resistance that evacuation could generate. “Firefighters informed me that people often refuse to evacuate”, he noted, foregrounding the emotional complexity of compliance.

Rather than presenting such resistance as mere irrationality, the speeches implicitly recognised that evacuation may involve a painful rupture with property, identity, continuity, and attachment to place. Homes appeared here not only as shelters, but also as repositories of memory and survival, particularly for those who had already lived through previous disasters such as the floods of 1997 and 2010. Tusk responded to this resistance by combining empathy with escalating urgency: “In an hour or five hours, evacuation may already be impossible due to the water level”. This shift moved

evacuation from the register of state advice to that of self-preservation, resonating with fear, concern, and protective instinct.

Tusk also sought to avoid the perception of coercion. As he emphasised, “Firefighters and police provide buses; they appeal, but they will not use force”. Emergency responders were, therefore, framed not as enforcers, but as figures of care, facilitation, and moral support. This framing was reinforced through his condemnation of disinformation: “Firefighters, soldiers, and police officers encountered aggression resulting from these lies” and through the assertion that “trust between rescuers and the rescued is an absolutely necessary condition for the success of the rescue operation”.

The same emotional logic was extended through symbolic affirmation. Tusk emphasised the moral authority of emergency responders, acknowledged the difficulty of persuading residents to leave, invoked Nowa Sól’s experience in 1997 as an example of collective resilience, and praised citizens who “spontaneously, without any compulsion” defended their communities. He also stressed that the presence of responders offered practical help and “a lot of encouragement to residents”. In this way, even logistical operations were invested with moral meaning through references to solidarity, transparency, and the longer emotional aftermath of the crisis.

Analytically, this linguistic pattern can be read as a combination of affective legitimisation and emotional containment. Evacuation was affectively legitimised insofar as it was framed through emotionally charged appeals to solidarity, care, memory, sacrifice, and protection. These appeals transformed a potentially contested state intervention into a morally intelligible and publicly defensible act.

At the same time, the speeches performed a layered strategy of emotional containment. By validating fear and attachment to place while simultaneously emphasising physical danger, Tusk reframed resistance to evacuation not as irrational defiance, but as an emotionally understandable response to trauma. The repeated emphasis on trust, reassurance, and the benevolent role of firefighters, police officers, and soldiers suggests an attempt to downregulate panic, resentment, and suspicion, while upregulating confidence in public institutions and willingness to cooperate.

In this sense, the framing did more than justify evacuation. It attempted to regulate the emotional atmosphere in which evacuation had to become acceptable. The condemnation of disinformation is especially important here, because it repositioned mistrust not simply as a messaging problem, but as a moral and affective threat to coordinated rescue action. Therefore, the speeches may be interpreted as seeking both to authorise intrusive state intervention and to stabilise the collective emotional field around that intervention.

Because this study does not include direct reception data, the following claims should be treated as contextually grounded interpretive inferences rather than as direct evidence of how local audiences actually understood these speeches. From the perspective of Szarfenberg’s framework, this strategy positions Tusk close to the Feeling Subject pole. Emotion is treated not as a distraction from policy, but as an indispensable medium of messaging, legitimation, and governance. His appeals to collective memory, relational authority, civic empathy, and moralised trust are analytically coherent with the Knight–Queen–Feeling Subject configuration.

This coherence becomes less stable, however, when the speeches are situated within the broader political and communicative ecology of the welfare state. In a context marked by high polarisation (Górska, 2019), identity-based mistrust, and localised resistance to centralised messaging, affectively rich public address may not necessarily generate emotional legitimacy. The case of evacuation resistance in Bliszczycze suggests that such messaging may fail in environments of deep institutional mistrust.

This inference is supported, albeit indirectly, by several contextual indicators discussed in the case material: reported refusals to evacuate, aggression toward emergency personnel fuelled by disinformation, and municipal-level accounts of procedural confusion, including the marginalisation of village heads and shortages of resources (Kotras et al., 2025). These examples do not provide direct evidence of reception. They do, however, suggest that the emotional and institutional credibility of central government messaging was uneven in some local settings.

As Howarth (2011) argues, emotional resonance is never unilateral; it is mediated through contested identities and social representations. Read in light of this literature, and in conjunction with critiques of classed and metropolitan political framing (cf. Kraszewski, 2024), Tusk's appeals may plausibly have been filtered through local memories of marginalisation and distance from Warsaw politics. Reports of confusion at the municipal level (Kotras et al., 2025), further suggest that affective credibility may have been weakened by practical incoherence.

Without direct reception data, it is not possible to claim definitively how these speeches were experienced by residents. Nevertheless, the available material and secondary context suggest that the framing of evacuation may, in some settings, have been perceived not as care, but as state overreach, emotional misrecognition, or symbolic dominance. In this reading, Tusk's performance remains analytically reconstructible as structurally coherent along the Knight–Queen–Feeling Subject axes, yet its emotional credibility appears uneven across the wider public sphere.

His role may, therefore, be seen as shifting situationally between Queen and Pawn, Knight and Knave, Feeling Subject and Rational Calculator, depending on the ideological alignment, local history, and prior institutional experience of those addressed. This points to the limits of affective governance in a polarised political ecosystem, where emotional legitimacy is not simply projected from above but co-constructed, refracted, and contested by audiences.

It also invites reflection on Tusk's partial embodiment of the Rational Calculator, particularly, in the top-down design of the evacuation strategy. Although the policy was framed emotionally, it still relied on standardised messaging and tacitly assumed that emotional compliance would follow from affective framing. The tensions identified here, therefore, do not invalidate the Feeling Subject reading. Rather, they suggest that its effectiveness was constrained by a more technocratic logic of delivery and by the fractured trust environment in which the framing circulated.

Emotional mobilisation of public support for the reconstruction and repair of accommodation infrastructure

Prime Minister Donald Tusk strategically mobilised emotional framing to build public support for housing reconstruction and repair. His speeches did not present rebuilding as a merely technocratic or logistical task. Instead, housing was framed as a symbol of national resilience, emotional security, and civic solidarity. Recovery was thus portrayed as a response to destruction, and moreover, as a collective moral undertaking and an opportunity for renewal.

One of Tusk's central linguistic strategies was to cast reconstruction as a forward-looking national project. He repeatedly suggested that rebuilding should not simply restore what had been lost but lead to improvement. This reframing positioned affected residents as participants in a broader process of collective recovery and progress rather than passive recipients of state aid.

Tusk also linked emotional solidarity with logistical planning. "Currently, we are facing a great task of drying and, of course, rebuilding", he stated, placing the recovery within a dignified, and even heroic, frame. Preparedness was presented as both a technical necessity and a source of emotional reassurance.

This logic was reinforced through references to continuity of care beyond the immediate emergency. In the key declaration that "when the waters recede, the services will stay with the people", Tusk rejected the earlier patterns of state withdrawal. He explicitly contrasted the current response with 2010: "I remember how in 2010 people felt helpless... the services ended their work, but [residents] were left with the drama". These invocations of prior failure activated emotional memory while positioning the current government's actions within a narrative of institutional learning and moral progress.

Tusk strengthened this narrative by referring to earlier policy innovation, including "the quick help system we launched on a large scale in 2008", and by defining effective aid delivery in ethical terms: "Our task is for it to be fast, flexible, so people don't have to wait when they really need urgent help". Speed and flexibility were, therefore, framed not merely as indicators of administrative competence, but as expressions of attentiveness and public responsibility.

At the same time, Tusk emphasised planning, coordination, and material scale. "We want to move not only with ad hoc aid, but also with the organisation of the reconstruction programme", he stated, while announcing a government plenipotentiary and "billions of zlotys" for the affected areas. He also foregrounded the practical uncertainty faced by victims, stressing that people "must know what to do, what to prepare for: renovation or rebuilding, temporary housing".

This emphasis on practical guidance was further developed through calls for the precise coordination of aid. As Tusk put it, "it's not so much about worrying what to deliver, but how to deliver it... with what help and coordination". He also called for the mobilisation of architects, engineers, and inspectors from unaffected regions. Particularly significant were his references to the material and emotional disruption caused by post-flood living conditions: "In wet buildings or apartments you can't even use electricity for safety reasons, so drying is becoming one of the most important actions".

Finally, Tusk reinforced the legitimacy of the reconstruction effort through visible outcomes and moral valuation. “Over 30,000 emergency grants have already been disbursed within a few days”, he noted, insisting that support must not be merely symbolic, but oriented toward “a better future” for those affected.

Analytically, this linguistic configuration can be read as combining affective legitimisation with emotional containment. Reconstruction was affectively legitimised insofar as it was elevated from a technical recovery measure to a morally charged national task, framed through the registers of solidarity, dignity, hope, and shared responsibility. The repeated insistence that rebuilding should lead to improvement gave the policy a future-oriented ethical horizon, presenting state intervention not simply as compensation for loss, but as a promise of renewal.

At the same time, the speeches also appear to perform a strategy of emotional containment. By emphasising continuity of institutional presence, rapid grants, coordinated expertise, and clear procedural guidance, Tusk’s messaging sought to absorb uncertainty and channel collective anxiety into manageable, future-oriented expectations. The reminder that “the services will stay with the people” is especially significant because it addressed as administrative continuity and the affective problem of abandonment.

Similarly, references to drying, temporary housing, and the practical steps of rebuilding translated diffuse post-disaster distress into a sequence of governable actions. In this sense, the framing worked not only by celebrating solidarity, but also by stabilising the emotional aftermath of displacement and damage through frames of control, visibility, and purposeful coordination. The insistence that aid must be rapid, flexible, and non-symbolic further converted material delivery into an affective sign of state attentiveness.

From the perspective of the BRC and SAC frameworks, this framing places Tusk close to a Knight–Feeling Subject configuration, while also preserving important elements of the Rational Calculator. On the one hand, the speeches consistently shape reconstruction in terms of public good, collective uplift, and ethical responsibility rather than electoral gain. Housing repair and infrastructural rebuilding become arenas in which the state is expected to demonstrate care, continuity, and responsiveness.

On the other hand, this moral-emotional framing remains inseparable from repeated emphasis on delivery mechanisms, measurable outcomes, procedural organisation, and scale: quick grants, billions allocated, professional mobilisation, and reconstruction timelines. The result is not a simple opposition between affect and rationality. It is rather a hybrid mode of political subjectivity in which emotional governance is articulated through technocratic performance.

In SAC terms, the framing may be read as an attempt to mediate recognition, security, and reassurance at the macro level by making the reconstruction process appear both morally attentive and administratively credible. Because this study does not include direct reception data, however, the analysis cannot establish whether these messages were actually experienced as reassuring or legitimate by affected residents.

What the analysis does suggest is that Tusk’s speeches sought to integrate emotional repair and material reconstruction into a single frame of state responsibility. This points to the broader analytical importance of reconstruction framing within affective

governance: rebuilding is presented not merely as technical restoration, but as a site where legitimacy, trust, and the emotional meaning of housing are renegotiated in public.

The transformation of collective emotion into a moral frame of enduring state responsibility for housing in disaster settings

Perhaps the most consistent and far-reaching emotional strategy in Prime Minister Donald Tusk's public messaging was the construction of a long-term moral frame in which the state appeared as the enduring guarantor of housing protection, security, and dignity. This framing did not merely offer reassurance during a moment of crisis. It sought to recast the relationship between citizens and the state as one grounded in emotional trust, historical continuity, and civic reciprocity.

Tusk repeatedly personalised the role of the state, presenting government not as an abstract bureaucracy, but as an emotionally accountable and morally invested actor. "The Polish state will also take on the organisational and financial burden," he declared, explicitly linking institutional commitment to ethical responsibility. This framing was intensified through direct personal accountability: "As Prime Minister, I will of course take responsibility for these decisions". Such statements did more than signal administrative control; they projected governance as a form of ethical presence.

Tusk further deepened this moral contract by invoking solidarity and national pride. "Polish history shows that in difficult moments, we know how to unite", he stated, embedding contemporary flood responses within a broader historical narrative of collective resilience. By framing cooperation as an expression of national character, and not passive obedience, he mobilised emotional cohesion in support of both state-led and community-based responses.

He also warned against the politicisation of the crisis, presenting unity as a moral obligation: "Let us unite in this work. We owe it to the flood victims, firefighters, police, soldiers". In this register, solidarity functioned not merely as a stylistic ornament, but as an affective norm of collective conduct. Housing was thereby reframed not simply as infrastructure, but as a moral and civic good embedded within a wider vision of public care.

This long-term framing also extended to the changing nature of state responsibility. "Unfortunately, it will more and more often be the case that anti-flood actions... will sometimes turn into rescue actions", Tusk warned, underscoring the growing importance of state responsibility in both preventive and reactive housing measures. Civic cooperation, mutual understanding, and affective messaging were elevated as democratic virtues: "Let us accept as obvious that everyone wants to help each other... this mutual communication and understanding is very, very necessary".

The frame of memory, presence, and trust culminated in a strong insistence on long-term institutional commitment: "People cannot be left alone after the dramatic event". Emotional signifiers such as "solidarity", "determination", and "mutual understanding" were repeatedly used to legitimate immediate emergency intervention and the longer arc of post-crisis recovery.

The framing further extended into the register of systemic change. “We already need to work on the first phase of the flood-affected area recovery programme”, Tusk declared, presenting housing as a site of political, moral, and affective responsibility rather than a static object of repair. His references to “European funds” suggested a longer temporal and institutional horizon, while symbolic gestures, such as offering “green school” placements for evacuated children, embedded the state’s housing role within a broader language of care, protection, and continuity.

Analytically, this linguistic pattern can be read as transforming collective emotion into a moral frame of enduring state responsibility. The speeches did not simply justify discrete policy measures. Rather, they assembled a broader affective grammar in which the state appeared as protector, guarantor, and ethical presence. In this sense, the framing performed a strong form of affective legitimisation: legitimacy was constructed not only through problem-solving capacity or formal authority, but also through emotional vocabularies of care, solidarity, duty, and historical continuity.

Housing, in particular, was elevated beyond its material or infrastructural dimension and presented as a morally charged domain through which the state demonstrated its continuing obligation to citizens. At the same time, this framing also appears to have performed an important function of emotional containment. By invoking historical trauma, notably the floods of 1997 and 2010, and juxtaposing it with images of improved institutional presence, Tusk’s speeches sought to absorb collective fear and redirect it toward hope, learning, continuity, and trust.

Emotional transparency, visible, for example, in the encouragement not to fear conversations with residents, and repeated appeals to mutual understanding framed emotional distress as a condition to be acknowledged and governed through solidarity, and not a threat. In this way, the framing sought to authorise state intervention and to stabilise the emotional field around that intervention by converting vulnerability into a renewed moral claim on state responsibility.

The significance of this pattern lies in the fact that emotional containment operated here through reassurance and the construction of a long-duration frame in which housing recovery became part of an enduring social contract.

From the perspective of the BRC and SAC frameworks, this messaging can be read as a particularly strong performance of the Feeling Subject, closely aligned with the Knight–Queen configuration. Tusk presents himself as acting in the public interest, exercising visible agency, and grounding legitimacy in emotional and ethical resonance rather than in technocratic neutrality alone. The speeches suggest a deliberate shift from technical governance toward emotional stewardship, in which the state is described as a caring and morally invested actor, and not merely the organiser of services.

In SAC terms, this may be interpreted as an attempt to mediate recognition, dignity, and security at the macro level by embedding housing policy within a larger moral frame of continuity, protection, and reciprocal obligation. At the same time, this reading depends on analytic reconstruction rather than direct evidence of reception. Because the study is based on the speeches of a single actor and does not include audience data, it cannot establish whether this performance was widely recognised as reassuring, credible, or legitimate.

Indeed, as the wider context suggests, such a strategy may not have been equally legible across all regions and publics. In a fragmented media environment marked by polarisation and mistrust (Kowalczyk, 2024), even a linguistically coherent performance of moral-emotional leadership may be refracted through partisan suspicion and unequal trust in central institutions. The strategy identified here should, therefore, not be treated as definitive evidence of affective success, but rather as an indication of how macro-political speech can seek to construct an enduring moral basis for housing-related state action under crisis conditions.

What this section most clearly suggests is that Tusk's messaging attempted to bind immediate flood response, longer-term recovery, and the symbolic meaning of housing into a single frame of state responsibility. In that respect, it offers a strong illustration of how emotional governance can operate through the legitimisation of particular interventions and the public framing of the state itself as an affective and moral actor.

Conclusion and discussion

This study contributes to the social policy approach to housing research by applying selected elements of Szarfenberg's Beyond the Rational Calculator (BRC) diagnostic tool to the analysis of emotional governance during the 2024 flood crisis in Poland. Read through this lens, the case offers a more differentiated account of how political legitimacy may be constructed at the intersection of emotional messaging and policy design. The analysis suggests that Prime Minister Tusk's public role should not be understood as a fixed or essentialised political subjectivity, but as a situationally performed configuration that shifts across the axes of Knight–Knaves, Queen–Pawns, and Rational Calculator–Feeling Subject.

In this case, emotional frames, such as empathy, solidarity, and reassurance, and policy precision, such as grants, timelines, and organisational commitments, appear not as opposites, but as mutually reinforcing elements of crisis governance. The study, therefore, lends provisional support to the argument that the Feeling Subject mode may humanise technically disruptive decisions, including evacuation, reconstruction, and compensation, without displacing rational planning.

At the same time, the analysis points to moments of possible affective dissonance, understood as instances in which Tusk's emotional framing appears to have clashed with broader patterns of mistrust, resistance, and political contestation. Read together with the wider secondary context, the case suggests that emotional appeals may not operate uniformly across politically differentiated settings. In regions marked by lower trust in Civic Platform and greater distance from centralised authority, the same linguistic strategies that seek to convey care and solidarity may instead be read as performative, technocratic, or manipulative.

This does not invalidate the relevance of affective governance. Rather, it points to its fragility and contingency. Emotional legitimacy, as this case suggests, is not simply projected from above. It is co-constituted through historically sedimented trust relations, political identities, and local interpretive frames. In this respect, the argument resonates with social-constructivist work on representative claim-making

(Saward, 2010), especially the suggestion that political claims are read back, accepted, modified, or resisted by audiences in context and not simply designed by some representatives.

The claims advanced in this article should nevertheless be interpreted with caution. Given its design as a single-case, single-actor, speech-based study, the analysis does not provide a definitive account of emotional governance or of the explanatory power of the BRC and SAC frameworks. Rather, it offers an exploratory proof of concept, showing that these frameworks can be meaningfully operationalised in the analysis of disaster-related housing policy messaging. Consequently, the findings are preliminary, interpretive, and hypothesis-generating. They also indicate the analytical promise of bringing affective categories into the study of housing policy under crisis conditions.

Furthermore, the study offers a cautious contribution to the Social-Affective Citizenship (SAC) framework, especially at the level of the relationship between provision and mediation. At Level 1, the Ecosystem of Provision, the case suggests that flood-related housing support was organised through a hybrid configuration combining a formal bureaucratic logic – state-led evacuation, emergency aid, reconstruction programming, and compensation – with community-based dynamics of attachment, local solidarity, informal resistance, and place-based memory. As a result, housing during the flood crisis appears not as a bounded sectoral domain, but as a layered field in which institutional action, local meaning structures, and emotionally charged expectations intersected.

At Level 2, the Mechanisms of Mediation, the analysis traces how macro-political speech sought to mediate recognition, dignity, and security. Recognition was projected through repeated acknowledgment of suffering, memory, and shared vulnerability. Dignity was addressed through the framing of evacuation and aid as respectful, voluntary where possible, and morally justified. Security was articulated through promises of institutional continuity, reconstruction, compensation, and long-term responsibility. Because the study does not include reception data, this discussion should be read as an interpretive reconstruction of how macro-level speech sought to structure citizen experience, rather than as evidence of how citizens actually accepted, negotiated, or resisted these claims.

Level 3, concerning the emotional experience of citizenship itself, lies beyond the direct empirical reach of this study. Nevertheless, the material allows for cautious theoretical inferences. The speeches suggest a mode of governance that relies heavily on affective repertoires – solidarity, sacrifice, reassurance, duty, and moral reciprocity – as foundations of legitimacy. They also suggest that emotional resonance was unlikely to be evenly distributed across contexts and may have varied according to political alignment, regional trust, and prior experiences of state responsiveness or abandonment. Therefore, the study does not demonstrate affective citizenship empirically. On the other hand, it indicates how macro-level speech acts may seek to pre-structure the emotional terms on which citizenship is lived, contested, or withdrawn.

Although this article does not trace Level 4 feedback empirically, the SAC framework helps articulate why these dynamics may matter beyond the immediate crisis. If evacuation, reconstruction, and compensation are publicly framed – and subsequently received – as recognising, dignifying, and reliable, they may contribute to

stabilising feedback loops of trust, compliance, and sustained expectations of state responsibility. If, however, emotional appeals are read as detached, performative, or politically selective, similar interventions may feed resentment, withdrawal, or polarised contestation. The present study cannot determine which of these pathways ultimately prevailed. Still, it can identify the conditions under which such divergent socio-emotional trajectories may begin to emerge.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the BRC and SAC frameworks are analytically productive for examining how macro-level political actors attempt to govern not only through rules, resources, and institutional instruments, but also through emotional vocabularies of care, solidarity, responsibility, and reassurance. One of the central implications of the case is, therefore, methodological as well as theoretical: emotional governance is not an incidental supplement to housing policy in times of crisis, but may form part of the very medium through which disruptive interventions become publicly intelligible, morally authorised, and politically sustainable. The article captures only one segment of a broader political-emotional process. Nevertheless, its value lies in opening this process to further empirical and theoretical investigation.

The text also contributes to housing studies by shifting analytical attention from exclusively institutional and material determinants toward the symbolic, emotional, and performative dimensions of housing policy, without dismissing the former. In this account, housing is not reducible to shelter, infrastructure, or compensation mechanisms. It emerges instead as a site of affective investment, political meaning, and moral expectation. This resonates with recent calls in critical housing studies, including Woodhall-Melnik and Weissman (2021), to take trauma, emotional displacement, and place attachment more seriously, particularly in disaster settings where the loss or disruption of home exceeds purely material damage. In this sense, the article suggests that emotional legitimacy may be central, rather than peripheral, to how housing-related interventions are justified and contested.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the usefulness of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) for examining affective governance in public messaging. While QCA is often associated with thematic categorisation and meaning reconstruction. Here, it proved useful for identifying patterns of affective legitimisation, emotional containment, and possible affective dissonance in elite political speech.

The study's limitations define the most important avenues for further research. Future studies should extend the analysis beyond a single macro-political actor and include additional institutional levels, especially, administrators, local officials, frontline workers, and residents themselves. They should also incorporate bottom-up materials, such as interviews, ethnographic accounts, local media, social media, or participatory observation, to examine how emotional governance is actually received, negotiated, or resisted. Comparative research across welfare regimes, disaster types, and political cultures could clarify whether emotional containment and affective legitimisation operate as recurring techniques of crisis governance or whether their form and effectiveness remain strongly context-dependent.

The ethical dimension of emotional governance also deserves closer attention, since strategies that stabilise trust in one context may be experienced as manipulation in another, especially, where institutional delivery is uneven or historical accountability

is weak. Therefore, future research should connect macro-level analysis of speech and policy messaging with the lived, contested, and temporally unfolding dynamics through which emotional governance reshapes citizenship. This would require fuller operationalisation of SAC components not examined here, especially the ECPA framework at the micro level and the ELP model concerning longer-term shifts in collective emotional climates.

Understood in this way, the present article does not close the theoretical question. It opens it by showing that the emotional life of housing policy in disaster conditions is analytically tractable, theoretically significant, and worthy of fuller investigation.

References

- Bate, B. (2020). Rental security and the property manager in a tenant's search for a private rental property. *Housing Studies*, 35(4), 589–611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2019.1621271>
- Boelhouwer, P.J. & Hoekstra, J.S.C.M. (2012). Housing and the state in Western Europe. In S.J. Smith (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (363–373). Elsevier. DOI:10.1016/B978-0-08-047163-1.00067-9
- Boryń, A. (2024). Bilans ofiar powodzi. Premier przekazał nowe szczegóły. *Polsat News*. <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2024-10-08/bilans-ofiar-powodzi-premier-przekazal-nowe-szczegoly/>
- Bujalski, S. (2024). Naukowcy o powodzi w Polsce: zmiana klimatu wpłynęła na katastrofę. *Nauka o Klimacie*. <https://naukaoklimacie.pl/aktualnosci/naukowcy-o-powodzi-w-polsce-zmiana-klimatu-wplynela-na-katastrofe>
- CBOS Flash. (2024). *Wielka powódź – jej zasięg oraz oceny działań ratunkowych* (No. 40). Warszawa. https://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/flash/pliki/2024/fl_040_2024.pdf
- Comer, J. (2024). 'For business it boils down to one thing': Affective legitimation in LGBTQ diversity discourse. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 21(6), 684–702. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2023.2255306>
- Donald Tusk: Powódź 2024. (2024). *Oficjalny kanał YouTube Donalda Tuska* [Video Playlist]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr2-1kDd2YEJ146bqifcJc_e0ppUr-1q3
- Entman, R.M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Ewenson, L. & Sanderson, D. (2025). The Right to Adequate Housing in Australia: Community-Based Disaster Management and Social Work Advocacy. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026251340228>
- Fang, C. & van Liempt, I. (2021). 'We prefer our Dutch': International students' housing experiences in the Netherlands. *Housing Studies*, 36(6), 822–842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2020.1720618>
- Filipek, M. (2024). Jak Polacy oceniają działania rządu ws. powodzi? Sondaż Opinia24 dla RMF FM. *RMF 24*. <https://www.rmfm24.pl/raporty/raport-powodz-w-polsce-2024/fakty/news-jak-polacy-oceniaja-dzialania-rzadu-ws-powodzi-sondaz-opinia,nId,7877286>
- Frysztacki, K. (2009). *Socjologia problemów społecznych*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Glennerster, H. (2009). *Understanding the Finance of Welfare*. Policy Press.

- Górska, P. (2019). *Polaryzacja polityczna w Polsce. Jak bardzo jesteśmy podzieleni?* Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami. <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/410/2021/02/Polaryzacja-polityczna-2.pdf>
- Howarth, C. (2011). Representations, identity, and resistance in communication. In D. Hook, B. Franks, & M.W. Bauer (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Communication*. (153–168). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230297616_8
- Jacobs, K. & Williams, S. (2011). What to do now? Tensions and dilemmas in responding to natural disasters: A study of three Australian State Housing Authorities. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 11(2), 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2011.573206>
- Kotras, M., Kubala, K., & Sześciło, D. (2025). *Kiedy pękają tamy. O państwie, wspólnocie i zarządzaniu kryzysem*. Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego.
- Kowalczyk, M. (2024). Republika i w Polsce24 upolityczniają powódź. „Służby Tuska nie radzą sobie z opadami”. *Press.pl*. https://www.press.pl/tresc/83606,republika-i-wpolsce24-upolityczniają-powodz_-_sluzby-tuska-nie-radza-sobie-z-opadami-deszczu_
- Kraszewski, C. (2024). Wyobcowanie proletariatu a ideologia klas średnich w III RP. *Fakty i Analizy*. <https://cypriankraszewski.substack.com/p/wyobcowanie-proletariatu-a-ideologia>
- Le Grand, J. (1982). *The Strategy of Equality: Redistribution and the Social Services*. Allen and Unwin.
- Maor, M. (2025). How can governments respond to policy bubbles driven by dysfunctional emotions? *Policy and Society*, puaf008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puaf008>
- Marcus, G.E., Neuman, W.R., & MacKuen, M. (2000). *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. University of Chicago Press.
- Pajdała-Kusińska, I. (2024). Zakończenie Operacji „Powódź 2024”. *Policja.pl*. <https://policja.pl/pol/aktualnosci/251188,Zakonczenie-Operacji-Powodz-2024.html>
- Panufnik, E. (2024). Stan kłęski żywiołowej w Polsce 2024 ponownie rozszerzony. *INFOR.pl*. <https://www.infor.pl/prawo/nawosci-prawne/6700152,stan-kleski-zywiolowej-w-polsce-2024-ponownie-rozszerzony-rozporzadze.html>
- Powódź 2024. (2024). *Hydrobim*. <https://hydrobim.pl/powodz-2024/>
- Rahman, M.M., Tanni, K.N., Shobuj, I.A., Hossain, M.T., Alam, E., Al Hattaw, K.S., & Islam, M.K. (2025). Multidimensional vulnerability assessment for floods: Evidence from flood-prone areas of Bangladesh. *Journal of Flood Risk Management*, 18(3), e70089. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfr3.70089>
- Savari, M., Jafari, A., & Sheheytavi, A. (2025). Determining factors affecting flood risk perception among local communities in Iran. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 4076. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-88673-2>
- Saward, M. (2010). *The Representative Claim*. Oxford University Press.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. Sage.
- Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*. (170–183). SAGE.
- Schwartz, H. (2012). Welfare states and housing. In S.J. Smith (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (267–272). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-047163-1.00694-9>
- Spicker, P. (2012). Social policy approaches. In S.J. Smith (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (478–483). Elsevier.

- Stake, R. (2003). Case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd ed., pp. 134–164). Sage.
- Szarfenberg, R. (2026). *Social-Affective Citizenship*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Torgersen, U. (1987). Housing: The wobbly pillar under the welfare state. *Scandinavian Housing and Planning Research*, 4(sup1), 116–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02815737.1987.10801428>
- van Hulst, M., & Yanow, D. (2016). From policy “frames” to “framing”: Theorizing a more dynamic, political approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 46(1), 92–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074014533142>
- Walker, G. & Burningham, K. (2011). Flood risk, vulnerability and environmental justice: Evidence and evaluation of inequality in a UK context. *Critical Social Policy*, 31(2), 216–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018310396149>
- Williams, S. & Jacobs, K. (2011). Introduction: Disasters, housing, actuarialism and the securitisation of risk. *Housing Studies*, 26(2), 185–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2011.557587>
- Williams, S., Jacobs, K., Newton, P., & Blakely, E.J. (2009). *Natural disaster preparation and response: A guide for state housing authorities*. University of Tasmania. https://www.ahuri.edu.au/sites/default/files/migration/documents/AHURI_Positioning_Paper_No113_Natural-disaster-preparation-and-response-a-guide-for-state-housing-authorities.pdf
- Woodhall-Melnik, J. & Weissman, E.P. (2021). Living with disaster: Exploring complex decisions to stay in or leave flood prone areas. *Housing Studies*, 38(5), 747–769. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2021.1900794>
- Zubrzycka-Czarnecka, A. (2025). Constructing empathy in housing discourse. *Critical Housing Analysis*, 12(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.13060/23362839.2025.12.1.584>