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# Crisis frames in the public discourse of the Municipality of Budapest after the COVID-19 pandemic

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This paper aims to investigate the Municipality of Budapest as a discursive actor; as an agenda-setter, politics-interpreter, and policy problem-definer. The focus of the research is to explore how the city government has used the term crisis to frame issues, political positions, and policy proposals, and to influence the thematic directions in the public discourse after the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the analysis collects the policy-relevant collocations of the crisis frame used by the municipal politicians of Budapest, or rather lists the terms in which the crisis frame activated. In addition, the study searches the main characteristics of the most and least frequently used collocations with regard to their tone, context and the values attached to them. Besides all that, the text also discusses the role of the crisis frame in the definition of (certain) public policy problems and the political strategies that have been associated with the use of the term.

## KEYWORDS

crisis frames, Municipality of Budapest, urban politics, problem definition, agenda setting, local governance, policy discourse

## Introduction

Budapest, the capital of Hungary, is virtually the only municipality in the country that has truly significant international visibility. But this means more than just the fact that the city's panorama and emblematic buildings appear in the global mediaspace on a regular basis or that Budapest is by far the country's most popular destination for tourists from abroad. Indeed, Budapest is the sole Hungarian municipality that is consistently the subject of research on urbanism, local governance, public policy formation and political struggles published in international journals (see cf. [Kerényi, 2011](#); [Olt and Lepeltier-Kutasi, 2018](#); [Udvarhelyi, 2019](#); [Oross et al., 2021](#); [Oross and Kiss, 2023](#)). Although the capital city stands out from other Hungarian settlements in terms of its population, GDP, administrative position and political leverage, these factors alone do not induce or explain the academic attention it attracts, especially in recent years. A major political turnaround contributed to this. In 2019, István Tarlós, the governing party Fidesz candidate for Budapest, was defeated in the municipal elections, losing the office he had held since 2010, and Gergely Karácsony, co-chair of the Dialog for Hungary – Green Party, won the mayoral seat (and was re-elected in 2024). As a consequence, Budapest (along with Bratislava, Zagreb, Istanbul, and until 2023 Prague and Warsaw) became one of the opposition-led cities that the relevant literature examines primarily as the spatial and institutional base of resistance to the political ambitions and pursuits of central governments. Accordingly, in a number of analyses, the Hungarian capital is qualified as an interesting, influential, typical, even paradigmatic case of urban politics, city democracy, and conflictual dynamics between “illiberal” central governments and “liberal” local governments (see cf. [Begadze, 2022](#); [Drapalova, 2023](#); [Aksztejn et al., 2024](#); [Panzano et al.,](#)

2024). However, much less is said about the communicative actions of the city government. Studies have mostly been limited to mentioning and discussing the phenomena of city diplomacy and city branding at the level of generalities (see cf. Buzogány and Spöri, 2024) and examining the mayor's posts in the social media (Niklewicz, 2021; Musil and Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2023).

This highly specific choice of topic is based on three deeper considerations. First: in the literature on local government, the problem of crisis is almost exclusively presented as an objective reality, a set of extreme external circumstances that need to be addressed. An analytical approach that focuses on crisis as an interpretative framework (see Vincze and Balaban, 2024) may therefore bring a new dimension to the field of LG research. Second: a recurring, important, and integral part of the rhetoric of Fidesz, which has been in power in Hungary since 2010, is the characterization of certain political situations as 'crises' (c.f. Antal, 2024a). The reference to the migration crisis, the crisis of Western culture and values, the economic crisis and the war crisis, i.e., the frequent use of the crisis frame, is central to the narratives of the governing party. It may therefore be interesting to examine whether an opposition-led local government, which defines itself ideologically as the counterpole of the ruling party and politically as its counterpart, is able to come up with alternative crisis frames that are sharply differentiated from these, whether it is able to develop a counter-interpretation and thereby also demonstrate its otherness, its difference and its resistance. The third consideration is that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the status of the term crisis may have changed. Consequently, it may be worth looking at which situations, issues and events in the post-Covid period could be relatively consensually and legitimately (or at least without provoking serious rejection and outrage) described as crisis in the municipal political arena.

## Background

This study aligns with Schneider and Jordan (2016 p. 20) who argue that crises are "central research topics" in political science.

The problem of decision-making in the context of "state of exception," in pressing, ambiguous, urgent situations, defined as crisis, i.e., situations of stress, uncertainty, high risk and complexity, has long received much attention in international political science (Rossiter, 1948; Allison, 1969; Hermann, 1979; Herek et al., 1987; Stone, 2011). Research on crisis is therefore closely linked to issues of political leadership (Ansell et al., 2014; Boin et al., 2017), governance (Boin et al., 2008; Blyth, 2013; White, 2019) and public policy-making (Kingdon, 1984; Birkland, 1997; Baumgartner and Jones, 2009; Nohrstedt and Weible, 2010). This includes the study of governmental responses to crisis situations, the rhetoric of crisis, and the public communication in crisis (Edelman, 1977; Cobb and Elder, 1983; Malhotra and Kuo, 2008; Reeves, 2011). Works analyzing international crises form a distinctive subset of the literature (Gelpi and Griesdorf, 2001; Powell, 2002; Widmaier et al., 2007).

It is also noteworthy that, since the 1970s, the term crisis has been used quite frequently by political scientists to describe fundamental structural challenges and threatened collapses of political systems and/or regimes, often linked and overlapped in content with the phenomenon of political instability and associated with political violence (see Binder and La Palombara, 1971; Almond et al., 1973;

Linz, 1978; Zimmermann, 1979; Sanders, 1981). Although the inquiry of this issue has lost some of its appeal in the optimistic atmosphere of the 1990s, the study of "democracy in crisis" is experiencing a renaissance in the 21st century (see f.e. Gaon, 2009). The renowned and influential publisher Routledge even has a bookseries entitled Routledge Studies in Democratic Crises.

Crisis-research also plays a crucial role in Hungarian political science. The most extensive literature is on the interconnection/intertwining of crisis and political leadership (Körösenyi et al., 2016; Körösenyi, 2017). Related to this, the study of the governance that continuously declared new emergencies and maintained the "state of exception" – which has been a recurrent feature of Hungarian politics for a long time, and which became particularly pronounced after 2010 – has developed into a research field in its own right (Antal, 2021; Antal, 2023a; Antal, 2024a; Antal, 2024b). Also, the dramatic encounter of self-professed permanent crisis management governance with the COVID-19 pandemic and its contradictory relationship with the taking of measures to deal with ecological disaster has triggered many academic publications (Hajnal and Kovács, 2020; Hajnal et al., 2021; Mészáros, 2020; Bene and Zs, 2021; Antal, 2021, 2023b). The academic perception of the importance of the issue is well illustrated by such motto-like formulations as that Hungarian politics has entered an Era of permanent State of Exceptions, or that the domestic situation is summed up as Crisis as Usual. A different approach from the previous ones has been the analysis of changes in the degree of political control exercised by the government in the management of fiscal/budgetary crisis (Hajnal and Csengődi, 2014).

The literature on Hungarian municipalities, local government system and local governance contains a number of precise, objective observations and in-depth analyses (Soós, 2015; Dobos, 2016, 2021a,b, 2022; Dobos and Várnagy, 2017; Pálné Kovács, 2017; Pálné Kovács, 2017a; Kovarek and Littvay, 2022; Hajnal and Rosta, 2019; Hajnal and Kucsera, 2023). On the other hand, it actually tells a sad metanarrative of the loss of hopes and dreams of effective self-governance, decentralization, regionalization and Europeanisation, the failure of reforms aimed at developing the local government system, the under-utilization of the middle level and the hollowing out of the local governance as a whole (Hajnal, 2003; Pálné Kovács et al., 2016; Pálné Kovács, 2017b, 2020; Pálné Kovács, 2021; Kákai and Pálné, 2021; Kákai and Pálné, 2023). In addition, in recent years, the issue of democratic backsliding/deficit (or some aspect of it) has been increasingly emphasized in the academic study of Hungarian LGs. For example, the problematic of single-party dominance established (also) in subnational politics (Jakli and Stenberg, 2021; O'Dwyer and Stenberg, 2022); the shaping of the workfare system into a specific form of poverty governance that reinforces the dependence of the rural population on the governing party (Szombati, 2021); the use of austerity measures as a partisan political weapon by the incumbent against selectively targeted opposition-led LGs (Kovarek and Dobos, 2023); the obvious and increasing impact of political alignment on the grant allocation to municipalities (Vasvári and Longauer, 2024) and the different types of political favoritism in relation to local governments (Reszkető et al., 2022). In this context, it is not surprising that the municipal elections of October 2019 have received considerable analytical attention, with the opposition scoring significant successes (f.e. Kovarek and Littvay, 2022). However, the analyses also include rather specific topics such as scapegoat-based policy making by mayors of the far-right Jobbik party (Kovarek et al.,

2017) or the role and functioning of municipally owned corporations (Hajnal and Kucsera, 2023).

The literature overlaps between local government and crises only at a few points, most notably in the context of disaster management in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dobos, 2020; Finta et al., 2020; Fekete et al., 2021; Hoeman, 2021). A relatively recent, rather tentative trend has been to explore the phenomenon of resilience to crises (Pálné Kovács, 2023).

The crisis theme appears only occasionally, and even then rather indirectly and metaphorically, in writings focusing specifically on urban politics and local governance in the capital of Hungary. Environmental pollution and climate change (Kerényi, 2011; Oross et al., 2021), residential struggles in the context of urban rehabilitation and housing problems (Olt and Lepeltier-Kutasi, 2018; Udvarhelyi, 2019) are mostly discussed as phenomena that induce innovative and collaborative public policy action, urban political and civic activism – but not as crises by definition.

## Research design, theory, data, and methodology

This paper focuses on the public discursive actions of the Municipality of Budapest, in particular on the use of the term crisis as a frame. The inquiry is based on the processing of qualitative, textual data collected between the second half of 2021 and the beginning of 2025, after the end of the intense period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It seemed a well-founded decision, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view, to examine the public discourse of the Municipality of Budapest, which is the most prominent actor in the Hungarian local government system in several aspects (importance, size, leverage, political agenda-setting capacity). However, the case selection was also justified by the fact that the Hungarian capital is not only an interesting but also an *influential case* (see Seawright and Gerring, 2008) for the more general phenomena of responsive/resilient/resisting urban politics and conflictual dynamics between opposition-led ‘liberal’ cities and recentralizing ‘illiberal’ central governments.<sup>1</sup> It was the situation that provided the broader political context for the analysis, the ‘bigger picture’ against which the specific detailed findings take on added value, weight and relevance.

It was perhaps no exaggeration to say that it might offer novel insights departing from the mainstream literature on crisis. As we have seen above, the majority of research treats the crisis as a phenomenon, a situation, an external factor, which is objectively given. Of course, the crisis perceived and analyzed as a reality can also be the result of human activity (negligence, error, bad decisions, antagonistic conflict of interest, deliberate and conscious crisis generation, sabotage). But then, through a process of external objectification, it becomes a compelling environmental factor for subsequent human activity. Some of the works on the subject draw attention to the perceptuality of the crisis phenomenon, the

importance of classification, categorization and interpretation, but the focus of the analyses is still on the crisis as a situation/challenge and its management.

The concept of crisis has been considered and analyzed from semantic, conceptual, philosophical and methodological perspectives by several scholars (Robinson, 1968; Svensson, 1986; Koselleck and Richter, 2006; McConnell, 2020). The issue of competing frames applied to actual crisis situations has also been addressed in academic work (Boin et al., 2009; ‘t Hart and Tindall, 2009). Nevertheless, analyses dealing specifically with the *use of the term crisis* as a political and policy frame are scattered and sporadic in the literature. The most important of these works, which played a decisive role in shaping the design of this research (as a reference point, as a model and as an inspiration), is the analysis by Vincze and Balaban (2024).

A further fundamental methodological consideration was that the analysis should be separate and distinct from the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are four reasons for this. First, the period of the pandemic is not so much relevant for the studies in terms of frames as in terms of the actual crisis management measures. Second, as mentioned earlier in the presentation of the background to the research, there is already a literature of a meaningful scope, quantity and quality on the epidemic management activities of Hungarian municipalities. Third, the most important forum for public discourse in the Municipality of Budapest, the General Assembly, was out of session for a long time during the pandemic. And fourth, examining the discourse of the post-Covid period provides an opportunity to assess whether the global shock has changed the (local) logic, rules and referents of crisis-classification.

In this way, the study focused its data collection and analysis on the period between the resumption of the General Assembly’s regular sessions in September 2021 and the end of the research in January 2025.

In addition, the fact that although local elections were held in Hungary in the summer of 2024, the Mayor of Budapest, Gergely Karácsony, was re-elected, is in favor of this decision. Actually, it can be stated that despite the significant rearrangement of the party balance in the General Assembly (and the spectacular advance of the political newborn and newcomer Tisza Party), there was no change in the leadership, ideological and public policy direction of the city government. Thus, there would have been far fewer arguments in favor of using an alternative timing-logic aligning with the electoral cycle (focusing on the period between 2019 and 2024).

The theoretical background of the study was framing theory (Entman, 1993; Reese, 2001, 2007) and discourse theory (Fischer, 2003; Chilton, 2004), while the methodological framework was a combination of thematic/rhetorical framing analysis (cf. Niklewicz, 2021; Vincze and Balaban, 2024) and political/policy discourse analysis with an interpretative structuralist approach (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 23–25). They grounded the conceptualization of the research and the procedures used in the analysis.

According to definitions that are considered canonical in the framing theory literature frames ‘are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world’ (Reese, 2001: 11), and to frame is ‘to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text’ (Entman, 1993: 52). In this research, following a somewhat more operationalized definition, the concept of frame can be understood as *a term/collocation used as a*

<sup>1</sup> The present research thus shares the methodological consideration of Aksztejn et al.’s (2024) study that, following the case selection classification, Budapest is not so much a typical or paradigmatic case, but rather an influential case (for the phenomena mentioned above).

*discursive resource for construct, articulate and/or formulate a social phenomenon to a certain community* (cf. Vincze and Balaban, 2024), *‘in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’* (Entman, 1993: 52).

Discourse, in the context of the present work, is understood as *an interactive (linguistic and meta-linguistic) sign-use process that assumes a shared knowledge base*. Public discourse, however, is also characterized, beyond what has been said so far, by *being widely and unrestrictedly accessible to members of a given society, synchronously and/or diachronically* (cf. Fischer, 2003). Closer to the object of analysis, political discourse is interpreted as *an intersubjective process of meaning-making that constructs the intertwining of the public good and power*, and policy discourse as *‘the communicative interactions among political actors that translate problems into policy issues’* (Fischer, 2003:30).

However, the two categories denote closely related phenomena. Frames function embedded in discourses, and discourses often revolve around certain ‘macroframes’.

The application of thematic/rhetorical framing analysis in this research meant that frames were presented as static linguistic forms related to specific issues, and as interpretive schemas capable of producing a social effect. In other words, the research did not focus on framing as schema formation itself, as a dynamic, multi-stage process.<sup>2</sup>

The interpretive structuralist approach to political/policy discourse analysis meant that the textual data was examined from a constructivist perspective (focusing on meaning-making) and in reflection to the ‘bigger picture’, the broader political-institutional context and the discourse that supports it (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 23). The aim was not to micro-analyze individual texts (i.e., social linguistic analysis), nor, in the case of an opposition-led municipality, to reveal the discursive manipulations of actors communicating from a position of power (i.e., to carry out critical discourse analysis). The collected expressions, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and longer passages, selected and categorized according to the criteria of the study, were thus analyzed as markers and constituents of a given political context.

Accordingly, a keyword search for the term ‘crisis’ was carried out on the [budapest.hu](https://budapest.hu) website<sup>3</sup>, the official communication platform of the Municipality of Budapest, on four consecutive occasions: 1 September 2024, 1 October 2024, 1 November 2024, and 1 February 2025. The starting point of the study was the result of the first search, which later became the first set of textual data of the research. The second search was used as a supplement to this, and its results were used to correct the text database. The third and fourth searches were essentially control searches. Their purpose was to check whether there had been a substantial shift in the content of the website using the crisis frame, either in terms of quantity or quality.

A keyword search on the digitally archived minutes of 36 General Assembly meetings held between 1 September 2021 and 29 January

2025 was also carried out. This resulted in the second major set of the research text database.

This textual source base was subsequently supplemented by the inclusion of proposals, memoranda, professional programs and policy materials from the period under study, as well as content published on other online platforms with a capital city connection.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with recognized experts who have a particular insight into the public policy role of the Municipality of Budapest through their research or work.

The four questions (or question-clusters) this research sought to answer were:

RQ1: What are the policy-relevant collocations of the crisis frame in the public discourse of the Municipality of Budapest? In what terms has the crisis frame been activated? What are the most frequent terms and were they used more often by (local) incumbent actors or (local) opposition actors?<sup>5</sup>

RQ2: What are the main characteristics of the most frequently used collocations (as typical cases) and the least frequently used collocations (as extreme/deviant cases) in terms of their tone, context and the values attached to them? Were there any macroframes that rose above the others in terms of importance, or that brought several other crisis frames under their own umbrella of meaning, merged them or even incorporated them?

RQ3: What is the role of the crisis frame in problem definition? What are the main findings of a comparison of the most frequently used collocations? Were functional crisis frames or abstract-symbolic crisis frames predominant in the public discourse of city government?

RQ4: What political and public policy strategies are associated with the use of the crisis frame? What political and public policy strategies can be derived from the particular ways in which the crisis frame is used?

## Analysis

The analysis was conducted manually, without the use of software. While this procedure was time-consuming and could potentially reduce the quantitative scope of the study and weaken its reliability, it also increased its validity, nuance, and capacity for self-correction. Moreover, it clearly met both the characteristics of the qualitative data under scrutiny (the textual source base) and the standards of an interpretative structuralist approach (see f.e. O’Connor, 2000; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). The methodology used in this study can therefore be considered consistent with the existing literature. The manual analysis allowed the elimination of formal/redundant, non-substantive multiple mentions (e.g., the

<sup>2</sup> That is, the four-step model (input, frame building, the frame’s appearance, and frame setting) described by Niklewicz (2021) did not appear in the research.

<sup>3</sup> Which is also linked to certain partner websites as a kind of hub and makes certain content available from them.

<sup>4</sup> Primarily: <https://enbudapestem.hu/>.

<sup>5</sup> This research question (or set of questions) built heavily on the research questions used in the Vincze and Balaban study, cited several times already (cf. Vincze and Balaban, 2024).



repeated appearance of the same assembly resolution text in the minutes), while terms that were grouped together in common syntactic structures (e.g., economic, cost-of-living *and* energy crisis) were taken into account.

To answer the first research question (or perhaps rather question-cluster), the textual data source of the budapest.hu website and the minutes of 36 General Assembly sessions filtered by keyword searches were used. However, the corpus of website texts required further selection for relevance. After excluding the content that was not of political context at all (but private, entertainment, educational), content that was no longer topical (historical or archival), and content where no collocations meaningful in a policy context were found, 159 relevant mentions remained for analysis. On 1 February 2024, this was extended to 167 relevant mentions (i.e., no significant changes in the course of the research). After reviewing the minutes, it was found that in 9 cases the crisis frame was not mentioned at all, and in one case only one of its thematic equivalents (climate *emergency*) appeared. Thus, in the end, it was possible to carry out a meaningful analysis of the proceedings of 26 General Assemblies with 226 relevant mentions.

The policy-relevant collocations that appear in both public discourse forums of the Municipality of Budapest are *housing crisis*, *energy crisis*, *economic crisis*, *COVID-crisis*, *refugee crisis*, and *cost-of-living crisis*. This set partly reflects the broader socio-political context, major processes and events in the 2010s and 2020s in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the political agenda at national level (*Covid crisis*, *refugee crisis*, *energy crisis*), and it is partly embedded in longer-term political-cultural specificities, attitudes and mentalities (*cost-of-living crisis*). However, the emergence of the *housing* issue and its framing as a *crisis* has already taken place largely independently of these contextual factors. It therefore shows specific, local-level problem perception and/or autonomous agenda-setting ability.

There is also a considerable overlap between the most commonly used terms in the corpus of the website and the minutes. *Housing crisis* and *energy crisis* are certainly two of the most salient, but the position of the third is uncertain. On this point, the discourse of the website and the discourse of the General Assembly are quite different. In the case of the former, the third most frequently used term is *climate crisis*, while in the case of the latter, this term is rarely used in this form (only two mentions), rather its thematic equivalent (*climate emergency*) appears somewhat more regularly.

This is probably related to the fact that budapest.hu gives a much broader and more diverse scope of actors a voice than the Assemblies. The reports, conversations, interviews and reviews published here draw from a wider range of the population, with activists, members of NGOs, artists, academics and ordinary citizens of the capital regularly speaking alongside local politicians and officials. *Climate crisis* seems to be their preferred frame, while professional institutional actors either avoid the topic or use the term *climate emergency*. The latter is no coincidence: the General Assembly led by Gergely Karácsony declared its recognition of the *climate emergency* and its intention to act against it at its inaugural session in autumn 2019. The term has therefore taken root in this form and has become – for the current leadership of the municipality – emblematic.

At the same time, the crisis frame is also activated in atypical terms that may seem strange at first sight, such as the *crisis of statue-overproduction*. This shows that its use is not subject to overly strict

conventions or prescriptive standards, and leaves room for freedom of interpretation and innovative formulations.

It is clear from the minutes of the General Assembly that the (local) *incumbent actors used the crisis frame significantly more* (three times as often) than the opposition actors. The conclusion is that the term was not a discursive tool of criticism to the capital's leadership, nor was it linked to municipal mechanisms of control and accountability. In contrast, it has emerged as more of a source of criticism and accountability for the actions of the national government by incumbent politicians in the Municipality of Budapest (in opposition at the national level) – highlighting that the crisis in question is either unmanageable or exacerbated by the government, or perhaps self-inflicted.

The answers to the first research question (RQ1) are presented in Tables 1, 2 in a comprehensive and detailed way.

Moving on to the second research question (RQ2), to answer this one, a decision had to be made on the range and number of collocations that were most and least frequently used. After careful consideration, it seemed theoretically and methodologically fruitful to take the three most used terms on the website and the three least used terms in the minutes of the Assemblies. The first two of the website's most prominent collocations are identical to those of the Assemblies, and the third is an emblematic frame for the entire metropolitan administration. The comparison with the terms that are not often mentioned is likely to reveal the rhetorical resources that determine the success of the crisis frames (beyond the importance and weight of the signified policy issue).

The tone of the most prominent collocations (*housing crisis*, *energy crisis*, *climate crisis*) is equally dramatic, while one of the less frequent terms, *polycrisis*, is neutral, professional and abstract, and the other, *statue-overproduction crisis*, is subtly light, playful and ironic. It seems plausible that the successful functioning of the crisis frame involves the alarming, mobilizing emotional power of the word combination. Collocations that neutralize or extinguish the inherent emotional tension of the crisis term, or explicitly reverse its sinister affective charge, act as a private suffix or have an oxymoronic effect at the level of connotations.

TABLE 1 The policy-relevant collocations of the crisis frame on budapest.hu.

Collocations	Prevalence	Frequency ranking
Housing crisis	42	1
Energy crisis	33	2
Climate crisis	24	3
Economic crisis	19	4
Covid-crisis	16	5
Refugee crisis	5	6
Overhead cost crisis	4	7
Ecological crisis	4	7
The crisis of faith in democracy	4	7
Cost-of-living crisis	3	8
'triple crisis'	3	8
Other (in sum)	10	9
In conclusion	167	1–9

TABLE 2 The policy-relevant collocations of the crisis frame in minutes of General Assembly meetings.

Date of the General Assembly meeting	Prevalence	Collocations	Most frequent	Incumbent/Opposition (+ Non-committed)
1 September 2021	12	Cost-of-living crisis, housing crisis, Covid-crisis, “the Crisis” (i.e., COVID-19), economic crisis	Covid-crisis/“the Crisis”	11/1
29 September 2021	0 (3)	(climate emergency, used synonymously)	(climate emergency, used synonymously)	(1/2)
27 October 2021	0	-	-	-
24 November 2021	11	“the Crisis,” refugee crisis,	“the Crisis” (i.e., COVID-19)	7/4
15 December 2021	3	“the Crisis,” crisis budget	“the Crisis” (i.e., COVID-19)	3/0
26 January 2022	2	Economic crisis, social crisis	Economic crisis/social crisis	2/0
23 February 2022	0	-	-	-
13 April 2022	9	Refugee crisis, economic crisis, statue-overproduction crisis,	Refugee crisis	9/0
27 April 2022	5	Housing crisis, world economic crisis, vast global crisis	Housing crisis	4/1
25 May 2022	non-quorate, 0	-	-	-
8 June 2022	0	-	-	-
29 June 2022	16	Cost-of-living crisis, housing crisis, social crisis, energy crisis	Housing crisis	14/2
31 August 2022	23	Cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, economic crisis, energy & economics crisis, health crisis	Energy crisis (energy & economics crisis)	16/7
28 September 2022	10	Energy crisis, economic crisis, energy & economics crisis	Energy crisis (energy & economics crisis)	7/3
26 October 2022	13	Cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, economic crisis, energy & economics crisis, “the Crisis”	Energy crisis (energy & economics crisis)	12/1
30 November 2022	1	Energy crisis	Energy crisis	1/0
14 December 2022	9	Energy crisis	Energy crisis	6/3
25 January 2023	3	Housing crisis	Housing crisis	1/2
22 February 2023	12	Cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, economic crisis	Energy crisis/economic crisis	11/1
29 March 2023	0	-	-	-
26 April 2023	0	-	-	-
24 May 2023	4	Energy & economics crisis	Energy & economics crisis	
28 June 2023	0	-	--	-
27 September 2023	2	Energy crisis	Energy crisis	2/0
25 October 2023	2	Economic crisis		2/0
29 November 2023	0	-	-	-
13 December 2023	2	Housing crisis	Housing crisis	2/0
31 January 2024	0	-	-	-
28 February 2024	1	Domestic crisis situation (of abused persons)	Domestic crisis situation (of abused persons)	1/0
27 March 2024	2	Crisis situation (financial, debt-related), energy crisis	Crisis situation (financial, debt-related), energy crisis	1/1
24 April 2024	11	War crisis, Covid-crisis, “the Crisis,” energy crisis	Energy crisis	11/0
4 October 2024	7	Social crisis, housing crisis,	Housing crisis	6/0 (+ 1)

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Date of the General Assembly meeting	Prevalence	Collocations	Most frequent	Incumbent/Opposition (+ Non-committed)
30 October 2024	41	Cost-of-living crisis, energy crisis, economic crisis, housing crisis, polycrisis	Housing crisis	14/13 (+ 14)
27 November 2024	7	Housing crisis, health crisis, energy crisis	Housing crisis, health crisis	1/3 (+ 3)
18 December 2024	10	Housing crisis, energy crisis, cost-of-living crisis, economic crisis, triple crisis	Housing crisis	6/3 (+ 1)
29 January 2025	8	Housing crisis, climate crisis	Housing crisis	6/2
In conclusion	226	Least frequent, discrete, unique: statue-overproduction crisis, domestic crisis situation (of abused persons), polycrisis	Housing crisis (9), energy & economics crisis (9), Covid-crisis/"the Crisis" (3)	156/51 (19)

Looking at the context outlined by the speakers, we see a colorful and diverse range of problems around the most salient terms.<sup>6</sup> In the case of *energy crisis*, these are *war, economy, dependency, gas, electricity, cost, comfort*. In relation to the *climate crisis*, these are *nature, economy, industry, consumption, pollution, transport, survival*. And, around the *housing crisis* frame, *economy, cost-of-living, university students, inflation, government policy, poverty, homelessness*. Interestingly, there were no significant, trend-like, perceptible differences between (local) incumbent and (local) opposition speakers in this area.

The rare term with a dramatic tone, *domestic crisis situation (of abused persons)*, has a much more limited context (*abuse, domestic violence, escape*), while for *polycrisis* we only know that its context is further crises – without any specification. However, the contexts highlighted differed not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. The contexts of the most frequently used frames outstripped those of the least frequently used terms not only in number, but also in importance and scale.

The situation is similar for the values associated with collocations. Terms with a prominent number of mentions imply a large set of core values, while the value implications of odd, rarely used terms are more limited in terms of both quantity and importance. Even if the list of values outlined by the (local) incumbent speakers on the *housing crisis* (*social equality, human dignity, solidarity, fairness, livelihood, personal autonomy, mobility*) differs sharply from the value associations of the (local) opposition actors (*livelihood, career, family, security, ethno-cultural homogeneity*), these are still, individually and separately, more numerous and more serious than the values threatened by the *statue-overproduction crisis* (*aesthetic quality, good artistic taste, well-being in urban public spaces*).

The textual source base does not contain any words or phrases that function clearly and in all respects as macroframes in the public discourse of city government. There is one expression that has played a structurally similar role, namely the term '*triple crisis*'. It was used mainly in the mayor's speeches, and was intended to cover the main hardships of the period: the Covid pandemic, the energy crisis and the difficult financial/budgetary situation of the municipality of the capital as a result of the '*domestic political crisis*' (i.e. the constant conflict with the central government, the hostile government actions, and central

government's cutbacks). However, the somewhat nondescript term did not become accepted and widespread even among (local) incumbent politicians, so it could not become a central, prominent, dominant and integrative interpretative schema.<sup>7</sup>

The detailed answers to the second research question (RQ2) are summarized and presented in Table 3.

In answering the third research question (RQ3), the analysis was focused exclusively on the communication of (local) incumbent actors in relation to the three most frequently mentioned collocations. The aim of the investigation was to explore the role of the crisis frame in the policy problem definition processes. An attempt was made to do this on two levels and in two ways. First, by looking in general terms at what it means when a policy issue is placed in the crisis frame. Then, specifically and comparatively, focusing on the similarities and differences between the use of the three collocations. In addition to drawing inspiration from the general literature on problem definition (Dery, 1984, 2000; Dunn, 2018; Peters, 2018), the criteria for the latter, more specific analysis was based primarily on the categories discussed in Rocheford and Cobb's studies (Rocheford and Cobb, 1993, 1994).

According to Dunn, there are four main characteristics of policy problems: interdependency, subjectivity, artificiality and instability (Dunn, 2018: 71–73). One of the empirically well-supported implications of the crisis frame is the tendency to reduce the acceptance of subjectivity and artificiality. In relation to both the *housing crisis*, the *energy crisis* and the *climate crisis* (and *climate emergency*), it has been a recurrent assertion that the existence and severity of the problem is a fact, that the situation is not a matter of individual judgment but exists objectively. In addition, the instability of policy problems is called into question. Because of the implications of urgency and unsustainability inherent in the term crisis, the final elimination of instability, the prevention of the problem's recurrence once and for all, i.e., the achievement of final stability, appears on the horizon of objectives.

Comparing the three prominently mentioned collocations along Rocheford and Cobb's categories, we see that the crisis classification alone does not carry and does not result in any clearly discernible pattern in problem definition with respect to problem causation, incidence, novelty, proximity or solution (Rocheford and Cobb, 1994).

In the public discourses of the Municipality of Budapest, the *energy crisis* is understood as an intended, temporary, unprecedented situation,

<sup>6</sup> These problems can be identified by taking stock of the references, assumptions and statements made in the excerpts where the particular crisis frames occur.

<sup>7</sup> It appears three times on the website and only twice in the minutes.

TABLE 3 The main characteristics of the most and least frequently used collocations (tone, context and values associated).

Collocation	Tone	Context	Values associated with the frame/ values threatened by the crisis (incumbent coalition)	Values associated with the frame/ values threatened by the crisis (opposition)	Values associated with the frame/ values threatened by the crisis (non-committed)
Energy crisis	Dramatic	War, economy, dependency, gas, electricity, cost, comfort	Livelihood, credibility, predictability, free choice, fairness	Credibility, free choice	-
Climate crisis/climate emergency	Dramatic	Nature, economy, industry, consumption, pollution, transport, survival	Social equality, human dignity, solidarity, fairness, survival	Habitude, customs, clean air, free choice, freedom to travel by car	-
Housing crisis	Dramatic	Economy, cost-of-living, university students, inflation, government policy, poverty, homelessness	Social equality, human dignity, solidarity, fairness, livelihood, personal autonomy, mobility	Livelihood, career, family, security, ethno-cultural homogeneity	Livelihood, personal autonomy, mobility, modern, European-standard living environment.
Statue-overproduction crisis	Light, ironic	Art vs. slush, politics of memory, democratic deficit	Esthetic quality, good artistic taste, well-being in urban public spaces	-	-
Domestic crisis situation (of abused persons)	Dramatic	Abuse, domestic violence, escape	Dignity, security	-	-
Polycrisis	Neutral, abstract, professional	Crisis embedded in the context of other crises	-	-	-

whose affordable solutions from the institution's budget are considered morally objectionable, while the acceptable solutions are considered unaffordable.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the *climate crisis* is accidental and impersonal, growing in the long term, unprecedented, and for the time being there is no available solution. At the same time, a *housing crisis* is both intended/accidental, growing in the short run, familiar, with available, acceptable, but (in the longer term) unaffordable solutions.

The one thing that is common to the use of the crisis frame in all three cases is the two-leveled nature of proximity: the crisis is understood both as a structural, systematic-social macro-level condition and as an individual, personal micro-level condition. The best example of this specificity, which is important for the problem definition, is provided by the documents on the *housing crisis*.

The public policy strategy "Home, for all" adopted in the summer of 2022, as well as the municipal decree adopted by the General Assembly on 29 June 2022, distinguish between *housing crisis*, which can be characterized as systemic or aggregate problem, and (acute) *housing crises situations* at the level of households, families and individuals. The different nature, level and scale of the two phenomena are accurately reflected in the language used: social-systemic crisis is always singular (a single, coherent, interconnected, systemic entity), while the categories covering personal living difficulties are usually plural. The latter are collected and listed in

both documents. (*Acute housing crises situations* include housing arrears (rent and utility bills) reaching critical levels, inadequate housing conditions, evictions without accommodation, loss of housing, staying in a family's temporary home, temporary or long-term homelessness. Although the discourse places the containment, or even the elimination, of the systemic phenomenon at the distant horizon of public policy, concrete, targeted measures are aimed at the micro-level, at the level of individuals. The planning and implementation of *crisis management* and *crisis intervention* thus involves many small, concrete, individual, but well-defined and effective steps, and is only really directed at the systemic crisis as such, as a distant, cumulative effect of these. The two-level application of the crises frame in problem definition thus allows for both a 'big picture' approach, thinking in terms of longer-term, macro-level outcomes, and the efficient operation of street-level bureaucracy to fit within this, given the seriousness and urgency of the problem.

Following Reese's (2007) suggestion, we can make further observations by examining the extent to which the crisis frames used in public discourse of the city government are 'functional' (i.e., they lay out actionable policy) and/or abstract-symbolic. On the basis of the textual data, it seems that (relatively) clear (particular) *problem definitions, causal interpretations, and treatment recommendations* can be deduced from the most commonly used crisis frames. Compared to the 'crisis of the West' frame in the discourse of the governing party at national level, even the *climate crisis* can be said to be functional, not to mention the *energy crisis* or the *housing crisis*. This impression is further reinforced by the large number of technical papers, policy proposals and action plans produced on the issues in question, as well as by the experts interviewed.

<sup>8</sup> It has been repeatedly stated in the Assemblies that, in order to find the right and acceptable solutions to the crisis, the Municipality would rather take on debt than cut back on public services in an unacceptable way.



TABLE 4 Functioning of the most frequent frames in problem definition processes.

Frame	Problem causation	Incidence	Novelty	Proximity	Solution
Energy crisis	Intended personal	Temporary, growing in the short term	Unprecedented	Personal and social	Objectionable- affordable acceptable- unaffordable
Climate crisis/climate emergency	Accidental impersonal	Growing in the long term	Unprecedented	Personal and social	Non-available (at the moment), acceptable
Housing crisis	Intended/accidental personal/impersonal	Cyclical, re-entrant, constant, growing in the short run	Familiar	Personal and social	Available acceptable unaffordable

The detailed answers to the third research question (RQ3) are set out in Table 4.

Finally, let us turn to the fourth research question (RQ4).

In order to uncover the political and/or policy strategies promoted, complemented, made more effective and implemented by the crisis frames, we need to start from the broader context and to trace our statements back to it. This context is the responsive/resisting urban politics pursued by the municipality of the capital and the conflictual dynamics between the opposition-led ‘liberal’ city and recentralizing ‘illiberal’ central government.

In this political situation, four basic strategies emerge for city government as a discursive actor. The first (1) is an attack on the reputation of central government, questioning its credibility, competence, principles, intentions and capabilities. The second (2) is to shield the reputation of the Municipality of Budapest and to prove its credibility, competence, principles, intentions and capabilities. The third strategy (3) is to oppose, reject or block a public policy measure promoted and/or initiated by the central government, while the fourth strategy (4) is to justify a public policy measure promoted and/or initiated by the local government. The first and third are offensive, delegitimizing (or legitimacy-reducing) strategies, while the second and fourth are defensive, legitimizing (legitimacy-enhancing) strategies.

The *economic* and *cost-of-living crisis*, as a frame, is clearly embedded in the first, offensive and delegitimizing strategy in the textual sources. In other words, according to the interpretation of the incumbent politicians in the capital, the serious situation that has emerged is clearly the result of the central government’s misguided economic policies, incompetence, hypocrisy and social insensitivity.

The use of the terms *Covid crisis* and *energy crisis* as a framework was associated with the combined and interlinked, simultaneous application of the first and second strategies. According to the narrative of the Budapest leadership, the capital came up with more effective and efficient solutions to both crises, and handled the situation better – in fact, it was ahead of the central government in terms of action. The central government initially belittled and ridiculed these measures, but later adopted them – whether in the form of compulsory mask-wearing or austerity.

The *climate crisis* frame was linked to the combined, but separate and not simultaneous application of the first two strategies. The narrative of the metropolitan government is that central government has not and is not doing anything to address the climate crisis. It either does not perceive the problem as important enough or denies it. It is not willing to take risky, unpopular measures, such as confronting the motoring lobby. In contrast, the Budapest authorities are realistic about the scale of the problem and are taking bold and effective action to tackle the climate crisis (increasing the proportion of green spaces,

insulating houses, creating cycle lanes, reducing public transport fares, setting up the Budapest Climate Agency etc.).

The term *housing crisis* as a frame correlated with all four strategies and was used in a wide variety of arguments. But perhaps the most emphatic strategy was the fourth, defensive and legitimizing one. This was used by the municipal leadership in narratives aimed at justifying the innovative policy model represented by the newly created Budapest Housing Agency.

A case of particular note was a major scandal, in which two crisis frames acquired strategic significance. Up until January 2025, it appeared that the central government was selling a brownfield site in central Budapest to a UAE-affiliated company to build a complex of buildings including skyscrapers, similar to an earlier project in Belgrade. An important discursive tool used by the capital’s municipality to protest against the project, previously dubbed ‘mini-Dubai’, was the inclusion of the *housing crisis* and *climate crisis* frames in the argument. In order to effectively oppose the conception and block the implementation of the plan (i.e., to pursue the third strategy mentioned above) the linking of the investment with these two issues has become a key reference.

In several of his speeches, mayor Gergely Karácsony relied heavily on the emotional and argumentative power of the two crisis frames. Speaking at a demonstration, he said: ‘*We want to prepare our common home for the 21st century. But there is one obstacle. The politics that hates this city and understands nothing about the housing crisis or the climate crisis, and knows nothing about the public interest, only the private interest.*’ (...) ‘*Budapest does not need Europe’s tallest building, it needs Europe’s highest life expectancy, a much healthier city, an end to the housing crisis and a residential community.*’<sup>9</sup>

On another occasion, in even stronger and more pithy terms, he said: ‘*The rapist state (...) wants to impose on Budapest an investment that serves private interests, destroys the cityscape and exacerbates the housing and climate crisis.*’<sup>10</sup>

Discussion and conclusion

Looking a little further than the empirical analysis perspective of textual data, it is also worth considering how the findings presented here fit into the existing academic descriptions of responsive/resilient/

9 Textual source: <https://enbudapestem.hu/2024/03/22/rakosdubaj-a-kezdodo-beruhazas-ellen-tuntetnek-a-civilek>.  
10 Textual source: <https://enbudapestem.hu/2024/05/03/karacsony-es-vitezy-szerint-is-sulyos-gondok-vannak-rakosdubajjal>.

resisting urban politics as practiced by the Municipality of Budapest. To this end, this paper adopts the concept that seems to be the most appropriate from among the available studies (f.e. Begadze, 2022; Drapalova, 2023; Buzogány and Spöri, 2024; Panzano et al., 2024).

Aksztejn et al. (2024) list seven general reactive actions as basic forms of local responses to 'illiberal' recentralization: 'policy proposals' (1), 'counter-policies' (2), 'lawsuits' (3), 'disobedience' (4), 'political mobilization' (5), 'communicative actions' (6), and 'transnationalization' (7).

The use of crisis frames is obviously most appropriate for the sixth type of response, but it also plays a role in the second, third and fourth types of action.

According to the narratives of city government, the central government's power-concentrating actions explicitly hinder the handling of certain serious, pressing, urgent situations (framed/defined as crisis), both at local and national level, and even exacerbate them. On the one hand, by neglecting them and focusing its attention and resources on the political struggle rather than on the actual resolution of policy issues, and on the other hand, by reducing the public policy capacities of local institutional actors. The central government, working to establish its own dominance, has failed to address the *climate crisis*, its short-sighted actions have reinforced the already existing *housing crisis*, while the *economic crisis* and the *cost-of-living crisis* have been triggered by its own misguided economic policies, some of which are purely designed to gain political support. In these communicative actions, the Municipality of Budapest, as a discursive actor, consciously built on the rhetorical potential of the crisis frame: the attention-grabbing power, the emotional power, the dramatic effect of expression. In this way, by highlighting the gravity of the unaddressed (or inadequately addressed) or unresolved (or not yet resolved) situations, the LG also emphasized the negligence, irresponsibility, power fixation and short-sighted incompetence of the central government. In conjunction with this, the use of crisis framing also served to strengthen Budapest's case against the central government on controversial policies or policy areas (environmental policy, urban development, real estate policy, housing, social policy).

At the same time, the use of crisis-frames has been integrated into the formulation of certain 'counter-policies'. These are defined by Aksztejn et al. (2024) as 'locally elaborated and implemented policies, regulatory measures or public services aimed at the local public that either counteract the undesirable effects of recentralization or demonstrate how the values and political profile of the LG differ from those of the central government'.

Thus characterized 'counter-policies' have emerged mainly in two areas, *environment/energy/climate policy* and *housing*. A distinctive and innovative approach to tackling related public policy (sub) problems was demonstrated by the launch of two new project organizations in 2024, the *Metropolitan Housing Agency* and the *Budapest Climate Agency*. Two dedicated actors that are flexible and less bound by rigid bureaucratic structures.

Based on the summarized mission statement on its website, the aim of the Metropolitan Housing Agency is to increase the stock of available housing and to provide affordable and secure rental accommodation for tenants. To this end, it is committed to property management cooperation for private individuals (utilization, management and rental of private homes with different offers), and

renovation of non-residential properties for change of function.<sup>11</sup> The Budapest Climate Agency, however, in the framework of the *100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission*, aims "to stimulate residential building energy efficiency investments and facilitate the achievement of Budapest's climate neutrality targets."<sup>12</sup>

The two institutions were described in the relevant discursive actions as entities that demonstrate the metropolitan municipality's commitment to addressing the increasingly pressing issues, countering the irresponsible, negligent attitude of central government, and intended for 'crisis management'. The crisis frames (i.e., *housing crisis*, *climate crisis*, *energy crisis*) have been used as key concepts, reference points, strong arguments in speeches and documents. By highlighting the seriousness, difficulty, complexity and ambiguity of the situations, the terms also underlined the justification, adequacy and relevance of the new innovative public policy solutions initiated by Budapest.

This is also reflected by the fact that the 12-point, HUF 20 billion action plan approved by the General Assembly in October 2024 was presented at all official communication forums as "the biggest housing programme of the last 30 years," which aims to solve the "*housing crisis*," "one of the biggest challenges facing our future."<sup>13</sup>

Crisis frames were also associated with responses of the 'disobedience' and 'lawsuits' type. As mentioned by Aksztejn et al. (2024), the city government refused to pay the so-called 'solidarity contribution' (or 'solidarity tax') that had previously been raised in such a way that specifically disadvantage Budapest. Indeed, it subsequently challenged the legality of the measure in court (and won the case in January 2025). For both actions, an important argument was that the unfair financial withdrawal would result in the inability of the capital to deal with the existing crisis situations, and that the measure itself would create a kind of *budgetary and management crisis*.<sup>14</sup>

As a (more) higher level reflection on the findings, let us see what conclusions can be drawn. The metropolitan municipality, as a discursive actor, functioned as agenda-setter, policy-interpreter, and policy problem-definer both during and through the use of crisis frames. In these roles, however, it has operated in different ways and with varying degrees of effectiveness.

As an agenda-setter, Budapest has achieved a clear and resounding success in one area at the expense of central government crisis-frame issues. Following a radio interview with the Prime Minister in October 2024, politicians from the ruling party Fidesz also started to talk about the need for 'affordable housing', adopting and increasingly using the '*housing crisis*' frame. This partly complemented, partly counterbalanced and partly replaced the crisis framing they had typically used until then in relation to 'migration', 'war', and 'demography'. Officials of the municipal government have repeatedly,

11 Summarized mission statement of The Metropolitan Housing Agency. Available at: <https://budapest.hu/eselyteremto-budapest/elerheto-lakhatas/lakasugynokseg>.

12 Online Communique of Department for Climate and Environmental Affairs, Mayor's Office of Budapest, May 7, 2024. Available at: <https://smartcity-atelier.eu/allgemein/budapest-sets-up-its-climate-agency/>.

13 Textual source: <https://budapest.hu/eselyteremto-budapest/elerheto-lakhatas>.

14 This frame was mentioned only twice in the period under review and is therefore shown in the summary table only under the category 'Other' and not specifically mentioned.

in several forums and with palpable satisfaction, acknowledged this turnaround in the political and public policy agenda. Ambrus Kiss, Director General of the Mayor's Office, for example, said in a background briefing that although politicians of the capital 'had been talking about it for quite a long time', a 'few weeks ago the government had also noticed that there was a *housing crisis* in Budapest'.<sup>15</sup>

As a politics-interpreter, however, the capital's leadership failed to construct a truly distinctive, characterful, strong crisis macroframe that could have served as a comprehensive and integrative interpretive scheme to explain political struggles and delineate opposing positions. In other words, it could not, or could not really, counterbalance the ruling party's crisis macroframes, which divided the political space between actors supporting and opposing the processes and actions that give rise to the 'migration crisis', 'war crisis', and 'the crisis of Western values'. Perhaps consciously, perhaps on the basis of values, but in the end the communication of the capital's municipality did not produce a similar discursive pattern of binary oppositions (pro-migration vs. anti-migration, pro-war vs. anti-war, pro-gender vs. anti-gender) to classify political actors and positions. Although the frame of the *climate crisis* could have been used as a macro-frame to integrate the discussion of political issues, and a series of oppositions (climate-conscious vs. climate-agnostic, pro-hydrocarbon vs. pro-renewable energy, motorist vs. cyclist, pro- and anti-extinction) could have been derived from it, the Municipality of Budapest did not start communicating in this way, creating enemy-images and replicating the radical environmentalist tone.

The capital government's only attempt to do so has been neither too emphatic, nor too forceful, nor too successful. Interestingly, one of the components of the '*triple crisis*', the '*domestic political crisis*' resulting from the conflict between central and local government, was used as the crisis macroframe to explain the political situation. Or, as the mayor put it, "this crisis is the result of the Hungarian government's visible commitment to an anti-Budapest politics."<sup>16</sup>

But while in this interpretative framework the anti-Budapest position meant recentralization, the reduction of powers, the withdrawal of financial resources, additional taxes imposed, activities contrary to the interests of the local community, and thus was capable of giving a pithy characterization of one of the actors, the "pro-Budapest" position meant nothing more than what the actual functioning of the municipality of the capital itself specifically implies. The use of the schema therefore remained an occasional attempt; it did not spread widely or take root in public discourse.

And last but not least, it is worth noting that the capital, as a public policy problem-definer, created functional frames (not abstract-symbolic ones). Moreover, as the two experts interviewed in the course of the research agreed, they were not used merely to create 'placebo policies'. Indeed, the municipality of the capital did not seek to diffuse blame, defend the status quo, and frame 'placebo policy' as a solution (McHugh et al., 2021). According to the consensus of experts, the use of the crisis frame by the city administration was associated with the idea that the situation interpreted in this way was an opportunity for political and policy change and a way to break the status quo. In other words, the action plans and project organizations (especially in the areas of housing and

climate/energy) that they have created, offered and framed as solutions can be considered as a real 'treatment policy'.

However, whether the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially changed the legitimacy and acceptability of framing certain political and public policy issues as crises could not be reconstructed on the basis of empirical analysis of the collected textual data. Answering this question should therefore be the subject of further research.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

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The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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15 Textual source: <https://enbudapestem.hu/2024/11/20/a-12-pont-amivel-a-fovarosi-vezetes-lakhatasi-valsagot-kezelve>.

16 Textual source: <https://enbudapestem.hu/2023/04/19/a-fovaros-felfuggeszti-a-kormany-finanszirozast>.



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