



Tackling Root causes Upstream of
Unhealthy Urban Development

Untangling complexity: a qualitative study to understand how to integrate health in decision-making for large-scale urban development

Dr Anna Le Gouais

Anna.legouais@bristol.ac.uk

@annalegouais

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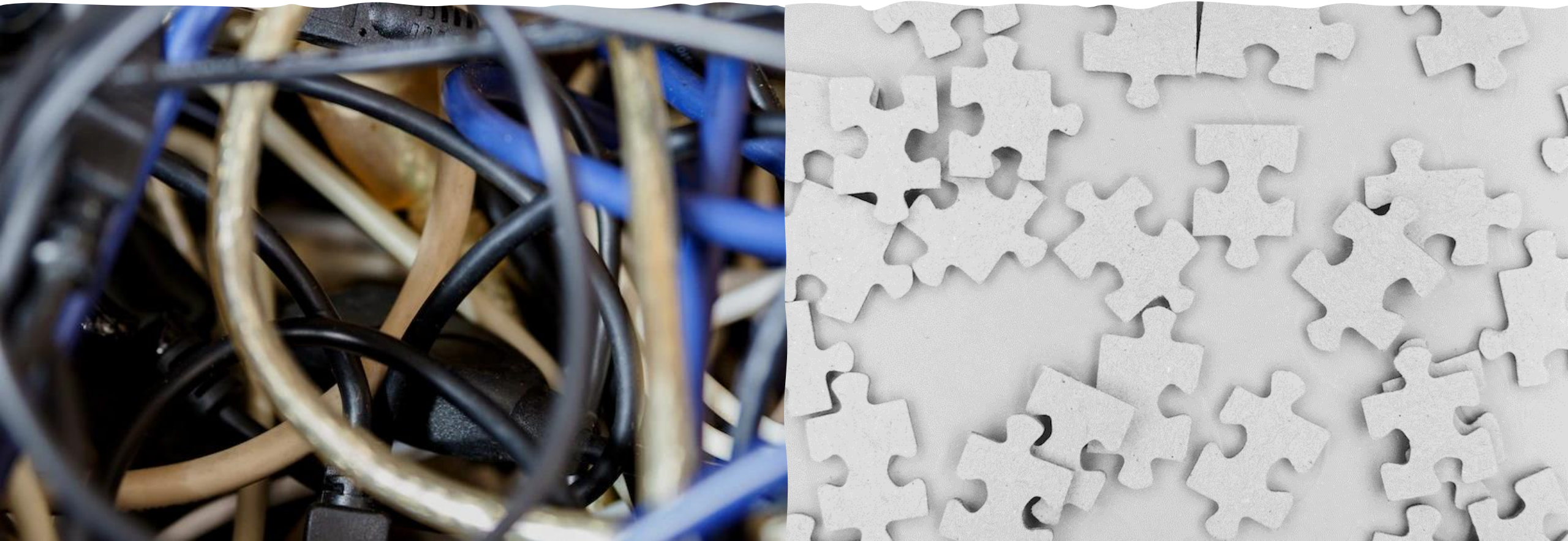


Creative Partners





How can the system of urban development decision-making
be influenced to create healthier environments?





Management

Public policy

Urban
planning



Transport

Public
health



The University of Manchester



Real
estate

Law



Public
involvement



Methods: Question development

Identifying the actors
and institutions

Identifying world views &
perception of problem

Understanding how
decision are made within
the system



Methods: Sampling and interviewing

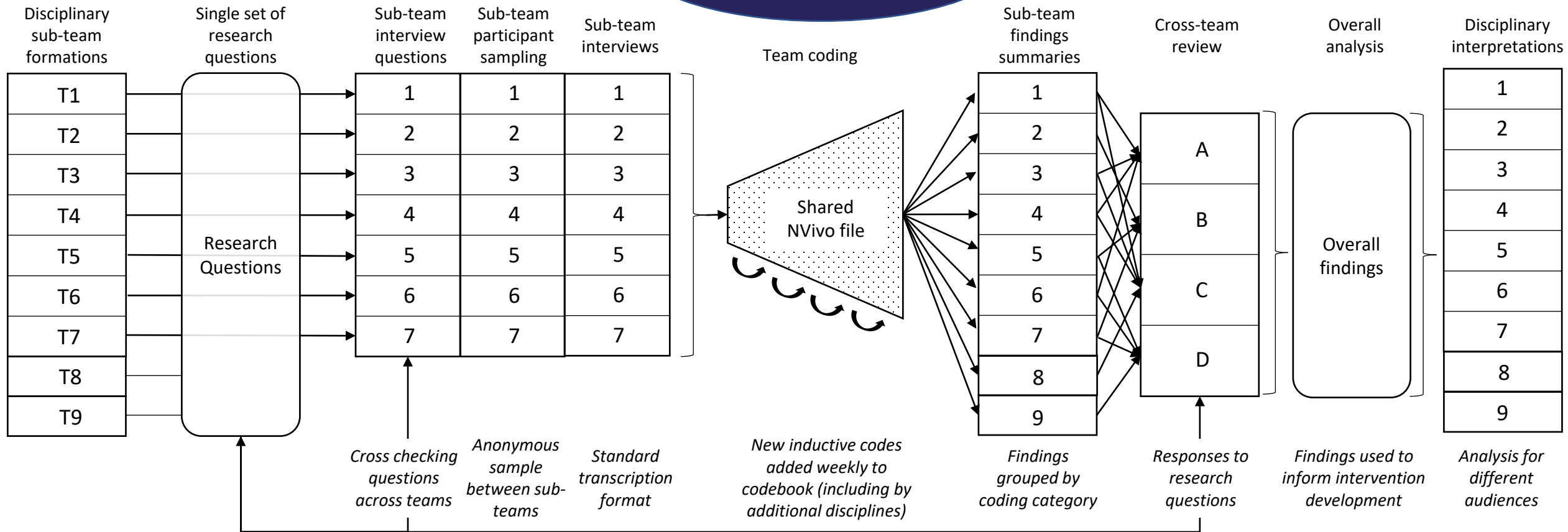
Stakeholder type	Local/ Regional government	National government	Private sector	Third sector	Total
Property development	5	2	24	0	31
Urban planning	15	3	5	3	26
Finance	0	3	18	0	21
Transport	6	3	3	1	13
Public health	7	2	0	2	11
Politician	8	1	0	0	9
Environment/ Sustainability	3	2	1	1	7
Other	5	4	2	3	14
Total	49	20	53	10	

132



Methods: Team coding and analysis

16 weekly team coding meetings





Findings



Competing priorities

National government priorities

*“...there are a lot of people within the broader centre-right who, instinctively, **resist the idea that government should be banning lots of things**, telling people how to live their lives” (National third sector organisation, urban planning)*

Local/regional government priorities

*“...there’s a tension there in terms of as a local authority you want to be **supportive of development** ...but often in practice those do come at a cost and **the more constraints you put on development, sometimes the harder it is to get things developed**, ... there’s a balance between what you would maybe want to do in an ideal world and what you can do whilst still allowing development to progress.” (Local government, property development)*

Private sector priorities

*“...it is an industry that goes, ‘We’re functioning perfectly well, just **making lots of money** carrying on like this, so why would we change?’” (Private sector, property development and investment)*

*“...when your shareholders and your bond holders are asking you, ‘What are you doing about **wellness and sustainability?**’, it quickly jumps up the agenda!” (Private sector, real estate finance)*



Getting around the rules

Rules: policies and legislation designed to control development

*“... the property sector from which I come is **untrustworthy** basically. We’ll leg over communities and places in order to make a **fast buck** and, I’m sorry, that’s how it is. You know, it’s what happens and so therefore the planning system and any government support to get anything off and away is beset with **safeguarding** so there’s an awful lot of tick boxing that goes on” (Private sector, property development)*

Community engagement challenges

*“...it’s a really **biased industry**. You need to be a white middle-aged man to be listened to. If you’re an immigrant, if you’re a female, if you’re young then you know nothing.” – (Private sector, property development consultancy)*

*“...all of these familiar **commercial pressures** which will work directly against what you fear local people will, quite rightly, demand. There’s both an unjustified and an entirely justified **fear of engaging local people more.**” (Third sector, property finance)*



Justifying a focus on health

Lack of clear definitions and evidence of 'healthy' urban development

*"...you've got this horrendous policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework] which says we can only refuse things if the impact is severe. Now **define severe**, you know, I was asked this in a public inquiry... people living in high buildings, mental health issues associated with that, isolation, that's **very hard to quantify**." (Local government, transport)*

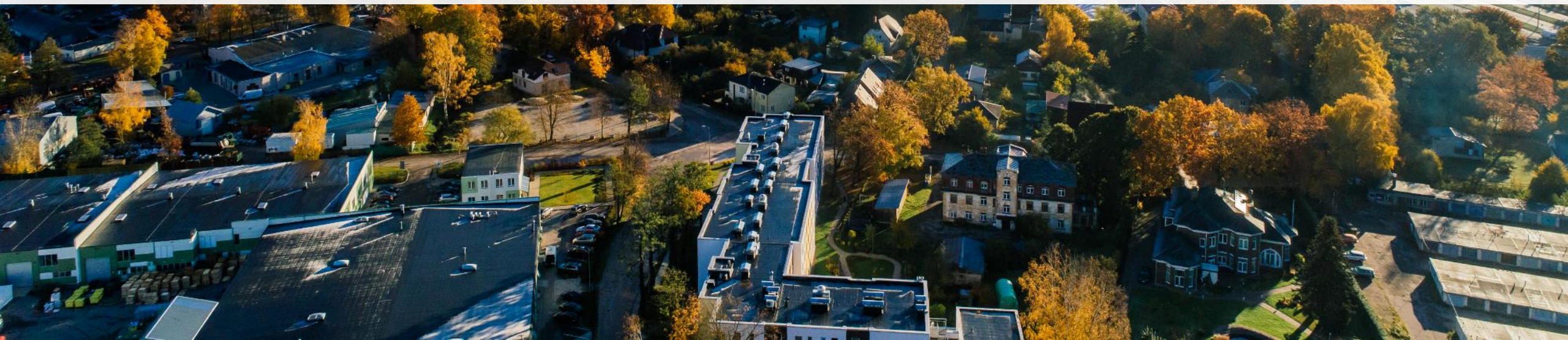
Obtaining resources to focus on health

*"Politicians want sustainability and to spend less money on things, but then **don't actually invest in prevention** and the things that will lead to that. Housing being one of them that could save NHS money". (National government, health)*





Implications for creating healthier places



Identifying leverage points in a complex system



Strengths & limitations

- Many stakeholders' views but more property development than transport
- Conducted in England (discretionary planning system)
- Exploratory study, with thematic analysis by Researcher-in-Residence with Bristol City Council
- Other papers by multi-disciplinary research team focus on different issues



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Weblink: <https://mrc.ukri.org/research/initiatives/prevention-research/ukprp/>

