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Essink, D.R.

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In this thesis we explore the concept of sustainable health systems, with a specific focus on the role and potential of change agents in bringing about fundamental change in our health system. Fundamental change appears to be urgent worldwide. The need for change comes from a diversity of problems: e.g. new complex health problems such as drug resistant tuberculosis, financial problems and organizational problems. This is particularly pertinent as the conventional approaches to deal with these complex problems appear to be insufficient.

To this end we turn to system innovation theory, which has been developed to analyze and govern long-term change processes towards sustainable systems. Based on theoretical explorations and six empirical cases studies we offer new perspectives to scholars, policy makers and health professionals on the management of fundamental changes in health systems. In addition, by exploring cases in the Netherlands, Canada and Vietnam, we have distilled heuristics for change agents, mainly NGOs and governments, to contribute to these processes. We especially picture a role for 'facilitator change agents' to bridge the top-down and bottom-up dichotomy in health system change governance.



Sustainable Health Systems

Dirk Rombout Essink

SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEMS

The role of Change Agents in Health System Innovation

DR Essink