EHMA 2025
Taking action to improve health for all

Governance of Innovation in Healthcare organizations in the Netherlands

Strategies, Challenges and practices from over >150 organizations

#EHMA2025

Introduction & context

A system under pressure

New technologies/ are developed

Organizations struggle to survive

Aim: There is need for more empirical research on how healthcare organizations manage innovation and how the governance of innovation is put to practice.
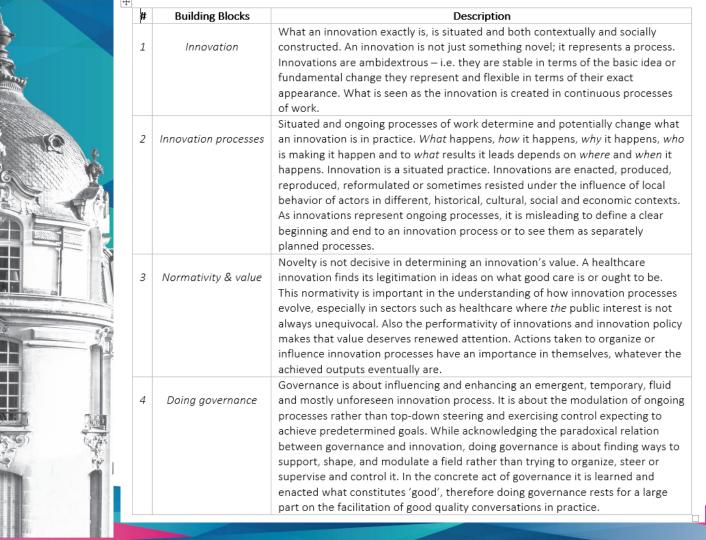
Methodology

- We conducted a so-called **secondary content analysis** by using the Situated Novelty framework (Janssen, 2015), focusing on how governance structures and processes shaped innovation processes and outcomes.

- A total of 176 assignments, submitted by participants in a Dutch postgraduate MBA-health program (2018–2025), are analyzed form across different organizations and sectors

- The assignments asked participants to analyze the way innovation is managed within their own organizations

- We aimed for insights into how structural, strategic, and cultural factors influence the way innovation is managed

Theoretical framework

- Used the 'Situated Novelty' framework of innovation

- Based on my PhD-project in healthcare innovation processes

- Qualitative research into how innovation practices (do not) work

- Lessons on innovation management

#	Building Blocks	Description
1	*Innovation*	What an innovation exactly is, is situated and both contextually and socially constructed. An innovation is not just something novel; it represents a process. Innovations are ambidextrous – i.e. they are stable in terms of the basic idea or fundamental change they represent and flexible in terms of their exact appearance. What is seen as the innovation is created in continuous processes of work.
2	*Innovation processes*	Situated and ongoing processes of work determine and potentially change what an innovation is in practice. *What* happens, *how* it happens, *why* it happens, *who* is making it happen and to *what* results it leads depends on *where* and *when* it happens. Innovation is a situated practice. Innovations are enacted, produced, reproduced, reformulated or sometimes resisted under the influence of local behavior of actors in different, historical, cultural, social and economic contexts. As innovations represent ongoing processes, it is misleading to define a clear beginning and end to an innovation process or to see them as separately planned processes.
3	*Normativity & value*	Novelty is not decisive in determining an innovation's value. A healthcare innovation finds its legitimation in ideas on what good care is or ought to be. This normativity is important in the understanding of how innovation processes evolve, especially in sectors such as healthcare where *the* public interest is not always unequivocal. Also the performativity of innovations and innovation policy makes that value deserves renewed attention. Actions taken to organize or influence innovation processes have an importance in themselves, whatever the achieved outputs eventually are.
4	*Doing governance*	Governance is about influencing and enhancing an emergent, temporary, fluid and mostly unforeseen innovation process. It is about the modulation of ongoing processes rather than top-down steering and exercising control expecting to achieve predetermined goals. While acknowledging the paradoxical relation between governance and innovation, doing governance is about finding ways to support, shape, and modulate a field rather than trying to organize, steer or supervise and control it. In the concrete act of governance it is learned and enacted what constitutes 'good', therefore doing governance rests for a large part on the facilitation of good quality conversations in practice.

Results

1. Working systemically on innovation

Over half of the organizations systematically allocates and embeds the responsibility for innovation within the organization. However, it also shows how those responsible struggle with transforming strategic thinking on innovation into practical implementation

2. Linear thinking

Organizations maintained a linear perspective, leading to 4 challenges:
(1) no clear distinction between improvement, innovation, and change;
(2) weak alignment with organizational strategies;
(3) overrepresentation of interventions at the fuzzy front end of innovation
(4) insufficient consideration of what innovations replace

Discussion

- As such, this research sheds light on the innovative capacity of healthcare organizations and the practical challenges of it.

- Also, it leads to a further refined and more holistic framework on the governance of innovation. It demonstrates that while structural aspects of innovation governance— e.g. roles and responsibilities—are often well-defined, softer dimensions like cultural readiness, reflection, and strategic alignment remain underdeveloped.

- I would like to add three dimensions:
    1. The interplay between innovation and transitions,
    2. The specific skills required for effective innovation governance, and
    3. The importance of reflecting on the unintended negative effects

THANK YOU

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