Typology of transformative health and care ecosystems

Introduction

An ecosystem perspective on health and care systems recognizes the interdependencies and relationships between diverse stakeholders involved in creating health and care services and outcomes (Beirão et al., 2017).

In this study, we analyse ***transformative ecosystems*** as long-term, partnership-based arrangements that bring together multiple actors around shared goals and coordinated action, aiming for systemic change in health and care (Perikangas & Tuurnas, 2025). We focus primarily on place-based, regional partnerships, adopting a meso-level ecosystem perspective (Osborne et al., 2022).

Research question:
How do different types of European health and care ecosystems pursue system-level transformation?

Data and methods

Research design: An exploratory multiple mini-case study (Käss et al., 2024) of health and care ecosystems. The study was conducted as part of the activities of the *European Partnership on Transforming Health and Care Systems* (THCS) programme.

42 health and care ecosystem cases

- *Case descriptions*: standardized case templates submitted by the THCS partners; THCS ecosystem case studies
- *Complementary data*: documents, web sources

Systematic qualitative coding

Each case analysed and data coded across *six analytical dimensions:*

- Central goals
- Structural form
- Funding
- Actor configurations
- Actor roles
- Governance

Cross-case analysis

- Recurring clusters of characteristics across analytical dimensions identified
- Four main ecosystem types constructed
- Transformation logic of each type articulated

Collaboration structures for service integration

Service integration, access & continuity	
Joint structures / formal networks	
Relatively stable, publicly supported	
Regional public authorities & service providers in coordinating roles, patient organizations often represented, often national policy support	

Transformation logic: Reshaping service systems by aligning service pathways, improving continuity, and strengthening coordination across organizations

Community-centered wellbeing ecosystems

Holistic community wellbeing & prevention	
Flexible, often relatively loose local networks	
Less stable funding, typically from multiple sources	
Citizens and third sector at the core, sometimes also coordinating role; regional public authorities and service providers, active and often coordinating role	

Transformation logic: Reorienting the system priorities from service delivery towards prevention and wellbeing by strengthening the role, participation, and agency of citizens and communities

Innovation and knowledge sharing networks

Innovation, scaling, knowledge sharing & capacity building	
Networks of varying formality, sometimes supported by digital platforms	
Diverse funding, often project- or programme-based	
Public organizations, research, industry & sectoral associations, collaboration often guided by national-level organizations	

Transformation logic: Reinforcing system's capacity for renewal by embedding development and innovation activities as a permanent component of collaboration among stakeholders

Value-based partnership models

Cost-effectiveness & impact alongside other goals	
Business/platform ecosystems, public-private-partnerships, alliances & joint ventures	
Contract-, investment- or market-based funding; outcome-linked incentives	
Diverse combinations, service providers, research actors, public authorities, companies, coordination responsibility varies	

Transformation logic: Reconfiguring the distribution of (financial) resources by sharing risk and responsibilities among actors, and identifying shared value

Conclusions

- **Transformative health and care ecosystems take different shapes**. System-level change is pursued through distinct ecosystem types and transformation logics.
- **Ecosystems reflect both shared goals and local contexts**. Actor configurations, structures, resources and governance are shaped by shared goals and the local operational context.
- **Different transformation logics require tailored policy support**. Ecosystem types mobilize resources and agency in distinct ways, creating different needs for policy support and approaches to measuring success.

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