

# All that glitters isn't gold

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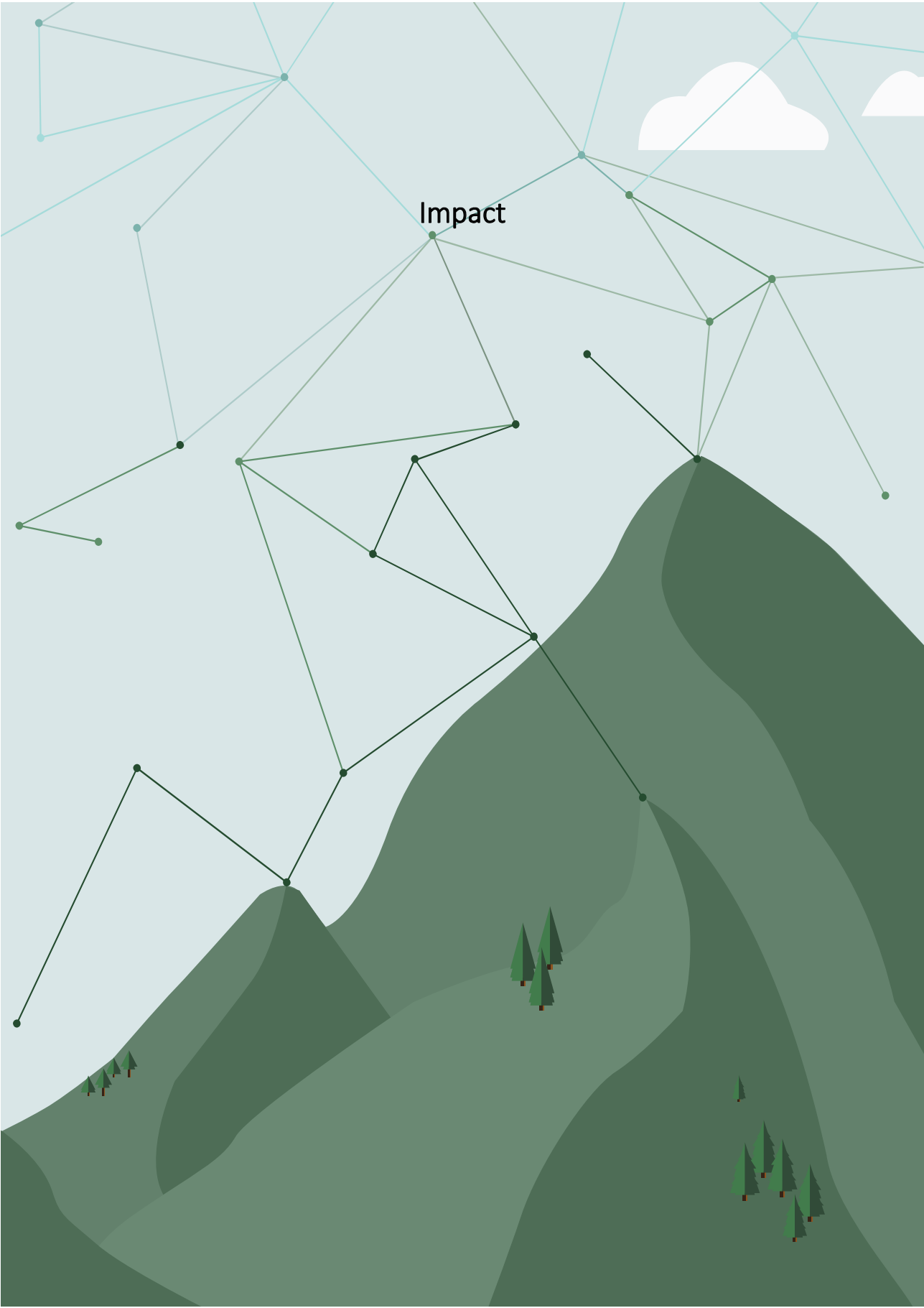
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Impact

Adventurer and recluse Christopher McCandless once said that “happiness is only real when shared”. In many ways, this might not only be true for happiness, but also for science. Research can provide important insights, yet they remain meaningless as long as they are not shared with those that can benefit from these insights. The research presented in this dissertation was performed at the Living Lab for Sustainable Care that aims to bridge research and education with practice and policy. This chapter describes the societal and scientific impact of the research presented in this dissertation.

### **Societal impact and dissemination**

There are several ways in which this dissertation has created societal impact. First, from a macro-level perspective, the dissertation contributes to an ongoing policy debate on how to keep our health system sustainable and the potential solution found in inter-organizational, purpose-oriented networks. Specifically in the Netherlands, but also globally, governments have encouraged the organization of healthcare in integrative ways for many years, often specifically through purpose-oriented networks (Burns et al., 2022; Hefner & Nembhard, 2021; Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, 2022; Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM), 2018). The research in this dissertation is therefore very timely and closely aligns with the needs in practice and policy, by creating an understanding of why and how networks collaborate, what the determinants are of effective collaboration, how dynamics influence networks, and how such determinants can systematically be measured.

To ensure the research closely aligned with practice, the aims of this dissertation were co-designed with representatives from the network studied in the three empirical studies. At the start of the dissertation period, a meeting was held with the research team and representatives from the network to discuss their needs and see how the research in this dissertation could respond to these needs. To ensure the knowledge generated by the studies performed was also transferred to the network, a management summary as well as the published paper was shared with the network and the participants of each study (for example also with the government representatives that participated in the study described in Chapter 3). In the management summary, the results were summarized and recommendations were provided in an accessible way to ensure they would also be useful to the respondents. Additionally, results were presented in the network and discussed with the network members to ensure the findings would be useful to them. The knowledge built in this dissertation will furthermore be used in

the future to support networks directly, where we will observe networks and immediately discuss our observations, using scientific knowledge, to contribute to the effectiveness of these networks.

The findings of this dissertation have also been distributed beyond the participants of the studies. A factsheet was created on the study in Chapter 2, illustrating the determinants of network effectiveness. This was distributed in the network of the research team, as well as communicated through LinkedIn. A QR-code was added for those interested to find more detailed information on the study's findings. Additionally, we published an article in *Skipr*, the main Dutch news platform related to health(care), to share the findings and implications of the studies described in Chapter 2 and 3 with stakeholders in practice. A blog series on networks has been created that will be published on *Skipr*, in which scientific knowledge generated in this dissertation is translated to practice so networks all over the country can benefit from this knowledge to aid in creating effective networks. Additionally, one study (Chapter 4) was purposefully published in a Dutch peer-reviewed journal that is read by many Dutch stakeholders, to increase the impact of the research performed and to ensure adoption by practice. All studies were shared on LinkedIn after publication to share the knowledge with stakeholders in practice. Those posts received a lot of impressions and responses, indicating that the research was picked up by and resonated with practice (e.g. communications of Chapter 4 reached more than 20.000 impressions on Linked-In).

The efforts to increase the impact and adoption of the research findings in practice has been effective, illustrated by the responses received from stakeholders throughout the country, as well as frequent referencing of the studies in practice and policy reports. For example, the study in Chapter 2 were used in a whitepaper on networks of Consultancy group Common Eye (van Elswijk et al., 2023) and a policy report of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (Keij et al., 2024). The findings of the study in Chapter 3 were addressed in the 'Volkskrant' (Stuijver, 2023) and blogs on *Zorgvisie* (large news outlet for healthcare related subjects) (Zonneveld, 2023) and *Sociaalweb* (van der Woerd, 2024). The study in Chapter 4 was discussed in a *Skipr* newsarticle (Ahli, 2024), an invited publication in the Dutch trade journal *Medische Oncologie* (Peeters & Westra, 2024), and other publications such as policy reports and blogs (Keij et al., 2024; van der Woerd et al, 2024; Zonneveld, 2023). Additionally, the studies in this dissertation are often used in presentations from stakeholders in practice, such as the Dutch Association for Health(care) Supervisors (*De vereniging van toezichhouders in*

*zorg en welzijn*) and representatives of networks. The researchers have also been approached by network stakeholders from practice for invited talks (e.g. for the Paramedic Platform, Platform for Dieticians, and several other networks throughout the country).

Preliminary findings from the final study, Chapter 6, were used to develop a questionnaire in collaboration with the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu, RIVM*). This questionnaire included two outcome measures and several determinants of network effectiveness. The questionnaire was distributed nationally to include as many cross-sectoral, purpose-oriented healthcare networks that aim to contribute to one or more Quadruple Aim outcomes. The outcomes are currently being used for both scientific and policy purposes to aid networks in their development and effectiveness, now and in the future. To generate immediate impact, a dashboard with the networks' results were provided to participants comparing their network's results to averages of all networks that filled in the questionnaire, including general recommendations related to the determinants.

Based on the findings of all studies in this dissertation, a workshop was developed aiming to provide participants with the tools to collaborate more effectively in networks by acquainting them with the latest insights regarding networks and prompting them to critically reflect on whether and how they apply these insights in practice. The workshop is designed so that it is suitable for anyone participating in networks or involved in organizing or shaping networks. This includes, for example, executives or other representatives of organizations actively involved in networks, as well as representatives of government agencies. The workshop has been provided to two networks and continues to generate interest from stakeholders in practice all over the country. The workshop is iteratively adapted to the latest scientific and practical insights and can be tailored to individual networks' and participants' needs.

### **Scientific impact and dissemination**

The findings from the studies in this dissertation have impacted the scientific field in several ways. First, there has long been conceptual unclarity and fragmentation in the field, for example on the definition of networks or the meaning of network effectiveness. The studies in this dissertation strongly advocate for the use of similar labels and definitions, and explicated the need for proper elaboration on the characteristics of networks under study to ensure

researchers can assess which networks are comparable and which are not. Additionally, the dissertation contributes to understand what network participants mean when talking about network effectiveness. Moreover, the dissertation has laid a conceptual foundation for the measurement of the determinants of network effectiveness, which has been fragmented because researchers have used different, mostly unvalidated questionnaire instruments. This dissertation has laid the foundation for consistent measurement across studies, which is important to increase comparability across studies, especially given the labor-intensive nature of studying networks and the lack of comparative studies in different settings. This might prove vital for our future understanding of network effectiveness.

The methodological nature of the studies in this dissertation also contribute to the scientific impact. First, the two review studies in this dissertation were necessary to understand what was already known in this fragmented field and build the empirical studies to ensure they contribute something new to the scientific field. For example, Chapter 2 showed that the context of networks has been understudied. Therefore, Chapter 4 specifically focused on the context to understand how a policy change influences networks in practice. Additionally, the field lacks longitudinal studies. For the studies in this dissertation, a network was followed for more than five years, using in-depth qualitative analyses using interviews, observations, and document analyses. This is a major strength of the studies in the dissertation, allowing to study instability and changes in the network and creating an in-depth understanding of the dynamics underlying the network.

The findings of the studies in this dissertation have been disseminated in various ways. First, the studies have been published (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) or submitted (Chapters 5 and 6) to top healthcare management journals, including peer review and open access. Additionally, the findings were presented at several international, scientific conferences, including the European Health Management Association (2020, 2021) and the Academy of Management (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024), including a workshop on networks (Academy of Management, 2023) aiming to enhance collaboration with scholars studying networks from all over the world. Moreover, the results were presented at several national conferences, including the CaRe Days (2022), the Caring Geographies Conference Rotterdam (2022), the SocioTechnical Systems Conference 2023: Moving Forward in Time, Maastricht (2023), and the Value Creation, Capture & Sharing in Organizational Networks Conference Tilburg (2023).

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