Author's response to reviews

Title: Advancing the application of systems thinking in health: Managing Rural China Health System Development in Complex and Dynamic Contexts

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We would like to thank the reviewers for very useful comments, which we have attempted to address.

Henjin Dong has drawn attention to the importance of political leadership for determining the broad thrust of economic policy. We have more explicitly linked the major transitions in health policy to the big changes that have occurred in broad development strategy.

Ligia Paina made a number of very useful suggestions.

We have substantially re-written and shortened the introductory section to achieve the following:

- Make the purpose of the paper clear early in the text.
- Present a more focused review of relevant literature
- Provide better guidance to the reader on the different literatures we draw on

We have revised the methods section to more clearly discuss the overall methodology and also to acknowledge some limitations in the approach.

We have added a table with a chronology of the changes we describe.

We have provided more information on the sources of specific findings.

We have taken into account the comments on the discussion section and made our conclusions more specific and drawn the link to thinking about complexity and resilience.