Health as an outcome of the three pillars of sustainable development

Health and sustainability. Changing the perspective on human development?

Talk: Sustainability #3, Lund University, November 21, 2018
“Everything clever has been thought of before. We must try to think of it again.”

(JW v. Goethe, 1749-1832)
The development perspective:

Why has the human species become so successful?
Because of a very special period of **environmental stability** in the history of planet earth!
Stability is important for successful adaptation, biologically, socially and economically.
This is interesting since the modern definitions of health build on the ability of the individual to adapt successfully, by intentional actions to the physical and social environment.
Definition of sustainability:

Survival of the human species at a good level of well-being

(Which also comes very close to the definition of population health)
Individual health and population health:

Same, same, but different!
Examples of measures of population health:

Average Life Expectancy
Under Five Mortality
Burden of Disease
Overlapping concepts:

Health Inequalities/socioeconomic status and health.
However, Population health cannot be understood without knowledge about the biological processes in the individual.

Therefore, collaboration and mutual understanding of how contributions from experimental/clinical medicine and population health research is necessary for the concept of Global Health and how this contributes to a sustainable development.
It has been suggested that population health, including health inequality, could be an important indicator for the success of adaptation (i.e. sustainable development) of a particular society or community.
WHO launched the concept of “Health in All Policies” (HiAP) about 20 years ago.
HiAP builds on the notion that all or policies, regardless of area, in one way or another relates to health, since policies are made to make society function better (i.e. to facilitate adaptation):

E.g. policies regarding the educational system, production of goods and services, governance, health care, welfare state, etc.
For long, social scientists have complained that natural scientists (especially in the applied science areas: technology and medicine) have too little knowledge of how society works.
Recently, *natural scientists* have made the counterclaim that *social science* (e.g. sociology, political science and economics) have neglected *fundamental biological/ ecological knowledge* when developing their theories on how society works and develops.
Therefore, Global Health should be global in at least two aspects:

As an aspect of general environmental, economic and social development, i.e. within countries

As an aspect of the global health development, i.e. between countries.
In order to intervene successfully, we need more knowledge on **specific mechanisms** on how different aspects of challenges to sustainability affects health:
Global warming, instability of weather patterns, changing local and global ecology.

New technology affecting everyday aspects of work and social life (transport systems, information technology – social media)

Social transformation, change of working life, gender relations, migration (urbanization as well as international migration).

The production and dissemination of knowledge, role of research institutions, the educational system, media, etc.
Take home message:

Understanding health and what processes that determine health in the individual and populations (Global Health) is essential for understanding the processes behind a sustainable development and for developing effective policies to safeguard it and for increasing resilience against the negative effects of global challenges.

All of which, are the starting points of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets!
Re: changing the perspective on human development:

“The Copernican shift in Global Health” (Santiago Alcázar, 2008)
Thank you for your attention!