A Warm Welcome

From the World Federation of Public Health Associations
The Role of Public Health in Today’s Global Setting

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World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and WHO

• WFPHA is in official relations
• Collaboration plan 2013-2016
• Point 1: “Role of Public Health in Today’s Global Setting”
• Initiated through a with the DG Dr Chan in 2013
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Classical definitions of PH

• C.E.A. Winslow, 1920
• Sir D. Acheson, 1988:
  “Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society.”
• This definition is:
  – Intentionally generic
  – PH as science and art; knowledge and action
  – Prevent disease, promote health, prolong life
  – PH is an organized societal function
Other definitions of PH

• WHO HQ, WHO/PAHO, WHO/WPR, WHO/EUR, European Commission, EUPHA/ASPHER, UK PH Faculty, APHA, Karolinska Institute, Institute of Medicine US, World Bank, ...
Definitions of PH

• Is a contested area
• We may recognize three different types of definitions of PH according to main axes to the extent of which they
  a) frame PH functions and PH work force
  b) are normative and descriptive
  c) incorporate wider social determinants and environmental factors influencing population health and health inequalities
Health care system – Public Health

Health care systems

• Clear organizational boundaries
• Familiar to most people
• Highly visible and valued
• Identifying and repairing health problems arising from past exposure*

• *Graham H. Where is the future in public health? The Milbank Quarterly. 201088(2):146-168
Public Health

• A definition describes public health as that which we as a society do to assure conditions in which people can be healthy*

* Institute of Medicine
Kenneth Clark “Civilisation”

• What is civilisation?
• I don’t know. I can’t define it in abstract terms yet.
• But I think I can recognise when I see it.
Katmandu
Questions

• What should Public Health do? What should be done elsewhere?
• Is Public Health the solution to better health?
• Who should be doing?
• Does Public Health fully capture current health challenges, current societal changes?
• Do we need Public Health experts?
Questions

• what do we mean by 'public' in public health?
• How do empirical and normative issues relate to each other?
• Is it all about governance for/of health?
• Is the new world order the multiplicity of empires and civilizations, not the dominance of one?
• new types of political organizations may arise
Future orientation of PH – challenges I

• Industrialisation and technology impact on ecological systems of future generations
• Lack of future conditions for health, instead: immediate risk and short-term benefits
• Evidence base is ill-suited; RCTs will not identify the result of complex interventions
Future orientation of PH – challenges II

• Equity, human rights and political empowerment
• Inter-generational equity
• Trans-national, global aspects of health
• Integrating the complexity and non-linearity of PH problems
• New approaches based on understanding linkages, relationships and interactions
Future orientation of PH – ongoing discussions:

• UN “The World we Want”
• Post2015 process: multiple actors
• Define common priorities for collective action for the next 15 years
• Political process: End of the autocraties and hierarchical patronage machines
• Societal process: worldwide conversation
Civilisation and Public Health

• What are its enemies?
• **Fear** (of war, intrusion, plague, famine)
• Fear (that you don’t dare question anything or change anything)
• It requires:
• **Confidence** (in society, its laws, philosophy)
• Vigour, **energy**, vitality
Ways “out”

• Systems science  
• System philosophy  
• Avoid the silo thinking  
• Integrate the regional members  
• get the global interconnectivity into the picture: “all in one boat”
I’m sure glad the hole isn’t in our end...
Thank you!