

## **EATING, MOVING AND SURVIVING: WILL RECTIFYING OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENTALLY NON-SUSTAINABLE WAYS OF LIVING PROMOTE HEALTH IN THE POPULATION AT LARGE?**

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The rise of 'health promotion' in the 1980s-1990s coincided with the peaking of the influential values of neoliberalism. Under that influence, and with reinforcement from the individually-focused and influential ethos of North American epidemiology, much health promotion effort has been directed at changing individual behaviour and, hence, individual risk factor levels. Meanwhile, we have paid little attention to the population-level dimension of human ecology – the ways that communities live, design their settlements, produce food, etc.

Several major recent health-endangering experiences have helped us reframe our thinking in ecological terms. These include: (i) the population-wide rise of overweight, (ii) the accelerated and widespread emergence of infectious diseases; (iii) the health risks, present and future, posed by human-induced climate change. To understand the genesis, and mode of health impact, of these large-scale changes requires us to think ecologically – to frame research questions and policy advice in population-level terms.

An uptrend in new zoonotic diseases from intensified animal husbandry has raised questions about food consumption priorities; likewise recognition of the great and rising contribution of the world's livestock sector to global greenhouse gas emissions. Curbing private vehicle use, to constrain GHG emissions, will help restore walking, cycling and social contact in urban populations. Both rising global temperatures and rising levels of obesity are expressions of a culture that combines excessive consumption with unprecedented reliance on fossil fuel-dependent energy. Forging an environmentally sustainable way of life will result in healthier diets and higher levels of physical activity as an integral part of daily life.