

# Health literacy in context

Ilona Kickbusch

Careum Foundation // The Graduate Institute

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# Towards a new public health

Health  
literacy is a  
right of  
citizens in  
21st century  
Europe



# To monitor this right we need data

- Regular European Health Literacy Survey
- Use of EUROBAROMETER
- Analyze and use other data (HIAP)
- Compare countries - EHLI
- **Cooperation European Union and WHO**

## To take the issue forward it needs:

- Making health literacy a policy priority
- Adopting a European health literacy strategy including targets
- Inclusion of health literacy in a wide range of EU policies as part of HIAP
- Funding for health literacy initiatives and monitoring and research
- Supporting a European health literacy network
- Champions



# HL is part of a larger agenda: Ottawa Charter

- Advocate
- Mediate
- Enable



Health literacy  
is about  
**POWER**

**POWER IS THE CAPACITY,  
ABILITY AND  
WILLINGNESS TO ACT!**



<http://www.ieorganizing.org/resources/what-is-power/>

# Health Literacy I

The capacity  
and ability  
to make  
choices for  
health in  
everyday life

**"Today, more than 95% of all chronic disease is caused by food choice, toxic food ingredients, nutritional deficiencies and lack of physical exercise."**



# Health Literacy II

Health Literacy is  
a major  
component of  
the  
**democratization**  
of the the health  
care system



- <http://www.patientpower.info/>

# Health Literacy III

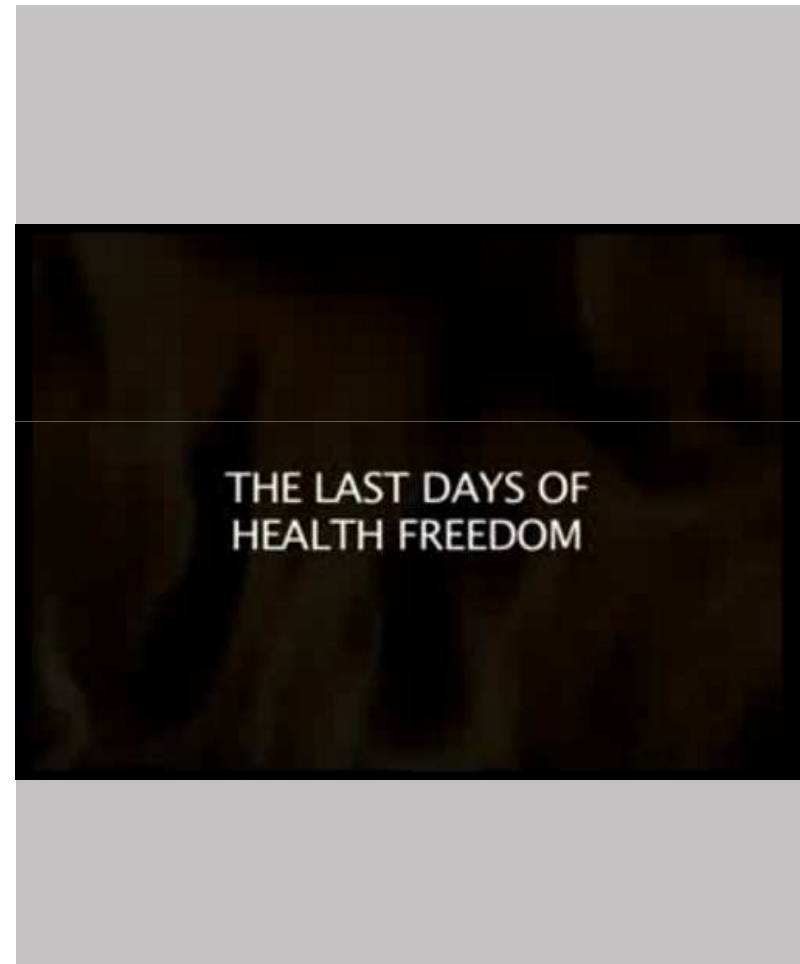
The capacity and ability to take action for health in a **political context**

– the high importance of systems literacy

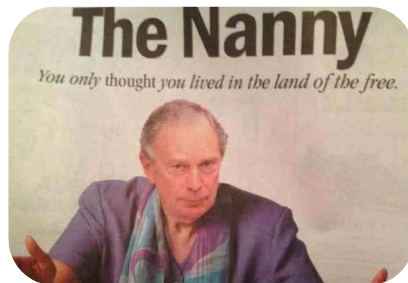


BUT.....

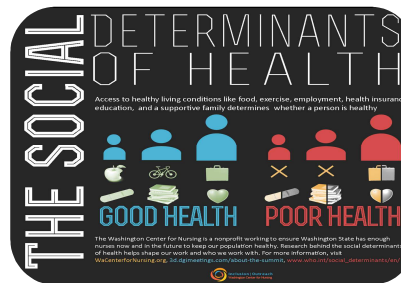
*It has become  
common practice to  
turn health issues  
into a fundamental  
debate about  
individual freedom  
and choice.*



# Public health discourses



Paternalism



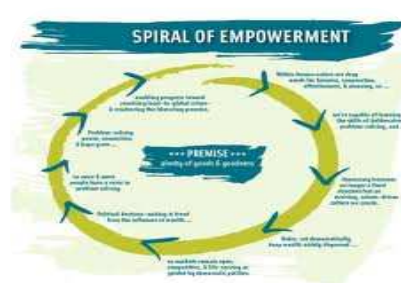
SDOH



medicalization



Coercive Healthism



empowerment



commercialization

## PH as a political tool moves in two directions

- Calling something a public health problem can serve a political purpose: **equity**
- Refuting a public health issue can serve a political purpose: **freedom**

**To discuss the public is to raise political ideas**  
**In *public* and in *health* we have different normative terms**  
(Coggon 2012)

# Positions



# Freedom: The slippery slope.....

If we allow this awful measure to stand, predicted the conservative spokesman, "behind it will come other federal programs that will invade every area of freedom as we have known it in this country until one day... **we will wake to find that we have socialism** [and] we are going to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it once was like in America when men were free." R. Reagan 1961



# The other side.....



**PHARMA  
LOBBYISMUS**

**Impfzwang  
Bevormundung  
Gentechnik**

DESHALB AM 22. SEPTEMBER

# NEIN

# ZU DIESEM EPIDEMIEEN GESETZ EpG

[www.nein-zum-impfzwang.ch](http://www.nein-zum-impfzwang.ch)

KICKBUSCH Aarhus 2014

am 22. September 2013

## Epidemiengesetz NEIN



weil wir genug haben  
von staatlicher Bevormundung.

- NEIN** zur Unterwerfung der Schweiz unter die WHO!
- NEIN** zur Entmündigung der Bürger und Kantone!
- NEIN** zur Fichierung von Gesundheits- und Reisedaten!
- NEIN** zum Impfblogatorium!
- NEIN** zur Zwangs-Sexual(um)erziehung unserer Kinder!

NEIN zum Epidemiengesetz PC 50-617590-1  
Postfach 746, 8044 Zürich  
Für mehr Informationen: [www.nein-zu-diesem-epidemiengesetz.ch](http://www.nein-zu-diesem-epidemiengesetz.ch)  
Spendenkonto: [www.flyer-ueberall.ch](http://www.flyer-ueberall.ch)



# Constant choice: Global Consumerism

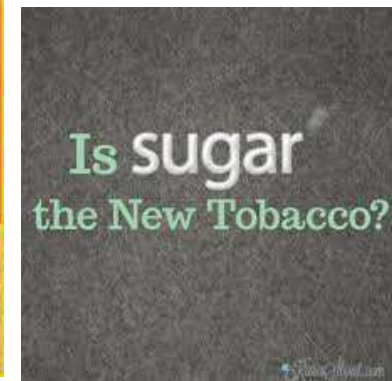


*It has become common practice to turn health issues into a fundamental debate about individual freedom and choice.*

# Commercial determinants

- “Marmot’s focus on the social determinants of health needs to be matched with an equal concern for the **commercial determinants** of health” (Hastings 2012)
- **Factors that influence health which stem from the profit motive** (West and Marteau 2013)
- Communicated disease
- Big food, big tobacco, big soda.....

Health claims



# Commercial determinants of health

- *Profits and pandemics (Moodie et al 2013) – unhealthy commodity industries*
- “Lifestyles” - The power of markets and business, in particular transnational companies/corporations and their marketing has led to “industrial” and “communicated” epidemics based on encouraging unhealthy consumption. **There is increasing proof that brands can shift consumer habits.**



# Commerical determinants: toxic products and environments + marketing

**Obesogenic Environmental Impact**



**Evolutionary Adaptation**      **Rapid environmental change**      **Rapidly adopted behaviour change**

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# Health citizenship

## Health Literacy

### Political choice



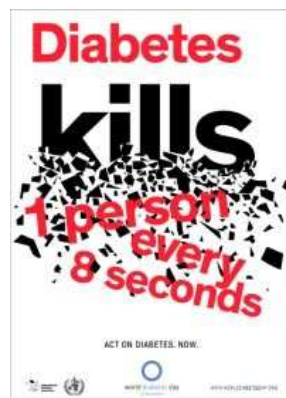
- Power is shifting to places where we have no voice or vote
- “The most political act we do on a daily basis is choosing what to eat”
- *Professor Jules Pretty, University of Essex, UK*



# Political choices – the right to health



Mexico's new tax on sugary drinks, which took effect in January 2014 as part of a government effort to trim waistlines, has reduced the sales volume in the country by more than 5% for Latin America's largest soft-drink bottler, a company official said Wednesday.

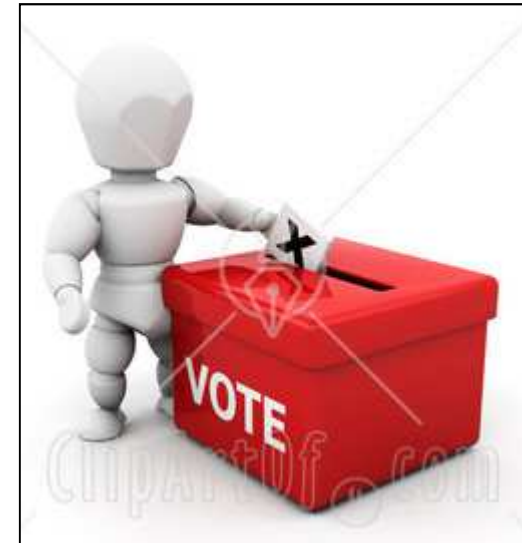


# The challenge of health citizenship: Equation of market behaviour with democracy

24/7



- Citizen
- Citoyen



- **Health citizenship: We must ensure that our democratic institutions value health.** We must invest in the health literacy of parliamentarians and of the citizens who elect them.