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Movement for Happy Degrowth (MDF)

Introduction

Since 2009, the Movement for Happy Degrowth started thinking about the connection between health and degrowth, looking back to what Ivan Illich theorized more than 30 years ago [1]. In 2011, the national group “Health and Degrowth” has been created with the aim to discuss about this topic, develop degrowth thinking in the health field and spread awareness of it on the society. Whereas a specific characteristic of our movement is pragmatism, after an early theoretic discussion on possible repercussions of degrowth thinking on medicine, we decided to put in practice our ideas with a concrete project aimed at diffusing the concept of degrowth in the medicine area: “Doctors for degrowth”.

This abstract will be briefly described our proposal of conceptualisation of the degrowth approach to health and the project “Doctors for degrowth”.



Health and Degrowth?

1) Applying the degrowth frame into the health field, would mean to “decolonize its imaginary” [2] from growth ideology. That should imply, besides a change in medical practice, a revaluation of values and epistemological principles which are still nowadays the basis of scientific medical knowledge (Fig. 1). Paradoxically most of these assumption have already been disprove by the best scientific literature (E.G. the impossibility to have a firm and objective knowledge of the physic world, because of the uncertainty principle theorized by W. Heisenberg [3], the importance of the relation with the patients and holistic approach, etc.), however, unfortunately, they are still the foundations of common medical practice.

2) Furthermore, a degrowth medicine will entail to overturn the mechanism of growth and its effects on the health system. Like human beings are nowadays only gears of a machine whose aim is uniquely to produce more and more, to increase GPD (fig. 2), a similar dynamic could be applied to patients, who become often gears of an health system whose purposes are more its productivity and efficiency (measured with objective and quantitative methods) than the patients subjective well being (fig. 3). Therefore, a degrowth medicine signify to break the chains of economic pressure on the health system (from bottom to up) and to put the patient and his needs at centre of the system, where the health machine have to strive for a real and full bio-psycho-social patient health.

Decolonization of Health Imaginary

Growth	Degrowth
• Objectivity	• Subjectivity
• Reductionism	• Holism
• Materialism	• Complexity
• Mechanism	• Indetermination
• Quantity	• Quality
• Neutrality	• Affectivity
• Limit abolition	• Sobriety / limitedness
• Dominion over nature	• Harmony with Nature

Fig. 1

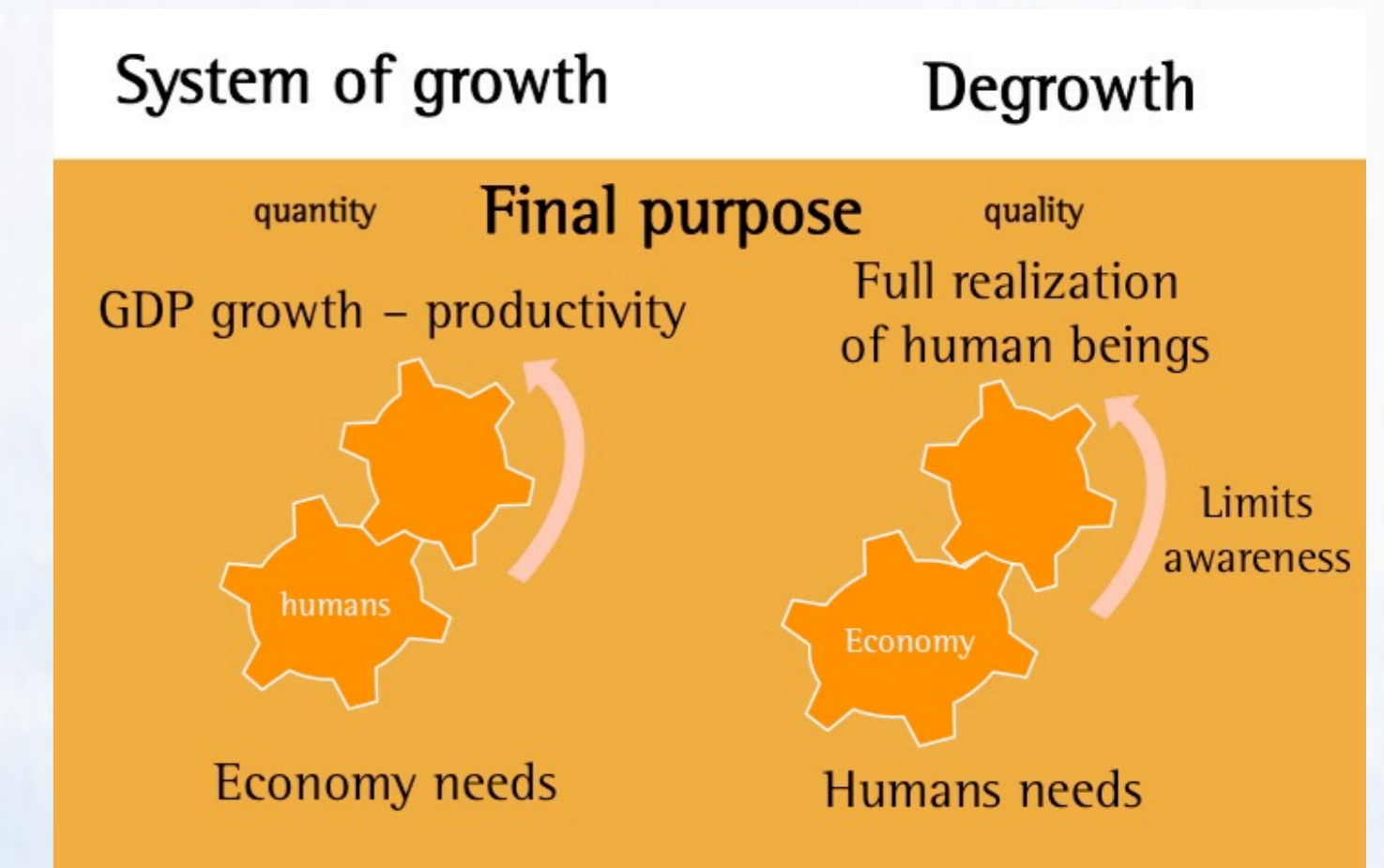


Fig. 2

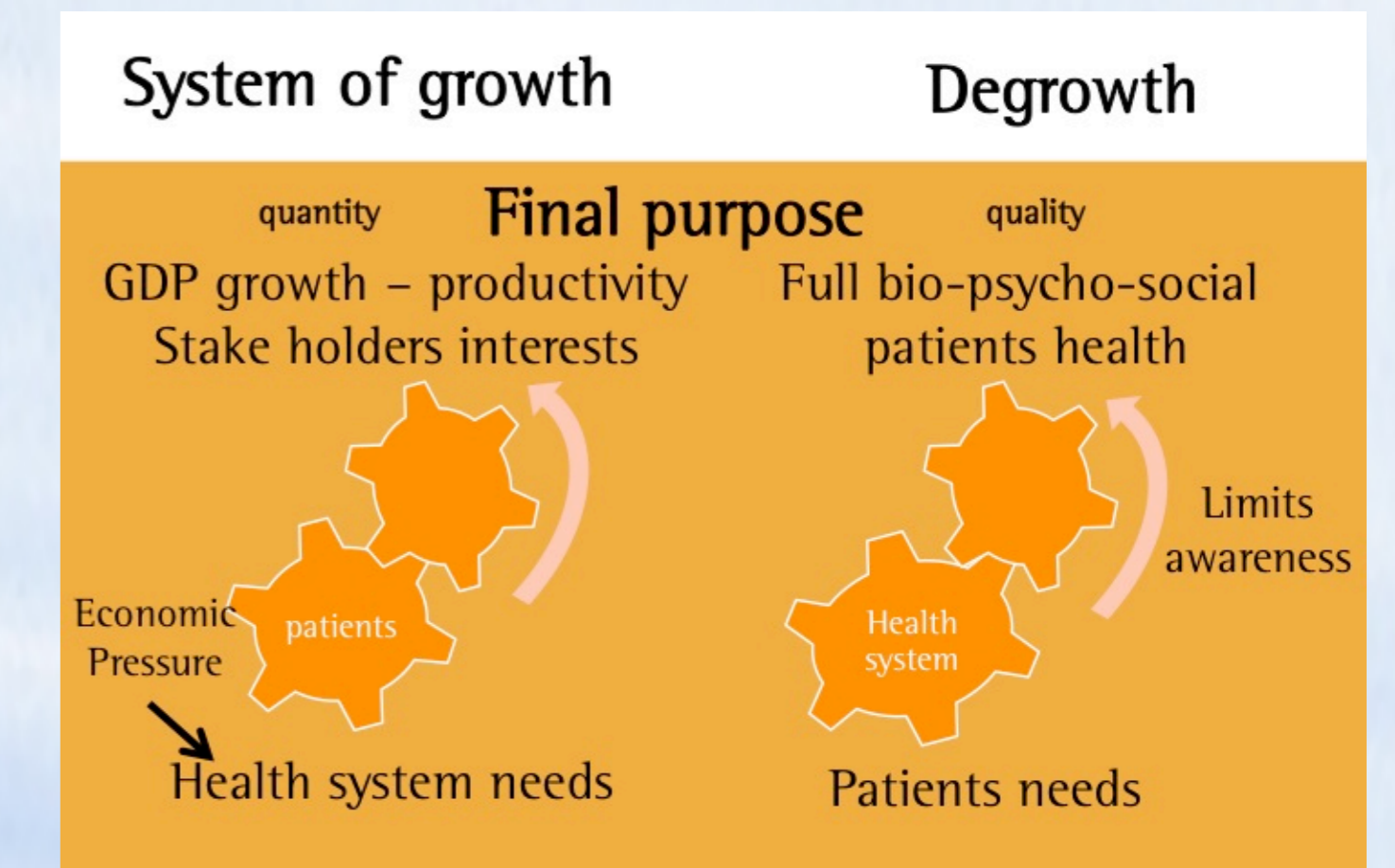


Fig. 3

“Doctors for Degrowth”

“Doctors for Degrowth” is a practical project, which aims to spread the awareness of an alternative medical practice, based on degrowth principles, between doctors and patients/citizens.

We created a manifesto with 10 criteria, that every doctor can subscribe for declaring himself/herself a “doctor for degrowth”. The Movement for Happy Degrowth publishes the names of the “doctors for degrowth” in his website [4] and sends to the doctor a brooch (to put on their gown) and a sticker (to put on the door of their consulting room) to make them easily recognizable from patients (fig 4). That will enable patients to identify and choose these doctors that have a particular approach to medicine, health and life. Furthermore, because the majority of patients do not know the degrowth philosophy, it will stimulate the discussions between doctors and patients about degrowth, enhancing the spreading of this thought and an alternative way to conceptualize and practice medicine.



Manifesto of the “Doctor for Degrowth”

1. I agree that today's economic system, based on continuous growth of GDP, is unsustainable from an environmental, economic, social and psychological point of view. I think that degrowth is the best way out of the inevitable epochal crises that otherwise we will face and to achieve a complete physical, mental and social well-being for all mankind (WHO definition of Health) [5].
2. I privilege disease prevention and promotion of a real psycho-physical and social well-being by encouraging people to adopt "degrowth" lifestyles.
3. I try to use appropriate drugs and only when patient really needs, preferring when possible to promote changes in lifestyle in a degrowth perspective.
4. I undertake not to excessively medicalize normal life events and to not treat pharmacologically, if not necessary, some diseases which are created “ad hoc” under the pressure of multinational pharmaceutical companies (disease mongering) [6].
5. I try not to run unnecessary tests that lead only to increase risk of false positives.
6. I privilege an holistic approach to the patient, seen in his entirety and in his complexity and in a continuous relationship with the surrounding world from a biological, psychological, socio-relational, cultural and spiritual point of view.
7. I consider crucial to take care of the patient compare to cure the disease. I discuss together with the patient about a treatment plan whose objective is not only quantity of life, but mainly quality of life.
8. I privilege to work in team, confronting myself with others, cooperating actively and on a equal plan with all the other professional figures involved in patient care, thus aiming to a continuous growth in both my knowledge and interpersonal relations.
9. I try to follow and implement Article 5 of the new Italian Code of Medical Ethics, regarding health education and health and environment relations, following the objectives provided by the degrowth thought. "The physician must consider the environment in which man lives and works as a fundamental determinant of health. To this goal, the doctor is required to promote a civil culture which will enhance the appropriate use of natural resources, also for the purpose of ensuring the benefit of future generations of a livable environment. The doctor encourages and participates in programs of prevention, health protection in workplace and he/she promotes individual and community health." [7].
10. **Optional criterion.** I do not accept any kind of gift from the pharmaceutical companies and informants in order to protect my independence from multinational drug companies.

Bibliography

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