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Chapter 6

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Abstract

During the Covid-19 pandemic, public campaigns were an important part of the Scandinavian health authorities' strategies to combat the spread of the virus. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had different strategies to manage the crisis: Denmark had the most political crisis management, Sweden the most informational, and Norway was placed somewhere in between. This chapter examines how public risk and crisis communication during a pandemic was handled in these campaigns in the Scandinavian countries, how they function as a governance technology, and how this was carried out rhetorically. We show how indirect, governmental steering dominated the campaign rhetoric in Scandinavia, through a focus on the culturally decided aspects of purity and danger, and through appeal to a sense of personal responsibility and willingness to avoid taking risks among the citizenry. Furthermore, we find that the campaigns are representative for the crisis management strategy in each country.

Keywords: public campaigns, governmentality, risk management, Covid-19, rhetoric of solidarity

Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the health authorities in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden persistently used public campaigns, ranging from simple, instructive campaigns to more complex, motivational campaigns. Some had a humorous twist, some focused on memories from before Covid-19, and some contained an appeal for public participation. Importantly, all these public campaigns contained a risk perspective (Almlund et al., 2020).

Campaigns are a specific genre within public communication and they epitomise health authorities' communications with the public. Usually, health authorities' messages are directed at relatively broad target groups, and campaigns are assumed to be the most cost-effective communication channel for addressing the public. The campaigns launched as part of the Scandinavian health authorities' crisis communication and crisis management strategies are no exception to this policy. However, due to their importance, these campaigns should not only reach a relatively broad target group – they should communicate with the public as a whole. Even though some messages are aimed at target groups and specific communication arenas, the most fundamental messages target the entire population.

Although public campaigns had a massive presence during the pandemic in all three Scandinavian countries, the strategies of crisis management (which influenced the campaigns' performance) differed between informational and political perspectives (Frandsen & Johansen, 2020). In this chapter, we show that Denmark demonstrated the most political form of crisis management, Sweden the most informational, and Norway was placed somewhere in between.

In the three countries, the rhetoric of political authorities appealed to solidarity (Bjørkdahl et al., 2021). As we show in the analyses, such discursive norms were rhetorically activated in our empirical material. In Denmark, this was performed especially by the prime minister through appeals to civic mindedness, in Sweden through duty and voluntariness, and in Norway through the concept of dugnad. To achieve dugnad means that all should participate voluntarily and on equal terms to help one's community, and as such, it is an "appeal to Norwegian identity and community sentiment" (Bjørkdahl et al., 2021: 173).

Generally, we assume that the campaigns were successful in all three countries. This assumption is based on two facts: The citizenry appropriated the measures recommended in the campaigns to a very high degree, and they exhibited a high degree of trust in the health authorities during the campaigns (Esaiasson et al., 2021; Helsingen et al., 2020). In all three countries, trust in the authorities was (and continues to be) remarkably high compared with other Western countries (Warren et al., 2021). This is in accordance with the tradition of Scandinavian countries being high trust societies (European Social Survey, 2018) (for a discussion of how this tradition of high trust in the Nordics

influenced the public's reception of governmental Covid-19 communication, see Johansson et al., Chapter 13).

All the campaigns shared a strategy of motivational governance or governmental steering (Almlund et al., 2020; Foucault, 1982, 1991). In this chapter, we show how this steering was carried out rhetorically. Moreover, we investigate how the campaigns communicated risk perception, since these campaigns could be categorised as risk and crisis communication. In this regard, we also investigate what is perceived to be right (pure) and wrong (danger, or dirt) behaviour, to use the terminology of Douglas (1966, 1992), and the individual's responsibilities and risks compared with the dangers to which we are exposed (Luhmann, 1997, 2008).

In this chapter, we demonstrate how public risk and crisis communication during the Covid-19 pandemic was handled in the campaigns in Scandinavian countries and how these campaigns function as a governance technology. Thus, we seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1.   How is governance present in the Scandinavian Covid-19 campaigns?

RQ2.   How are risk and responsibility expressed in the campaigns?

RQ3.   Which country-specific strategies are visible in the campaigns, and what are the similarities and differences between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden?

The chapter is divided into four parts. First, we present the context in which the campaigns were carried out. Second, we outline the theoretical approach and explain how the empirical material was selected. Third, we present an analysis of the selected campaigns in the three countries. Finally, we offer reflective concluding remarks.

Context of the campaigns

Any form of crisis and risk communication must deal with uncertainties (see, e.g., Kjeldsen et al., 2022). During the Covid-19 crisis, communication had to address two main types of uncertainty: First, the health authorities needed to address the public's uncertainty or lack of knowledge and provide guidance on how to act, and second, the health authorities themselves were in a position of being unsure of how to address the crisis, except for some basic, important recommendations. These measures and recommendations were then based on previous experience and the countries' pandemic preparedness plans (Andersen & Almlund, 2013; Parliament of Denmark, 2021; Heinrich & Holmes, 2011).

Surprisingly, it is apparent that Covid-19 campaigns seem to not have been studied in the academic literature. Instead, the recommendations and restric-

tions introduced have mainly been analysed in relation to institutions (Bent-kowska, 2021; Boswell et al., 2021), politics (Boswell et al., 2021; Grondel, 2021; Triukose et al., 2021), and behavioural changes (Jørgensen et al., 2021). In this chapter, we address this gap by examining how such recommendations were communicated to the public through campaigns.

Risk and crisis communication in the public sector is only rarely theorised in the literature. Thus, Frandsen and Johansen (2020) argued that research-ers should focus on communication from public sector organisations. In their understanding of the strategic and communicative differences, they developed three perspectives on public risk and crisis communication. The rationale of the informational perspective is to inform, warn, protect, and secure the safety of the public; crises are defined as emergencies and disasters, and this approach is based on professionalism and consensus, with the intention of communication being to distribute information. In comparison, the political perspective is an internal approach with a rationale to frame, persuade, and define expectations; here, a crisis is simply framed as a crisis, and the key actors are political leaders – hence, the approach is political and agonistic, while the intention is persua-sion through rhetorical communication. Finally, the institutional perspective is analytical, with the intention of understanding how crises are institutionalised; hence, the focus is on shared social reality (Frandsen & Johansen, 2020).

The informational perspective is supported and investigated in research on behavioural change. For example, it is suggested that authorities focus on self-efficacy instead of fear and trust within crisis and risk communication. This was found to be more influential on people's behaviour in the first wave of Covid-19 in seven Western and Northern European countries and the US (Jørgensen et al., 2021). Similarly, Sar and Anghelcev (2012) argued that people's mood is an important factor when attempting to increase the effectiveness of public health service advertisements. Recently, studies of the political aspect of measures, recommendations, and regulations have supported the political perspective (Boswell et al., 2021). Here, Sweden is frequently mentioned in research articles due to its position as an outlier by choosing the more health professional strategy of herd immunity (Grondel, 2021; Triukose et al., 2021).

Grondel (2021) argued that three governance approaches have been employed to effectively combat the pandemic: 1) the cyber-intrusive approach involves the use of cyber technology to "intrude" on citizens' digital privacy, which is a relatively strong surveillance method; 2) the liberty-intrusive approach involves restrictions or mandates that intrude on citizens' liberties, which means that people are encouraged to behave properly without being monitored (Grondel, 2021); and 3) a combination of the first two approaches. Grondel (2021) has described Sweden and the UK as countries that adopted a herd immunity approach, which was not effective in combatting the pandemic. In accordance with the following analysis, Norway and Denmark could be placed in the category of using the liberty-intrusive approach in their response to Covid-19.

Boswell and colleagues (2021) considered Denmark's and the UK's governance responses to Covid-19 as top-down approaches, which they termed "court politics". They highlighted and described the differences between the two countries and arrived at the remarkable conclusion that Denmark (as a consensual democracy) centralised authority in "the Frederiksen court", whereas the UK (as a majoritarian democracy) did not act swiftly or decisively, muddling through the pandemic from the beginning. Here, Denmark is described as having a political and authoritative response strategy.

Bentkowska (2021) adopted an institutional perspective that involved Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, focusing on how formal institutions are dependent on informal institutions (such as unwritten codes of conduct, traditions, behavioural norms, and taboos), which exist independently of the state. The study analyses the link between the countries' restrictions as a measure of formal institutions and the societal response as a measure of informal institutions. Further, Bentkowska revealed that Denmark and Sweden are in the group of countries that have both strong restrictions and strong societal responses, whereas Norway is in the group that has a strong societal response, but with fewer restrictions. Although the countries have similarities (such as strong trust and social ties), the main difference is that formal institutions in Denmark and Sweden have a stronger influence than informal institutions, whereas the opposite is the case in Norway. In Denmark and Sweden, citizens expect the state to take responsibility, whereas in Norway, citizens do not leave all responsibility to the state, going beyond formal rules and acting responsibly on their own initiative (Bentkowska, 2021).

Thus, existing research and our empirical material support our claim that in terms of crisis communication and management, Denmark had the most political approach, Sweden the most informational, and Norway was somewhere in between.

Theoretical approaches and methodology

It is important to consider the background and logic behind the development and launching of the campaigns. This informs our understanding of how the campaigns disseminated non-medical measures, such as advice, demands, and recommendations. Since they were launched with the intention of coping with the crisis and motivating citizens to do the same, the analytical approach focused on risk communication and governance, drawing on three sociological perspectives on risk.

We focus on how the campaigns functioned as a governance strategy through the lens of Foucault's (1982, 1991) concept of governmentality, which focuses specifically on indirect steering – the type of governance conducted by the campaigns. Moreover, we analyse the logic of risk through the theory of Mary

Douglas (1966, 1992) and her concepts of purity and danger, and through the theory of Niklas Luhmann (1997, 2008) and his concept of risk. Since communication of risk is a governmental strategy, according to Foucault (Dean, 2006), we also examine how specific messages about risk can be part of a governance strategy.

The concepts of Foucault and Luhman allow us to focus on individual responsibility. However, Luhman's perspective on personal responsibility versus external danger is more comprehensive when analysing risk perspectives compared with Foucault's more general focus on individual responsibility as an outcome of governmental steering. In contrast, indirect steering is more precise and operational in the Foucauldian perspective. Douglas's definition of risk is sharp and bound to daily activities (Arnoldi, 2009; Lupton, 1999), whereas the Foucauldian and Luhmanian perspectives reflect a more discursive level (Andersen, 1999). Combining these three perspectives provides the opportunity to focus on the discursive level through the descriptions of daily expectations during a pandemic.

Governance and governmentality

As mentioned previously, campaigns can be understood as an indirect governance strategy, compared with a direct governance strategy that is bound by laws. Both strategies have been conducted in relation to Covid-19 as motivational recommendations and legal pandemic regulations, respectively. Although campaigns can be perceived as reminders of regulations, they are mainly motivational recommendations. As such, they take the form of governmental steering. This type of steering is conducted with the ambition of motivating citizens to steer themselves in a specific direction and of establishing a set of specific norms or discourses, which establishes a chain reaction. First, citizens accept and apply the normative direction enacted by the initiators of the campaigns. Then, they become mediators of the norms inherent in government strategies. Accordingly, citizens are an important part of the governmental discipline chain (Foucault, 2008). It is important to acknowledge that governmental steering (according to Foucault) presupposes that free individuals are the basis of modern democracy (Foucault, 1982). For example, while we are legally free to choose whether to cough or sneeze into our sleeves, this is not the case socially or normatively.

According to Foucault, statistics have a strong influence on who is perceived as being at risk, and he further highlighted how statistics have established the idea about risk (Foucault, 2008). Accordingly, risk is part of governmental steering and is connected to the practices and rationalities of governance. Moreover, risk has become a rationality of governmental steering (Dean, 2006) as the focus on risks has increased (Beck, 1997). Because there are multiple practices and rationalities, the perceptions and performances of risk will be equally mul-

tiple and are dependent on actual situations. However, some understandings of risk develop as more dominant than others. Moreover, in a governmental sense, norms will be established regarding what is more or less risky behaviour. However, in accordance with the recommendations of the campaigns, the public should know the dominant norm. This focus on differentiated perceptions of risk is also a core in Douglas's anthropological understanding of risk.

Risk understood through purity and danger/dirt

According to Douglas (1966, 1979), the concepts of purity and danger are a united differentiation between purity and danger, or dirt, meaning that they are not two different concepts. In this sense, purity and danger are each other's preconditions. Douglas understood this differentiation as the most important dichotomy for human thinking because this is the way we establish social order and ensure the survival of society.

Focusing on social order, Douglas underlined culture, differentiation of cultures, and patterns of culture as the outcomes of this continuously functioning dichotomy between purity and danger. Usually, this dichotomy is perceived as the risk concept (Arnoldi, 2009; Lupton, 1999), where purity refers to what we think belongs to our culture and danger and dirt are what we exclude from our culture as being risky. However, what is accepted as pure in one culture can be judged as dirty in another. The differences in people's judgements of Covid-19 vaccines are a clear example of this concept. Douglas (1966: 2) described the idea as follows: "There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder". Striving to understand the specific logic of risk perception, Douglas advised us to be aware of "rituals", "taboos", and "matter out of place", since such aspects expressed during communication can help us to understand which risk perception is at stake.

While it may seem strange to search for rituals in modern contexts such as the Covid-19 crisis, rituals are part of all cultures historically (Douglas, 1966). Still, it may be an analytical challenge to observe and understand the rituals of one's own culture. On this issue, Douglas (1979: 68) wrote: "To the outsider the taboo is irrational, to the believer its rightness needs no explaining". Thus, Douglas understood rituals as a type of affirmative communication that expresses the emotions and conjectures of specific cultural groups. Moreover, it is reproductive in the sense that it upholds social relations and collective morals and values. A taboo is a restriction or prohibition. While this is obvious for the culture (which acts as the taboo prescriber), this obviousness often results in a level where the rightness is unconscious or tacit. Taboos are, like rituals, culturally dependent and culturally supportive. Matter out of place means something that is wrong in specific situations or places (dirty); for example, when some of the Covid-19 campaigns encouraged us to maintain a safe distance of

two meters from others, it was assumed to be a matter out of place if we were closer. In addition, matter out of place is culturally dependent and supports social classification. Despite our blind spots when observing our own culture, the concepts of ritual, taboo, and matter out of place are analytically beneficial when examining risk perceptions in campaigns. As a supplementary approach to the various perceptions of risk, Luhmann (1997, 2008) contributed with a discursive understanding of risk perception that specifically focused on risk, security, and danger.

Risk, security, and danger

The aim of Luhmann's analysis of risk was to uncover which concept is most often differentiated from the concept of risk in the understanding of risk in society. The theoretical foundation of this search is that all concepts are given meaning by the concepts and content of communication from which they are differentiated. When conducting form analysis, it is possible to reveal the denominator of the content and concepts and, subsequently, the logic of the communication of the topic under investigation (Andersen, 1999; Luhmann, 1997). Luhmann (2008) defined risk as differentiated from danger and not (as generally understood) as differentiated from security, and he underlined the importance of both sides in the understanding of risk. Risk is something that we take ourselves, whereas danger is a threat we are exposed to. Even though risk can be expressed through security in campaigns, Luhmann argued that a differentiation between risk and security makes no sense because risk is always oriented towards the future, and there is no certainty of a secure future (Luhmann, 2008). When analysing the campaigns, we searched for expressions of risk and danger and how they were differentiated from each other in communications pertaining to citizens' own responsibilities compared with what exposure citizens encounter.

Empirical material

When selecting our material, we initially examined all the available posters, videos, and other material on the websites, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels of Scandinavian health authorities: the Danish Health Authority [Sundhedsstyrelsen] (www.sst.dk); the Norwegian Directorate of Health [Helsedirektoratet] (www.helsedirektoratet.no); the Norwegian Institute of Public Health [Folkehelseinstituttet] (www.fhi.no); the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency [Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap] (www.msb. se); and the Public Health Agency of Sweden [Folkhälsomyndigheten] (www. folkhalsomyndigheten.se). We went through the material in October and November 2021 and looked at more than 115 campaign items in total. An initial hermeneutic analysis revealed two dominant phases in the pandemic: the instruction phase, which was dominated by a rhetoric of information dis-

tribution and instruction, and the perseverance phase, which was dominated by a rhetoric of motivation. We then selected the most salient and widely used examples of communication by the authorities during these two phases, including more than half of the available material on the respective authorities' websites. We also ensured that our selection included both posters (print and online) and videos. It should be noted that the selection of items for such a textual analysis is not meant to be statistically representative; instead, it functions as a foundation for determining the general rhetorical appeals in the material. We then examined the material from the two phases, looking for similarities and differences between the phases and between countries. This interpretative analysis was informed by our theoretical departure points, looking for textual signs and instances of governmentality, purity, and dirt distinctions, as well as risk and danger distinctions. We have translated into English any quotations from our material included in this chapter.

Analysis: Campaign rhetoric in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden

Closer textual analysis of the selected material supported the previously mentioned phases of instruction and perseverance. The initial campaigns were instructive and informational, whereas the campaigns launched later in 2020 (and afterwards) involved more features and instigated endurance and perseverance, aiming to motivate the public to keep following the established Covid-19 guidelines. The Danish Health Authority was already evaluating the initial campaign in May 2020 and was aware of the necessity of a hold-on strategy (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020b). However, the first campaigns to consider this issue were launched later in 2020. In Norway, there was early pressure from the public to further tighten the already severe restrictions. However, after some months, it was also necessary for Norway to renew its messages and campaigns to maintain public attention and instigate people to hold on.

According to the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the communicative need in the initial phase was to alarm and raise consciousness. Moreover, the aim of the campaign in this phase was to quickly create a feeling of safety and emphasise the importance of solidarity and responsibility. The slogan was, "Together we can slow down the infection" (Olofson, 2020). As the pandemic progressed, the communicative need was to instigate endurance and perseverance.

Even though campaigns were the epitome of indirect governance and governmentality, we can still search for differences in the degree of indirectness, which could reflect the campaigns' differences in strategy (informational or political). Drawing on Douglas's risk perspectives, we examined how the authorities

expressed what the right thing to do was – and what not to do; hence, what was the correct understanding of risk. With the Luhmanian perspective, we have a strict focus on how the campaigns expressed the expectations of citizens' own responsibilities compared with an expression of the danger to which they were exposed. Regarding these risk perspectives, we focused on how the degree of responsibility expressed in the campaigns and the perception of risk differed between countries. Hence, all three theoretical perspectives revealed differences in the countries' strategies and how they were reflected in the campaigns.

Campaign rhetoric in the initial phase

In the initial and instructive campaigns in Denmark, the textual elements were mostly in imperative form. This was the case in headlines, in sentences that provided good advice, and in sentences that contained appeals to follow the specific mentioned advice. Figure 6.1 depicts two examples of several posters published by the Danish Health Authority in the same format and with the same type of advice. This use of the imperative form implies that the health authorities' ambition was to push the citizenry towards a specific behaviour; however, this advice was not supported by law or subject to penalties. This duality (or contradiction) was found in sentences such as "Protect yourself and others with this good advice" and "Thus, follow this advice" (see Figure 6.1). Using such a duality of imperative form and providing advice suggests governmental steering (Foucault, 1982, 1991). Simultaneously, they aimed to establish norms to follow and initiate a governmental chain reaction of correct behaviour among citizens. We found a clear example of this in a poster for elderly and chronically ill people: "Keep your distance and ask others to be considerate", where the audience was directly asked to function as mediators of change (see Figure 6.1, left).

Figure 6.1 *Examples of Danish Health Authority campaign posters*

Comments: Full English translations of the text contained in the posters can be found in the online Supplementary Material file for this chapter.

Source: Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020a

This initiation of a chain reaction was more directly expressed in the sentences "Protect yourself and others with this good advice" and "If you protect yourself, you are also actively protecting others" (see Figure 6.1). However, more obviously, these sentences express "civic mindedness" because they encourage people to take care of others by taking care of themselves (Bjørkdahl et al., 2021).

In contrast, the most used poster in Norway did not adopt the imperative form in the title, simply stating "Habits that prevent infection" (see Figure 6.2, left). This not only presupposes that there is a virus and that citizens must act accordingly, but that the citizens agree about this. In other words, they are more in need of motivating information than an order. In general, the language was straightforward and in an everyday tone. Only two of the pieces of advice used an imperative form: "use your sleeve" and "wash your hands". Two other pieces of advice were purely informative by stating "Paper tissue" and "Hand disinfection", and then explaining how such remedies could best be used to prevent infection.

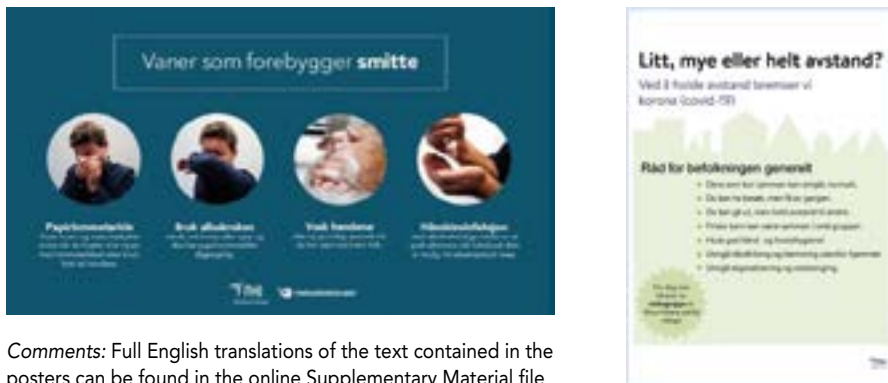**Figure 6.2** *Examples of Norwegian campaign posters*

Comments: Full English translations of the text contained in the posters can be found in the online Supplementary Material file for this chapter.
Source: Helsedirektoratet, Folkehelseinstituttet, 2022

Another Norwegian poster from late March 2020 (see Figure 6.2, right) referenced the uncertainty prevalent in the early phase by using the title: "A little, a lot, or complete distance? By keeping distance, we slow down corona (Covid-19)". However, this appears vague in its questioning form, in contrast to the widespread use of imperative statements in the Danish posters. Moreover, the bullet points were formulated as positives rather than prohibitions: People who live together "may socialise normally" and one should "remember good hand hygiene". Only the two final bullet points used an imperative tone, although in the mild form of "avoid": "Avoid shaking hands and hugging", and "Avoid

stigmatisation and exclusion". Although the Norwegian campaigns were still indirect steering (hence, governmental steering), they used a more inviting and gentle rhetorical tone.

The Swedish posters in this period were generally informational; for instance, the very first poster published on the Public Health Agency of Sweden's Facebook feed after the novel coronavirus was detected in Wuhan was simply "New coronavirus detected in China" (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020a). Later posters maintained the informational format, with messages like "Stay home when you feel sick" and "Protect the elderly and other risk groups" (see Figure 6.3, left).

In many of the Swedish posters, we see the very same governmental steering through imperative language as in the Danish campaigns. These campaigns served to establish some norms for what was assumed to be risky behaviour and what was perceived as safe (Luhmann, 2008). However, the Swedish health authorities' methodology for reaching this goal was mainly through information and facts and through an appeal to a sense of solidarity. In particular, the focus on community, solidarity, and responsibility, and the mantra "Together we can slow down the spread of infection" pervaded the Swedish pandemic campaigns.

Figure 6.3 *Public Health Agency of Sweden campaign posters*

Comments: Full English translations of the text contained in the posters can be found in the online Supplementary Material file for this chapter.

Source: Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020b

In March 2020, a video from the Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020b) shows how factual aspects were presented, explaining through animations why it was important that as few people as possible were ill at the same time. Then, it asked, "So what can we all do?", followed by advice on distancing and hygiene, before finishing with the slogan "Together we can slow down the spread of infection". By referring to science, this built an ethos of expertise and was an exercise from an informational perspective (Frandsen & Johansen, 2020). It presented risk as governmental steering (Foucault, 2008),

as the authorities recommended actions and behaviour based on their statistical and general knowledge about the virus and the danger it represented.

Even though the campaigns did not explicitly mention risk, it is clear that they addressed a risk situation both contextually and textually. The campaigns were only necessary because of the need to make the public aware of a dangerous risk: catching the virus. A poster from Sweden (see Figure 6.3, right) shows a pictogram of a woman walking alone, with a tree, a bench, and a bird in the background. Although there is no explicit expression of risk or danger, the imperative form and insistent tone of the text – "Keep a distance!" – communicate an emergency and the importance of the message. Moreover, there is an implication of an underlying risk situation and advice on how to establish safety. This concern about the specific risk of being infected infiltrated all advice and imperative sentences, underlining how risk is a rationality of steering, and the specific rationality of risk perception.

The campaigns contained instructive advice (both informative and imperative) for avoiding the physical contact we usually maintain as social beings, washing or sanitising our hands more often than before, and sneezing and coughing into our sleeves instead of our hands (which have been the usual and right behaviour until then). By giving this advice, the health authorities touched upon ritual, taboo, matter out of place, and to some extent, they disturbed the social and hygienic order.

Washing our hands is a ritual, especially after visiting the bathroom and in other situations where we try to keep bacteria and viruses, which are perceived as dirt, away. It is a ritual because it maintains purity (Douglas, 1966; Lupton, 1999). Moreover, the way we communicate about washing our hands in specific situations is reproductive in the sense that it upholds social relations and collective morals and valuations (Douglas, 1966, 1979). When we are asked to wash our hands more thoroughly and more often, the campaigns built on and reinforced a well-known ritual in our cultures.

We see this element of ritual present in "This is how you wash your hands" posters (see Figure 6.4 for a Swedish example), where both informational and ritual traits are reinforced in the posters' detailed description on how to proceed. While people might have thought that they already knew how to wash their hands, these posters claim to display the right way. In other words, washing your hands differently could imply risk (Douglas, 1992). The aim of reinforcing ritual hand washing was to enact the taboo of not washing hands. Accordingly, the campaigns attempted to reinforce rituals and articulate taboos (Douglas, 1979).

Figure 6.4 *Swedish campaign poster detailing proper hand-washing techniques*

Comments: The poster says "This is how you wash your hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds".
Source: Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020c

The campaigns in all three countries not only attempted to reinforce our established hygiene rituals, they also introduced new hygienic actions, such as asking us not to cough or sneeze into our hands. Here, the bacteria and viruses on our hands become matter out of place. Further, because we are unable to see them, they are assumed to be there, meaning the action of coughing and sneezing into our hands would be matter out of place (Douglas, 1966). Moreover, it would be a matter out of place if we were too close to other people, as the campaigns advised us to "keep a distance". One example of this was the Norwegian poster campaigns that used photographs to demonstrate how people should act, placing the audience directly in front of the threat of the virus. Seeing the images of the man in the picture sneeze into a paper tissue and cough into his sleeve demonstrated how to deal with sputum and cough in a new manner, and thus avoid matter out of place (see Figure 6.2, left). Taken together, our hands played an extraordinary role in the campaigns' pandemic advice, and hence, in the Scandinavian health authorities' idea of prevention. The new demand that our hands should not touch others placed everyone in a situation in which their hands were at risk of becoming matter out of place.

The health authorities also introduced new social norms, such as when the Danish campaigns advised the elderly and chronically ill to "Avoid unnecessary physical contact – remember it is okay to say no to social gatherings" (see Figure 6.1, left). They underlined how it is acceptable to say no to social invitations for no reason other than the pandemic. When people were advised

to remember this new social norm, it could be perceived as raising a warning finger, indicating that it should be an acceptable new norm to say no to social gatherings (Foucault, 1982).

As mentioned previously, the citizenry of all three countries were addressed by these campaigns because they were all at risk, or in danger of infection (Luhmann, 1997, 2008). The question is whether the health authorities, through the campaigns' advice, were holding the citizens responsible for avoiding the risk of being infected or were simply warning the public about the danger of being infected. The campaigns gave the impression that both risk and danger were at stake. Furthermore, danger was communicated by naming the virus "new coronavirus", since what is new is unknown, and nobody was given responsibility for this new virus – or the situation – in the campaigns. Moreover, the Danish poster directed at the elderly expressed danger when it stated, "You are particularly exposed to infection with the new coronavirus and should be very careful" (see Figure 6.1, left). It should be noted that the poster did not say that the elderly and chronically ill were *responsible* for being particularly exposed, as the new coronavirus presented a danger to all; however, the information is ambiguous since the elderly and chronically ill were being held responsible for careful behaviour in order not to be infected. Moreover, they were expected to take responsibility for being preventive, which means that the health authorities assumed that they may act carelessly, thereby running the risk of being infected. The poster and the photographs presented a possible threat while simultaneously illustrating how citizens could exercise individual responsibility and turn it into a controllable risk if they did as they were advised in the campaign, for example, "Wash your hands often or use hand sanitiser" and "Avoid shaking hands, kissing, and hugging – limit physical contact" (see Figure 6.1). Accordingly, the campaigns offered agency and responsibility to the public and turned the threat of the virus into a personal risk (Luhmann, 2008).

A Norwegian video published on 8 April 2020 shows a montage of the most popular YouTubers in Norway talking directly to the camera, encouraging everyone to contribute to curbing the virus by saying, "We all carry a responsibility. A good Norwegian dugnad, where everybody contributes" (the latter sentence is depicted in Figure 6.5). As an activity and concept, dugnad can be considered a Norwegian cultural ritual that activates norms, values, and the enforcement of individual responsibility.

Figure 6.5 *Screenshot from a Norwegian Directorate of Health campaign video*

Comments: Full English translations of the text contained in the video can be found in the online Supplementary Material file for his chapter.

Source: Helsedirektoratet, Folkehelseinstituttet, 2022

Following these traditional and now reinforced rituals pushed the citizens from threat to risk. This use of "dugnad" was reinforced by most of the Norwegian campaigns, as they were constructed as citizen-to-citizen rhetoric, presenting Norwegians as people who stand together and work in unison in a voluntary communal way (see also Figure 6.2, left).

Although the concepts of risk and security were not mentioned in any of the countries' campaigns, the focus on preventive advice was an attempt to place responsibility primarily on the citizens themselves. In accordance with this experience, the differentiation of risk and danger is, as Luhmann (1997, 2008) defined, still more telling of the risk communication in these campaigns than the differentiation between risk and security.

Campaign rhetoric in the perseverance phases

As the Covid-19 pandemic progressed, the Scandinavian health authorities needed to ensure that people did not become more careless and behave riskily. The campaigns remained instructive, such as a Swedish poster with the message, "The pandemic is not over. The situation may change rapidly. Follow the current recommendations" (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2021). However, the need to make people continue living life while employing prevention measures demanded more motivational campaigns.

In Denmark, a "We can" campaign was launched on 23 November 2020 with five videos created to induce people to continue the requested behaviour (Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020c). One video addressed the population in general, and four were targeted towards young people. The video targeting the general population conveyed a happy tone and was intended as a tribute and encouragement to everyone who was following the recommendations and restrictions.

This video used narrative scenes to show how the new daily Covid-19 routines were disturbed by old habits, forgetfulness, and clumsiness. The videos aimed at the young audience used humour and narratives, each presenting a small and funny story about a restriction or a recommendation. One video shows a young man in the bathroom who coughs, and his mother encourages him to stay home. Although he says he is fine, he looks into the mirror and sees Søren Brostrøm (the director general of the Danish Health Authority) standing behind him with a strict, almost diabolic look. He turns around, and though he sees no one, he decides to stay at home (see Figure 6.6, left).

Figure 6.6 Screenshots from a Danish Health Authority campaign videos

Comments: Full English translations of the transcriptions of the videos depicted in the screenshots can be found in the online Supplementary Material file for this chapter.
Source: Sundhedsstyrelsen, 2020c

Another video shows four young people laughing in a bar. One of them looks at her watch and says that it is time to go home, and a young man loudly protests and tries to keep the party going. He designates himself as DJ and goes to the jukebox to play some music. The piece of music that plays is Søren Brostrøm singing "Go the hell home, go home and lay down in your bed". The young man becomes a little shaken and is now eager to stop the party and go home (see Figure 6.6, right).

In these videos, the imperative form is less explicitly verbal than in the Danish instructive campaigns. However, a direct verbal message is conveyed when Søren Brostrøm sings, "Go the hell home, go home and lay down in your bed". In this sentence, we find the same duality of an imperative and good advice, representing the same type of governmental steering (Foucault, 1982, 1991) observed in the instructive posters from the initial phase.

In general, the videos supported the instructive campaigns and contained the same sort of recommendations. Thus, we can also consider the videos as risk communication functioning as a rationality of steering (Dean, 2006). Moreover, we encounter matter out of place (Douglas, 1966) and support

for the early campaigns' focus on new social and hygienic norms, where the audience is encouraged to adopt measures such as keeping distance, staying at home, and avoiding hugging. Even though the campaigns were supportive in all these aspects, they were more indirectly supportive when addressing the new hygienic norms related to our hands. For example, in the video where the young man should stay at home after coughing, the film does not show him coughing into his sleeve. Moreover, none of the videos addressed the necessity of washing hands frequently or using sanitiser. Accordingly, matter out of place, ritual, and taboo were less explicitly addressed in these videos compared with the instructive campaigns.

In Norway, the constitution of the citizenry and the gentle rhetorical force of governmentality present in the initial phase were also evident in later phases. Overall, the Norwegian campaigns displayed ordinary Norwegians, whereas the Danish campaigns used Brostrøm to represent the health authorities. The Norwegian authorities placed themselves in the background and appeared to refrain from giving orders to the public. This was the case in the series "A gentle reminder", communicated through posters and videos where the health authorities presented ordinary Norwegians in everyday situations. A warning triangle with an exclamation mark was used to signify that these were important messages (see Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7 *Examples from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's "A gentle reminder" campaign series*
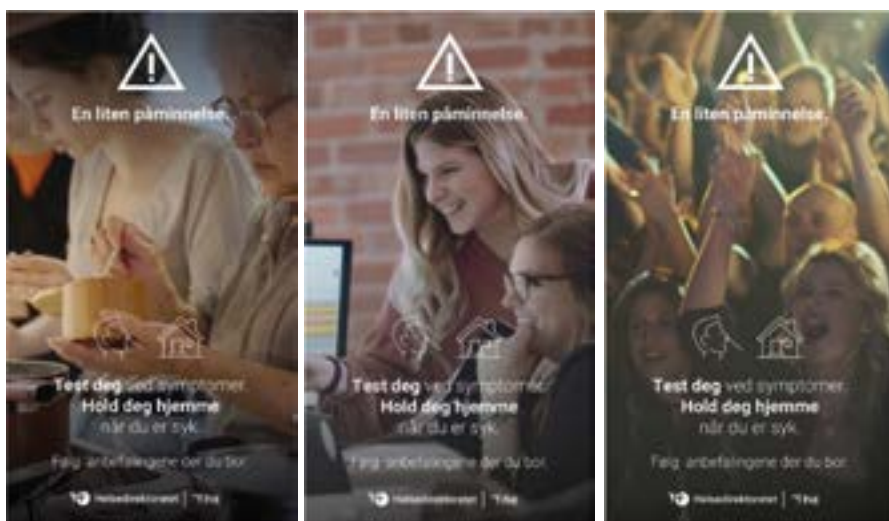
Source: Helsedirektoratet, Folkehelseinstituttet, 2022

In the images depicted in Figure 6.7, the title text states, "A gentle reminder", followed by two sentences that explain what the citizens should bear in mind: "Test yourself if you have symptoms" and "Stay at home when you are sick" followed by the more general advice, "Follow the local recommendations". These messages are accompanied by different images of people living their everyday lives. Even though the sentences in this campaign were formed grammatically as imperatives (e.g., "test yourself"), the health authorities refrained from using manifestly directive rhetoric that ordered the public from a position of authority, since this was followed by "a gentle reminder".

In contrast to the Norwegian poster from March 2020 (see Figure 6.2, left), there is no obvious matter out of place in the photographs. However, the warning triangle placed across the images functions as a sign that something is out of place (Douglas, 1966). Thus, in a semiotic relay (Barthes, 1977) of images and text, an extra meaning is created, subtly indicating that even though everything might appear normal, it is not. In other words, something is indeed out of place, so we should all be aware.

A group of Norwegian videos in the series "If you are in quarantine, stay in quarantine" (the sentence all videos ended with, as seen in Figure 6.8) from March 2021 were like the Danish videos presented in a narrative format. One video shows a young woman lying on her bed reading as she receives a text saying, "Miss you, my quarantine girl!". She answers, "I guess it takes a long time before you know whether you are infected", and then receives a picture from her boyfriend blowing a kiss at her and sending heart emojis. She smiles, puts the phone away, and picks up the book again (see Figure 6.8, left). The youngsters' messages mentally merged with requests from the health authorities and became active mediators of the health authorities' discourses and norms. Moreover, they demonstrated how citizens could become an essential part of the chain in governmental disciplining (Foucault, 2008).

Figure 6.8 *Examples from the Norwegian Directorate of Health's "If you are in quarantine, stay in quarantine" campaign series*

In late 2020, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency saw a need to sharpen its messages (Olofson, 2020) to make people realise the consequences of their actions. The method selected was a campaign called "Memories" that reminded people of life before Covid-19. Short films made from private mobile phone video recordings from life before Covid-19 were included to entice the public and make them see what life could be like again if they took responsibility and followed the authorities' advice. The videos were all dated on days during 2019 and contained the text "If we are to return to normal, you and everyone else need to take responsibility" (see Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9 *Examples from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's "Memories"*
campaign

The actions depicted in the "Memories" videos were deemed risky matter out of place during the pandemic. In this campaign material, the health authorities explicitly assigned responsibility for overcoming the pandemic to Sweden's citizenry (Luhmann, 2008). The communication used a direct address ("you"), while also implying that this was a common duty and something that everyone must do together. Again, we see a focus on responsibility and togetherness, which was a common theme in the Swedish campaigns.

All the videos from the three countries attempted to establish the kind of risk awareness that we observed in the instructive campaigns. However, this attempt was carried out by focusing on the citizens' responsibility, not on the danger of the new coronavirus – the videos focus on the audience's willingness to take a risk.

Thus, in the perseverance phase, the health authorities aimed to curb Covid-19 by encouraging the population to continue with the new habits and by repeating the recommendations, thereby continuing the indirect steering and established risk perspective. However, there are some important differences between the instructive and persevere campaigns. The use of narrative videos was added, although the use of posters was never replaced. However, more significant was the change in rhetorical appeal from instructive communication to the use of narratives and the introduction of humour in Sweden and Denmark.

In the Danish videos, humour was evident through unrealistic features as remedies, which all involved Søren Brostrøm. For example, Brostrøm's picture and song directly from the jukebox, Brostrøm's strict face appearing in the mirror, and a street poster where Brostrøm comes alive and blinks his eye to set

up the "strict look". These are funny because they are unrealistic and because the audience understands that Brostrøm's strict look is meant as an order, even though it only functions as an appeal, since there is no legal basis for giving orders. Even though the videos appealed to the bad conscience of the audience, they still conveyed a happy tone with the use of humour. In this way, the videos communicated a duty to take responsibility and simultaneously offered an understanding of the difficulties citizens would encounter by complying with the demands of the authorities.

A Swedish campaign from the perseverance phase in 2021 attempted to use a strategy of expressing gratitude towards the Swedish people with a humorous dimension by illustrating the inconveniences caused by following the health authorities' advice. Large posters in public spaces and short videos encouraged people to continue with their careful behaviour and endure these inconveniences, for example, "Thanks to you who have gone grocery shopping alone" and "Thanks to you who have spent your vacation at home" (see Figure 6.10, left and right, respectively). All the posters had the same text below the photo object: "Keep fighting all the way through. Your effort makes a big difference" (see Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 *Examples from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's "humorous gratitude" campaign*

Source: MSB, 2021a

In the videos of this campaign, the message, the people, and the settings were the same as on the posters (MSB, 2021a, 2021b). Displaying these situations, which most people related to and recognised from their own lives during the pandemic, created a sense of community. By using humour and describing peoples' experiences of life during the pandemic as something slightly uncomfortable, while also being recognisable and almost ordinary, the campaigns made it seem

less dangerous, presenting Covid-19 as a manageable risk rather than a threat (Luhmann, 1997, 2008). Humour can help release negative energy, such as fear and anger (Dahl, 2021), and inspire people to keep following governmental advice. The gravity of the situation was eased by the unserious description of life during Covid-19, while the use of humour also brought forth a feeling of community (Douglas, 1966, 1979).

Surprisingly, performing governance through humour established stronger governmental steering (Foucault, 1982, 1991) than we observed in the instructive campaigns. Even though the communication acknowledged the difficulties that the measures caused, the Danish and Swedish campaigns nonetheless attempted to internalise the recommendations and restrictions in the thoughts and actions of the citizens. This evoked a bad conscience with the Danish videos and a strong sense of personal responsibility with the Swedish ones.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated how governmental steering dominated the campaign rhetoric in Scandinavia and how the aim of the campaigns was to indirectly regulate the populations (Foucault, 2008). In this governmental risk communication, there was a focus on culturally determined aspects of purity and danger, and we demonstrated that the campaigns utilised some well-established rituals in the three countries, such as washing hands and avoiding coughing on each other. The campaigns even expanded on these rituals and created new norms of pure and impure (Douglas, 1966) in the attempt to steer the populations. Another means of action in the campaigns, hence the governmental steering, was the relatively strong appeal to citizens' sense of personal responsibility indicating that citizens should perceive the pandemic more as a personal risk – and hence avoid risk-taking – than an external threat they were exposed to (Luhmann, 2008).

The appeal to solidarity as a governmental strategy was present in all three countries (Bjørkdahl et al., 2021; Foucault, 2008). The Norwegian campaigns achieved this through the cultural concept of dugnad to motivate citizens to take responsibility. In contrast, the Swedish campaigns focused explicitly on duty and how "we can come through this together". The Danish campaigns were somewhat different, as they only expressed solidarity through the explicit and often repeated sentence "Protect yourself and others with this good advice". However, this sentence seems to be a clear reflection of the civic mindedness that was often mentioned by the Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen. These more explicit appeals to solidarity in both the Swedish and Danish campaigns indicate that the duty to support the common good is to a lesser degree part of the Swedish and Danish cultures than it is part of the Norwegian culture. In

Sweden and Denmark, this has created a demand for more explicit and imperative communication about solidarity. In comparison, the campaigns in Norway could rely on the established and well-known concept of dugnad. Even though governmental steering is by definition indirect (Foucault, 1982, 2008), this also shows that it was more indirect in Norway than in Sweden and Denmark.

Our analysis demonstrates how the campaigns expressed the crisis management strategies in each country. In Sweden, we observed how the informational strategy represented in the campaigns primarily focused on facts and instructions on how to act, although part of the campaigns also used emotional appeals and humour to motivate citizens to continue their good habits. In the Danish political strategy, the campaigns were instructive, expressing how people should act responsibly to avoid infection. Subsequently, during the perseverance phase, humour was employed to motivate citizens to continue with the new hygiene habits and social norms (Douglas, 1966; Foucault, 1982). The authorities were highly visible in the instructive and motivating campaigns. For example, Søren Brostrøm appeared in a humorous way as the strict authority in the videos. Although the Norwegian strategy was political, it was less authoritative than the Danish strategy. Accordingly, it left more space for the informational parts in a less instructive tone. This gentler and downplayed tone was supported by the strong focus on citizen-to-citizen communication performed in the campaigns instead of a visible or loudly authoritative voice. This demonstrated how the Norwegian campaigns depended on informality more than formal institutions (Bentkowska, 2021).

The overall similarities and subtle differences in governance strategy and risk perception in the three countries indicated that although the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Scandinavian countries were largely similar, there were fine-grained differences in the authorities' rhetorical attuning to context and cultural peculiarities. Thus, any successful response to a health crisis will necessarily differ from country to country, from context to context, and from pandemic to pandemic. This was probably the ambition when handling the Covid-19 pandemic in the Scandinavian countries. However, we can wonder if the fine-tuning could have played out differently and, for example, consider whether the more inviting and gentle tone in the Norwegian campaigns could have also proven useful in Denmark and Sweden.

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