

Abstract

The object of this dissertation is an organ donation campaign directed toward young people. The problem presented in the dissertation arose from the fact that after the closing of the campaign, especially the young men were still less than willing to register as donors. On the basis of the campaign material and four research interviews – three of them with men within the target audience and one with a member of the National Board of Health responsible for the campaign – I aim, on the one hand, to examine a particular discourse regarding this subject; a subject that touches upon ethics and is very sensitive. On the other hand, I wish to view the aforementioned reluctance in the light of certain issues pertaining to organ donation as a health care policy. Thus, the dissertation has two foci: One is on campaign material, the Go-Cards and the website. Placing reliance on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and on supplementary terms from Multi-Modal Discourse, I endeavour to shed light on the discourses inherent in the campaign material and on how the target group is constructed through these. Furthermore, I draw upon earlier published material on organ donation for comparison, thus illustrating discursive change. The material, Go-Cards and website, together with matters concerning production- and interpretational resources make up a discursive practice, and the content of the interviews serves to review these matters from a broader perspective. Based on the campaign's verbalisation of the subject matter, I aim to ascertain whether or not this verbalisation contributes to a change in attitudes toward organ donation. Not least, however, the interviews are meant to provide an insight into the mechanisms that might complicate the decision to commit oneself to donation – this is the second focal point of the dissertation. I borrow from Luc Boltanski's thoughts on the issues

pertaining to the distance that is characteristic of the relationship between the ‘unfortunate’ and the ‘fortunate’ and the obligation of the latter to help the former, in accordance with a *politics of pity*. I draw a parallel to organ donation as a deeply complex subject, facing the fortunate with questions of moral obligation, among others.

The analysis thus uncovers how the Go-Cards make use of palpable commercial and consumerist discourses, while the website seeks to maintain an institutional discourse. The Go-Cards construct the target group as one of individuals who can be seduced, via persuasive means – ‘sex’ and ‘romance’ – to comply with the message of the campaign. The sender is, however non-transparent in the Go-Cards, whereas the use of what is intended as an institutional discourse on the website aims to construct the sender as an institution and thereby as trustworthy. The analysis, which also draws on earlier material on organ donation, points to a discursive change in that the conventions regarding the verbalisation of the message has changed. I also point out an overall structural change owing to the fact that discourses that used to belong to the discourse order of the National Board of Health have been transformed to rely on a market discourse order, thus making use of commercial and consumerist discourses.

The way in which the campaign verbalises its message and the change that it indicates does not, however, have any significant effect on the young men’s approach to the subject. Their statements suggest that the subject is one of such complexity that it transcends questions of obligation. With the subject of this campaign, the men are faced with abstract questions that lead to doubt and scepticism toward dealing with the matter. The mechanisms that can be said to heighten the young men’s reservations concerning the subject have to do with distance. Not only is the person or persons that stand to receive donor’s organs strangers to the donor – the donor cannot follow and witness the actualisation of his help. Because the actualisation of the help is contingent on the donor’s death, the men are faced with abstract and not least existential questions, and something as concrete as a signature hinting at aspects of their own death may deter them from making the decision.