

Marta Axner 2013. *Public Religions in Swedish Media. A Study of Religious Actors on Three Newspaper Debate Pages 2001-2011*. Diss. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. *Studies in Religion and Society*:11.

This study addresses issues concerning religion in the public sphere, brought about by the debates over the perceived resurgence of religion and the post-secular. The aim is to analyze the participation of religious actors in the public, using three newspaper debate pages as the empirical material. Building on theories by Casanova, especially his concept of public religions, as well as mediatization theory and Habermas' writings on religion in the public sphere, 639 opinion pieces signed by religious actors were analyzed. The mixed-methods content analysis was conducted in two steps: first a quantitative overview of the religious actors published, to what extent and on what issues. The second step consisted of three qualitative case studies based on the results of the first step: an argument analysis of the debate over same-sex marriage; an exploration of the specific position of the Church of Sweden and the idea of the national church as a public utility; and finally a discourse analysis of articles by Jewish and Muslim authors. These were analyzed on the basis of criteria for public religions developed from Casanova's theory and from the media logic of debate articles. While the results show no clear increase in the number of religious actors during the period under scrutiny, one notices a clear presence of Muslim and Jewish actors, even though Christians of varying denominations dominate the material. There are also clear differences between the different religions: minority religion contributions are limited in terms of issues and scope, while Christian groups write about more varied issues. Muslims often relate to negative media discourse towards Islam, while Jewish signatories write on a limited number of themes closely related to the group itself. In many articles, one found a meta-debate over the place of religion in the public sphere even when specific issues were debated. The contribution of this dissertation is to critically discuss the concepts and assumptions underlying the debate over the place of religion in the public sphere. It stresses the importance of media perspectives as well as empirical studies for analyzing issues of authority, visibility, private/public and religion in late modern, mediated contexts.

Keywords: religion, media, public sphere, public religion, content analysis, mixed-methods, media logic, public debate, secularization, post-secular, mediatization