Constructions of Religion and the Secular in Contemporary Swedish Public Debate

This project undertakes a multidisciplinary analysis of the construction of boundaries between “religious” and “secular” in cases from contemporary Swedish public debate. Previous research within the Impact Program, as well as from the US and France, indicate a need for a deeper analysis of the implications of such boundaries for the construction of Swedish identity. The project was started in 2014 and will be finalized in 2019 through the publication of chapters in the forthcoming edited collection *A Constructive Critique of Religion: Encounters between Christianity, Islam and Non-religion in Secular Societies* (eds. Stenmark and Lövheim), Bloomsbury. Researchers from the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Law cooperate in the project: Mia Lövheim, Ulf Zackariasson, Per-Erik Nilsson and Victoria Enkvist.

*Research questions:*

- How are boundaries between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ constructed in three cases within contemporary Swedish public debate: Freedom of speech and religion, discrimination and equality, and the status and rights of faith based communities?
- What norms and values are attributed to ‘religious’ and ‘secular’?
- Who are the main participants in these debates and in what contexts are they situated?
- What are the implications of these distinctions for conceptions of the public role of ‘religion’ and how do they shape conceptions of national identity, minority identity, and religious pluralism?

*The Missionary Church of Kopimism*

A completed case study concerns the Missionary Church of Kopimism (see Nilsson, P., Enqvist, V. (2016) *Techniques of religion-making in Sweden: The case of the Missionary Church of Kopimism. Critical Research on Religion*, vol. 4). The Church is built on the idea that copying and the spreading of information is an ethical right, and was recognized as a faith based community (trossamfund) in 2011. As a registered faith based community the Church qualifies as an organized and by the state approved religion, as such it is protected by Swedish constitutional law where it is stated that freedom of religion is absolute. The overarching question asked in this project is how the category of religion enables the state apparatus to produce legitimate and illegitimate subject positions and what the consequences of this production are in relation to power and ideology.
Mia Lövheim, project leader

Ulf Zackariasson, researcher
Per-Erik Nilsson, researcher

Victoria Enkvist, researcher

**Publications**


**Presentations - conferences**


**Public lectures and media**

Per-Erik Nilsson. “Grundmurade stereotyper om ondskefull religion”, *SVT Debatt*, 12 October 2013


Mia Lövheim "Religionens återkomst – en utmaning för demokratin?”, SAMspråk 2016, arranged by Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish research council), Almedalen, 4 July 2016.

Mia Lövheim "Mediebilder av kvinnor och religion", lecture "Delaktig, stark, synlig”, The commission for government support for faith communities (SST) and the Interfaith Council of Sweden, Mentorship-program for women, 22 October 2016

Mia Lövheim, expert member, governmental committee: SOU Översyn av statens stöd till trossamfund, Ku 2016:01, 2016-2018