



**AXEL VIKSTRÖM** (b. 1991) holds a Master of Science in Media and Communication Studies from Lund University. His research is situated in the nexus between Critical Discourse Studies, Media and Communication Studies and social theory, focusing on the role of language and communication in naturalizing/challenging inequalities in wealth and power. He has previously worked as a freelance writer and is a regular contributor to the public debate on economic inequality.

In *The Mediated Representation of the Super-Rich*, Vikström uses Critical Discourse Analysis to explore how the wealthiest apex of the capitalist class, often referred to as ‘the super-rich’, is represented in Swedish legacy newspapers. The thesis is timely, given that the concentration of wealth and power at the very top has emerged as a prominent topic of public debate, with the mainstream news media serving as an important site of meaning-making around the super-rich. Drawing on Nancy Fraser’s theory of normative contradictions, Vikström approaches the super-rich as a material and discursive phenomenon that neoliberal capitalism is inclined to incorporate into its hegemonic justice narratives in order to mitigate its inherent tensions between market justice and social justice. By conducting three case studies set in both contemporary and historical settings, the thesis shows how Swedish newspapers recurrently mobilize discourses – such as meritocracy, mobility, and competition – that neutralize the super-rich as objects of ideological struggle. The findings also show how the reluctance of the super-rich to appear in the media can be used to intensify the experience of ‘wealth porn’ rather than to raise questions about the role of secrecy in reproducing inequalities, and how the media discourse around the Swedish wealth tax prior to its abolishment in 2007 paved the way for the naturalization of the super-rich by representing wealth concentration as an inevitable part of global capitalism. While the representations are not without their ambivalences, Vikström asserts that the news media is mainly concerned with using the super-rich to raise the question of the ‘right’ ways of becoming wealthy rather than questioning inequality per se. Arguing that the findings showcase how the mainstream media is structurally geared towards mitigating the tensions of neoliberal capitalism, Vikström’s thesis aligns itself with the ongoing ‘inequality turn’ within the social sciences by displaying the value of studying economic inequality from above.

ISSN 1651-4785  
ISBN 978-91-7529-543-5

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ÖREBRO STUDIES  
IN MEDIA AND  
COMMUNICATION  
30  
2024

Doctoral Dissertation

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*Media and Communication*



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