



## **Strategic Communication and Preparedness**

Discursive Legitimation Practices in Swedish Total Defence  
Organizations

av

**Malin Ågren**

### **Akademisk avhandling**

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i medie- och  
kommunikationsvetenskap,  
som kommer att försvaras offentligt  
fredagen den 23 maj 2025 kl. 13.15,  
Hörsal F, Forumhuset, Örebro universitet

Opponent: Professor Misse Wester  
Avdelningen för Riskhantering och Samhällssäkerhet  
Lunds universitet  
Lund, Sverige

Örebro universitet  
Institutionen för humaniora, utbildnings- och  
samhällsvetenskap  
701 82 ÖREBRO

## Abstract

The aim of this compilation thesis is to investigate how a group of Swedish public sector organizations with key roles in the country's total defence system discursively legitimate preparedness issues through strategic communication, at a time when the question of preparedness is receiving increasing priority in Swedish society. Using a critical discourse methodology in three empirical studies, the thesis shows how communication about preparedness plays an important role in how three types of organizations seek to gain legitimacy for themselves and for their operations, as well as for preparedness as a societal phenomenon.

The findings show that all three organizations, the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) [*Försvarsmakten*], municipalities, and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) [*Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap*], rely heavily on a normalizing message in their communication, as well as on the legitimation strategies of moralization and rationalization. The findings furthermore pinpoint how the role of the public sector organizations is largely backgrounded in this communication, and the individual citizen's responsibility for preparedness is highlighted instead.

Due to the strategic importance of this kind of communication in these organizations' legitimation process, the thesis concludes that it should be regarded here as a particular form of strategic communication, called "preparedness communication". Through its focus on the discursive micro-levels, the thesis shows how such communication is performed in practice, and how it is an integral part of the public sector's overarching strategic communication, in times of both stability and uncertainty.

Keywords: strategic communication, public sector organizations, preparedness, discursive legitimation, critical discourse analysis