

Marknaden som monster och mönster
Ekonomiska experter och nyheter om ekonomi i Rapport 1978-1998

The market as utopia and dystopia
Economic experts and news on economy in Rapport 1978-1998

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Abstract

The two starting points of the thesis are (i) a structural change, i.e. the disembedding or globalization of the Swedish economy, and (ii) a discursive change in economics, more specifically the orientation from Keynesianism to neo-classical economics.

The aim of the study is to analyze how these changes, structural and discursive, are constructed and appropriated by Swedish news media.

The data is collected from the public service news broadcast, Rapport, during two formative decades, more specifically 1978-1998. By selecting news items with economists, experts on economy, it is possible to, firstly, examine the medias appropriation of the change in discourse in the expert system, and secondly, shed light on the overall construction of the economy in news reporting.

The results show that economic experts are consistently treated as impartial and trustworthy arbiters, their knowledge and analytical skills stay mostly unquestioned. During the 1980's the experts begin to criticize the economic policy from a neo-classical point of view, and recommend a freer play for market forces. These opinions are generally accepted in the reporting.

Over time, the construction of the Swedish economy changes. In the early years, a Keynesian economy, adapted to the Swedish welfare model, is identified, which means a macro perspective, where the totality of the economic development is considered, and where the government has an important controlling and fine-tuning role.

During the 1990's the financial markets, more often named "the so-called market", becomes a new agent. The market is powerful and has taken over the governments leading role. The overall construction of the new agent is negative, it brings chaos and disorder, rather than wealth and civilization.

All in all, the market stands for 'utopia' concerning specific sectors and as a mean for increased efficiency – but as agent in the new economy it seems to represent 'dystopia'.

In many respects, the market is caricatured and mystified and the news reporting, hence, makes it difficult for citizens – whether they accept globalization or not – to have well-founded ideas about the market and the economic development as a whole.

Key words: television, news media, economy, discourse analysis, economists, experts, globalization, capitalism, disembedded economy.