

## Doctoral Research in 2020: What Did the New Nordic Doctors Study?

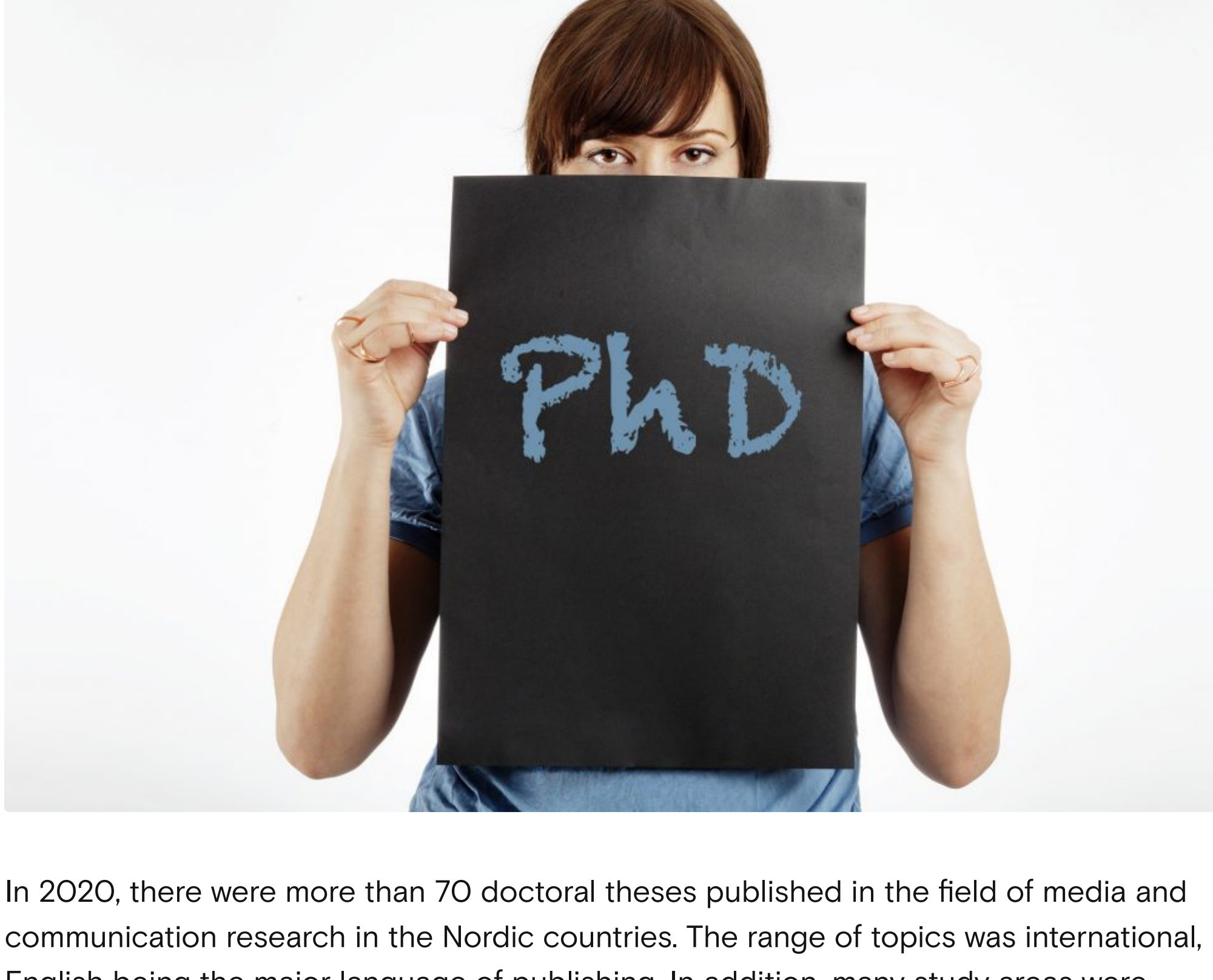
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In 2020, there were more than 70 doctoral theses published in the field of media and communication research in the Nordic countries. The range of topics was international, English being the major language of publishing. In addition, many study areas were related to digitalization and new media.

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There are **72 universities** in the Nordic countries where media and communication research is being conducted. A majority of these universities, eventually with their subunits and partner research institutions, are delivering doctoral education and awarding doctoral degrees. These include the universities; universities with the name *högskola* (*høgskole/hayskole/høyskole*), universities of applied sciences, university colleges, as well as individual research units, do not have doctoral study programs.

During 2020, at least 74 doctoral theses in media and communication research were defended. No PhD theses were defended in Iceland last year, yet the next defense is around the corner, being scheduled for February.

In times of increased impact of media, the number of theses exploring media-related issues is expectedly on the increase. University libraries and research registers categorize research output as “media and communication research”, and this may be what we perhaps understand as the core of media and communication research, but it goes without saying there is even more media research related projects in educational, computer and economic sciences, and the humanities. The profiles of PhD programs and departments also influences the approach and may make media emphases occur more often.

Media and communication research has a primary interest in media, journalism and mediated communication. Based on universities’ publication registers and university libraries’ services, we discovered 24 new doctoral theses in Finland, 24 in Sweden, 18 in Denmark and 8 in Norway that could be defined as media and communication research.

### Digital and international

When looking at the topics of the theses, print media and cultures are outweighed by a high research interest in new media. Recurrent topics in doctoral theses were related to digitalization and digital media, from mobile phones to podcasts, and from self-tracking apps to uses of the Internet.

An increasing number of doctoral students come from abroad, which makes the range of topics in PhD theses rather international. Many aspiring doctors study topics related to their countries of origin. Last year, doctoral candidates defended theses on Romanian and Japanese media content, Russian crisis reporting, university libraries in Rwanda and Chinese television news programs.

Moreover, as doctoral students are to an increasing degree seeking to publish in international peer-reviewed journals, an increasing number of doctoral theses are written in English. The majority of the theses on our list, 78 per cent in total, were written with English as the main language. In Sweden, 22 out of the 24 theses were written in English (91%). In Norway, the equivalent number was 7 out of 8 (88%), in Denmark 14 out of 18 (78%) and in Finland 15 out of 24 (64%).

It seems that in Denmark it is more common to write a monograph than in the other countries, where article-based theses are common. However, it is difficult to verify this and get access to the theses, as not all are by default published online.

2020 was an exceptional year because of the Covid-19 pandemic that forced a majority of doctoral defenses to become virtual. Some doctoral students may have postponed their defenses in the spring term in the hope of being able to defend their thesis in normalized conditions, but within a longer timeframe, the pandemic may not affect the number of defenses.

### Expansion and convergence

Previously, Nordicom’s information specialists created annual collections of doctoral theses published in the Nordic countries. Within a decade, it has become more and more difficult to define what exactly is media and communication research, or, more exactly, what is not, and where the line should be drawn.

For example, study designs in the interdisciplinary approaches within computer science are becoming more diverse, and disciplinary areas like digital design, human-computer interaction and studies of digital methodology are developing approaches that are becoming more and more close to what has been understood as media, communication and information studies. At the same time, the traditional media, communication and information studies need these approaches to meet today’s challenges of digital data collection and study of digitalized phenomena.

Congratulations to all new doctors for completing their thesis under highly unusual conditions, and kudos to all supervisors, opponents and members of evaluation committees!

To manage the increasing volume of research – which does not only apply to doctoral dissertations – we would need to develop automated methods for collecting information on topical research. This is something that Nordicom is looking forward to exploring in the coming years.

Finally, we should not forget to say one thing: Congratulations to all new doctors for completing their thesis under highly unusual conditions, and kudos to all supervisors, opponents and members of evaluation committees!

Read the [annual collections of new doctoral theses in 2012–2018](#) at Nordicom’s webpage.

## Doctoral theses 2020

### Denmark (18)

Batslev, Jesper: *Evidence of a Potential: The Political Arguments for Digitizing Education 1983–2015*, Roskilde University (communication studies, not available online)

Blom, Joleen: *The Dynamic Game Character: Definition, Construction, and Challenges in a Character Ecology* (game studies)

Flensburg, Sofie: *Det digitale systemskifte: En historisk analyse af digitaliseringen af det danske kommunikationssystem*, University of Copenhagen (communication studies)

Jacobsen, Sara Jul: *Kvindespecifikt jihadpropaganda – subjektpositioner, motiveringsnarrativer og mobiliseringspotentiale: En undersøgelse af diskursive praksisser, materialitet og følelser i dansk online jihad-salafisme*, Roskilde University (communication studies)

Jovanovic, Danica: *Multimodal Dialogue and Photographic Style on Social Media*, University of Southern Denmark (media studies, not available online)

Jørgensen, Ida Kathrine Hammeleff: *Games as Representational Artifacts: A Media-Centered Analytical Approach to Representation in Games* (games studies)

Homeood, Sarah: *The Body is Not a Neutral Design Space: How Designers Can Use Feminist and Phenomenological Theory When Defining the “Self” in Self-tracking*, IT University of Copenhagen (computer science)

Karlsson, Amanda: *Den kannede datakrop – en socioteknisk undersøgelse af menstruation, self-tracking og apps*, Aarhus University (media studies)

Lange, Simon Bierring: *Video Mediation in Institutional Encounters: 4 Studies from an Applied Ethnomethodological and Conversation Analytic Project*, University of Copenhagen (communication studies)

Lee, Rosemary: *Machine Learning and Notions of the Image*, IT University of Copenhagen (computer science)

Lindegård, Jannik Friberg: *Parallax Machines: An Ethnography on Artificial Life in the Real World*, IT University of Copenhagen (computer science)

McCrow-Young, Alexandra: *Incongruent Images: Connective Mourning Rituals on Instagram Following the 2017 Manchester Arena Attack*, University of Copenhagen (media studies)

Müller-Bloch, Christoph: *Governance in the Age of Blockchain*, IT University of Copenhagen (computer science, not available online)

Pagh, Jesper: *Exploring Everyday Uses of the Internet in the United States*, University of Copenhagen (media studies)

Radli, Casper: *A Game of Three Halves*, University of Copenhagen (media studies)

Saabby, Sigrid Nielsen: *Podcastlytteren som hverdagskurator – en undersøgelse af podcastlytning som praksisfenomen i hverdagen*, Aarhus University (media studies)

Thorsen, Tess Sophie Skadegård: *Racialized Representation in Danish Film*, Aalborg University (film studies, not available online)

Zeng, Fiona Huijie: *“I cannot go through a day without the Internet”: Exploring the Dynamics of Everyday Uses of the Internet in China*, University of Gothenburg (media studies)

### Finland (24)

Alha, Kati: *The Rise of Free-to-Play: How the Revenue Model Changed Games and Playing*, Tampere University (game studies)

Chydenius, Tarja: *Culture in Service Design: How Service Designers, Professional Literature and Service Users View the Role of National, Regional and Ethnic Cultures in Services*, University of Jyväskylä (communication studies)

Grigor, Irina: *Weaponized News: Russian Television, Strategic Narratives and Conflict Reporting*, University of Helsinki (journalism studies)

Harjunieni, Timo: *Journalism and Democracy after the Economic Crisis: Journalistic Representations of Austerity Policies*, University of Helsinki (journalism studies)

Huttunen, Miia: *Suitable for Western Audiences: UNESCO and the Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Cinematic Cultural Diplomacy*, University of Jyväskylä (cultural politics)

Ishikawa, Motoko: *Media Portrayals of Ageing Baby Boomers in Japan and Finland*, University of Helsinki (media and communication studies)

Kangaspuuta, Veera: *Verkkoautisten kommentit julkisen osallistumisen muotona ja julkisen rajapinnolla*, Tampere University (media studies)

Koponen, Minna: *Kohti ylikulttuurista mediakasvatusta*, Tampere University (media education)

Körkkö, Minna: *Beneath the Surface: Developing Video-Based Reflective Practice in the Primary School Teacher Education Programme*, University of Lapland (media education)

Laitinen, Kaisa: *Vuorovaikutusteknologia työyhteisössä: Teknologiatilanteen vuorovaikutus virtuaalitilteissä ja työyhteisön sosiaalisessa mediassa*, University of Jyväskylä (communication studies)

Limatus, Hanna: *Communities of Empowerment: Exploring the Discourse Practices of Plus-Size Fashion Bloggers*, Tampere University (media studies)

Mykkänen, Marjaana: *The Good Television. Factual Programmes, Quality and Subjective Experience*, University of Helsinki (media and communication studies)

Mäki-Kuutti, Anna-Maria: *Terveyskuri mediayhteiskunnassa: Populaari terveysviestintä toimijuuden ja hallinnan kenttänä*, Tampere University (media studies)

Nylund, Niklas: *Game Heritage: Digital Games in Museum Collections and Exhibitions*, Tampere University (game studies)

Näsi, Ailti: *Visual Discussions: Understanding the Socio-cultural Functions of Vernacular Photography in Contemporary Communities*, University of Lapland (media studies)

Pieniemi, Simo: *Kulttuuriteollisuus ja dialektiikka: Näkökulmia Theodor W. Adornon ajatteluuun*, Tampere University (media and cultural studies)

Rantasila, Anna: *Circulating Emotions, Sticky Feelings: Affective Dynamics of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster in a Hybrid Media Environment*, Tampere University (media studies)

Reponen, Erika: *Mobiliivideokommunikatio 2005–2010*, University of Lapland (media studies)

Saariketo, Minna: *Kuvitelmia toimijudesta koodin maisemissa*, Tampere University (media studies)

Timonen, Kati: *The Active Agency of Ordinary People in Mediatized Crises*, University of Helsinki (media studies)

Timonen, Matti: *Ryhmsäamisen lukiossa. Lukiolisten ryhmsäamisen kehittyminen ja kehittäminen*, University of Jyväskylä (media education)

Tyni, Heikki: *Games Crowdfunding as a Form of Platformised Cultural Production*, Tampere University (game studies)

Vainikka, Eelisa: *Prekarisaation tunnemaisema: Vastustavat taktiikat, tunnelmat ja elämänpolitiikka verkon julkisuudessa*, Tampere University (media studies)

Willman-Iivarinen, Hanna: *Consumer Media Choice: Towards a Comprehensive Model*, Tampere University (media studies)

### Norway (9)

Andersen, Ida Vikøren: *Instead of the Deliberative Debate: How the Principle of Expression Plays out in the News-Generated Facebook Discussion*, University of Bergen (media studies)

Brun, Elisabeth: *Digital Public Defence: Thinking Topographically Through the Camera*, University of Oslo (media studies)

Bull, Synne Tollerud: *“Proxistant vision” and nye synsmaskiner – å se nært og fjernt på én gang*, University of Oslo (media studies)

Ervik, Andreas: *Diversions: Playful, Stupid, Cute and Funny Evolution*, University of Oslo (media studies)

Holmene, Ingeborg: *Forestillte publikum – Casestudier av den norske film- og tv-bransjens strategier for sosiale medier, inland Norway University of Applied Sciences & NTNU* (media studies)

Kristensen, Linn-Birgit Kampen: *Digital or Physical, Streaming or Turning Pages? Digitization, Diffusion and Diversity in the Book Industry: A Norwegian Case* (media studies)

Olsen, Ragnhild Kr.: *The Value of Local News: Unpacking Dynamics of Local Newspapers’ Value Creation for Audiences and Society*, University of Oslo (media studies)

Sandberg, Linn: *Politics as (Un)usual? Relational, Functional, and Discursive Dimensions of Political Communication on Social Media*, University of Oslo (media studies)

Segers, Iris Beau: *“Not in My Backyard”: A Story-based Local Approach to Anti-asylum-seekers’ Centre Mobilization in the Netherlands*, University of Oslo (media studies)

### Sweden (24)

Andersson, Rickard: *Strategic Communication at the Organizational Frontline: Towards a Better Understanding of Employees as Communicators*, Lund University (communication studies)

Araújo, Marco: *Infrastructure Deployment in Unprofitable Areas: A Techno-economic Model for Multiple Criteria Decision Analysis under the European Union Telecommunications Regulatory Framework*, Stockholm University (communication studies)

Agellii Genlott, Annika: *Designing for Transformational Change In School: Digitalizing the Digitized*, Örebro University (media education)

Breazu, Petre: *Representing the Roma in Romanian Media: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis*, Örebro University (media studies)

Chen, Yiming: *The Construction of the Professional Identity of the TV News Presenter in Two Chinese News Programmes: A Discourse-Theoretical Analysis*, Uppsala University (media studies)

Dahlgren, Peter M.: *Media Echo Chambers: Selective Exposure and Confirmation Bias in Media Use, and its Consequences for Political Polarization*, University of Gothenburg (journalism studies, published, defense in January)

Dafgård, Lena: *Digital Distance Education: A Longitudinal Exploration of Video Technology*, University of Gothenburg (media education)

Eriksson Krutro, Moa: *Digital Aftermaths of Terror: Reactions to Terrorist Attacks on Twitter*, Umeå University (sociology)

Forsler, Ingrid: *Enabling Media: Infrastructures, Imaginaries and Cultural Techniques in Swedish and Estonian Visual Arts Education*, Södertörn University (media education)

Gustavsson, Tomas: *Inter-team Coordination in Large-Scale Agile Software Development Projects*, Karlstad University (communication studies)

Habibipour, Abdolrasoul: *User Engagement in Living Labs: Issues and Concerns*, Luleå University of Technology (computer science)

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Hani, Imad Bani: *Self-Service Business Analytics, Örebro and the Path to Insights: Integrating Resources for Generating Insights*, Lund University (information science)

Lin Dahl, Jonas: *In Search of Future Excellence: Bibliometric Indicators, Gender Differences, and Predicting Research Performance in the Early Career*, University of Umeå (information science)

Lindblom, Terje: *Bakom bilderna: Bildjournalister och bildjournalistik i ett marknadsorienterat journalistiskt fält*, Malmö University (journalism studies)

McGregor, Moira: *Social Order of the Co-Located Mobile Phone: Practices of Collaborative Mobile Phone Use*, Stockholm University (media studies)

Pettersson, Lena: *Paving the Way for Transparency: How eHealth Technology Can Change Boundaries in Healthcare*, Lund University (communication science)

Ritter, Carl: *The Cosmopolitan Mythology: A Study of Cosmopolitan Storytelling on Netflix Department of Media Studies*, Stockholm University (media studies)

Rostami, Asreen: *Interweaving Technology: Understanding the Design and Experience of Interactive Performances Department of Media and Systems Sciences*, Stockholm University (computer science)

Stub Nybellus, Marit: *Förhandling pågår: en studie av internationella skiidförbundets (FIS) medialisering*, Dalarna University (media studies)

Tjøstheim, Ingvar: *Experiencing Sense of Place in a Virtual Environment: Real in the Moment?* University of Umeå (computer science)

Uwamwezi, Berthilde: *Merger and Management: University of Rwanda Libraries in a Transitional Context*, University of Borås (information science)

Westerlund, Parvaneh: *Designing for Automated Digital Preservation: Model, Pre-Ingest, and Error Handling*, Luleå University of Technology (computer science)

Zhao, Hui: *Politicizing Crisis Communication via Social Media: A Contextual Understanding of Organizational Crises in China*, Lund University (communication science)

*Is your thesis missing? Let us know and we will complement the list! Please contact Maarit Jaakkola, maarit.jaakkola@gu.se. The information on Danish, Finnish, Icelandic and Swedish theses was retrieved by Maarit Jaakkola and on Norwegian theses by Balder Holm.*

Photo: Skandinav

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Dear you who are working at the university as an “adjunct lecturer”, “lecturer” or “university teacher”: this is a letter for you. NordMedia Network wants to thank you for the hard work you’ve been doing in teaching, as it is widely known that you seldom receive letters of admiration at the end of the academic year.

NordMedia21 10 June 2021

### NordMedia21 is Open for Registration

The registration for the NordMedia2021 conference has now been re-opened, after being temporarily closed due to technical issues with the payment process. Registration will be open until 16 August 2021.

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