

Erik RINGMAR

erik@ringmar.net

Lund University

Department of Political Science



What are Public Moods?

In newspapers and everyday conversations references are frequently made to "public moods," but social scientists have never really discussed what public moods are or how they might be invoked in social explanations. Public moods are important, but ephemeral and hard to capture. In this talk, I will suggest a few ways to think about public moods and how to use them in our analyses of society. Moods, I will argue, are not features of individuals, and not of the situations in which individuals find themselves but instead of the interaction between individuals and situations. Moods are way of finding oneself in the world. Boredom is an obvious example. To be bored is to find oneself in the world in a certain fashion. The question to be addressed is how this analysis originating with individuals can be applied to social wholes. Can a group be bored, a society? Can a certain age be boring?