



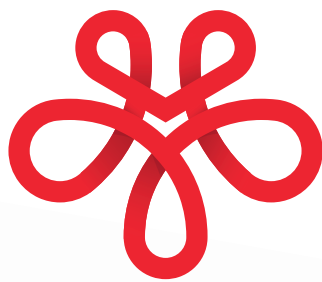
# Hanna Cinthio

Founder and senior consultant at MECCA

> Professional Biography

Knowledge and dedication  
for sustainable social change

KUNSKAP  
OCH ENGAGEMANG  
FÖR HÅLLBAR  
SOCIAL FÖRÄNDRING



المعرفة  
والالتزام  
لتغيير  
مجتمعي مستدام

Le savoir  
et l'engagement  
pour un changement  
social durable



# THE SEED

## CONCEPT AND ORIGIN

The idea of MECCA was born in 2001. I had just settled back in Sweden after returning from Palestine where I moved in my late teens and spent several years exploring a new language, culture and social structure. I was saturated; full of impressions and insights and a profound love for a society that had welcomed me warmly and taught me so many things. I was also awakened by the exposure to social inequality on many levels; from human rights violations caused by the political situation to the microcosm of intra-family dynamics in a collectivist, traditional milieu.

I came back with a growing realization of my privileges, such as holding a passport that enables freedom of movement, and being raised in a setting that allowed me to enjoy this and other liberties. I felt obliged to keep shedding light on the problems and injustices that I encountered and that many people close to me were not in a position to address or stand up against. Another drive was the frustration over the climate in Western media and debate, where stereotypes and politicized fear created a simplistic image of The Other and caused dangerously one-dimensional responses to challenges related to migration and diversity.

I sensed the need for a different kind of competence than the one usually displayed by “experts” and social entrepreneurs – a profile combining academic proficiency with lived, practical experience and social consciousness. This is why I founded MECCA.





# THE GROWTH

## COMPETENCE AND METHOD

With the world ever changing, societal institutions must adapt constantly in order to stay aligned with their objectives. Facing new trends in the field of social work and cultural diversity, Sweden in the early 2000s struggled to deal with unfamiliar phenomena through systems lacking experience and flexibility. While academics and politicians fiercely debated topics such as social exclusion, religious extremism and honour violence, the executive level largely remained hesitant and passive. However, the demand for education and practical know-how was growing, and I found myself in a position to offer it.

Over the years that followed, I had the opportunity to build my agency and reputation through frequent educations and trainings for different institutions while working in parallel with creating and managing projects for human rights protection and social change. I was active on many arenas, from developing national strategic guidelines and establishing professional networks to engaging in individual cases. This gave me a valuable overview of systems and the gaps within them, and an understanding of the chain from micro to macro level.

Within a few years, I had become one of the most contracted specialists within my field, providing competence to ministries, municipalities, the justice and health care systems, social services, schools, and NGOs. To date I have carried out 1000+ assignments of varying scale in Sweden and abroad through MECCA.



# THE MIND

## ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY

In addition to my institutional assignments, I have always engaged in community work to make proper use of my competence and to stay in tune with the shifting reality. From the mid 2000s, I organized and carried out multicultural sex education among teenagers and parents, and thematic discussion groups among Arabic speaking prison inmates for several years. Both of these experiences served as inspiration for my subsequent research projects.

Driven by a strong urge to bridge the academic and the practical, I embarked on my PhD journey in 2009, based on a solid experience in social interventions and a master's degree in Middle Eastern studies combined with anthropology, Islamology and Arabic. The interdisciplinary environment shaped new trajectories: I got further education in philosophy, ethics, gender, sexual health and more. I also had the freedom to create my own research projects building on the field experience I wished to theorize. Within the framework of cultural norm conflicts and social policy, I carried out two studies built on recurring deep interviews over several years. In one, I explored navigation strategies regarding sexuality and relationships among teenagers with migrant background, and in the other I examined cultural bias within the judiciary while gaining a unique insight about inmates in Swedish prisons serving long sentences for honour related crimes.

My years of scientific training have been of great use in my current work as an international consultant, where I get to do what I enjoy the most in the name of humanism and neverending curiosity.





# THE HEART

## ARTS, CULTURE AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

As a lover of arts, and a singer and composer myself, music has been ever-present in my life and offered a refuge not only from rigid structures and demands for academic stringency, but also from private hardships and the weltschmerz that might develop when one faces the suffering of others. I have utilized music as a way of venting my thoughts, opinions and emotions, but also in my cross-cultural activism, through bridging artists from different places and with diverse musical backgrounds, creating spaces for exchange and growth.

Supported by the Swedish Institute, I have initiated and managed exciting projects in the MENA region revolving around arts, culture, creative resistance, censorship and freedom of expression. The projects engaged activists and artists from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Sweden, and resulted in the recording of one album as well as in exchanges including joint performance tours in Lebanon, Palestine and Sweden. I have also toured and recorded in Mali in 2014 – a country where music was banned in 2012 when Islamic extremist groups took power over the northern parts – with an autofinanced collaboration project bridging Malian and Swedish artists, creating tracks about artistic freedom.

My socially engaged cultural production and my personal artistic venture continues in parallel to my academic career, and can be experienced through [www.hanouneh.com](http://www.hanouneh.com)



# THE SOUL

## MECCA'S PHILOSOPHY

Working in thematic fields where the tendency to simplify and ideologize is pervasive, and where dangerously clear-cut solutions are often served, I insist on pursuing nuances and dynamic aspects. My approach is to provide multiple perspectives and I do not believe in one single method or answer to complex social problems.

I am committed to the idea of generating knowledge and understanding through sharing and exchanging, and by using interactive methods and dialogue, not oration. This is why I never follow a script, but choose to remain flexible during my talks and seminars, so that the participants contribute in shaping the event and the outcome. Combining a vibrant lecture with practical work around a relevant case study is not only inspiring in the moment but also creates cognitive reflexes for the future. Moreover, I prefer building capacity through tailored long-term processes over generic quick fixes. Rather than pointing to a printed checklist telling people what to do and how to do it, I encourage organic development by providing the necessary foundations, follow-up sessions, and continuous mentoring.

Fifteen years of excellent client recommendations and outstanding evaluation results seem to confirm my pedagogical faculties.

Besides more extensive research projects, I write articles and reports and carry out baseline studies and evaluations for different NGOs internationally.





I am recognized for my ability to build trust among informants and obtain rich material through observations and the capturing of candid personal narratives. Mechanically ticking boxes has never been my objective, but rather to reach underneath the surface and identify true dynamics of needs and challenges, agency and potential.

My exceptional international network and my capacity to work without need for translation in English, Arabic and French has further facilitated and improved my field missions and the depths of my analytical output.

During my years in the academic system, I developed a profound understanding of the responsibilities connected to qualitative research in marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Working with informants suffering multiple levels of injustice, tackling sensitive topics such as sexuality and trauma, and operating in politically volatile contexts requires a conscious and respectful approach. High standards of ethics and integrity, an intersectional perspective, and a post-colonial outlook on theory and practice, are fundamental aspects of my work.

I care not only about content but also about form. Manner and visual presentation is important to me, and clients frequently commend my clear and precise yet effortless style of writing, and my commitment to promptly deliver aesthetically packaged material suitable not only for internal strategic use but also for fundraising and advocacy purposes.



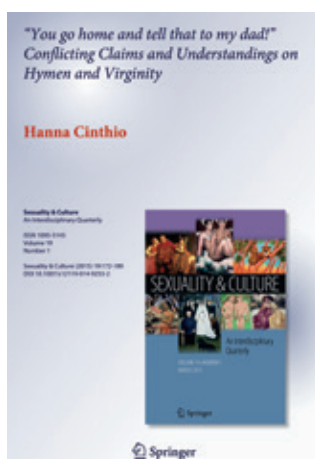
# SELECTED WORKS

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## Honour related violence and oppression – a handbook for healthcare professionals

I was the researcher, editor and main author of this handbook published in 2007. Articles, interviews, and check lists were collected to provide a thorough knowledge basis about theoretical and practical aspects of the problem of honour related violence. The 12 chapters deal with topics such as the sociocultural construction of honour norms, the clinical manifestation of virginity and chastity ideals, psychosocial and medical care aspects, legal and moral complexities, case management and coordination, and inspirational good practice presentations. The printed hardback was distributed to health care providers of different capacities in all Swedish counties and is still available as an online resource.



## “You go home and tell that to my dad!” Conflicting Claims and Understandings on Hymen and Virginity

This piece was published in the scientific journal *Sexuality and Culture* in 2015 and illustrates some central aspects of one of my PhD research projects. In the article I explore the charged discourse around the hymen and discuss possible different purposes served by the upholding of the concept. I mirror Swedish sexual policy and the agenda to “eradicate the hymen myth” against the narratives of teenage informants who need to maneuver within a normative field where the main dilemma is that the collective asserts power over the individual in matters concerning relationships and sexuality, and where the hymen plays not only a factual role but also a symbolic one.



## Selected Stories

While finishing my evaluation of the Kvinna till Kvinna Palestine Programme 2014-2016, I found myself frustrated with having to squeeze over 100 hours of precious interview material into the quite limited format of a commissioned document. I decided to create this bonus report by choosing seven narratives and one observation and turn them into stories. The idea was to capture the qualitative essence of the work done by the women's rights NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza that I followed during my field visit in the late summer of 2016. I also wanted to give voice to the women themselves; to highlight the personalities hidden behind generic catastrophe reportages and dry statistics.

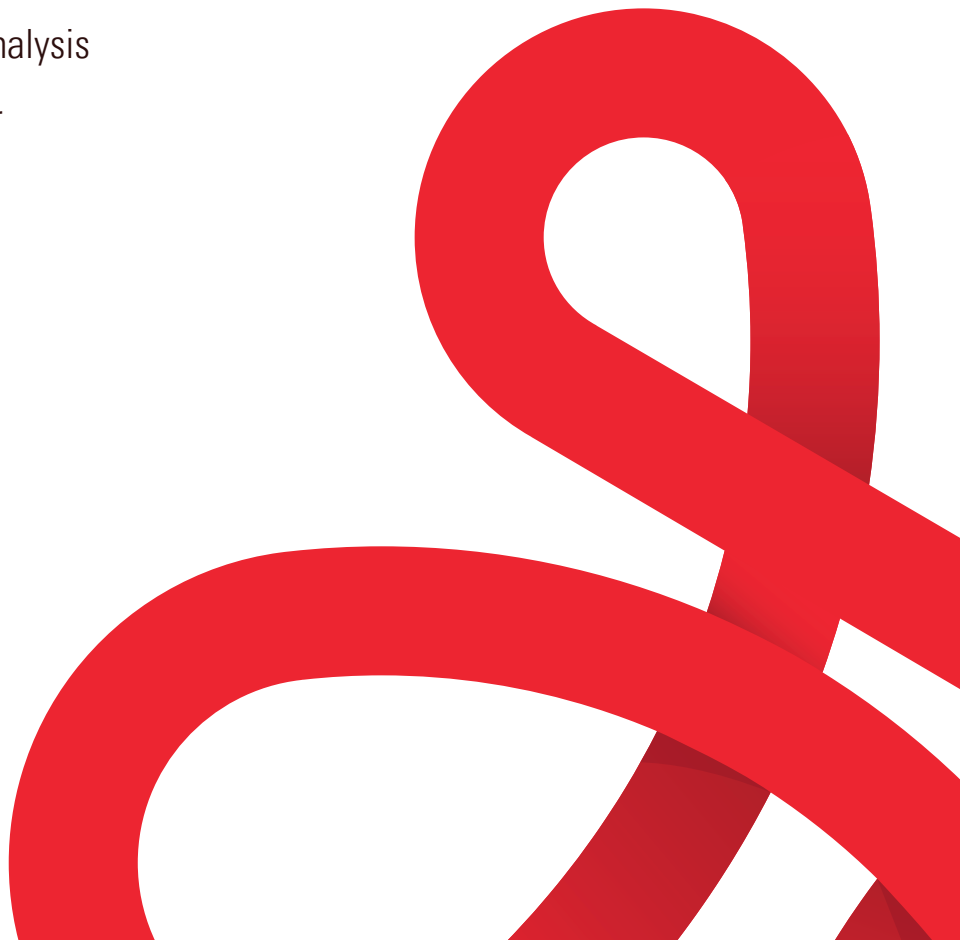
# Hanna Cinthio

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## > Curriculum Vitae

### Key Competences

- Human rights/Democratization/Sociocultural structures
- Gender/Sexuality/Global sexual health
- Migration/Diversity/Norm conflicts
- MENA region/Islam/Arabic
- Project development/Management/Evaluation
- Social interventions/Civil society/Rights-based approaches
- Cultural activism/Conscious artistry/Freedom of expression
- International experience/Multilingual work capacity
- Research methodology/Analysis
- Lecturer/Educator/Mentor
- Writer/Editor



## EDUCATION

2009 - 2016 PhD candidate (part time)

Research topic: Cultural norm conflicts  
*Malmö University*

2006: Master of Science Degree

Middle Eastern studies  
*Lund University*

1993 and onwards courses

Middle Eastern studies, social anthropology, Islamology, modern standard Arabic, history of religion, sexology, global sexual health, global intelligence  
*Lund and Malmö University*

1996 - 1997 courses

Politics, modern standard Arabic and local Arabic dialect within the Palestine Arabic Studies Program  
*Birzeit University, West Bank, Palestine*

Non-academic courses (selected)

2006: The Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Norrköping, Sweden Course: "Leading parental training programmes for Arabic speaking prisoners"

2004: UgilKonsult, Halmstad, Sweden Course: "UGL – Development of Group and Leader"

2003: S:t Lukas Institute of Psychotherapy, Malmö, Sweden Course: "The professional interview"

2003: BRIS, Malmö, Sweden Course: "Talking to children and adolescents in need"

## LANGUAGES

**Swedish:** Native language

**English:** Native level fluency

**Danish:** Fluent in speech and reading, good in writing

**Arabic:** Fluent in speech, good in reading and writing

**French:** Good in speech, reading and writing

**German:** Good in speech, reading and writing

## EMPLOYMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

### MAIN OCCUPATION

Founder and managing director of MECCA, since 2001 providing specialist knowledge, research, education and coaching on human rights, gender, gender based violence (GBV), honor related violence (HRV), sexual violence (SV), social structures, diversity and democratization. Frequently provides lectures and mentoring to NGOs, municipalities and authorities and serves as an expert resource on cultural dimensions, violence, conflict resolution, and women's rights to the justice system. Participation as key note speaker and moderator at a number of national and international conferences. Recurring international qualitative research and evaluation assignments, for instance reports, baseline studies and evaluations.



## POSITIONS HELD

- 2017

● **RESEARCHER**  
 Swedish Government/Örebro University  
*Responsible for qualitative data collection and final analysis in the ongoing national mapping of honor related violence commissioned by the Government of Sweden.*
- 2017

● **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER/CONSULTANT**  
 International relations and projects unit of Malmö City's Cultural Department  
*In charge of tasks related to Malmö's role as a Safe Haven for persecuted artists and writers; responsible for curating and hosting the international Safe Havens network meeting for donors, NGOs, artists and activists engaged in the relationship between arts/culture and freedom of speech. Expert consultant in the pre-study about the Museum of Movements focusing on democracy and migration.*
- 2016

● **CONSULTANT**  
 Kvinna till Kvinna  
*Consultant with the objective of evaluating the Kvinna till Kvinna SIDA funded Palestine Programme 2014-2016, supporting women's rights NGOs through capacity building. Conducted focus groups and individual interviews with staff of partner organisations plus rights holders and duty bearers in the West Bank and Gaza, producing one evaluation report and one interview-based selection of stories, providing input to the planning of the upcoming five year strategy.*
- 2011

● **RESEARCHER**  
 Swedish Prison and Probation Service  
*Research assignment with the objective of gaining knowledge about cultural perspectives on psychosocial interventions. Analyzed verdicts and made deep interviews in Arabic with inmates sentenced to prison for violent crimes related to gender, honor and sexuality.*
- 2009-15

● **RESEARCHER/LECTURER**  
 Malmö University/Faculty of Health and Society  
*Social work, sexology, global sexual health, GBV/HRV.*
- 2007-11

● **EDUCATOR/SPECIALIST**  
 Malmö City Department of Ethnic Relations  
*Cultural diversity, migration, gender, equality.*
- 2007-08

● **"LIFE TALKER"**  
 Rosengårdsskolan, Malmö  
*Intercultural sexual health educator and counsellor for teenagers; a project serving as a pilot study for the PhD research project starting in 2009.*
- 2007

● **CONSULTANT**  
 RFSL (The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights)  
*Coordinating a field visit to partner NGOs in Beirut, Lebanon for best practice exchange.*

- 2006-07

**CONSULTANT**  
 Save the Children Sweden (SCS), Beirut  
*Baseline study for the SCS with the objective of launching a hotline for psychosocial support to children in the aftermath of the 2006 war. Coordination with local CBO:s, NGO:s and ministries, interviewing stakeholders to assess local competence, political and administrative framework, and financial and technical needs. Recommendations for implementation and capacity building, ensuring rights based approaches and protection of vulnerable groups.*
- 2006-07

**SPECIALIST/WRITER**  
 Skåne County Administrative Board, Malmö  
*Responsible for compiling a national guideline for health care professionals on GBV/HRV and for developing capacity building methods within the Swedish health care system.*
- 2006-10

**COUNSELLOR**  
 Swedish Prison and Probation Service  
*Group sessions and individual counselling with male Arabic speaking prison inmates on the topics of masculinity, gender, parenthood, relations, sexuality, GBV, HRV and SV. Created a manual based on these sessions for thematized circles to be used nationally.*
- 2006

**MANAGING DIRECTOR**  
 Elektra/Fryshuset  
*Established Elektra Malmö (an NGO working with changing attitudes in communities affected by honor norms). Fundraising, financial handling/reporting, administration, strategic planning, monitoring and reporting, evaluation, staff management, training and lecturing, mentoring, media contacts.*
- 2002-05

**PROJECT MANAGER**  
 BRIS (Children's Rights In Society)  
*In charge of national project "Alima" which intervened at structural and individual levels in order to improve knowledge and capacity in regards to the problem of honor related violence. Responsibilities: Fundraising, financial handling/reporting, administration, strategic planning, monitoring and reporting, evaluation, psychosocial support, training and lecturing, mentoring, network building, media contacts.*
- 2002

**PROJECT MANAGER**  
 Malmö City Program for Sexual Health  
*In charge of a prevention project aiming to improve sexual health in immigrant communities.*
- 2000-01

**PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER/PROJECT MANAGER**  
 Al Zaeem and Associates Law Firm, Gaza City, Palestine,  
*Responsible for international client relations and for co-planning and monitoring World Bank funded aid projects in the Gaza Strip.*

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### Books

- Cinthio, H (editor and author): Hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck – ett kunskapsunderlag för hälso- och sjukvården, Malmö: Länsstyrelsen i Skåne Län, 2007
- Cinthio, H: En hedersfråga? Reflektioner kring kulturell mångfald, hederstänkande och bemötande inom Kriminalvården, Norrköping: Kriminalvården, 2009





### Anthologies

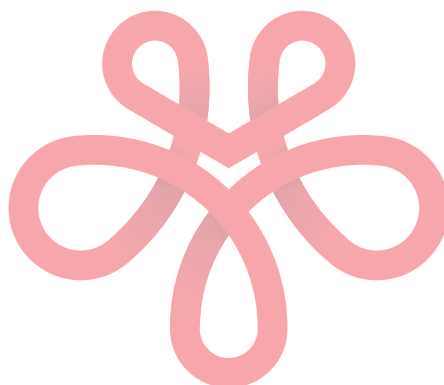
- Cinthio, H: "Om oskuld, heder och giftermål i Barnens Hjälptelefon hos BRIS och BRIS-mejlen", Att möta flickor och pojkar i starkt patriarkala familjer – teori och praktik, Stockholm: Stiftelsen Allmänna Barnhuset, Skriftserie 2005:3
- Cinthio, H: "Bortom murarna – samtal om könsroller, jämställdhet och relationer med män i fängelse", Perspektiv på manlighet och heder, Stockholm: Gothia förlag, 2010

### Articles

- Cinthio, H: "'You go home and tell that to my dad!' Conflicting Claims and Understandings on Hymen and Virginity". Sexuality & Culture, Vol 19, Issue 1, 2015, pp 172-189
- Cinthio, H: "Alltför enkel utväg att fördöma råd om oskuld". Brännpunkt/Debatt, Svenska Dagbladet, September 2, 2011

## CONTACT

-  Krafts Torg 2, S-223 50 Lund, Sweden
-  (+46) 73 528 99 96
-  [info@meccaofknowledge.com](mailto:info@meccaofknowledge.com)
-  [www.meccaofknowledge.com](http://www.meccaofknowledge.com)







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Page 4 photo (Issa Bagayogo, n'goni player, Mali) by Josef Hjertzell  
Page 4 photo (Ashraf Chouli, oud player, Beirut) by Saad Salloum  
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