



Hanna Cinthio

Managing director and senior consultant

> Professional Biography





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 - Middle East Cultural Consulting Agency - which later became MECCA OF KNOWLEDGE.



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 honor 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 social 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 honor 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, Tunisia 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.dondada.se



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.

Two decades 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.

HANNA CINTHIO

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> Curriculum Vitae

Key Competences

- Human rights/Democratization/Sociocultural structures
 - Honor violence/Early and forced marriage/Harmful cultural practices
 - Gender/Sexuality/Global sexual health
 - Migration/Diversity/Norm conflicts
 - MENA region/Islam/Arabic language
 - 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
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EDUCATION

- 09-16 • **PHD CANDIDATE** (part time)
Malmö University - Faculty of Health and Society
Research project about cultural norm conflicts
- 2006 • **MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**
Lund University
Master Thesis: "Beneath the surface of honor: A study on the interplay of Islam and tribal patriarchy in relation to crimes of honor in Jordan"
- Courses**
- 2009 • **Lund & Malmö University**
Doctoral level university courses in Theory, Method, Sociology, Gender, Philosophy, Sexology, and Global Sexual Health
- 1993 • **Lund & Malmö University**
Courses in Middle Eastern Studies, Social Anthropology, Islamology, Modern Standard Arabic, History of Religion, International Analysis
- 96-97 • **Birzeit University, West Bank, Palestine**
Courses in Politics, Modern Standard Arabic and Local Arabic Dialect within the Palestine Arabic Studies Program
- Non-academic courses/certificates (selected)**
- 2006 • **The Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Norrköping, Sweden**
"Leading parental training programmes for Arabic speaking prisoners"
- 2004 • **UgilKonsult, Halmstad, Sweden**
"UGL - Development of Group and Leader"
- 2003 • **S:t Lukas Institute of Psychotherapy, Malmö, Sweden**
"The professional interview"
- 2003 • **BRIS (Children's Rights In Society), Malmö, Sweden**
"Talking to children and adolescents in need"

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Main occupation

- 2001 • **SENIOR CONSULTANT AND MANAGING DIRECTOR**
MECCA OF KNOWLEDGE, LUND, SWEDEN
Providing specialist knowledge, research, education and coaching on human rights, gender, social structures, diversity and democratization. Frequently provides lectures and mentoring to NGOs, municipalities and authorities and serves as an expert resource to the justice system. Recurring international qualitative research and evaluation assignments, for instance reports, baseline studies and evaluations

POSITIONS HELD/ASSIGNMENTS

2018

SENIOR SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

FREEZONE SWEDEN

Providing specialist knowledge, education and coaching to professionals from different sectors on the subject of honor violence.

2018

RESEARCHER (5 MONTHS)

GÖTEBORG REGION SWEDEN

Researcher in a study about segregation in the Gothenburg region.

17-18

RESEARCHER (18 MONTHS)

ÖREBRO UNIVERSITY SWEDEN

Responsible for qualitative data collection and final analysis in the ongoing national mapping of honor related violence commissioned by the Government of Sweden.

2017

ARTISTS' COACH

EVELYN (KULTURENS BILDNINGSVVERKSAMHET) SWEDEN

Providing mental and professional coaching to established artists in Skåne, helping them to develop and reach their own definition of success.

2017

CONSULTANT & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (11 MONTHS)

MALMÖ STAD SWEDEN

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 & FIELD RESEARCHER (9 MONTHS)

KVINNA TILL KVINNA SWEDEN/PALESTINE

Consultant with the objective of evaluating the Kvinna till Kvinna Palestine Programme 2014-2016, supporting women's rights NGOs through capacity building. Made deep 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 and providing input to the planning of the upcoming five year strategy between arts/culture and freedom of speech.

09-15

PHD RESEARCHER/LECTURER

MALMÖ UNIVERSITY SWEDEN

Carrying out PhD project research about cultural norm conflicts within the Faculty of Health and Society, and teaching courses in social work, sexology, and global sexual health.

07-11

EDUCATOR AND SPECIALIST

MALMÖ STAD, DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC RELATIONS SWEDEN

Intercultural educator and specialist within the field of migration, cultural diversity, and gender equality at the Department of Ethnic Relations

2011**RESEARCHER****SWEDISH PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICE SWEDEN**

Research assignment with the objective of gaining knowledge about cultural perspectives on psychosocial interventions. Analysis of verdicts and deep interviews in Arabic with individuals sentenced to prison for crimes of gender based violence, honor related violence and sexual violence

07-08**COUNSELOR (LIFETALKER)****ROSENGÅDSKOLAN, MALMÖ SWEDEN**

"Life talker" (intercultural sex educator) within a project serving as a pilot study for the PhD research project starting in 2009

06-07**CONSULTANT****SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN (SCS) SWEDEN/BEIRUT**

Baseline study with the objective of launching an emergency hotline and psychosocial support for 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. Presenting recommendations for implementation and capacity building for local partners, ensuring rights based approaches and protection of vulnerable groups

2007**CONSULTANT****RFSL SWEDEN**

Consultant for RFSL (The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights), coordinating a field visit to Helem in Beirut, Lebanon for the exchange of practices

06-07**SPECIALIST/WRITER****SKÅNE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD SWEDEN**

Responsible for compiling a national guideline for health care professionals on GBV/HRV and for developing methods for capacity building within the Swedish health care system

06-10**RESEARCHER****SWEDISH PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICE SWEDEN**

Responsible for compiling a national guideline for health care professionals on GBV/HRV and for developing methods for capacity building within the Swedish health care system

2006**MANAGING DIRECTOR****ELEKTRA, FRYSHUSET SWEDEN**

Establishing Elektra Malmö (an NGO working with changing attitudes in communities affected by honor norms), employed by Fryshuset, Stockholm, Sweden. Responsibilities: Fundraising, financial handling and reporting, administration, strategic planning, monitoring and reporting, evaluation, staff management, training and lecturing, mentoring, media contacts

02-05

PROJECT MANAGER

BRIS (CHILDREN'S RIGHT IN SOCIETY) SWEDEN

In charge of a national project which intervened at structural and individual level 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 STAD, PROGRAM FOR SEXUAL HEALTH SWEDEN

In charge of an intercultural prevention project aiming to improve sexual health in immigrant communities

2002

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER/PROJECT MANAGER

AL ZAEEM & ASSOCIATES LAW FIRM GAZA CITY, PALESTINE

Responsibility for international client relations and for co- planning and monitoring World Bank funded aid projects in the Gaza Strip

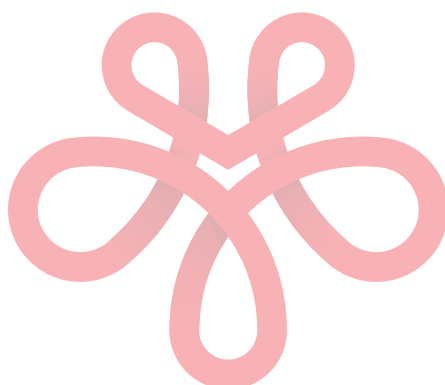
ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Invited speaker/expert

Participation as a key note speaker and moderator at a number of national and international conferences, including "Karnovs Juriststämman" (2016), "Domardagen" (2010), "Cities Conference" (2009) held by the Dutch Ministry of Interior, "Avenues for Dialogue II" (2009) held by CRISMART/Research Strategies Network, and "HRV within a Global Perspective: Mitigation and Prevention in Europe" (2005) held by Kvinnoforum and the EU

Language skills

Swedish: Native language | English: Native level fluency | Danish: Fluent | Arabic: Fluent
French: Good | German: Good | Norwegian: Good



PUBLICATIONS

> AVAILABLE ONLINE 



Honor related violence and oppression A report on the situation in the three biggest cities of Sweden

Year: 2018

Authors: Rúna Í Baianstovu, Hanna Cinthio, Emmie Särnstedt, Sofia Strid, Jan-Magnus Enele
Publisher: Örebro University & the cities of Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm

Commissioned by the cities of Gothenburg, Malmö, and Stockholm, the three reports aim to map the extent and nature of honor related violence and oppression in the respective cities from an intersectional perspective. Each report consists of three parts: an executive summary, a qualitative interview study and a quantitative survey study.

(click on the layout to read full publication of the Malmö report)

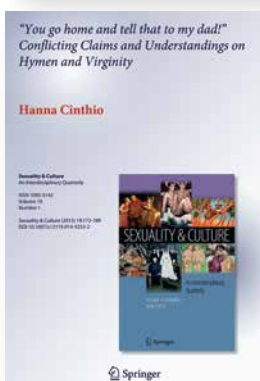


Honor related violence and oppression A handbook for healthcare professionals

Year: 2007

Editor & main author: Hanna Cinthio
Publisher: County Administrative Board of Skåne

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 honor related violence. The 12 chapters deal with topics such as the sociocultural construction of honor 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.

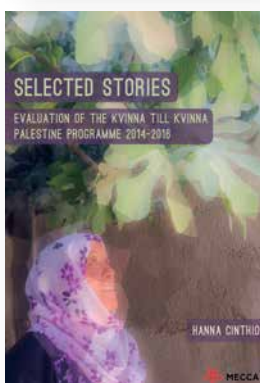


"You go home and tell that to my dad!" Conflicting Claims and Understandings on Hymen and Virginity

Year: 2015

Editor & author: Hanna Cinthio
Publisher: Sexuality and Culture/Springer

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 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

Year: 2016

Editor & author: Hanna Cinthio
Publisher: Mecca of Knowledge

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.

> OTHER 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

Scientific 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: "Love, Loyalty and Legislation. Thoughts on marriage among cross-cultural teenagers in Sweden". (Submitted.)

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LinkedIn **ACADEMIA**



Front cover photo by Anna Patarakina
Back cover and page 1 photo (Sa'id family, Palestine) by David Cinthio
Page 3 photo (eyes) by Jenny Bäcklin
Page 4 photo (Issa Bagayogo, n'goni player, Mali) by Josef Hjertzell
Page 4 photo (Ashraf Chouli, oud player, Beirut) by Saad Salloum
All other photos by Hanna Cinthio
Design and illustration by Motion

