

## **Countering Conspiracy Theories: Experiences from a Scenario-based Pedagogical Training Program in Malmö, Sweden**

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### **Abstract**

Malmö City Council in 2021 released a report titled “Skolgårdsrasism, konspirationsteorier och utanförskap. En rapport om antisemitism och det judiska minoritetskapet i Malmö förskolor, skolor, gymnasier och vuxenutbildning” – roughly translatable as “School yard racism, conspiracy theories and exclusion. A report on Antisemitism and belonging to the Jewish minority in Malmö’s pre-schools, schools, colleges and further education”. Although the background of the report was to map the extent to which the Jewish minority was exposed to harassment in the public school system of Sweden’s third largest (yet most multicultural) city, it also found that both pupils, students and (pedagogical) staff at various levels of the educational system encounter various forms of conspiracy theories (not necessarily connected to Antisemitism). Currently there are few tools available to raise awareness or to design appropriate pedagogical interventions in the school setting. Based on research carried out in the area, the author of this paper was consulted by Grundskoleförvaltningen (the administration of primary education of Malmö city council, Y1–Y9) and engaged to develop training sessions to (pedagogical) staff. The paper introduces to a scenario-based approach, dividing the prevalence of conspiratorial imagination into four areas: 1) hot-button issues, 2) science denial, 3) distrust in democracy and 4) social identity. It also presents experiences from workshops with different cohorts of teachers and staff at Malmö schools.

### **Keywords**

conspiracy theories, Malmö city, scenario-based education,

### **Bio**

Dr. Andreas Önnersfors is affiliated to Fojo Media Institute at Linnaeus university, responsible for factchecking and countering disinformation in the media ecosystem. With a background in the cultural history of the eighteenth century, he has later in his career focused on radicalization, conspiracy theories and their overlaps. For the Swedish civil contingency agency MSB, Önnersfors published a report on COVID-19 and conspiracy theories. Work with Malmö city council was carried out through his consultancy agency Hyperhelikon Ideas (est. 2021) and aims to produce pedagogical tools.

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