

## Camilla Rehn, The Order of the Teaspoon

*Examples of pedagogy for diversity and tolerance in the face of sectarian resistance*

### Slide 1: Foreword



My name is Camilla Rehn, and I'm Head of Education at a Swedish organisation called the Order of the Teaspoon. If I were to present myself to you, using only one photo, it would be this.

This is the chamber of the Swedish Parliament. I chose this photo because I truly love democracy and I find democracy and the values upon which it rests incredible important. I love democracy and that love has in my life led me to work both as a teacher and as a civil servant at the Swedish parliament for a very long time.

My topic here today is: "Examples of pedagogy for diversity and tolerance in the face of sectarian resistance". I believe that tolerance and diversity are core values of a functioning democracy. They are also important in fighting sectarianism. Therefore, building a better democracy is important to fight sectarianism, polarisation etc.

### Slide 2: Introduction of The Order of the Teaspoon

The Order of the Teaspoon is a Swedish NGO with the aim to create a society that embraces diversity. For us, diversity means a society free of discrimination. Everyone has his/her own identity and are entitled to be who they are (as long as the don't break any laws).

The organisation was launched in 2006, inspired by the book *How to cure a fanatic*, by Amos Oz. The book is his reflection about who becomes a fanatic, what fanaticism is and how it can be met. Amos Oz wrote:

I believe that if one person is watching a huge fire, there are always three principle options.

1. Run away, as far away and as fast as you can and let those who cannot run burn.
2. Write a very angry letter to the editor of your paper demanding that the responsible people be removed from office with disgrace. Or, for that matter, launch a demonstration.
3. Bring a bucket of water and throw it on the fire, and if you don't have a bucket, bring a glass, and if you don't have a glass, use a teaspoon, everyone has a teaspoon. And yes, I know a teaspoon is little and the fire is huge but there are millions of us and each one of us has a teaspoon. Now I would like to establish the Order of the Teaspoon. People who share my attitude, not the run away attitude, or the letter attitude, but the teaspoon attitude – I would like them to walk around wearing a little teaspoon on the lapel of

their jackets, so that we know that we are in the same movement, in the same brotherhood, in the same order, The Order of the Teaspoon.

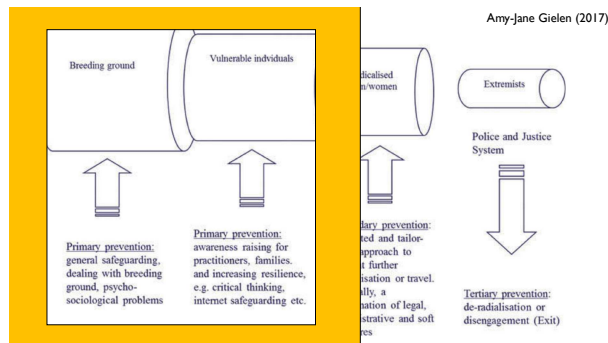
In Sweden people are now wearing a little teaspoon on the lapel of their jacket or around their necks as proof of their membership, in the same brotherhood as Amos Oz.

So, The Order of the Teaspoon was launched in 2006 and the general director now is the person who then was Amos Oz publisher in Sweden. We try to use our “teaspoons” to fight fanaticism.

### Slide 3: Schools are our main target group in fighting fanaticism and promoting diversity. Why?

- You need to start early. Noone is “too young”.
- Everybody goes to school!  
If you are in a process of radicalisation it’s natural to want to close off against the world. But you have to go to school. This is a good place to get to you! But: The intervention has to be in a way that prevents you from radicalisation, NOT pushes you towards radicalisation. Therefore it’s important to, together with teachers, discuss and understand push and pull factors around radicalisation.
- We have great support in the Swedish curriculum. Schools HAS TO work with these issues. I will get back to that.
- Teachers often say that they don’t have enough knowledge or training to deal with controversial issues in the classroom, polarisation and/ or signs of sectarianism.

### Slide 4: Levels of radicalisation



This is a picture from a paper by Amy-Jane Gielen. Maybe some of you know of Gielen, who does her PhD on countering violent extremism (CVE).

As you can see this picture shows different levels of radicalisation, and how they can be met and dealt with by the society. Gielen speaks of four levels of radicalisation: the breeding ground, the vulnerable individuals, the radicalised men/woman and the extremists. The text below the arrows shows what methods are believed to be effective in every step of this process.

The work of the Order of the Teaspoon aim at the very left end of this picture: Primary prevention. We want to reach young people and help in preventing them from falling into radicalisation or extremism. Amy-Jane Gielen herself states that: “It would seem that when looking at schools, it is mostly primary prevention that is the concern – at the breeding ground level and then the level of vulnerable individuals.”

#### Slide 5

The Order of the Teaspoon educate teachers and work with projects towards schools, in order to create reflections of the importance of diversity and tolerance.

Now I've told you some of our ideology. It's time for examples!

#### Slide 6: Examples of pedagogy for diversity and tolerance in the face of sectarian resistance (head-line)

#### Slide 7: Example: Tolerance project

The Tolerance project is targeted against students about age 14.

The project takes places outside of school (it's an extracurricular activity).

The Tolerance project has been mentioned by the UN as a model that works in creating social bonds between kids that might not otherwise meet each other. The project stretches over a year. Kids meet to reflect about themselves and their identities, historical sectarianism and events of today. They write, discuss, reflect and learn. They also travel to Poland to visit places of the Holocaust.

One of the goals is to teach the student to: "Be the best you that you can be."

The project has been implemented in several municipalities in Sweden. In places where the municipalities have worked with the project for a long time, they can see that for example recruitment to Neo-nazi organizations has lessened.

The Order of the Teaspoon was earlier part of the group forming and working with the Tolerance project.

This project stretches over time – to make a difference! That is an important aspect. There are NO quick fixes to solve the problem of intolerance.

The project started in the 1990's, after the death of a young man, killed by Neo-Nazis in Sweden.

#### Slide 8

This is a newly taken picture of a group in Nyköping in Sweden, taking part of the project during this year. They have just returned from their trip to Poland and are here writing that they now are going to continue reflecting upon that experience. (The picture is from their blog.)

#### Slide 9: More examples: Tools for the classroom

The Order of the Teaspoon loves to work with real stories as a tool to start reflections about identity, diversity, discrimination and human rights. We believe in stories as a way to remind ourselves to understand and respect different groups in our society, and by that fight sectarianism.

We use real stories to create tools for teachers to use in the classroom when working with these important issues. Three of our latest projects are:

- Reality check (Sweden's first app against racism)
- Trevligt folk (a movie)
- Not a stranger (a book)

All comes with a manual for teachers, showing how the project CAN be used as a relevant tool in the classroom.

#### Slide 10: Reality check – Sweden's first app against racism

The app is based on interviews with Swedish kids that experience racism in their everyday life. As a user of the app you get to react upon racist situations, and you also get examples of how you COULD react, the next time you hear or see something racist.

The app is available free of charge, for everyone to use.

It was launched in February and we have since then had more than 9000 downloads.

#### Slide 11: Trevligt folk – a movie

The title means “nice people”. This is a movie about Somalia's first national team of bandy – formed in Borlänge, a small town in Sweden as a project for integration and to fight prejudice in this small town.

The team reached its goal as they managed to qualify to play at the World Championship of bandy. (They went there and had lots of fun but lost every single game.) The team still exists. Today young Somalis from other cities move to Borlänge to be part of the team.

The Order of the Teaspoon distributed this movie to schools in Sweden two years ago. Schools could free of charge watch it and then reflect together upon norms, identity, prejudice etc. It was a very popular activity. About 90 000 students watched the movie (which is a lot for a small country like Sweden).

#### Slide 12: Not a stranger – a book

This is the last example that I will show you today. It's a book where 41 swedes write about feeling alienated in our society, to feel “outside”. They all give their personal reflections on this, from very different lives. Three of our writers are:

- Mohamed Yasin Hamami  
A boy who fled from Syria
- Sofia Jannok  
Songwriter from Sápmi, she is saami
- Soraya Post  
Roma and member of the European parliament

#### Slide 13: Swedish curriculum

The message and the work of The order of the Teaspoon have strong support in the Swedish curriculum. That is very important to us.

#### Slide 14:

The role of the Swedish schools is NOT to be neutral. The task of the school is to promote learning by stimulating the individual to acquire and develop knowledge **and values**.

The goals of the school are that each pupil:

- can consciously determine and express ethical standpoints based on knowledge of human rights and basic democratic values, as well as personal experiences,
- respects the intrinsic value of other people,
- rejects the subjection of people to oppression and degrading treatment, and also assist in helping other people,
- can empathise with and understand the situation other people are in and also develop the will to act with their best interests at heart, and
- shows respect and care for both the immediate environment, as well as the environment from a broader perspective.

In short: Every school and everyone working in schools has to embrace the core values of our democracy. And they are to be taught to all students.

#### Slide 15: No country stands alone

A conference like this is an excellent way to meet across our European borders and learn from each other. I encourage you all to during the day speak with someone you haven't met before. The topic of today is *Education versus cults*. I strongly believe that schools have an important role in fighting polarisation, sectarianism and radicalisation. But we need to think together and work together. And we need to use methods that work, and that doesn't push the students into radicalisation.

I will finish my talk today with showing two examples of countries in Europe standing together in this.

#### Slide 16

Examples:

1. Article written by the ministers of education of Sweden and France together, published last year after acts of terror in both our countries.
2. Teaching controversial issues – issued by the Council of Europe, aiming to be a well needed help for teachers.

I know that there are many more examples, and I hope to see even more in the future. The problem is similar in all our countries, and therefore we can help one another in acting on it.

#### Slide 17: The Global Goals

The leaders of the world have agreed on 17 global goals that they want to see reached by 2030. Several of these goals are relevant the topic of this conference.

What we all do is important. And together, we have the power to create a better world.

Thank you.