

CHAPTER 9

Negotiating Terror, Negotiating Love

Commemorative Convergence after the Terrorist Attack on 22 July 2011¹

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In an interview with CNN on 23 July 2011, a member of the Norwegian parliament and survivor of the terrorist attack at Utøya, Stine Renate Håheim, was asked, “How do you tell the youth of Norway that revenge is not an option?”. She replied, “If one man can create that much hate, you can only imagine how much love we as a togetherness can create” (CNN, Norwegian Island; Youtube, *Om en mann*). These were not her own words, however. The sentence was a translation of a tweet posted by her friend, 18-year-old Helle Gannestad: “When one man could cause so much evil—think about how much love we can create together” (Twitter, Helle Gannestad).² Gannestad posted this tweet from her home during the night of the 22nd and the 23rd of July, it was re-tweeted 40 times, and was rapidly distributed around the country and across the world. The sentence was widely quoted—on Facebook, in letters and notes on spontaneous memorials, on a graffiti wall in Oslo), and even in Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg’s speech in a directly broadcast memorial service in Oslo cathedral on 24 July.

According to the Norwegian daily paper *Dagsavisen*, Gannestad was “She who turned hate into love.” The newspaper further called her “The girl that inspired the entire country” (*Dagsavisen*, 27 July



Figure 1. Helle Gannestad's tweet also found its way to a graffiti wall in Oslo. This piece was painted by the street artist BigBen (Photo: Gjert Stensrud).



Figure 2. This Oslove symbol spread rapidly on Facebook in the hours and days after the terrorist attack.

2012:1). Her words had significance for the grief rituals that followed the attack. The symbolic language used on the numerous spontaneous memorials and in commemorative ceremonies throughout Oslo and elsewhere in Norway, circled around the word “love”. A frequently used hash tag on Twitter and Instagram was #oslove, and on Facebook people soon started to change their profile picture to an Oslove symbol. Even the graffiti embraced Oslo with symbols of love, and three days after the attack, Crown Prince Haakon opened his appeal at the so-called rose parade in Oslo with the words: “Tonight the streets are filled with love.” The word love was everywhere.

The circulation and impact of Gannestad's tweet illustrates how social media were integrated in the public grief and commemorative practices that immediately followed the terrorist attack. In this paper, I will look closely at this commemorative work and discuss how a master narrative of the terrorist attack was formed more or less directly following the attack. Such a master narrative was necessary to make some sort of order out of chaos, and to place the evil within structures that made it possible to go on in the world, at least for those not directly involved in the tragedy (see Neiman 2002:239).



Figure 3. The word love and the red heart were frequently used as symbols of grief on the spontaneous memorials. This huge, red heart combined the love symbolism with the well-known biblical quote from 1 Corinthians 13, 13: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” The heart was placed on the spontaneous memorial outside of Oslo Cathedral just a few days after the attack. In April 2013 it is still there. The picture is taken while the trial against the terrorist was going on, in April 2012. (Photo: Kyrre Kverndokk).



Figure 4. Graffiti on a construction site in the inner city of Oslo. Several such graffiti pieces appeared after the terrorist attack. The picture is taken in January 2012 (Photo: Kyrre Kverndokk).

I will emphasize the importance of social media in this process, and simply ask: What kind of impact did the uses of social media have on the formation of a Norwegian narrative of the terrorist attack?

Convergence Culture

The circulation of Gannestad’s tweet, from her living room in a small town in Western Norway, to CNN, to the prime minister’s speech and so on, illustrates how social media and established mass media are intertwined in today’s media culture. It is also an example of how media consumers can suddenly turn into media producers. The media world has changed radically in the last decade. Social media, and especially Facebook, has blurred the distinction between media producers and media consumers. Everybody is now, simultaneously,

a potential producer and consumer of media, and the circulation of media content is unpredictable. The media scholar Henry Jenkins has introduced the term “convergence culture” to describe today’s media society. He writes:

Welcome to convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways. (Jenkins 2008:2)

In a world where the uses of media are intertwined with everyday life practices, Jenkins’ reflections on convergence culture may also have wider implications for how cultural scholars understand cultural practices. This paper is about cultural convergence, and I will use the term “convergence culture” in a broad sense. I will discuss how new media practices and ritual practices collide, how grassroots and authorities intersect, and how the power of media producers, institutions and authorities interact in new and often unpredictable ways. Social media have become integrated into our everyday lives, and are at the center of this convergence.

In 2011, there were, according to figures from Facebook, Inc., 2.3 million Facebook users in Norway, which is almost half of the national population (Halogen; Gjestland 2012:133). Social media had become so widely used that they now represented a true alternative to the traditional news media. The difference is, however, that the circulation of news in social media is dependent on personal relations. On both Facebook and Twitter messages are distributed through a network of friends. Whether the news actually will be distributed further or not depends on the participants in the network—if they are willing to share the messages within their own network of friends. This kind of dynamics makes the distribution of social media content unpredictable, but potentially immensely effective. Moreover, Facebook and Twitter are able to distribute news that are not immediately captured by the traditional news media—because the news is not regarded as spectacular, important or general enough or because reporters are not on location while the events occur.

One important aspect of social media is rotational speed. Media distribution is constantly speeding up. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the speed of news distribution was proportional to the geographical distance between the event and the media audience. For instance, it took five weeks for the news about the 1755 Lisbon earthquake to reach Scandinavia (Kverndokk 2011:168). In the late nineteenth century, the invention of the telegraph made it possible to distribute the news almost in real time, regardless of the distance (Fulsås 2003:89–108). European newspapers could then bring the latest news from America just a few hours after it happened. In the 1960s, communication satellites completed the media synchronization of the world. Events could now be broadcast live across the Atlantic Ocean. But live broadcasting depends on an advanced media infrastructure—a reporter, and a lot of technical equipment, have to be on location, while the event happens, to produce a live broadcast. This sort of infrastructure is not always present when events occur unexpectedly, for instance, during terrorist attacks and natural disasters. As late as 2005, media coverage of the disaster area in New Orleans immediately after Hurricane Katrina was highly insufficient, because the mass media infrastructure was itself knocked out. It took several days before it was possible to get proper TV coverage of the affected area.

The year after Hurricane Katrina, the international news coverage of the 2006 July War in Lebanon was also insufficient. It was difficult for the international press to gain access to the war zone. Yet, as the media scholar Sarah Jurkiewicz has pointed out, Lebanese bloggers replaced journalists, and could be on the spot, blogging about the war in real time (Jurkiewicz 2012). Today, professional reporters do not have to be on the spot. Mass mediation is no longer dependent on TV stations and media corporations. A terrorist attack or a catastrophe is instead mediated as it happens, on Facebook and Twitter, by those affected. The news of an unexpected event is no longer mass mediated almost immediately; it is mass mediated in the exact moment it happens—in real, real time.

This new kind of immediacy, enabled by social media, became especially visible in Norway on 22 July 2011. Twitter became a main channel for the youngsters at Utøya to communicate with

the outside world during the long one-and-a-half hours of terror. The first mass mediated news about the attack at Utøya was a tweet posted at 17.36 (Gjestland 2012:142). Seventeen minutes later, the online newspaper *Dagbladet.no* first reported the shooting (Gjestland 2012:143).

Social media have not only speeded up the distribution of news. In the case of the terrorist attack, it also speeds up public grief and the commemoration of the event and of the victims. Drawing on the classic work of Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, the terrorist attack and the public rituals of grief that immediately followed could be described as *media events*. The mediation of such kinds of events happens in real time, and they totally dominate the media picture for a short and intense period of time. The mass mediation works as a structuring component in such cases, it affects the form, content and progress of the event. Hence, media events are characterized by an intertwining of the actual events and the mass mediation of them (Dayan & Katz 1992). Dayan and Katz developed their thoughts on the basis of a media world before the internet. However, their reasoning is still applicable in the age of web 2.0. We have to add the social media as one incorporated aspect of contemporary media events. I will suggest the term “social media event” to describe media events in a world where social media is an integrated part of everyday life. The terrorist attack may be described as one such event. Through the uses of social media, the attack itself, and its commemoration, were intertwined and became two dimensions of the same social media event. How was this social media event organized?

From Facebook to Rose Parades

The bomb exploded in the government quarter in the centre of Oslo at 15.25 in the afternoon of 22 July 2011. At 17.17 the terrorist arrived at Utøya. He was arrested one hour and 19 minutes later. The total number of deaths was later confirmed to be 77. While the tragedy happened, the public situation was chaotic and uncertain. Rumours circulated about another bomb at the parliament building, and several other possible bombs elsewhere. The media houses TV 2 and Aftenposten, along with other buildings, were evacuated

in response to these rumours. Further, there were rumours about a possible bomb on the railway line between Oslo and Gardermoen airport. The situation was chaotic and surreal, but nobody had any idea about the unthinkable high number of deaths until the following morning.

Despite the confusing situation, the commemoration of the attack began more or less right away. Facebook functioned as a vehicle in the commemorative process. Several Facebook groups commemorating the victims were established almost immediately after the attack. The group: “R.i.P. to the dead at Utøya Oslo 22 July, 2011” was, for instance, established between 8 and 9 o’clock in the evening, and served as an online protocol of condolences (Facebook, R.i.P til de omkomne). About an hour later, at around 10 o’clock, a Facebook user named Terje Bratland created another Facebook group to commemorate the victims in Oslo, though the situation at Utøya was not yet fully known to the public. The group was initially named “Torch march—Norway is standing together against the terrorist incidents.”³ Later the name of the group was changed to “The night Norway stood together against the terrorist incidents” (Facebook, Kvelden). This Facebook group expanded rapidly to 70,000 members. It was not at all the largest Facebook group commemorating the attack and the victims, but it was certainly the group that had the largest impact on how public grief was expressed. This group initiated what three days later became the so-called rose parades.

The first message was posted on the wall of the group at around 10 o’clock on Friday night, 22 July. It illustrates the uncertainty and frustration that dominated in the hours after the bomb exploded:

We will show the world that we are not afraid. We will stand together side by side, hold hands. We will walk in the largest torch march of all times and we will show those who are responsible for the terrorist incident in Oslo that we are VIKINGS, and that WE fear no one. (Facebook, Kvelden)⁴

There is much to say about this text; however, I will only use it to emphasize the immediacy of the commemorative work. At the time Bratland posted this message, nobody knew for certain what was

going on. The message was posted half an hour before the Norwegian government held the first press conference at 22.30. At this live broadcast press conference, the prime minister framed the public grief rituals of the coming days with the words:

We must never give up our values. We must show that our open society can pass this test too. That the answer to violence is even more democracy. Even more humanity. But never naivety. That is something we owe the victims and their families. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)⁵

It was also at this press conference that the nationality and the skin colour of the terrorist were publicly confirmed. So at the time Bratland wrote the message, the identity of the terrorist was still uncertain. Although there had been rumours on Twitter about his ethnic background since 20.00 hours (NRK, *Terrordøgn*), many still believed him to be a member of al Qaeda or a similar terrorist group. It was still uncontroversial to use a rather nationalistic rhetoric. Hence, the rhetorical landscape was still relatively open, with a nationalistic potential. Further, Bratland's text only mentions Oslo as a scene of terror, not Utøya. The number of deaths at Utøya was yet unknown when he wrote this. Oslo, on the other hand, looked like a war zone, with the city centre evacuated. In other words, the initiation of the commemoration of the attack and the attack itself were almost synchronic events. This was partly due to the possibility of immediate response offered by social media.

Bratland's initiative was not the only one. Several similar grief ceremonies were suggested on Facebook. During the following weekend these initiatives were coordinated with the aid of Facebook groups, such as the one Bratland established (Facebook, *Minnemarkering*; Facebook, *Fakkeltog*). Late at night on Saturday, 23 July, somebody also posted a suggestion to use roses in the parades instead of torches. In this way, the rose parades were planned and coordinated with the help of numerous anonymous Facebook users.

The rose parades were organized and nationally coordinated at the same time as the dead bodies were counted at Utøya and the survivors were unified with their families: they were synchronic



Figure 5. From the rose parade in Oslo (photo: Tor Karlsen).

events. Again the immediacy is striking. Facebook offered an infrastructure that made such immediate and coordinated responses possible. Norwegian officials were unable to respond with the same degree of speed. Chief of Staff at the Office of the Prime Minister, Karl Eirik Schjøtt-Pedersen, was in fact planning an official commemorative ceremony to take place on Thursday, 28 July. But during a government meeting on 25 July, he became aware of the already well-planned, Facebook-initiated rose parades, and he simply cancelled the official ceremony to make way for the rose parades. The government could not compete with the unofficially organized grief ceremony. In other words, the Facebook way of organizing events accelerated the ritual process.

The rose parades took place at 6 pm on Monday, 25 July, just three days after the attack. Approximately 200,000 people gathered in Oslo. The participants were carrying red roses—if they were lucky enough to get any, that is, since all the florists in Oslo were sold out in anticipation of the ceremony. In the middle of the summer holidays, when most of the inhabitants are out of town, almost half of the population of Oslo took part in the parade. At the same time, thousands gathered in similar parades in cities and towns all over

Norway. In my home town of Skien, for instance, a town with a population of 52,000, about 50,000 gathered for the rose parade. Coordinated rose parades or torch parades took place in at least 150 of the 428 municipalities of Norway, and more than one million people attended (Aagedal et al. 2013b:9). The rose parades were probably the largest coordinated public event, demonstration or celebration ever staged in Norway, except for the yearly celebration of the National Day, 17 May.

The rose parade in Oslo included appeals by the prime minister, the mayor of Oslo, and the crown prince, and the entire ceremony was broadcast live—all due to the Facebook user Terje Bratland's initiative. From being an anonymous Facebook user he had suddenly become a national hero. The rose parades were a result of a convergence culture—a cultural practice where old and new media collide, and where media consumers, media producers, the authorities and the so-called common people work together in new and unpredictable ways.

Spontaneous Memorials as Convergence Culture

The immediacy of social media goes hand in hand with the immediacy of late modern public grief practices, such as the use of spontaneous memorials. Such memorials are now not only common, they have become almost culturally expected ways to express shock and grief after sudden death caused by an accident, a crime or a disaster. Such memorials of flowers, letters, condolences and candles are usually established just a few hours after an accident or a catastrophe occurs (Santino 2006a; *Margry & Sánchez-Carretero 2011*). This was also the case after the terrorist attack in Oslo.

The morning after the attack, a spontaneous memorial was established right in front of Oslo Cathedral. It became the main arena for public grief and commemoration in the weeks to follow, and what soon became an ocean of flowers and candles grew rapidly. However, it was far from the only spontaneous memorial in Oslo. The rose parade in Oslo on 25 July was supposed to end up in front of the cathedral, where people were expected to put down their roses on the already enormous ocean of flowers. But the addition



Figure 6. Democracy was, alongside with love, a key word in the commemorative practices. This flower was placed in a window frame on the Parliament building just after the rose parade in Oslo. The screenshot is an example of pictures posted on the Facebook group “The night Norway stood together against the terrorist incidents” immediately after the parade. The caption reads: “I have never seen Oslo More beautiful”.

of 200,000 new flowers to the memorial was almost physically impossible. Instead, the organizers of the parade encouraged people to spread their flowers all over the city and so transforming the entire city into a continuous spontaneous memorial. This was also done. There were flowers everywhere in the city centre.⁶

The folklorist Jack Santino argues that spontaneous memorials, or spontaneous shrines, as he prefers to call them, are characterized by being commemorative and performative. They are commemorative in the sense that they are places where the memories of the dead are negotiated, and they are performative in the sense that this negotiation is done in a public place, in front of an audience. In this sense, spontaneous memorials are not only places; they are first and foremost commemorative practices in a public sphere (Santino 2006b).

There are some interesting structural similarities between spontaneous memorials and social media. Immediacy is one of them.

While Facebook and Twitter are the media for informal and immediate opinions and utterances, the spontaneous memorials are informal arenas for expressing immediate grief. Such memorials are arenas for informal commemoration, giving voices to personal grief in public.

The informal character is emphasized in scholarly work on this kind of memorial. Scholars have termed them “grassroots memorials” and even “the voice of the people” (*Margry & Sánchez-Carretero 2011*; Santino 2006b:13). However, I will argue that they are not necessarily merely informal. They can emerge as a result of the interplay between institutional work and grassroots initiatives. There are examples of memorials that emerged spontaneously and were institutionalized as an official monument later. One such example is the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania, located on the spot where the hijacked Flight 93 crashed on 11 September 2001. Soon after the crash people started to visit the place to put down flowers, paper notes and objects of different kinds to express their grief, frustration or anger (Lawrence 2011). During the years, the place turned into a well-known and well-visited memorial, and on 10 September 2011 it was consecrated as a national memorial, by former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush (National Park Service).

The spontaneous memorial in front of Oslo Cathedral after the terrorist attack emerged as a result of the interplay between informal and spontaneous participation and institutional preparation. The memorial was initiated on the morning after the attack by cathedral employees, and it was immediately adopted by people passing by on the street (*Vårt Land* 18 August 2011:17). The memorial was soon used by thousands of visitors, among them both the Norwegian king and the mayor of Oslo. Rather than expressing *the* voice of the people, such memorials are multivocal. They have a seemingly informal character, but are a result of a cultural convergence in which institutional and informal commemoration merge.

Immediacy, multivocality and, to some extent, informality characterize both spontaneous memorials and social media as such. While social media are at the centre of what Henry Jenkins calls “convergence culture”, spontaneous memorials are the central arenas for

what I will call a “commemorative convergence”—a kind of commemoration in which various actors, media forms and ritual practices are intertwined. It is a kind of commemoration that is very much connected to mass media. Spontaneous memorials are very often responses to mass mediated disasters, and as Peter Jan Margry and Cristina Sánchez-Carretero have pointed out, they have “become as mediatized as the disasters themselves” (*Margry & Sánchez-Carretero 2011:ix*). Pictures of the memorial in front of Oslo Cathedral, for example, were widely disseminated after the attack.

Spontaneous Memorials and Rose Parades on Facebook

Unsurprisingly, the dialogue between social media, especially Facebook, and the spontaneous memorials were intense in the days following the attack. Facebook provided an opportunity to express and process the impressions from the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials. Numerous pictures from the parades, and of the memorials, were posted on Facebook, on individual Facebook walls—but also in Facebook groups such as the rose parade group “The night Norway stood together against the terrorist incidents.”

I consider the posting on Facebook and Twitter of pictures depicting spontaneous memorials and commemorative ceremonies to be performative acts, since in doing so, one communicates that: “I was there! I took part in the rose parade!” Or: “I laid down a flower on this particular spontaneous memorial!” It is a way to perform one’s participation in the commemoration. Posting such pictures is, among other things, a way to publicly perform grief. The immediacy is again striking. The pictures and texts published on Facebook give an impression of being instant, unfiltered reflections. One Facebook user for instance wrote: “I have never seen Oslo more beautiful,” while another expressed the feeling through the words: “Thanks for a fantastic experience—together we are strongest.” A third simply wrote: “♥♥♥ to everyone ♥♥♥!” It seems to me that lately the heart emoticon has become as common in use as the smiley on Facebook. This emoticon fitted perfectly for expressing the experiences after the rose parades, and was frequently used. The descriptions are generally dominated by a simple and positive symbolic language.

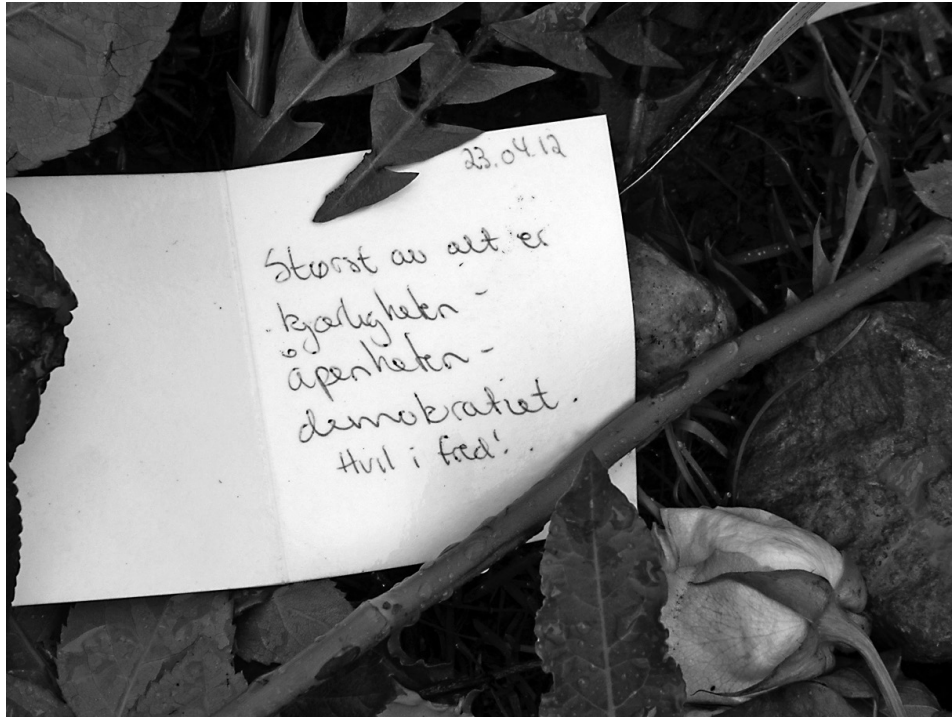


Figure 7. This paper note was placed on the spontaneous memorial that emerged outside of Oslo Courthouse during the trial against the terrorist was going on. The text on this card merges the key words of the commemoration with 1 Corinthians 13, 13: “The greatest of all is love, openness and democracy. Rest in peace.” (Photo: Kyrre Kverndokk).

In addition to hearts, the innocent child and roses were commonly used symbols in this kind of posts.

It may seem surprising to post utterances like these just three days after an unthinkable catastrophe. We have to keep the liminal character of the situation in mind. A catastrophe like the terrorist attack makes the cultural cosmos collapse. The grief practices in the days after the attack functioned as what are often termed rites of affliction—that is, purification rituals that turn religious or social disorder into order (Bell 1992:118–120). It was imperative that cultural order was reestablished after the attack, and that the imagined Norwegian community was ritually purified. The texts and pictures posted on Facebook, from the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials, express the liminality of this ritual process. They are unfiltered experiences of the liminal feelings of belonging to a Norwegian community of grief, a feeling that is best described

as a “communitas” (V. Turner 1969:96–97; E. Turner 2011). The immediate character and the national coordination of the grief rituals made the experience of solidarity and emotional unity overwhelmingly intense.

Posting pictures of the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials functioned as mediated performative acts, expressing and confirming the experience of an emotional togetherness. Facebook even provided ways to participate for those who were not able to take part in the public rituals. Private grief practices at home were coordinated through several Facebook groups. The largest one was called “Light a candle for the dead and wounded after the tragedy in Oslo and at Utøya” (Facebook, Tenn) and had an incredible 1.3 million members. It is, however, difficult to measure how many of the group members actually did light a candle, but judging from the number of posts on the wall, a large number of candles were certainly lit. In this group, members submitted pictures of lit candles, and posted short reports of when and where they had lit them. The Facebook group documents thousands of lit candles, and the group could work as a coordinator and a mediator of grief practices from a private sphere. Grief practices that used to be private were now given a semi-public and performative dimension. The candles were burning for an online audience. Hence, the distinction between the private and public sphere was blurred. Such Facebook groups did unite similar practices at different geographical locations and different kinds of spaces into one digital continuum.

Private and public commemorative practices all over the country and abroad were linked and coordinated in rather concrete ways through Facebook. This gave the commemorative work an overwhelming intensity. Thus, the experienced communitas did not necessarily involve a physical experience of togetherness; one did not have to be on the spot and take part in the rose parades or to participate in commemorative ceremonies at the spontaneous memorials in order to experience the feeling of belonging to a grief community. The communitas, the feeling of belonging to an inclusive Norwegian community, was both embodied and digitally experienced. Grief practices in real life and online worked together in a commemorative convergence.

Commemorative Convergence

In social networks such as Facebook, everybody is what network theory terms a node in the network. In the public grief after 22 July 2011, Facebook groups such as “Light a candle for the dead and wounded after the tragedy in Oslo and at Utøya” and “The night Norway stood together against the terrorist incidents” not only worked as nodes connecting people. They also worked as nodes in a commemorative network connecting grief practices regardless of geographical distances, connecting practices in real life with digital practices, and connecting private grief practices with public rituals. These nodes opened up possibilities for participation in grief rituals without necessitating a physical presence. They synchronized time and space and created a digital continuum. In other words, they worked as digital nodes in the commemorative convergence after the attack.

I consider the grief rituals in the streets and online not only as ways to handle grief and despair, but as practices for performing and negotiating the memory of the victims, and ways of making some sort of sense out of the meaningless violence. It was a cultural necessity to form a master narrative that made it possible to cope with the shock, uncertainty and despair. The formation of this narrative was undertaken through the interaction of media forms and digital and spatial commemorative practices, and in the unpredictable interactions of entirely different kinds of actors such as the social media users Terje Bratland and Helle Gannestad, alongside official representatives like Prime Minister Stoltenberg and Crown Prince Haakon. The master narrative was formed through the commemorative convergence that I have described in this paper.

The key concepts, defining the content of the narrative, emerged through circulation in and out of social media and ritual practices, like how Helle Gannestad’s tweet: “When one man could cause so much evil – think about how much love we can create together,” circulated from Twitter to CNN, to the prime minister, to the spontaneous memorials, to Facebook and so on. In addition to “love,” the key concepts circulating were “openness,” “democracy” and “humanity.” All these concepts are rather undefined and vague. They could be described as what, in discourse theory, are termed “empty

signifiers” (Jørgensen & Philips 2000:35). Such words function as key concepts while maintaining a fluid significance. However, precisely because they are vaguely defined, such concepts work efficiently in the construction of emotionally based communities. Everybody embraced the words, yet nobody defined the content.

The immediate character of social media contributed to merge the terrorist attack and the collective grief practices of the attack as a mediated continuum of events, as aspects of the same social media event. The temporal amalgamation of the tragedy and the public reactions and grief practices made it possible for those of us who were not directly affected by the attack—what we could call the catastrophe audience—to experience the events as a continual process that transformed the hatred of the terrorist into unified and all-embracing love. I will not go into a discussion about the relationship between rituals and narratives. I will just remark that rituals usually are described as re-enactments or re-enacted negotiations of myths or master narratives, while in this case the master narrative was created in the ritual process. The plot of the master narrative could be described as a transformation from the hatred of the terrorist to unified love. It was first formulated in Helle Gannestad’s tweet and soon performed and experienced in the streets and online. In other words, the narrative was experienced and embodied by the participants in the making.

The master narrative is just as much about the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials as it is about the terrorist incidents as such. Pictures from the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials have become the main media representations of the terrorist incidents, and the terror is publicly recalled through the experiences from the rose parades. One example is the CD record *My Little Country: In commemoration of 7.22.11* (*Mitt lille 2011a*), published in memory of the terrorist attack. It was published by some of the people behind the rose parades, and was named after a song frequently used in the commemoration of the victims and the attack. The CD is a collection of some of the songs used in the rose parades and other public commemorative ceremonies after the attack. The cover shows a blurry close-up picture of a red rose. The picture refers to a digital memorial published in the online newspaper *Dagbladet.no* three

days after the rose parades. This memorial was first and foremost recapitulating rose parades and the spontaneous memorials. It was shaped as a photo montage of the same blurry close-up, constructed by the use of 4,700 small pictures from rose parades and spontaneous memorials all over the country (*Dagbladet.no*, 28 July 2011). The CD booklet further contains pictures and quotes from the appeals performed in the rose parades, and the terrorist attack as such is only referred to indirectly through quotes and pictures from the parades. On the last page of the booklet, Helle Gannestad's tweet is printed—as a postscript with a concluding remark about what we learned from the rose parade experience. By playing this CD you can re-experience the rose parades, and through that re-experience commemorate the tragedy.

Among the numerous books published in the aftermath of the terrorist attack were two so-called memory books published in late 2011. One bears the same title as the commemorative CD record, *My Little Country* (*Mitt lille* 2011b). The other one is entitled *From Hatred to Love: The Incidents that Changed Norway* (22/07/11: *Fra hat* 2011). Both of the books contain pictures, speeches, tweets and quotes from Facebook. They are both structured chronologically. They present a course of events starting with the bomb explosion in Oslo at 15.25 on Friday, 22 July, directly followed by the commemorative ceremonies. The book *My Little Country* uses Helle Gannestad's tweet as an epigraph. Seven of the following pages are filled with pictures from the explosion in Oslo. The rest of the book documents the commemoration through quotes and pictures. The book *From Hatred to Love* contains four chapters, one chapter for each date from 22 July to 25 July. The chapter on the attack itself fills the first 90 out of 317 pages in total. The remaining 227 pages are about the public grief rituals—the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials.

The same continuum, from the attack to the rose parades, is also described in the official 22 July Commission's report, published in August 2012. Chapter two, which describes the terrorist attacks, also portrays the following grief rituals as a continuity of events (*NOU* 2012/14:17–37). Hence, as a Norwegian “lieu de memoire” (Nora 1989), as a key symbol and rhetorical topos in the national

Norwegian memory, the term “22 July” is not merely referring to the attack itself. As a lieu de memoire, 22 July also refers to the rose parades and the spontaneous memorials, while circling around the vaguely defined concept of love.

One possible problem with the formation of the master narrative could be that public attention was diverted from the tragedy as such and tended instead to focus upon the successful ritual handling of a deep national crisis. One obvious question is, then, if there are any other possible narratives? What kind of alternative narratives may have been muted by the dominant master narrative? Love is no doubt a far better alternative than anger, for example, as was the case in the US after 9/11. Yet, one reaction that occurred in the hours after the bomb exploded was anger directed against Arabic and East African immigrants and other Norwegian Muslims. After the identity of the terrorist was made publicly known, this anger seemed to melt into thin air. There has been an overwhelming silence about the hate-filled utterances and threatening behaviour directed against Norwegian Muslims in the first hours after the explosion. No such incidents were reported to the police (*NOU* 2012/14). The silence about such violence and threats has been so massive that it has been questioned whether they really happened (see *Aftenposten*, 28 January 2012). A survey published on this topic claims that it was difficult to get the informants to talk about this topic. They would rather talk about the intense experience of togetherness that soon followed (Haarr & Partapuoli 2012:4). An open question is then if there were other kinds of grief narratives or personal experiences that have become untellable since the rose parades (see Goldstein 2009).

In this paper, I have concentrated on the immediate cultural negotiations of the terrorist attack. The picture is more complex if we add to it what happened later. When the trial against the terrorist started in April 2012, the personal experience narratives of the survivors from Utøya and the Government quarter in Oslo further revealed the extreme dreadfulness of the terrorism. The trial added individual stories and depth to the master narrative, but did not shake its basic structure.

The public criticism that was raised in the mass media and especially in the 22 July Commission report (2012) also added complexity

to the master narrative. The criticism did not, however, challenge the narrative. It was performed within a political and institutional discourse. It was partly directed against the government, and partly against the police operation, and did not touch upon the forms and content of the public grief.

In spring 2012, while the trial was going on in Oslo Courthouse, the master narrative was once again played out in public. A new spontaneous memorial emerged in front of the courthouse. It was visited by thousands, bringing with them flowers and paper notes with messages about love. A crowd of 40,000 spontaneously gathered in Oslo on 26 April 2012. They were once again carrying red roses to demonstrate against the terrorist, to commemorate the victims and to embrace love, peace and tolerance. Together with the singer-songwriter Lillebjørn Nilsen they took part in a gigantic sing-along of his iconic Norwegian reinterpretation of Pete Seeger's song "My Rainbow Race."⁷ The demonstration was initiated through Facebook, by the two Facebook users Lill Hjønnevåg and Christine Bar, after the terrorist a few days earlier had pointed out this song as an example of how cultural Marxism has infiltrated Norwegian society and its educational system (Agedal et al. 2013b:16; Davies 2013:245). Similar sing-alongs were held synchronically in five other Norwegian towns (Agedal et al. 2013a:251). Hence, the way the demonstration was organized, its symbolic language and the impressive participation, have striking similarities with the rose parades. It was almost a creative re-enactment of the rose parades. The love narrative was once again both embodied through ritual participation and re-experienced online.

Abbreviation

NOU: Norges offentlige utredninger

Notes

- 1 An earlier, extended version of this paper is published in Norwegian in Olaf Agedal et al. (eds.) 2013: Den offentlige sorgen etter 22. juli. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, see Kverndokk 2013.

- 2 “Når en mann kan forårsake så mye ondt – tenk hvor mye kjærlighet vi kan skape sammen.”
- 3 Fakkeltog – Norge står samlet mot terrorhandlinger.
- 4 “Vi skal vise at vi ikke er redde. Vi skal stå sammen side om side, holde hender. Vi skal gå i tidenes største fakkeltog sammen og vise de som står bak terror handlingen (sic) i Oslo at vi er VIKINGER, og at VI frykter ingen.”
- 5 The Norwegian government’s official translation of: “Vi må aldri oppgi våre verdier. Å vise at vårt åpne samfunn består også denne prøven. At svaret på vold er enda mer demokrati. Enda mer humanitet. Men aldri naivitet. Det skylder vi ofrene og deres pårørende.”
- 6 The flowers in the inner city were later collected and eventually turned into more than 15 tonnes of compost (Agedal et al. 2013b:9).
- 7 Nilsen’s Norwegian translation is called “Barn av regnbuen,” and has been one of the most popular songs in Norway in the last 40 years.

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