

13 - Transitional justice and contested memorialization after terror: the Norwegian 22 July attacks

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In the contemporary context, in many locations in the so-called Global north communities and governments are grappling with how to come to terms with the aftermath of religious and right-wing extremism and mass-death terror attacks. While contestations and failings over issues pertaining to healing, security and inclusion share many empirical similarities with struggles common in more traditional transitional justice contexts (as carefully documented by a large ethnographic literature), there has been no analysis of these attacks through the frame of transitional justice. Using the 22 July attack as a case, the panel welcomes ethnographic and socio-legal contributions exploring the aftermath of terror.

In the 22 July 2011 terror attack, a car bomb in the Oslo government district killed eight people, injured about 200 and destroyed a large tract of urban space. 69 children, women and men were massacred at Utøya Island. Thousands of individuals – survivors, family and friends of victims and survivors, rescuers, and bystanders – continue to be directly affected. The government responded with a call for ‘more democracy, more openness’.

Yet, only now, Norwegian society is moving from framing 22 July as an attack against ‘us all’, democracy and the rule of law, to a difficult recognition of the attack as a large-scale political assassination carried out against the Labor party and its Youth wing: executed by a lone terrorist but through the prism of a political ideology. At the same time, the States attempts to settle this conflict and provide a recognition of the political nature of the terror attack through the construction of a memorial site, a gigantic new government quarters and the renaming of streets have been met with fierce resistance from ordinary citizens who oppose the reframing of their lifeworld as a ‘political’ site of post-terror commemoration.

A contested national script: the politics of litigating memorials

Kristin Bergtora Sandvik

Across Norway, enormous amounts of commemorative work have gone into the design and location of 22 July memorials, sometimes resulting in contested administrative or juridified processes. In this paper I focus on the legal mobilization by local residents against the plans for a national monument in the Municipality of Hole, the site of the Utøya massacre: first the proposal for Memory Wound at Sørbråten, later followed by a different proposal for a memorial at the Utøya quay. This mobilization included intensive use of administrative complaints procedures, threats of 'going to court' and the subsequent use of lawyers, legal action and legal proceedings as means to terminate processes relating to the national monument. Originally, the plan was for a memorial to be ready near Utøya in 2015. In March 2021, after a difficult court case, it was finally determined that the memorial could be completed at the Utøya quayside.

The tensions embedded in post-terror commemorative work and the sometimes-contradictory role of law in these processes are important to unpack. Grassroots legal mobilization is often framed as a progress narrative about ordinary people on a quest for justice: while local actors may not win their cases or be able to achieve social change through the use of administrative procedures or legal strategies, stories about mobilization are often stories about participation and empowerment. However, the organized local opposition to a national monument, the arguments used to bolster this resistance and the decision to engage in legal mobilization have been surrounded by considerable stigma and condemnation. Legal proceedings after atrocities are generally expected to contribute to a national healing process. In the present narrative, law and grassroots legal mobilization occupy highly ambiguous places. Norway is generally described as a high-trust society: it is also a society with a great deal of emphasis on societal and cultural cohesion and political consensus.

I suggest that these values also constitute a national script for the use of law to address the aftermath of 22 July. A legacy of the highly publicized criminal law proceedings against the terrorist is that the courtroom becomes a metaphor for justice whenever 22 July is 'on trial'. A decade after the attacks, the use of law to deal with the memorialization of the attack creates its own ripple effects that stand in tension with these values. Contested commemorative work does not fit the national script and as a result, the *avoidance* of legal conflict has been a desirable goal. Paradoxically then, as illustrated by the struggles over the national memorial, going to court and *avoiding* going to court both entails costs in terms of money, time, trust and emotions.

The nation as memorial cartography: mapping commemorative sites outside the canon

Maja Vestad and Kristin B. Sandvik

This exploratory paper investigates the notion of the nation as a memorial cartography. As of July 2021, the canon of memorials commemorating the 22 July attack include the Government Quarter, with the temporary memorial plaque and the 22 July Centre; Hegnhuset on Utøya; the 1000 iron roses next to Oslo Cathedral; and 52 identical commemorative stone sculptures in affected municipalities across Norway. However, it also includes multiple other memorials situated in hospitals, parks and public places. Importantly, commemoration also happens through naming buildings and streets after victims: A sports hall in Orkdal called 'Sondrehallen', a Swim course named after Mona Abdinur or a street in Oslo called 'Isabels vei'.

In this paper we propose to cluster these 'other' memorials into three categories: the future, the past and the virtual. First, we consider the everyday, non-monumental and forward looking quality of some these sites – such as those connected to sports and leisure. Second, we suggest that there is an evolving tapestry effect whereby the threads of the past are interwoven with the threads of the present: not only that 22 July is informed by the Second World War, but that our understanding of the War is informed by the terror attack. We exemplify this with reference to the Cissi Klein High School in Trondheim and the references used by the Telavåg museum as 'the greatest terror attack before the 22 July. Finally, we discuss the tentative category of virtual commemoration, through the iconic imagery of Memory Wound and the documentation of the struggle to save the Y-bloc in the government quarter. Together, these examples make up the memorial cartography of the nation. We ask what they can tell us about the place and role of 22 July – increasingly remote for many Norwegians – in Norway today.

Remembering mass violence in the neighbourhood

Ingeborg Hjorth