Salomonsen, Jone. "The ritual powers of the weak: Democracy and public responses to the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks on Norway." *Reassembling Democracy: Ritual as Cultural Resource*. Ed. Graham Harvey, Michael Houseman, Sarah M. Pike and Jone Salomonsen. London,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 143–161. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350123045.ch-008>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 09:33 UTC.

Copyright © Graham Harvey, Michael Houseman, Sarah M. Pike, Jone Salomonsen and contributors 2021. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

The ritual powers of the weak: Democracy and public responses to the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks on Norway

Jone Salomonsen

On Friday afternoon, 22 July 2011, a bomb in Oslo destroyed a government building and killed eight people. Police quickly closed off all the downtown streets and asked people to go home and stay indoors. Soon text messages started coming from young people at the Norwegian Labor Youth's (AUF) summer camp on the Utøya Island, an hour outside Oslo. Kids reported being hunted and shot by a tall, white Norwegian man dressed as a police officer as they were screaming and running for their lives. It took seventy long minutes after the first message was sent until the real police arrested the thirty-two-year-old Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik. By then he had killed sixty-nine people, the youngest only fourteen years old.

Norway is a small country with only 5 million inhabitants. A lot of people knew someone who knew someone who was at the summer camp on Utøya. We were shocked, and many felt powerless, weak and confused. People hid in their homes, continually watching television to get the latest news, trying to understand. But by early evening some started to think and act differently. They walked to Oslo Cathedral to put down flowers and light candles in the town square bordering the church. Rumours about the flower 'ceremony' spread, and more and more people showed up. On Monday 25 July, more than 200,000 people gathered with flowers in their hands, creating what was later known as 'an ocean of roses' (see Figure 8.1). For several weeks, massive gatherings marked a togetherness, solidarity and a different kind of 'love of country' than did Breivik's nationalist feelings and violent acts. In the years that followed, memorials for the victims of Breivik's attacks tried to capture the spirit of these powerful and inclusive non-violent gestures.

Figure 8.1 The Ocean of Roses, Oslo Cathedral. Source: http://static.vg.no/uploaded/image/bilderigg/2012/07/21/1342889615890_239.jpg

This chapter moves from a descriptive analysis of Breivik's ideology and mission to an account of three cases of ritual imaginaries intended to counteract them. These are the Ocean of Roses that arose in downtown Oslo, a multi-workshop for young adults at the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture (DogA) in the fall 2014 during which participants proposed a number of memorial designs and an actual memorial site, *The Clearing*, built at Utøya in 2015. The questions asked by the chapter concern what is created by ritual and what these particular rituals tell us about ordinary people's ritual competence and sense of democracy. Hannah Arendt's (1998) conceptualization of the political as distinct from the social, and her attendant opposition between *demos* and *ethnos*, as well as Chantal Mouffe's (2002) distinction between the political and the pre-political, is used to interpret the findings. Ritual, specifically the ritualized creativity of 'the weak' that became manifest in post-2011 Norway, is revealed to be both a gate that leads from community to democracy and a fence that stands between them. Such ritual, I argue, is conceptualized not so much as a political means for building stronger democracies but as a pre-political tool to secure democracy's precondition: an egalitarian people capable of accepting others' humanity and rights.¹

Breivik's mission: A fascist revolution – first terror, then cultural wars

When Anders Behring Breivik conducted his carefully planned terrorist attacks he wanted to 'kill' Norway as an open, democratic society. From his perspective, he killed in order to save the nation from multicultural decay and the slow extermination of the white race due to Muslim invasion and feminist Norwegian women's betrayal when marrying non-Aryan migrant men. His attack was both a declaration of war against liberal democracy and a spur to Norwegian men to wake up and join his ultra-nationalistic battle for the country (cf. Salomonsen 2013, 2015, 2017). Although he spent eight years of his life in single-minded and systematic preparation for war, he conceived of himself as a consecrated Templar who was only executing orders. Thus, he drew on powerful symbols and the rhetoric of so-called magical rites to prepare, stage and legitimize the 22 July massacre as a possible sacrifice, his sacrifice, and to be proud that he was willing to die as a martyr. Then, at the opening of his trial on 17 April 2012, he greeted the court with a raised arm and a clenched fist – the fascist 'heil'. Finally, towards the end of his opening statement, he proclaimed:

Multiculturalism is an anti-Norwegian and anti-European hate ideology ... We, the indigenous people of Norway, are now in a situation where we are losing our capital [Oslo] and our cities ... Responsible Norwegians and Europeans feel morally obligated to see that Norwegians are not made into a minority in their own country ... The attacks [22 July 2011] were preventive attacks in defense of Norwegian culture and my people. I acted from the principle of necessity on behalf of my people, my religion, my ethnicity, my city, and my country.

What exactly is Breivik's religion, and what kind of society is he propagating? Just hours before his attack, Breivik published a much-studied online manifesto, *2083 – A European Declaration of Independence*, where he calls for a violent change of European political realities. He also posted a ten-minute video in which he urges radical nationalists in Europe and the United States to 'embrace martyrdom' and to join him in defending ethnic rights to a homeland. The video shows him dressed as a Knight Templar, wielding a large sword and calling for a return to the zeal of the medieval Christian crusades.

Breivik grew up in a secular, democratic society with the Lutheran Church as the hegemonic, state church of Norway. Historically, the church has always been closely linked with Norwegian culture and society. Until the 1990s, for

example, the church refused to marry gays and lesbians or employ them as ministers if married. Then, after twenty years of intense debate, it changed its own theological understanding of marriage (in 2007) and quickly developed a new, inclusive marriage liturgy. In 2017, almost 71 per cent of the population was still affiliated with this majority church even though less than 4 per cent attended Sunday worship on a weekly basis. And 88 per cent of those who lose a loved one choose a funeral ceremony under the auspices of the Church of Norway (Høeg, this volume). This way of 'doing church', a fairly stable pattern, may be related to what Grace Davie has termed 'vicarious religion': religion as performed by an active minority on behalf of a much larger number (Davie 2007: 22). The majority may approve of what the minority is 'doing' or regard church as important to maintain the moral fabric of society. A Norwegian with this paradoxical relationship to church will downplay personal belief and call herself a 'cultural Christian'. Breivik is no exception.

In his manifesto Breivik argues that religion is necessary to society and therefore also to successfully building a new society. But the Church of Norway is not the one he chooses. Not only does it support social democracy, it also endorses multicultural, feminist, homosexual and trans-religious practices. He calls instead for a return to a strong, unified Catholic Church, the way he imagines 'it must have been' before the Reformation: an aristocratic house with one will and one sword. Only such a militant church can be at the head of the non-pluralist, homogeneous, patriarchal and traditional society he wants to re-construct. Yet, in a typically Norwegian way, Breivik felt the need to explain that he was not really a 'believer' but merely identified with church as a 'cultural Christian'. Pages 1360–3 of his manifesto reveal that he has in fact two religious identities, as both a cultural Christian, relating to his Norwegian citizenship, and a cultural Odinst, relating to the heritage of his Norwegian ancestors.² His emphasis on European Christianity may have been strategic, as Odinism is too local and ethnically limited to Northern Europe.³

When Breivik reappeared in public in 2017 (to accuse the state of Norway with having imposed inhumane prison conditions) he had resolved this apparent religious knot by purifying his thinking and taking sides. He announced that he was no longer a Christian but simply an Odinst. Furthermore, he had embraced National Socialism as his version of fascism and dedicated his life and work to the deceased Norwegian NS-leader Vidkun Quisling in a ceremony in his prison cell. He had also changed his view on tactics, he said. He now distanced himself from terrorism as a method. In 2012, after the Greek right-wing party *Golden*

Dawn won more than twenty seats in the Greek parliament through the regular electoral system (twenty-one national candidates, as well as two in the European Parliament), Breivik gained new trust in peaceful methods to transform society.⁴

It needs to be emphasized that in Breivik's case, the term 'fascism' does not denote a concrete regime but points to a hybrid, religionized, ultra-nationalist ideology that criticizes the society we live in based on a very approximate vision of what should replace it. Historian Roger Griffin has introduced the concept *generic* fascism to explain thinkers like Breivik. Generic fascism has three characteristics: belief in collective regeneration and rebirth of society after full collapse or deep crisis; practical politics anchored in myths of a past golden age and in work for its retrieval; nation understood as an organic entity of ethnically interlinked peoples and patriots, governed by a monarchic-hierarchical principle (Griffin 1992). Thus, while fascism aims to deconstruct democracy and create something completely different, it can also use the democratic political system to mobilize voters and gain power legally and through slow reform, and then destroy this system later on. This typically modern, intellectual and reform-friendly version of fascism seeks political change through cultural wars, not military ones, and makes use of a *meta-political* strategy to do the more 'spiritual' work of bringing about political change by modifying people's awareness and culture.⁵ This 'option' was not acknowledged by Breivik until 2017. Chantal Mouffe (2002: 63) seems to warn us of this type of fascism when she reminds us of the interplay of two different traditions in modern democracy: on the one hand, the classical democratic, communitarian tradition of equality and popular sovereignty, and, on the other, the liberal tradition and rule of law and individual liberty that protects minorities from oppressive majority rule.⁶ In the resurgence of Radical right movements today, communitarian egalitarian ideals are typically foregrounded while liberal rights such as rights of assembly, rights to freedom of speech, sexual rights and reproductive rights are attacked.

From this perspective, terrorist acts are to be understood not as political acts but as preparatory to the breakdown of democratic society. Indeed, following Hannah Arendt, true political acts do not seek to create a tribe or ethnic culture but rather a civil society and a new, constituted people that come together as *demos*. Politics deal with the coexistence and association of different people in the contemporary and in the open, not with society as a hereditary, tribal unified totality or as a secret club where those who do not fit, such as the youths at the Norwegian Labor Youth summer camp at Utøya, are weeded out. From this point of view, Breivik had no real political project but was merely articulating a

yearning to return to a kin-based, patriarchal unity inside a tall, ethnic fence – a project helped by his guns, the internet and the microphones he had access to during his trials.⁷

The ritual powers of the weak

I approach people's gathering in the streets to protest Breivik and mourn the dead as an instance of ritual. Why ritual and not just a social event? Sociologist Emile Durkheim (1995) saw ritual as a socio-religious tool. The work of religion was to create social cohesion and unify its practitioners into 'one single moral community'. Ritual was the tool with which this miracle could happen and social bonds be forged. In this light, ritual acts to preserve existing social realities, not to protest or explore other possible worlds. Durkheim probably assigned this power to rites because their underlying symbolic imaginaries were borrowed from small tribal societies and from what he understood to be the elemental forms of religion, universally. Thus, the social was perceived as a unified totality, and rites were seen as expressive of this totality, providing meaning and consolidating moral community. In this sociological tradition, ritual underlies the social, its ground or supportive wall, not a productive anti-structure in which alternative worlds might be created and visited. In short, in the end, the aim of ritual is political. When Breivik refers to 'my religion' and points to the necessity of returning to religion to be able to build a new society for 'my people', he leans on this powerful sociological matrix and its allegation that ritual/religion facilitates bonding and group building within society perceived as One – traditional or modern – and without which there would be no stable societies.

The problem with Durkheim's conceptualization of ritual is that the social is collapsed into the political. By making this 'category mistake' both authoritarian fanatics like Breivik and utopian religious or social movements may fuel their dreams that a new world order can be created by social means, by merely living 'as if' or by changing consciousness or by dropping a bomb, and that working through the slow democratic public assemblies and political institutions is not a necessity. Another effect of making this 'category mistake' is that the more generative side of ritual itself is easily displaced and attributed to art, play or psychology. This generative dimension of ritual refers to what is commonly called its subjunctive mode, its 'what if' mode of creativity, and ritual's ability to invert or bring into being new possibilities through its own inner potentialities and subversive dynamics (Handelman 2005).

To help scholars distinguish better between two very different forms of appearing together in the social, anthropologist Victor Turner (1989) split the category of ritual into ‘ceremony’ (the actual) and ‘ritual’ (the possible). While ceremony might be about both *social* cohesion and the harnessing of the *political* powers to rule, only ritual can facilitate the enactment and articulation of collective *aspirations* aimed at transformation and change. The secret tool of ritual to achieve ‘change’ is its interstitial and processual character, its framing and sequencing processes. Through the ritual process, a person or a group is transported from structure to a liminal space and back to structure – a process which in itself can create major ‘before’ and ‘after’ experiences. Thus, the liminal is essential and key to this definition of ritual. According to Turner, it is in fact only liminality that can constitute (time-limited) zones of creativity, subjunctionity and *communitas* (Turner 1979: 469).

Turner was aware that the powers of ritual in liminal space can also be subversive. When he coined the expression ‘the (ritual) powers of the weak’ he referred to ritualized, social critique performed by stable categories of people, such as ‘women’ and ‘outlaws’, directed against the strong and mighty (1979: 478). I disagree with Turner that the contextual ‘weak’ in ritualized space represents a stable social class or position and that the situated powers of the weak are necessarily intentional, self-conscious or directional. Ritual can evolve spontaneously and even surprise its participants. By gathering together in the streets of Oslo, ‘the weak’, victims of terrorist threats, ‘grew strong’ and produced a sense of taking back control over their daily lives. But to the extent that such acts produced ‘meaning’ they did so not because of people’s explicit intentions to manifest criticism, but through a need to be with others, to comfort and be comforted, which took place through the gathering itself.

In the Ocean of Roses, both modes of rituality were present, both ceremony and ritual, with one mode evolving into the other, without clear beginning or end. I am interested here in what was created by these two modes of ritual in the Norwegian post-22 July responses and also by what this response says about people’s ritual competence.

The Ocean of Roses in the streets of Oslo, 2011

The immediate counter-response to Breivik’s horrific killing was the small condolence ritual in the early evening of July 22, which quickly evolved into a strong mobilization of togetherness, solidarity and protest. Some explained their

participation as springing from a need 'to come together', others that they felt a need 'to act': 'I had to do something' (*jeg måtte gjøre noe*). The act of leaving one's home and 'coming together' with other Norwegians one did not know in unprotected space in downtown Oslo could include other smaller acts such as picking or buying flowers, writing a personal condolence letter, fixing up an old teddy bear, bringing chocolate or asking the children or the neighbours to join in. All the objects would be placed in the streets, although some of them were intended for the dead, some 'for my little country' (Norway), while others could be more political in character, diagnosing the situation.⁸

On Monday 25 July, almost half of the capital's population (more than 200,000) attended this silent condolence ritual, and the flowers and other objects they brought grew into what Norwegians called an 'ocean of roses'.⁹ The event was attended by the royal family and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, who said, 'The answer to violence is even more democracy, even more humanity. But never naivety.' He encouraged the crowd to dress up the whole city with their flowers, as a protective shield and as an expression of love. The Ocean of Roses spread out and its dense materiality flowed into more streets, squares and parks, and touched buildings associated with Parliament, the Norwegian Labor Party and Labor Union, as if a coordinated body in motion, and peaked at Oslo Cathedral.

Oslo Cathedral opened its doors to the 'push of the ocean' in a way that has never been seen before. The streets continued materially into the middle passage of the church and people circulated in and out for weeks. On the town square bordering the church, the gathering grew, its density standing in contrast with the quiet atmosphere that reigned. People behaved as if at a funeral or as if at church. They greeted newcomers with a nod, perhaps a smile and whisper, by giving them space, but in the absence of loud talking. These simple gestures were enough to create a sense of 'love' and 'solidarity' experienced and attested by thousands of people, and the red rose became its symbol. At the same time, these actions were more than symbolic expressions of something else. They were, in themselves, embodiments of peace with unknown others, expressing great trust and therefore also great vulnerability. People stood side by side with others they did not know and were not afraid of being stabbed.

I have already suggested that both ceremony and ritual, the two modes of rituality, were present in people's response in the streets of Oslo, each leading to the other. The more political aspect of the gathering, the ceremonial, obviously spoke back to Breivik and to the world, 'we are not your people', simply through the gesture of forming a large ritually structured 'body' that positioned 'itself'

respectfully in front of important political and ecclesial institutions. In doing so it confirmed Norway's democratic constitution and Christian-humanistic heritage. At the same time, this structured body was transformed into *communitas* (a liminal form of togetherness) when it turned inward on itself, processing people's fear and grief at having lost fellow humans and their own sense of security. Ritual was in this case contemplative, opening up space for a new experience of togetherness, love and solidarity primarily characterized by an attentive collectiveness. Silence was privileged; so were material, individual expression and movement. Ronald Grimes repeatedly reminded participants in the REDO project from which this volume arose that ritual in this sense 'springs up in the cracks created by disasters'. In this mode, rituals are not the performances of the 'as is' of democratic society or of the perfection of business as usual but, to use Turner's formula, enactments of collective aspirations of 'what if's'.

The 22 July protesters' massive presence at the edge of Oslo Cathedral was clearly part of their bodily statement against Breivik, not a witness to suddenly becoming 'more religious'. They also gathered in and around the cathedral because church represents a well-known space of sanctuary and safety, and because church is where they marry, baptize their children and send off their dead. Indeed, this unusual close interaction between church and people should rather be perceived as an invitation 'to be received' or 'to be held', which refers to primary acts of hospitality, love and healing. We do not know precisely how people interpreted the invitation of an open Cathedral, but we know that thousands of people every day accepted it and walked in, lit candles, wrote prayers, touched things, looked at the art, listened to music, often joined in the singing, walked out and came back in. Generative ritual is not primarily about belief but about participation in what it creates, being willing to experience it.¹⁰

According to Judith Butler's critical reading of Arendt (Butler 2015), when bodies come together 'in alliance in the street', the act produces more and other than what mere conversation does. It enables people to create a physical memory *in each other* through acting together, both by being physically close and as vulnerable individuals. While this is true, ritual in its subjunctive mode is more than bodily alliances in streets. It is a process that brings us 'out' of ourselves, acts on us and imprints us, skills something in us, then brings us back. We may therefore ask, what was being rehearsed and skilled in the streets of Oslo? An answer is: letting the other press her or his living, bodily image onto me, into my personal space, and tolerating their unique existence with me.

The multi-workshop for memorial design at the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture (DogA), 2014

Inspired by global social movements and their notions of ‘democracy in action’, but also by Judith Butler’s ideas of how street assemblies imprint themselves on participants’ memories, the REDO project staged a three-day workshop in October 2014 to learn more about how young adults experienced 22 July 2011. We invited people aged 18–30 to participate in open conversations and discussions with each other and with us in the rented venue DogA in Oslo.

These self-recruited participants were also asked to help design a fictional memorial site that they felt would embody the spirit of their own and of other people’s response to Breivik’s terror. The workshop was in part inspired by the 2013 survey conducted by the official Norwegian *Artistic Plan for Memorials after 22 July* (KORO), in which people were asked what words they associated with the street assemblies following 22 July and what words they hoped future memorials would be able to evoke. In the REDO project, however, we not only wanted to learn how small groups might negotiate the terms in which best to express their emotional experience of public responses to Breivik; we also wanted to see how they could collectively convert their responses into a material, architectural image by designing a fictional memorial.¹¹

The event was organized according to *charette* principles, a planning method used by green architect Frederica Miller and urban planning activist Audun Engh. With their help we constructed a methodology in which ‘charrette’ was transformed into a ‘multi-workshop’ of five specific tasks to be collectively resolved in five different rooms. Thus, we were interested not only in what small groups of young adults would say but also in how different environments could influence their engagement and response: what can safely be said in what kind of space?¹²

For many of these young people, assembling in front of the cathedral and in the streets of Oslo after 22 July was a radically new experience. Specifically, they were amazed at being part of *creating* something new. Although individuals were free to express what they felt on paper and other materials placed on the ground, there was no preaching. Nor were there leaders or instructors, although silence was the tacitly obeyed rule. The assembly had no stable borders, ebbing and flowing with the changing number of people present, its flow structured by streets and walls. Finally, it was devoid of explicit religious and/or political symbols except for the red rose which represented both love and a passion for justice.

A majority of Norwegians responding to the 2013 KORO survey reported that the words 'love', 'solidarity', 'grief', 'reflection', 'hope' and 'peace' best captured their post-22 July experience.¹³ The conversations in our workshop did not contradict this, but more emphasis was placed on inclusion, community, safety, contemplation and space for individual needs. The experience in the streets seemed to have created in and of itself a form of ritual resourcefulness, both to express resistance and to form a new type of floating community. Discussions revealed a need in young people for contemplation, with opportunities both for silence and for individual processing while at the same time being part of a group, a community. When in the streets, they had felt that they 'gave' love and solidarity to strangers and that they 'received' a sense of belonging in return. For a few days, they experienced a transformed city in which it was safe to stand close to strangers. All of them were certain that love and solidarity is the glue of society, although many were aware of fear lurking just beneath the surface. They are afraid of racism and xenophobia, of Breivik's ideology, of what might happen if trust is undermined and fear encouraged, and if people started acting collectively on the basis of fear and not community sentiment.

It also became evident that young people lacked venues where they could talk about 22 July. They felt that both high school and college/university had failed to deal critically with Breivik's ideology in class. Neither their fear of extremist ideology nor their experience of showing 'love and solidarity' to strangers was ever discussed in connection with democracy or freedom of speech. Nor did teachers reflect with them on the nature of the acts in the streets of Oslo and elsewhere. (Were the acts manifestations of a sudden democratic assemblage? Were they instances of genuine ritual?) Educational research had already documented that Breivik's ideology was not sufficiently discussed in Norwegian schools and that more education in democracy was needed.¹⁴ But no research had yet documented the need for young adults to be able to understand the *nature of the acts* in the streets of Oslo, which implies knowing how to discern democratic assemblage from genuine ritual. To develop this skill set, students would need to be taught not only democratic theory but also ritual theory. The young at DogA were able to critique what they felt was lacking in democratic education. But they were not aware that the 'other' side to their experience in the streets could also be conceptualized and that their own ritual competence therefore could also be educated.

The most important work accomplished in the multi-workshop was participants' design of an imaginary 22 July memorial site, visualized to be located at the end of a hiking trail that goes through the recreational forest

surrounding Oslo. We asked them to decide on its structure and components and to describe the experiences that they hoped their design would elicit from the 'hikers'. All three groups began their work by the participants being taken directly into a subjunctive ritual mode by means of a 'walking guided meditation'. As she does in all her creative architectural design work, Frederica Miller began by asking the young to get up and walk alone in the room, in a pattern they just make up as they walk. She then asked them to imagine going back to the past, to a past time of walking, to observe their surroundings, to remember, then to stop and share their 'experience of the past' with another person. Then she asked them to continue the walking, but now into an imagined future, to remember and to share. And finally, they were asked to walk in the present, and again, to remember and to share. The group then sat down at a table with Frederica and basically told her how to sketch a 22 July memorial site, taking clues both from their experiences in downtown Oslo in 2011 and from their imagined walking in the past, future and present at DogA in 2014. In this way, the memorial designs they proposed derived at once from their personal phantasies, their invented memories of walking together in time and their actual memories of 22 July.

Figure 8.2 Imagined memorial design, multi-workshop, DogA. Photo by Frederica Miller.

All three workshop groups used memories from the Ocean of Roses as a template for their imagined memorial and were united in insisting that a memorial should be able to host people of different cultures and religions. Also, they thought, it should take the form of a circle and with a number of openings so that anybody who walked by could enter in many different ways and also leave whenever they wanted. Some details varied. Some groups placed a beacon in the middle of the circle, others placed a tree that could also become a tree of hope if people hung objects and written messages on it. In all proposals, the memorial site either had a hearth or a water source close by. Many named this place a 'clearing in the woods' as they were trying to explain its 'feel'. The designs were not monumental but allowed for action, enabling people to do something 'in it' or while 'being there'. They were grounded in a ceremonial structure with the form of a 'wide open' circle within which people could remain silent or engage each other by means of the objects and symbols at their disposal, thereby allowing ritual acts to emerge.

The convergence of the participants' designs is remarkable. But it is difficult to know if this is due to similar experiences from the streets and their bodily imprints or if the walking-meditation was formative. Ritual in its subjunctive mode is meant to act on us, skill something in us, before it brings us back. If we ask what was skilled through the DogA experiment, toleration, playfulness and trust stand out. Willingly participating in an on-the-spot walking meditation signals toleration and playfulness. Agreeing to invite 'the other' into one's own personal space through speaking about and listening to 'fantasy memories' signals trust. These values are echoed in the proposed memorials' material design and statement, 'wanting to share' sacred place with the other.

The Clearing memorial site at Utøya, 2015

There are a number of striking similarities between the memorial design proposed by young people during the REDO multi-workshop at DogA and the actual design (by 3RW Architects) chosen and made public several months later for a private memorial at Utøya. In both cases a unifying circle defines a space designated by the same name: 'the clearing' (in the woods). This should be interpreted as evidence that the youth at DogA and those linked to Utøya – a training ground for political activism and participatory democracy – share overlapping cultures with respect to ritual imaginaries that feel inclusive and safe and that connect with other living beings.

According to the architects who won the competition, their design tries to address the duality of Utøya as both a unique natural site and the scene of horrific crime.¹⁵ In this duality, nature represents hope, and the memorial clears a space in nature to establish community and to give shelter and protection from the weather. It is meant to highlight the fact that nature has no memory of Breivik's killing and is already healing from the scars and wounds of 22 July 2011. When a big tree in the forest dies, an organic process that we know as a clearing begins. The memorial forms this clear spot, free from violence, free from history. The Clearing is shaped into a circle by means of four pine trees and a heavy metal ring hanging from the trees and into which the names of the dead are carved. Inside the uneven circle is a garden of bushes and herbs meant to attract life from the surrounding environment, including butterflies, not least of which is the mourning cloak. Life lost is to be remembered with the smell and vision of new life, and the fact that the ring broken by the names of the dead makes all the difference.

The 'Memorial Committee' at Utøya that chose this design regards it to be both sophisticated and unpretentious: 'No matter what social, cultural or religious affiliation, you can feel welcome here.'¹⁶ The memorial, which is both non-religious and trans-religious, was crafted with voluntary work from parents and survivors and opened 22 July 2015. Many families who had lost their

Figure 8.3 The Clearing memorial site, Utøya. Photo by Jone Salomonsen.

children in Breivik's massacre were present, mostly adults. All carried flowers. The prime minister said a few words. Then silence. No music, no talking, no singing. People walked slowly around the metal ring and put down flowers under the carved-out-name of their lost child. Some stuck flowers into the name carved into the ring itself. The flowers form a new ring under the metal ring. The slope above the ring has benches and seats. It invites mourners to rest in contemplation with memories and stunning views of the sea, the sky, the birds, the trees and the beautifully made memorial site. The same ritualized patterns that unfolded in the streets of Oslo are repeated here: silence, whispering, kindness, togetherness, roses, small movements, circles.

Utøya is a campsite on a small island and is in many ways already always a liminal space. But within it, different modes of rituality have been put in place. From the architects' point of view, it was important to build the memorial in a place where nobody was killed and which materially and symbolically could harvest all the riches of nature for its design. However, it is just as important to be aware that the old gathering site for political speech and discussion, concerts and rallies is a three-minute walk from the memorial site. These two places are connected by a border of trees and flowers that demarcate two different modes of rituality: on the one hand, the political, ceremonial meeting grounds for assembly that can instantly shift into a loud, singing crowd that creates a deep sense of bonding and community; and on the other, an intimate, spiritual memorial site inviting individual and collective commemoration and open to ritual.

The presence of the memorial is a constant reminder that democracy is not a given but must be defended and its supportive social institutions strengthened. Still, these two sites, the one linked with the political, the other with ritual, are complementary, and it is important not to confuse them. It is ritual, as a time-limited tool of the social, which may be supportive of democratic politics, not the other way around. Ritual rehearses our common humanity while politics contains our wildest disagreements and offers civilized tools to come to terms, despite conflicts.

The political, the pre-political and democracy

In 'The Human Condition', Hannah Arendt distinguishes between public and private spaces and their respective structural logics. A public, democratic space is a political space open to continuous talking and listening, to opposition,

confrontation and endless debate. These free contestations take place among people who are free citizens and who constitute a *demos*. Such public space is in principle different from the socially constituted and ordered household of the family, the church or the welfare state. Arendt believes that these latter spaces are generated from the hierarchical principles of *ethnos*, meaning kinship and lineage-based organizational principles. To better identify the essential difference between the public-political and the private-social, Arendt points to the Greek *polis*:

In Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home or household (oikier) and the family. [...] The foundation of the *polis* was preceded by the destruction of organized units resting on kinship, such as the *phratría* – derived from brother and meaning brotherhood and kinfolk, which was a social division of the Greek tribe (*phyle*)

(Arendt 1998: 24).

Arendt builds her argument in reference to Fustel de Coulanges's *The Ancient City* where he argues that the religion of the family and the regime of the city represent two analogous forms of government. The paterfamilias, like the authoritarian monarch, is a king in his own terms; both are leaders of (continuous) social units. The political, however, argues Arendt, is constituted differently. It is an assemblage of free and equal citizens who regularly come together to discuss and resolve conflict, legal issues and other mundane affairs on behalf of society (and themselves). It is a time-limited assembly, a *thing*. To compare the household rule with political governance is thus a category mistake.

It is a well-known fact that women, slaves and strangers-immigrants were excluded from the polis of Greek society. They represented its constitutive outside; only free Greek males had dual citizenship in both private and public spheres. In recalling this, Arendt's point is simply that a political public space is not built on domestic structures, on variations of *ethnos*, but constitutes something radically new, people as a temporary 'gathering together' a *demos*. An ultra-nationalist desire to dismantle liberal democracy, to put up fences and return to *my kindred*, is therefore basically a desire to dismantle the *demos*, the constructed people of a nation state, and to return to king, führer, church, family, a closed community or to the one head/one body symbolism of authoritarian mass movements. In short, the political does not resemble a home and familiar consensus is not its goal. To criticize democracy is therefore tricky since a desire to leave the political and return to the social can also

mean returning to the hierarchical orders of the patriarchal household and its resort to violence to force obedience.

Political scientist Chantal Mouffe builds on Arendt's distinctions between public and private but recasts the spatial limits of the political when she argues that the 'political' is the potential antagonistic inherent in all social relations – in the parliament as well as at the dinner table. It operates in both public and private spaces and manifests as strong disagreement when decisions are to be made. Democracy, she argues, is a way of organizing human coexistence in a context which is always conflictual exactly because of this ever-present 'political'. The aim of democratic politics is thus to create the institutions through which this potential antagonism (hostility and strife) can be transformed into agonism (a community of disagreeing citizens) and enable pragmatic decisions to be made on matters of concern. Yet, she warns, if we want democracy to actually work, citizens must pay allegiance to two basic norms (or political principles): (1) all humans have equal worth, and (2) all human rights are universal rights since they are inborn and not relative to culture.

Mouffe is critical of consensus decision-making in new social movements because it may cover up the realities and dangers of antagonism. She is also critical of deliberative democratic theory and the belief that we can create societies that are no longer concerned with collective identities or distinctions between us and them. For her, good democratic governance requires a plurality of social units and *demoi*. At the same time, she urges us to imagine and experiment with new forms of association in which pluralism can flourish and where the ethical capacities for democratic decision-making can be enhanced. However, she defines such experimentation as belonging to the 'pre-political', as opposed to 'the political', which is the work of transforming antagonism into agonism and of facilitating deliberative and sensible decision-making.

Mouffe's concept of the pre-political is helpful for thinking about the outside of democratic politics. However, I suggest, it is less productive to think of the pre-political as limited to imagination and experimentation, set apart from the political, than it is to see it as closely entangled with it. In other words, if she is correct in thinking that democracy begins in a shared allegiance to ethical norms, the necessarily cultivated human ability to pay allegiance in this manner can only be developed in pre-political social domains. This idea joins up with concerns expressed in the 2014 government report on Norwegian culture (the *Kulturutredningen*) regarding a new political trend in Norway in which people tend to split into activist subgroups and only engage with those they already agree with politically. Historian Francis Sejerstad regards this tendency as a problem for

democracy since political debates and disagreements must take place within, not outside of, a community constituted horizontally and in conscious acceptance of differences and disagreements – which is his definition of democracy. The remedy against this political trend, he writes in *Kulturutredningen*, lies in the ‘pre-political sphere’, in phenomena called ‘cultural meeting places’. The report argues that inclusive ‘cultural meeting places’ have a civilizing effect and can help a community of disagreeing people to come together across the real divisions in society. Ritual is not mentioned in this report, but the elusive ritual work in the streets of Oslo after Breivik’s deadly attacks were such cultural meeting places for those who participated. In the meeting, pluralism flourished and ethicality was practised and enhanced.

As documented in this chapter, the pre-political is not only a remedy to the political. In a democratic society they are interdependent. Instances of the pre-political in which ritual played a major role were not only the Ocean of Roses but also the DogA memorial proposals, including the ritualized tools (walking guided meditation) used by the architect to open up creativity and a sense of pre-existing interrelatedness. The two kinds of ritual spaces at Utøya bear witness to the same.

But part of the skill of performing a ritual in a democratic society is to make sure that ritual really ends and to be aware of this fact. Otherwise ritual can become a totalitarian way of life and impose utopian or nativist norms onto politics, or be a battlefield for the never-dormant antagonistic forces. This demand for ritual closure necessarily means that an experience of ‘togetherness’ ends when ritual ends. For an experience to take hold and be ‘crafted’ onto the body as rhythm, feeling, knowledge, disposition or memory of alterity, ritual must be repeated again and again. Thus, ritual *in this take* is a major cultivating tool of ‘bodies in alliance’ in a plurality of places. It imprints a physical memory of close inter-relations with the not-me human other of the ‘built community’.

Conclusion: Ritual and democracy

Democratic theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Chantal Mouffe argue that politics is about agonistic confrontation and negotiation in a context which always will be conflictual. Democracy is a way of organizing human coexistence that leaves behind kinship based on *ethnos* as a model for politics and builds instead a new body politic, the *demos*. This does not mean that society should not be concerned with collective identities. Mouffe insists that if people want

effective democratic self-governance they need to be citizens with rights and duties under a nation state and in *addition* belong to at least one other civil association, a local *demos*. In such associations, she says, pluralism can flourish and ethical capacities for democratic decision-making be enhanced. The work and experiments of these associations are said to be outside of democratic politics and therefore belong to the pre-political. At the same time they are instrumental in cultivating human allegiance to the two foundational norms that are a precondition to democratic governance: human equality and human rights.

As conveyed in this chapter, egalitarian ritual plays an important, yet underestimated role in the cultivation of democratic dispositions. Ritual is not an organization but a cultural *tool* with which people gather into a certain ritualized mode and for a certain reason. Neither is ritual democratic per se. It becomes part of democratic culture through its particular enactment in place, through how it is constructed and done.

The two formations, the noisy negotiation of democracy and the quiet space of condolence, memorial and walking meditation may seem to be mutually contradictory to the demands of living collectively and at the same time individually in modern society. Democracy begins in the experience of social battle and political disagreements. It does not reflect unity but provides a framework and a method for fair discussion, negotiations and distributions of power, obliged by a notion of inborn human equality and right. Democracy is therefore not a goal in itself but a continuous and unrestricted process towards better solutions.

Ritual, on the other hand, begins in the experience of life and of pre-political fellowship and inherited and invented traditions. Its formality, modesty, festivity or silence may seem to break with the forever open, democratically negotiated traditions, even though ritual too invites participation. The process may be prescribed or improvised. It nevertheless takes people into places and processes where they are forced to see the other, without argument, including those who do not belong to their own in-group. Ritual intends to build or confirm community and therefore society. That is why it also needs to end. Because if our social life becomes a single ritual event, without open conflict and debate, society becomes totalitarian.¹⁷