



HOW TO COPE WITH A TERRORIST ATTACK?  
– A CHALLENGE FOR THE POLITICAL AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

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The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It will analyse the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens' service needs and social cohesion in Europe. Evaluating the extent and consequences of NPM's alleged fragmenting tendencies and the resulting need for coordination is a key part of assessing these impacts. It is funded under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014).

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### **Abstract**

This paper addresses how the Norwegian government and political leaders handled the terrorist attack of July 22. Such crises are typical ‘wicked problems’ transcending organizational arrangements, policy areas and administrative levels, and creating complex problems for those handling the crisis. This article addresses some of these complexities. What characterizes the government response, and how can it be explained? Can we learn anything from the Norwegian response to this crisis? The descriptive part of the paper is based on crisis management theory. To explain the crisis response, we apply three perspectives from organization theory – a symbolic, an instrumental and a cultural perspective. A major finding is that political leadership in times of crisis is crucial. The prime minister succeeded through suitable use of symbols, while the administrative leadership and the police were constrained by structural and cultural features, and ran into severe coordination problems.

### **Keywords**

*Wicked problems, Crisis, Coordination*

# HOW TO COPE WITH A TERRORIST ATTACK? – A CHALLENGE FOR THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

## 1. Introduction

On July 22, 2011, Norway was struck by two unprecedented and shocking terror attacks. A car bomb destroyed several central government buildings in the capital of Oslo. A few hours later, a large number of politically active youths from the Labour Party's youth organization attending a camp on the island of Utøya, were massacred. Most of the victims were between 15 and 18 years old. In total, 77 people died. Many were seriously injured. People soon came to realize that the attacks were carried out by an ethnic Norwegian citizen, aged 33 and living in one of the more affluent areas of Oslo. He was arrested on Utøya the same evening and immediately admitted his responsibility for the attacks. The evidence so far indicates that he was "a lone wolf", operating on his own without the backing of any (political) organization.

The attacks came as a terrible shock. Norway is generally regarded as a peaceful, open and robust democracy, and has had limited direct experience with terrorism (Rykkja, Fimreite, Lango & Lægreid, 2011). However, the attacks of July 22 have been characterized as the most devastating since the Second World War. In times of crisis, citizens and victims look to government for leadership, protection, direction and order. At the same time, as Masters and 't Hart (2012: 2) point out, there might be a collective anxiety and outrage that makes those responsible – political leaders as well as administrative authorities – obvious targets of blame. This article addresses the challenges that this shattering crisis created for central government and political leadership in Norway.

Dealing with terrorist attacks engages structures of internal security and crisis management. Such disasters or crises are typical 'wicked issues' (Harmon & Mayer, 1986) or 'problems' (Head, 2008), transcending organizational arrangements, policy areas and administrative levels, and creating complex problems for decision-makers and those responsible for implementation. This article addresses some of these complexities. How did the Norwegian government and political leaders handle the crisis of July 22? What characterizes the response of the government, and how can it be explained? Can we learn anything from the Norwegian response to this crisis?

To answer these questions, we examine the response of central political leaders and the police. Through the lens of more *descriptive* crisis management theory, the response to the terrorist attacks is considered in relation to different phases of crisis management (Boin, 't Hart, Stern & Sundelius, 2005). However, the crisis is far from over. The government is still

in the process of dealing with the attacks and their aftermath. Therefore, our focus is on the immediate response from the authorities only. In seeking to *explain* the different aspects of crisis management in this early phase, we draw on three perspectives from organizational theory, looking more closely at the importance of formal organization, cultural-historical traditions and path-dependency, and the use of myths and symbols (Christensen, Læg Reid, Roness & Rovik, 2007).

## **2. Our approach**

Following Boin (2008), crisis can be seen as an extreme situation that threatens core values or life-sustaining systems, and which requires an urgent response under conditions of deep uncertainty. Crises are largely improbable events with exceptionally negative consequences, or ‘low chance, high impact’ events (Weick, 1988). They are difficult to predict, develop quickly and in unexpected ways, and differ from normal situations in that they require a coordinated effort by many organizations at the same time (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009). Crisis thus involves forming subjective opinions about non-routine situations characterized by time pressure, threats and ambiguity (Rosenthal, Charles & t’Hart, 1998). The *subjective* element is central since it opens up for different understandings and different actions, making crisis response a particularly interesting research topic.

In addition to the devastating human losses and extensive material destruction, July 22 represents a significant crisis at a *symbolic level*. A physical attack on central institutions in a democracy – in this case central government ministries and the largest political party in the country – strikes at the very core of the state and violates common political and societal values. By targeting young people, the attacker also violated essential human values. This complexity exerts extra pressure on responsible authorities. The political executive has a central symbolic role in how it responds to and handles such an event (Edelman, 1964). We will concentrate on this symbolic role in our analysis below.

A terrorist attack represents what Gundel (2005) calls a *fundamental crisis*. Such crises are largely unpredictable and non-influenceable. A terrorist attack is also a *transboundary crisis*, transcending boundaries of administrative levels and sectors, involving public authorities at different levels and within different jurisdictions (Boin, 2008; Ansell, Boin & Keller, 2010). These crises typically challenge existing government structures of crisis management. In Norway, internal security and crisis management is fragmented and decentralized, characterized by weak horizontal coordination at the top and major responsibilities at lower levels of government (Lango, Rykkja & Læg Reid, 2011). What consequences such a structure has when a major crisis hits is an interesting question.

Formal organization is a critical factor for understanding and managing risks and crises (Fimreite et al., 2011). A broad organizational approach tells us that formal arrangements, established culture, routines and institutionalized forms of action, as well as the use of myths and symbols, may hinder or enhance the authorities' ability to navigate (Christensen et al., 2007). At the same time, when a major disaster happens it is necessary to supplement existing formal organizational structures with temporary organizational arrangements and an ability to improvise (Czarniawska, 2009).

Problems of coordination and specialization within the field of internal security and safety are interesting for several reasons. Coordination between different organizations or parts of organizations responsible for crisis management is vital (Kettl, 2003). The awareness of threats related to natural disasters, pandemics and terrorism seems lately to have increased. The structures of crisis management and internal security can also be linked to more general reorganization processes in central government. According to dominant research within public administration and governance, new organizational forms emerge as society faces new challenges (Christensen & Lægreid, 2006; Bouckaert, Peters & Verhoest, 2010). The New Public Management-based reforms of the 1990s, which encouraged decentralization and structural devolution, have increasingly been supplemented by new arrangements that emphasize the need for more coordination across sectors and levels, often leading to hybrid structures (Bogdanor, 2005; Christensen & Lægreid, 2007; Bouckaert et al., 2010). These processes also influence arrangements for crisis management, and has made the field of internal security increasingly relevant (Christensen, Fimreite & Lægreid, 2011).

#### *Data and method*

The following analysis is based on qualitative content analysis of central policy documents, mainly commission and evaluation reports, parliamentary debates and documents, speeches made by central actors, and mass media coverage in the first months following the attacks. The data were collected mainly between November 2011 and March 2012.

Boin, McConnell and 't Hart (2008) point out that mass media play a crucial role in the framing contest that often ensues after a crisis. They constitute a prime arena in which different actors perform to obtain or preserve political power/influence. Crisis actors are dependent on news-makers to pay attention and possibly support their particular crisis frame. At the same time, mass media crisis behaviour has its own logic and media coverage might be biased or speculative. Many of the media reports after July 22 revealed important

circumstances and facts related to the government's crisis management. Although the media may have their own agenda, we still think that their reports have value as information on how the authorities responded to the attacks. Analysed alongside central documents from responsible public authorities, and with the necessary critical evaluation, we believe that we can – for our purposes – give a sufficiently thorough interpretation of how central actors dealt with the crisis.

### *Sense-making, decision-making and meaning-making*

In order to understand a crisis it is useful to examine different stages in its development. Crisis management literature often distinguishes between prevention, preparation, mitigation and crisis aftermath. Boin et al. (2005) link these phases to processes of sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, closure and learning. This is relevant for our analysis. However, considering that the events of July 22 are still near, we only address the first three elements: sense-making, decision-making and meaning-making.

First, central actors must *make sense* of the crisis. They must find out what the unfolding events are all about and how to define them in order to limit damage. This initial framing has important consequences for how the crisis is handled and dealt with at a later stage. In addition to the chaos, urgent timeframes and often limited information and uncertainty related to the crisis, the organizations involved face various constraints and barriers that influence their understanding of the crisis. If we accept that central actors have bounded rationality (Simon, 1957), initial decisions are often made on the basis of incomplete and contradictory information and advice. Crisis management research also suggests that clues needed to detect and deal with a crisis in the making can be found within the organization in question (Turner & Pidgeon, 1997). Important difficulties can be related to organizational features such as structure, complexity, number and size. Organizing means making systematically biased selections and prioritizing problems and solutions. In order to detect a crisis, an immense concerted effort to bring data together is often required. In order to handle it, different organizations need to act, separately or together.

The *decision-making aspect* includes prioritizing resources and deciding how to coordinate the different governmental actors involved. Once leading actors realize there is a crisis, decisions need to be made. Managers and executives are central actors. Professionals and experts may also have crucial roles. Interorganizational coordination between specialized organizations at different administrative levels is very often a central challenge (Kettl, 2003). The scale of the crisis is important. When the crisis strikes multiple jurisdictions, is overly

complex or of a very serious nature, decision responsibility will usually shift upwards. At the same time, numerous organizations and groups are typically involved in the implementation of crisis decisions. The specific characteristics of central decision-making structures are relevant here. Who are they, what are their roles and responsibilities, how are they related? What are considered as available and relevant instruments, measures or actions?

By '*giving meaning*' to a crisis leaders try to frame the crisis for others, i.e. citizens at large, affected groups and other private actors, mass media being one example. Whether they really grasp the crisis or not, they must try to create an image, often using symbols, with which to make sense of it, in order to lead, comfort and inform the public. In this phase, communication is the essence. A sure-footed manipulation of symbols that shape the views and sentiments of the political environment and thereby enhance the leaders' capacity to act is crucial.

#### *Perspectives from organizational theory*

Organizational theory argues that different types of coordination and specialization have important consequences for actors within public bodies, for the public bodies themselves, and for the policy field affected (Egeberg, 2003, March & Olsen, 1989). The organizational layout of the internal security and safety field is of crucial importance to risk and crisis management (Fimreite et al., 2011). In many cases, a crisis can be traced back to organizational failure or poor risk management within an organization (Hutter & Power, 2005). Organizational forms affect which issues get attention and which are ignored, how the issues are grouped together and how they are separated. Organizational arrangements will therefore have vital importance for risk management.

Within organizational theory, different perspectives emphasize different aspects and variables and may give different explanations for the existing structure or management solution (Christensen et al., 2007). An *instrumental perspective* directs attention towards formal structural arrangements seen as instruments to achieve certain goals. The underlying behavioural logic is a 'logic of consequence' where 'bounded' rational actors are assumed to be able to predict the consequences of their choices and find the appropriate means to achieve their goals (Simon, 1957). A distinction can be made between a *hierarchically oriented variant*, where the leaders' control and unambiguous analytical-rational calculation are central, and a *negotiation-based variant* which allows for the articulation of a variety of interests, and for compromise and negotiation between organizations and actors whose goals

and interests are partially conflicting (March & Olsen, 1983). Based on this perspective, characteristics of the formal national security organization are relevant.

Institutional theory adds other elements to the analysis. A *cultural-institutional perspective* emphasizes informal norms, values and practices that have developed over time, and as a response to internal and external pressure rather than conscious and rational design (Selznick, 1957). Development is largely path-dependent, and the ‘roots’ of an organization – contexts, norms and values central to its establishment – will influence its ‘route’ or path at a later stage (Krasner, 1988; Pierson, 2004). Here, central actors follow a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March & Olsen, 1989). A relevant question in our case is how much and in what ways the response to the terrorist attack was influenced by such cultural factors. Were the existing structures adequate, or did they result in a lack of flexibility in dealing with the crisis?

A third perspective opens up for the importance of *myths and symbols* in politics and administration. According to some, such myths are created on a macro level and spread around the world, from private to public organizations, and between public organizations, creating isomorphism or structural similarity on the surface, but not necessarily affecting actual events and activities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Reform waves of New Public Management and post-NPM are relevant examples (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). According to Brunsson (1989), public leaders will balance their actions with respect to certain policies and cases with talk and manipulation of symbols. Importing myths and using symbols may make organizations more flexible and enhance their legitimacy. We are particularly interested in what symbols were used by the political and administrative leadership in the first months after the terrorist attack in Norway, in order to tackle the crisis.

The three perspectives are used in a supplementary manner (Rones, 1997). Processes of policy formation and change are seen as characterized by complex interaction between different factors, rather than as resulting from instrumental processes and leadership strategies alone, or being a product of history or of adaptation to external myths and symbols exclusively.

### **3. Context**

When one wants to understand the reactions and response to 22 July in Norway, certain contextual factors seem relevant. Norway is a society that scores high on trust. Both the generalized trust among citizens and citizens’ trust in government, are higher than in many other countries (Wollebæk, Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Ødeård, 2012). This also applies to

citizens' trust in the government's ability and capacity to handle and prevent crises (Christensen, Fimreite & Lægreid, 2011; Fimreite, Lægreid & Rykkja, 2011). This high trust leads us to expect that the public at large on the one hand will not be very critical towards how the government tackles the crisis, while the government on the other hand will be quite confident in their existing approach.

Individual ministerial responsibility is a core concept within the Norwegian central government.<sup>1</sup> This impacts on how the policy field of internal security is organized. Ministerial responsibility implies strong sectoral ministries and strong vertical coordination, resulting in weaker horizontal coordination between policy areas and sectors (Christensen & Lægreid, 1998; Bouckaert, Ormond & Peters, 2000). Specialization by sector or purpose/task makes it difficult to establish coordinative arrangements across traditional sectors. This is the case within the area of internal security and crisis management, where the Ministry of Justice's responsibility for coordination meets with strong sectoral interests (Fimreite et al., 2011).

Another central feature is the concept of local self-government. Local democracy and authority is a relatively strong value in the Norwegian polity (Fimreite, Flo & Tranvik, 2002). However, local self-government is not legally established. This creates a constant tension between national and local liabilities and interests. Local government has important responsibilities for crisis management, but in many cases limited capacity to handle large or unexpected crises. Sometimes the crisis at hand is so far-reaching that regional and national coordination is necessary. This creates tensions between the state and the national government, related to liability and blame.

*Central principles: liability, decentralization and conformity*

Three crucial principles guide the authorities' approach to risk and crisis management in Norway (St.meld. nr. 22 (2007–2008)). The *liability principle* implies that every ministry and authority has responsibility for internal security and safety within its own sector. It is closely related to the doctrine of individual ministerial responsibility, emphasizing strong sector ministries. The *decentralization* (or subsidiarity) principle emphasizes that a crisis should be managed at the lowest operational level possible. This corresponds with the principle of local self-government, and makes geography a central additional organizing concept. Between the

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<sup>1</sup> The minister, as head of a given ministry, bears ultimate responsibility for actions within that ministry, including those of subordinate agencies. In this case, the minister also bears responsibility for the actions of the police.

two principles lays an important (organizational) paradox: The principle of liability implies strong vertical coordination within specific sectors, but weak coordination across them. The principle of decentralization implies strong horizontal coordination across sectors at a low level, and hence less coordination between vertical levels of government. The third principle, the principle of *conformity* emphasizes that organizational forms in a crisis or a crisis-like situation should be as similar to 'normal organizational' forms as possible. This is also difficult; first, because planning and maintaining the capacity to deal with 'unlikely events' has its costs and may require extraordinary resources. Second, when a major and 'extraordinary' crisis happens, supplementing existing formal organizations with improvisation and temporary organizations becomes crucial (Czarniawska, 2009).

A fourth principle relating to the rescue services is also relevant. A principle of *collaboration* implies the mobilization of private sector and civil society organizations to enhance the capacity to handle disasters and major crises. In many crises, the contribution of people accidentally involved and volunteering is crucial in the early stages of the crisis. Also, the effort of different voluntary organizations is often invaluable.

#### *Organizing for internal security and safety – a reluctant reformer*

The most important changes in Norwegian internal security and safety policy since the Cold War have been the introduction of the principles mentioned above, the further development and clarification of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Justice, and the establishment of both permanent and ad hoc organizations under the ministry (Fimreite et al., 2011). Over the years, a shift from the military towards the civilian sector has been observed (Læg Reid & Serigstad, 2006; Dyndal, 2010; NOU, 2006: 6). According to Fimreite et al. (2011), the principles of ministerial superiority and local self-government have imposed limitations on legislative and organizational proposal. Efforts to strengthen coordinating authorities within the field have led to the clarification of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Justice, subordinate agencies, regional state authorities (the County Governors) and local government, but no major restructurings (Lango, Rykkja & Læg Reid, 2011). In general, existing organizational forms have been gradually strengthened, resulting in a somewhat cautious adaptation to the new situation following the end of the Cold War.

At the same time, experiences with certain crises have revealed that the responsible authorities are not always well prepared. The tsunami in South-East Asia in 2004, where several Norwegian tourists were hit, revealed serious shortcomings (Jaffery & Lango, 2011). This led to some reorganization, but not completely new arrangements, in accord with

Norway's reputation as a 'reluctant reformer' (Christensen & Lægheid, 2007; Olsen, 1996). Other crises, such as the mad cow disease (BSE), have also led to changes that largely followed the existing lines of responsibility (Rykkja, 2008). The principle of liability stands strong, and continues to create tensions between organizational units, sectors and administrative levels (Lango & Lægheid, 2011). The government has not built up strong, permanent core organization in central government. The Ministry of Justice remains the central coordinating body, but is characterized as rather weak. Attempts to build a strong overarching coordinating ministry have failed, largely due to the strength of the principle of ministerial responsibility. Crises have not resulted in radical changes, but rather in incremental adjustments (Ibid.). Thus, coordination between different authorities continues to be a challenge (Fimreite et al., 2011). A typical arrangement is the establishment of virtual networks with weak resources at the ministerial level that do not threaten the power of line ministries (Lango, Rykkja & Lægheid, 2011).

#### *Who were the responsible authorities*

A complex web of authorities were responsible for crisis management on the day of July 22. *The Ministry of Justice* has the main coordinative responsibility, and normally takes the lead in a major, national crisis. In less severe or cross-cutting crises, responsibility lies with the authorities within which sector and administrative level is the most affected, according to the liability principle. *The Cabinet Crisis Council* supports the government during severe crises and is normally summoned by the most affected ministry.<sup>2</sup> Constitutional and ministerial responsibility still rests with each ministry. *The Crisis Support Group*, an administrative resource designated to support the lead ministry, is summoned in certain demanding crisis situations. All these institutions were operative during the terror attacks in July.

The main operative units under the Ministry of Justice are the *Directorate of the Police* (PD), the *Police Security Service* (PSS), and the *Joint Rescue Coordination Centres*. At the local level, *local police districts* are responsible for tactical decisions and operations. The PD is responsible for the professional direction and follow-up of the police, and can assist the local Chief of Police in a crisis situation. The PSS provides information and intelligence covering counter-terrorism and counter-extremism and warning and threat assessments, and provides personal protection. There are two main rescue coordination centres, and 28 local branches.

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<sup>2</sup> The Council has five permanent members, comprising the top level staff (director-generals) with the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In particularly severe crises, the heads of all the ministries can be summoned.

The police is separated into 27 police districts. They differ considerably in size, number of staff, population served, internal organization and the crime problems they face. The attacks of 22 July hit two different police districts – Oslo and Nordre Buskerud. *The Contingency Platoon* (Beredskapstroppen) – a national counter-terrorism unit, is organized within the police district of Oslo. The district of Oslo also has a specially trained bomb squad that serves other police districts where needed, a separate emergency squad, and a police helicopter unit.

The *municipality of Oslo* also has an important role in the local crisis management. This includes the authority to regulate traffic, a circumstance that became very relevant under the attacks of July 22.

#### **4. Making sense, making decisions and providing meaning**

According to a statement by the Minister of Justice to Parliament, the first notification of the bomb explosion outside a main ministerial building was registered by the police at 15:26 h (Storberget, 2011). A few minutes later, the first police patrols arrived at the site. Within about 25 minutes, all police districts in Norway had been alerted. Within the next hour more than 20 police officers were stationed at the bombsite. Five additional officers constituted central crisis management on site. The attack was quickly defined as a crisis of security policy, a situation where the principle of decentralization does not apply. Nevertheless, the crisis demanded action from all levels and coordination across structures, not least because of the shootings on Utøya that followed.

The first emergency phone-calls reporting the attacks on Utøya were registered at 17:25 h (Ibid.). At that point, the Police District of Nordre Buskerud had five officers stationed at the police station close to Utøya. Five others were stationed further away. Incidentally, the Police Directorate's liaison to Oslo police district received a phone-call, only minutes later, from his daughter who was under attack on Utøya. This call led to the immediate raising of full alarm and deployment to the island. Formally, the district of Nordre Buskerud requested assistance from the Contingency Platoon at 17:38 h. At this point, the platoon was already on its way to Utøya by car, but had got caught up in traffic. Further delays resulted from complications regarding meeting point and command, even the police boat broke down while transporting the platoon to the island (Stormark, 2011). More serious was that there was no police helicopter available to provide air support or intervention. Eventually, the Contingency Platoon arrived on Utøya by boat at 18:25 h (Storberget, 2011). The perpetrator was arrested two minutes later.

The immediate response of the authorities, both strategically and operative, was at first largely praised. The authorities themselves were reluctant to admit faults or shortcomings. Over the following months, and as the crisis became more distant, the reactions of the central political leaders were praised. However, the operative crisis management – in particular the police – was increasingly criticized. The Prime Minister and leading figures like the King and the Crown Prince were said to have dealt with the crisis in a sensible and dignified way. At the same time, doubts were raised as to whether the responsible authorities were at all prepared or adequately equipped to handle such a crisis.

As time passed, more detailed information on the actual crisis management was revealed, especially by the press. Criticism was directed mainly at the police operation on Utøya, and towards the Norwegian Police Security Service. Later on, the crisis management of several ministries was also found to be at fault. After the crisis, the Minister of Justice, the leader of PST and a Secretary General within the Ministry resigned. Although it has been emphasized that their resignations were not directly due to faults related to 22 July, this is an interesting development.

*The response of the political leadership: the PM shows 'statesmanship'*

Eight central presentations and speeches the Prime Minister (PM) made during the first month after the terrorist attack reveal the main approach and communication strategy from the central political leadership. The first press conference was held on the evening of the attack. Subsequent speeches were delivered to both national and special audiences, i.e. members of the Labour Party's youth organization, the Muslim community, and central civil servants (listed under News articles and public documents – Statsministerens kontor in the reference list).

At the very first press conference after the attack, the PM introduced some of the main themes that continued to dominate his later speeches. The most powerful symbol used was 'democracy'. He proclaimed that the terrorist attack was an attack on the whole nation, on democracy and on Norwegian commitment to creating a better world and said that a fitting response would be more democracy, more openness and more humanity. No one should be allowed to bomb Norway into silence. Norway would continue on its historical path, and reclaim her security. He said: 'Evil can kill a man, but it cannot defeat a whole nation and its people'. He also underlined that the Norwegian people should stand up for their ideals and central values. This is an example of a strong symbolic language, and of a leader setting a strong moral example in a crisis situation (Edelman, 1964; Edelman, 1977).

In his following speeches, the PM returned to various aspects of democracy. First, he underlined that such an unprecedented attack demanded a lot from the whole population, stressing the importance of mobilizing democratic values, sharing in the grief of the families affected and giving them support. Second, he underlined the importance of various groups in society for democracy. The youth organization was lauded as representing the future of democracy. He thanked the central civil servants, who had gathered to mourn, for their valuable contribution to democracy. In his speech in a mosque he stressed the importance of ‘new members of the democracy’. Here, he underlined that Norway was one community, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender or class. He praised the broad expression of solidarity in the streets and at public meetings after the attacks as an expression of the collective will of the people. He also underscored that people should engage more in civic organization and public debate and should vote at elections, stating that each and every citizen could strengthen the ‘fabric of democracy’ by gathering around the Norwegian ‘we’. His central message, which he repeated many times, was: “Our answer is more democracy, more openness, and more humanity, but never naivety”.

A second and related theme is the PM’s ability to ‘rise above’ the people to be a representative of the ‘common will’. In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, he was not willing to blame anyone or to start a ‘witch hunt’ on those with subversive attitudes. He underlined that while there was a time for everything, this first phase should be a moment to reflect, to grieve and give support to others. He stated that he was greatly impressed by the dignified, caring and firm nature of peoples’ reactions. He further underlined the importance of respecting the fact that people would react in different ways to the attacks and hold different opinions in the aftermath of the crisis. An important focus was nevertheless unity. In one speech, he quoted a young girl from the youth organization: ‘If one man can show that much hatred, think about how much love we all can show together’.

This unwillingness to start a blame-game is interesting. One could easily have pointed a finger at the extreme right, where the terrorist belongs, and more specifically at the Norwegian Progressive Party, known for its anti-immigration policies, to whose youth organization the terrorist once belonged. However, the PM consciously refrained from criticism of this kind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is quite different to the more confrontational style of George Bush Jr. after 9/11 (Kettl, 2004).

A third theme, although not a main theme in the PM's speeches, was to avoid naivety. Herein lies a recognition that Norway is not immune to terror attacks or similar incidents of extreme violence. The PM emphasised that people should be alert to signs of extremism, and that the country needed to be organized and prepared for terrorist attacks in the future. Increased security should be attained through adequate emergency organization, visible police, more controls, exercises, and training, and the right equipment.

The PM repeatedly used personal examples to underscore his main arguments. He met with the families of the victims and survivors several times following the attack. This further underlined the symbolic aspect of his main arguments and earned him a lot of praise. A major reason for his personal approach, of course, was that he in many ways identified with the victims of the attack. He emphasised that he had many good memories of his own numerous stays at the annual youth camp on Utøya, where he had gained a lot of political experience and made many friends over the years. He also knew many of the young people killed and their families personally. Another important fact is that the PM's Office was badly damaged in the bomb explosion.

Overall, the PM's response prompted praise, and can be seen as a display of 'statesmanship' (Selznick, 1957). According to Masters and 't Hart (2012:17) there is ample evidence in crises that involve public safety and national security that astute rhetorical executive leadership can shape public cognitions, emotions and attitudes. The discourse of 'democracy, openness, humanity, but never naivety' was repeated continuously by the political leadership and the press over the following weeks and months, and became both a slogan and a symbol of how (apparently) successful central leadership in Norway was in dealing with the crisis. This far, it represents a crucial sense- and meaning-making framing of the reactions, creating a sense of comfort, direction and unity.

Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) argue that crises that involve natural disasters or acts of terrorism call for *Restorative Rhetoric*: a different category of crisis response, emphasizing issues of repair, recovery, rebuilding and helping victims. This rhetoric includes a humanistic element, and the primary concern is to help victims and others affected cope with the physical and emotional destruction of the crisis. The rhetor is not directly in 'defence' of himself/herself but serves as a facilitator and sense-maker, whose task is not only to manage the crisis, but also to manage the healing process from disaster to restoration. In these types of crises, the (successful) responders – as we have seen through the symbolic statements and actions of the Norwegian PM – typically introduce expressions of remorse, sympathy and regret (Ibid.:379).

The speeches of the central leaders of Norway apparently hit a nerve in the Norwegian population. Three days after the attacks, hundreds of thousands of Norwegians turned out in what have been called ‘The Rose demonstrations’. In all Norwegian cities, towns and villages, candles were lit and flowers laid down in a silent protest against the terrorist. The statements and speeches of the nation’s leaders, together with these demonstrations, seemed to raise awareness that terror seeks to destroy trust, and apparently resulted in a mobilization of core values in the Norwegian society (Wollebæk et al., 2012:35).

#### *Central government crisis management*

The government authorities directly responsible for crisis management played a somewhat different, and less symbolic role in the aftermath of 22 July. Three weeks after the attacks, a special commission was appointed. The mandate of *the July 22 Commission* is to examine the ability of the authorities and society as a whole to uncover and prevent similar attacks, to protect society from future attacks and to deal with and reduce following consequences. It is due to complete its work by August 2012 (PMO, 2012). One important observation is that through the appointment of this commission, central government deferred taking immediate action and launching ground breaking reforms, on the grounds that they are awaiting the Commission’s final report. Nevertheless, several other evaluation reports have been published, raising important concerns about the government’s and central authorities’ preparedness and ability to take action during the crisis.

An internal evaluation of the Cabinet Crisis Council presented in January 2012 revealed severe crisis management failures and communication problems within the government immediately after the bomb explosion (JBD, 2012a): The Ministry of Justice was preoccupied with problems concerning its own staff and localities, largely leaving central crisis coordination and communication to the Crisis Support Group. There was a greater focus on the respective ministries’ situation rather than on overall strategic crisis management, and coordination problems between central government and the police were noted as the situation escalated. According to the report, information from the police to the Crisis Council, the lead ministry and the Cabinet, and eventually to the public, was slow and inadequate. Media reports were frequently more up to date than the information emanating from government. This eventually led to the establishment of a direct line of communication between the Police Directorate and the PMO, circumventing established communication lines.

Signalling a renewed focus on preparedness, the Ministry of Justice and the Police was renamed the Ministry of Justice and Emergencies in January 2012. A report on the ministry's responsibility for internal security and emergency recommended a general strengthening of the Ministry's coordinative role and crisis management functions, internal restructuring, the establishment of the Ministry of Justice as a permanent lead ministry, a strengthening of the Crisis Support Group, and a tightening up of supervision and control of internal security and crisis management within central government (JBD, 2012b). A government white paper on internal security is under preparation, and will be launched in the spring session of 2012.

### *The police*

Contrary to the central government and political leadership, the police faced serious criticism after 22 July. One extensive debate concerned police response time. It took almost an hour from the first reports of the shootings on Utøya until the police's arrival at the site. During that time, a helicopter from the Norwegian Broadcasting Company took live pictures of the terrorist on the island. Several officials, including members of the Parliamentary Justice Committee, expressed their concern about this (Aftenposten, 17.8.2011). Criticism was also raised concerning transportation, the choice of route to Utøya, and the meeting point before landing (NTB, 9.8.2011; Aftenposten, 8.1.2012). Questions were raised as to whether the local police, who had arrived ahead of the platoon, had followed central instructions requiring immediate action in dangerous situations (NRK, 21.10.2011; Dagbladet, 28.12.2011). Another issue was the communication between different emergency units during the incident and the functionality of the emergency communication network (Dagsavisen, 12.8.2011; NTB, 10.11.2011; Aftenposten, 19.11.2011; Aftenposten, 18.1.2012b). Furthermore, the emergency telephone headquarters experienced severe capacity problems (Aftenposten, 4.9.2011). Later on, police from the district of Nordre Buskerud claimed that they were not adequately equipped for situations like this, and they were backed by others within the police force (Norsk Politi, 2011). The issue of how the local police force was organized was debated for some time (Stavanger Aftenblad, 18.8.2011; TV2, 1.2.2012; VG, 3.1.2012). This has been a recurrent theme during the years prior to the attack (St. meld nr. 42 (2004-2005)), and a new police reform is expected by 2012 (Resultatreformen).

The police were heavily criticised for not providing helicopter assistance to Utøya to protect the victims and arrest the perpetrator earlier. The one existing police helicopter was not available because the pilots and technicians were all on enforced leave to save money. At first, the police denied that support from the police helicopter would have led to an earlier arrest (NTB, 10.8.2011). At the same time, the Minister of Justice stated that the police

airborne capacity was an important discussion point for future crisis preparedness (Ibid.). The Chief of Police in Oslo later on admitted that this was a very unfortunate situation, and that helicopter assistance would indeed have been helpful (Aftenposten, 15.9.2011). Assistance from other helicopters was requested, but not acted upon. This revealed serious coordination problems with the military defence and health sector rescue units (Oslo politidistrikt, 28.10.11).

Another critical issue was whether the PST should or could have noticed the activities of the perpetrator and taken action prior to the attack. International experts claimed that the attacks could have been detected if the PST had followed up central information on the perpetrator (Aftenposten, 27.8.2011; 24.11.2011; Bergens Tidende, 25.11.2011). The director of the PST was accused of giving contradictory information, having first denied that the PST should have taken action, but later apologising for giving misinformation (NTB, 6.12.2011). A statement from the director only three days after the attack, in which she contended that not even the East German Stasi<sup>4</sup> could have picked up on and stopped the perpetrator, was especially criticised and seen as a PR blunder (NTB, 25.7.2011; VG, 8.8.2011). It is also interesting to see how the PST reacted to the terror event when issuing an analysis of terror threats for 2012 (Aftenposten, 18.1.2012a; Klassekampen, 18.1.2012). In this report, the PST continued to insist that Islamic groups constituted the main terrorist threat in Norway. This might be construed as a continuing refusal to admit their lack of preparedness and attention to other types of terrorism (e.g. from the extreme right) before the terrorist attack.

Immediately after the attacks, the police were reluctant to admit any faults or errors. Several media reports argued that the police leaders had not shown a humble attitude or been apologetic enough, but continued to say that they could not have done much better and that it was always easy to criticise in retrospect. This reaction was typified by the way the leader of the internal police commission responded to questions after presenting some preliminary points from its discussions (VG, 23.1.2012). Some presented this as a PR disaster, creating more criticism towards the police (Aftenposten, 17.12.2011; Dagsavisen, 17.12.2011; VG, 22.12.2011). Following evaluations from the police (Politidirektoratet, 2012) and PST (PST, 2012) responded to this criticism, and leaders from both organizations apologized publicly and admitted to poor crisis management (Stavanger Aftenblad, 17.3.2012).

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<sup>4</sup> Stasi: The Ministry of State Security, the official state security service in former East Germany.

### *Coordination issues*

In addition to criticism against the police, coordination between the police operation and the military defence also quickly became an issue. Questions were raised about why the police had not asked for assistance and access to army helicopters (Dagsavisen, 8.8.2011). One explanation was that army helicopters had not been available in the capital at the time because they were being used for international operations (in Afghanistan). The hearing arranged by the parliamentary evaluation committee concluded that the coordination between the army and the police had not been optimal (Aftenposten, 18.1.2012b). Questions were raised about the responsibility of the army to secure official government buildings and protect certain officials and about why the Norwegian Special Forces Command – a unit especially trained to handle terror situations – had not been called out immediately. The Minister of Defence addressed these questions in her statement to the Parliament in November 2011: “In the wake of the terror attacks of July 22 it is natural to examine all sides related to the Defence’s support of the civil authorities in serious incidents, accidents and catastrophes, with the aim of improving the Defence’s ability to support civil society” (JBD, 2012c).

Other important structural coordination problems were revealed by the events of 22 July. Almost six years prior to the attack, the police of Oslo had proposed closing the street close to the government buildings – where the car that carried the bomb was parked. However, the proposal was delayed by the municipality of Oslo who was responsible for road regulation. The final decision to close the street was taken only two months *after* the bomb exploded. The question of why the central government had not over-ruled the local planning authorities and closed the road earlier, became a major issue. It seems that the strong Norwegian preference for decentralized solutions in this case hindered effective prevention. Questions were asked as to whether this indicated that the government did not take terrorist threats seriously. Central officials in the government on their side continued to blame the municipality of Oslo (NTB, 26.12.2011).

### *Inquiry commissions and public hearings*

The Parliament arranged a public hearing featuring the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Defence on November 10, 2011 (Storberget, 2011). Here, the Minister of Defence identified seven specific challenges for the future: first, preventing radicalism and violent extremism – particularly relevant to the role of the PST; second, establishing the necessary legal provisions to secure adequate police and surveillance methods; third, police response time; fourth, the development of an adequate communication network; fifth, securing and protecting vulnerable objects/targets; sixth, coordination and interaction between the police and the

defence; and lastly, follow-up support for those affected and their relatives/next of kin. Minister Storberget's statement supported and enhanced the symbolic language already used by the government and the Prime Minister, concluding with the now familiar phrase "more democracy, more openness, but never naivety". His final words were even quite poetic: "A responsibility lies with us all to show, in words and in action that democracy shall win" (Storberget, 2011). Later that day, the Minister of Justice resigned and was replaced by the (then) Minister of Defence.

Several inquiry commissions and evaluation teams have been established to assess and evaluate the course of events and how the crisis had been handled. The government appointed July 22 Commission the and the internal evaluation of the Department of Justice's organizational arrangements and responsibilities has been mentioned. Also, an evaluation of the health-related follow-up of victims was published by the Directorate of Health some three months after the attacks (Helsedirektoratet, 2011). A special parliamentary committee to examine the government's handling of the events of July 22 publicised its conclusions in March 2012 (Stortinget, 2012). An internal evaluation of the police (Politidirektoratet, 2012) and an evaluation of the Directorate for civil protection and Emergency Planning (DSB, 2012) was published the same month.

Decisions have been taken to strengthen resources in some areas, like helicopter capacity, police preparedness and the work of the Police Security Service (JBD, 2011; JBD, 2012d). The government has also signalled several legislative amendments, among other things a revision of the existing legal provisions covering the planning of terrorist acts in order to take account of so-called solo terrorism (JBD, 2012e). At this point in time, there have been no suggestions for any path-breaking changes to the existing structures. Nevertheless, many are awaiting the conclusions of the July 22 Commission. It seems that the "learning phase" is still not over.

### **Dealing with the terrorist attack**

The terrorist attack revealed a number of well-known problems within the policy field of crisis management and internal security. These concern lack of resources, ambiguous chains of responsibility and competences, and a corresponding lack of coordination between relevant ministries and agencies, and internally within the police organization.

On July 22, central actors had severe problems comprehending the situation. The attacks were completely unexpected and unprecedented. Even to realize that the two events were linked, took time. It also took some time before it was clear that this was the action of a single

perpetrator. Making sense of the events and deciding how to prioritize resources were closely connected.

Communication aimed at developing a common understanding of what the crisis is about, is a central feature in most crises. The Norwegian PM very early on took on the role of communicating to the public and played a crucial role in this phase. His focus on democracy, openness and care for the victims became an important slogan in the first phases of the crisis, clearly symbolizing condemnation of the events, leadership from the centre and a need for unity against the attacks and the attacker.

Several studies have shown that military command and control methods in crisis management can be problematic (Boin, McConnell & 't Hart, 2008). In crises of greater magnitude, and where the issue crosses traditional institutional borders, there is a greater need for flexibility, improvisation and cooperation. The police operation on Utøya demonstrates the tension between a need for hierarchy and command on the one hand, and the need for local flexibility and improvisation on the other. This tension seems to have been particularly problematic, partly because of a lack of adequate communication instruments, but also because both the central and the local police struggled with internal coordination problems.

According to the structural instrumental perspective, formal organization and plans matter, and crisis management can be seen as a process of deliberate and strategic choices. In this case, the established command structures and plans were followed to some extent, but improvisation and chance were crucial as well. Unfortunate and unforeseen situations hindered optimal crisis management. Consequently, the response to the terrorist attack cannot only be seen as the result of a coherent, planned and coordinated procedure.

Crisis and risk management typically takes place under uncertain and ambiguous conditions. In these situations, the prevalence of rational choices characterized by clear, stable and consistent goals, a fair understanding of available goals and means, and an apparent centre of authority and power, is not realistic. It is more likely that central goals will be rather unclear, ambiguous and partly conflicting. In addition, technological constraints may be uncertain, and there will be difficulties predicting events and the effects of relevant choices. In these situations, flexible political and administrative coordination based on institutionally fixed rules, routines and roles may be a reasonable alternative to action based on calculated planning (Olsen, 1989).

The crisis thus demonstrates the limitations of planning, or what Boin has labelled “the planning syndrome” (Boin, 2008). Plans may work well for predictable and routine events, but in crisis situations characterised by deep uncertainty and urgency, the plans often prove inadequate or even useless. They may give a false sense of security and increase vulnerability. In this case, the existing plans for crisis management were not followed – for example, regarding the establishment of central crisis management structures within the ministry and with respect to police procedures for an “on-going shooting”. The emergency telephone system experienced severe capacity problems, and communication channels within the police were underdeveloped and in some cases incompatible.

Another problem was the paralyzing quest for more information, which is crucial for making sense of events and deciding what to do. On the one hand, central actors are reluctant to make crucial decisions unless they have a complete picture of the situation. On the other hand facts tend to be in short supply during a crisis and are often uncertain and inaccurate. Communication between the police to the Cabinet Crisis Council was slow, the information was quickly out-dated, and had to go through many levels of authorization before it reached central decision makers. To be able to make urgent decisions in the absence of complete and accurate information is clearly a challenge. In the beginning, the information from Utøya was conflicting and confusing, initially indicating that there was more than one terrorist and possibly further bombs. Precaution is obviously important in such dangerous situations. Still, uncertainty and lack of information may have delayed the police operation.

The crisis revealed apparent capacity problems, leadership challenges and coordination problems, especially related to communication, but also between different actors and responsible authorities. Internal security is a “wicked issue” transcending organizational and sectorial areas. It is also a policy area that has to fight for sufficient attention and resources. It is normally hard to obtain adequate resources to prevent crises, but often easier to get access to resources after a crisis. Budget allocations in the aftermath of the attacks in Norway clearly demonstrate this. In the state budget for 2012 there was a significant increase in the budget for internal security and police.

Leadership challenges were most obvious at the central level. The central political leaders, and especially the PM were by and large praised for their actions. Nevertheless, serious coordination problems became apparent between central and local crisis management, between the Ministry of Justice, but also within the police, between the PSS and the police, and between the different police districts. Coordination challenges between the police and the

customs authorities and between the police and the local government in Oslo were also revealed.

A major finding is that crisis management in the case of the terror attacks in Norway cannot be characterized by a neat sequencing of crisis phases. The pattern revealed is rather more complex and messy than predicted by stringent crisis management theory. The response to the crisis can better be described as a two-step process. In the first aftermath of the terrorist attack, a complex combination of sense-making, meaning-making and critical communication came to the fore. The situation was marked by disbelief, shock, uncertainty, fear and chaos. There was an urgent demand for crisis communication from the political leadership to make sense of the situation.

The terrorist attack shows the essential importance of the use of symbols in crises, and highlights the interaction between symbols and instrumental action. Symbolic action and leadership was shown both by the PM and by other central leaders – the King, the Crown Prince, several other ministers and political leaders at national level, alongside the Mayor of Oslo. They all stressed the importance of democracy, openness and a caring society. The symbolic effects of this rhetoric and the initial speeches were significant (Rykkja, Fimreite, Lango & Lægreid, 2012).

In one sense, the central role that the PM took was surprising. In previous discussions proposals to make central crisis management a responsibility of the Prime Minister's Office have been met with considerable resistance, and proposals to restructure responsibility lines have not been followed through (Fimreite, Lægreid & Rykkja, 2011). This corresponds to the Norwegian tradition of a (comparatively) small and rather weak PMO with no specific task portfolio, and a rather weak role for the PM supposed to be 'first among equals' in the Cabinet.

The reactions after the attacks of July 22 illustrates that central public figures, and in particular the PM, are important national symbols of unity in the face of a serious threat. After the attacks of July 22, the PM assumed the role of a strong leader. Emphasising the core values of 'openness, democracy and humanity' his stance endowed the political leadership with support, legitimacy and the necessary strength in the early phases of the crisis. This symbolic leadership is central to the meaning-making phase of a crisis. Those who successfully frame and define what a crisis is all about, and at the same time manage to avoid blame, are also often seen to hold the key to the appropriate strategies for solving it. This way, the political leadership may have created the necessary legitimacy, authority and

considerable leeway to do what they see fit in the aftermath of the crisis. In marked contrast to the PM's stance during and after the attack, other public leaders seemed to fail, at least in a symbolic sense. The Minister of Justice was criticized for not being more apologetic, for being defensive, and for being too loyal to the police, and was largely placed in the shadow of the PM. The PSS leader was also seen as defensive, and was criticized for not being self-critical enough on behalf of the service. Also, the leaders of the Police Directorate, of the Oslo Police District and the police district of Utøya initially insisted that they had handled the police operation rather well, although increasing information leaked to the press spoke of the opposite. This resulted in criticism, creating the impression that the said authorities were neither humble enough nor willing to take responsibility for the apparent faults and shortcomings. These examples illustrate the importance of symbolic action and framing in crisis management.

Important characteristics separate the immediate handling of the crisis and the later criticism. This relates to the central elements of sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, termination and learning. After the first expressions of unity and the following round of praise, the process became more conflict-ridden. Criticism was directed especially towards the police. The latter phase of the process therefore seems to fit more easily to a negotiation variant of the instrumental perspective, characterized by the articulation of a variety of interests, and pointing towards solutions that constitute a compromise between different actors. Whether this will be the end result, is something to follow up in further research.

The crisis also reveals an interesting interplay between instrumental and environmental drivers of change. Reforms might start as a rational instrumental decision-making process. As such (new) arrangements become more common, they tend to be less controversial, more recognizable and familiar, attaining legitimacy and becoming taken for granted as appropriate organizational forms among a broader audience, prompting other organizations to follow suit (Tolbert & Zucker, 1988). In this case it seems, however, to be the other way around. The process started with a strong focus on crisis communication and meaning-making. Symbolic features, trust relations, unity and lack of criticism were emphasized. After this first phase, the process changed towards more regular decision-making, involving negotiation between different governmental bodies and stake-holders, fighting to get accept for their interests.

Several arguments can be used to understand the reactions following the crisis. Shocks, crises and sudden events may lead public organizations on to another path, creating a "window of opportunity" for change (Kingdon, 1984; Rykkja, 2008). However, path-breaking changes are not always the result of crises. When discussing institutional change, Streeck and Thelen

(2005:9) distinguish between ‘breakdown and replacement’, which is a combination of abrupt change and discontinuity, and ‘survival and return’, which combines abrupt change and continuity. In the latter case, after a period of conflict and upheaval the system reverts to its roots. Kettl (2004) distinguishes between three models for stress-testing in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. First, incremental change in which internal pressure pushes the system back to a previous equilibrium; second, punctuated equilibrium in which external shocks create a new equilibrium; and finally ‘punctuated backsliding’ in which the new equilibrium after the policy stress test is a product of tension between the external shock and pressure for stasis.

Typically for a crisis, after a period of chaos the situation tends to normalize. Hence *time* is an essential contextual dimension, often related to the reasoning pertaining to the long-term versus the short-term aspects of the crisis. This assessment fits well with the assumptions of a cultural-institutional perspective. Time is clearly an essential dimension in the crisis management of the terror attacks in Norway. This was evident first when central decision-makers and citizens alike were trying to comprehend the situation (sense-making), and later on reflecting the reactions to the attacks (meaning-making) through the strong communication of (national) unity. Incremental change and minor structural changes have characterized the field of internal security and crisis management in Norway so far. It seems that ‘survival and return’ might be the outcome of this particular crisis as well, seeing as there has been no major ‘breakdown and replacement’ of the old system – at least so far. This seems to fit a reaction pattern of ‘punctuated backsliding’ – a combination of path dependencies, external shocks and deliberate choices.

A cultural-institutional perspective would predict such responses according to the established institutional culture. The response from the Ministry of Justice seems to be very much in line with the existing historical path of organizing for internal security and crisis management. The same seems to be the case with the reaction from the military and the defence side. Reactions here also followed established path dependencies. The division between the military and civilian administration responsible for internal security is a longstanding one (Lango, Læg Reid & Rykkja, 2011). Coordinated action across the boundaries of the military and the civilian administration was obviously difficult during the crisis and continued to be an important tension.

It seems that the institutionalized tradition of separate ministerial responsibility continues to stand strong within the Norwegian polity, limiting efforts to strengthen horizontal coordination. So far the organizational changes have been minor, and there has been a lot of symbolism. The name of the Ministry of Justice has been changed, but the report evaluating

the new structure of the ministry follows the previous very cautious approach. No major changes have been suggested. The report of the July 22 Committee points out a number of topics for improvement, but does not propose any major organizational restructuring. This is in line with a cultural-institutional approach underlining path dependency and the importance of existing political administrative culture and tradition. That said, all actors are waiting for the report of the July 22 Commission. What we have seen from the Commission so far, however, indicates that it is more interested in detailed accounts of what happened than in analysing challenges related to how the internal security and crisis management apparatus is organized.

Summing up, the response to the terrorist attack is characterized by complex interactions between mutually influential factors. The external shock had an obvious and important impact on all actors. Institutional and contextual constraints seem to be a central dimension for understanding the outcome so far. The response was, to a large extent, shaped by established organizational arrangements, doctrines and principles that constrained central leaders' scope for action. Deliberate interference by the political executive was important, but has not resulted in any major changes so far. Furthermore, the process and outcome cannot be characterized as a result of rational planning alone, but has clear negotiation-based features revealed through elements of conflict and compromise. All this is blended with a rather successful use of symbols by public leaders.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the political leadership, and in particular the prime minister, have been praised for their response and for how they handled the attack. The public organizations responsible for operative action, in particular the police and their leaders, on the other hand, were heavily criticized for what they did or did not do, both in their immediate response and in the aftermath.

The reactions and crisis management following the terrorist attack in Norway on July 22 illustrate that public leadership in times of crisis is crucial. However, the theoretically distinct phases of public crisis management are often highly interwoven and overlapping (Boin et al., 2005). In this case, internal sense-making, crucial decisions and meaning-making took place simultaneously in a dynamic and complex combination. The Prime Minister's successful use of crucial symbols of democracy, openness and humanity, supported by similarly strong symbolic statements from members of the royal family and other executive leaders, supports elements of a myth perspective on organizations. Other leaders, like the Minister of Justice and the leader of PST, were less successful in their manipulation of symbols. Both eventually

resigned. Several police leaders also failed to gain the trust of the public and the media. This was partly due to their lack of humility, but also to their apparent lack of preparedness for the attack and their difficulty in explaining their handling of it.

Seen through the lens of an instrumental perspective, the internal sense-making and decision-making that went on during the crisis evoked both support and criticism, in particular towards the police. The criticism of the police revolved around the lack of instrumental and planned features – an apparent lack of internal and external coordination, inadequate means of communication, the absence of helicopter support, and problems related to responding under pressure, leading to an (excessively) long response time. The organization of the central governmental crisis-management apparatus was also criticised, especially when it turned out that established procedures for crisis management had not been followed. To some extent the problems that were revealed can be understood in terms of a cultural-institutional perspective. The previous history of crisis management in Norway is characterized by fragmentation, sector-wise solutions, path-dependency and incremental change (Lango, Rykkja & Læg Reid, 2011). This also influenced the discussions on how to change the system after the events of July 22.

The crisis management of the terrorist attacks of July 22 reveals that the established organizational principles of conformity, liability and decentralization are difficult to practice. The expectation that the organizational model in extreme crisis situations will be similar to a normal situation (conformity) is difficult to live up to. Major crises and disasters are unexpected and surprising situations, where established organizational forms often prove inadequate. Generally, there is an urgent need for improvisation and rapid and flexible response. Often, established hierarchical structures, lines of command and competence areas are overstepped. This was also the case in the hours and days following the bomb explosion and the attacks on Utøya.

Furthermore, major crises like the July 22 attacks epitomize trans boundary and ‘wicked’ issues in the sense that they pose challenges that cross established organizational borders. Increasingly, successful crisis management must take place at the interface between organizations and levels of administration. Here, the principle of liability establishes responsibility within single organizations, but represents an obstacle to coordination in a larger crisis situation.

On 22 July it seems that the main coordination problems were within the police and between the Ministry of Justice and the subordinate authorities with responsibility for prevention or

crisis management. However, there were also coordination problems in other sectors, in particular the military and the healthcare sector.

Crisis situations often require balancing between flexibility at the local and operative level and the need for central control, direction and leadership. Thus, the principle of decentralization may also represent a problem. How to handle the requirement for more hierarchical control and leadership when major crises, disasters or risks threaten society is a recurrent central question that was also prominent in the discussions following July 22. The process of dealing with the terrorist attacks in Norway may have revealed a need for the establishment of more permanent organizations to address such “wicked” inter-organizational issues in a coordinated and continuous manner and for the designation of sufficient resources and capacity to deal with future crises.

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