

National memorial after 22. juli, 2011 Government quarter, Oslo

by Jonas Dahlberg

On the **22nd of July 2011**, seventy-seven lives were taken in Norway by an act of terrorism. 8 people were killed by a bomb that went off in the governmental quarters in Oslo, and 69 people were killed at the Social Democratic Youth party's summer camp on the island of Utøya. We live in an ever more difficult social climate in which vulnerable groups are pitted against each other. We have seen how this can create the conditions for extremism and for hate. Among the targets of hate groups are social movements that have historically supported equality. Indeed, this was the reason for the terror attack that took place in Norway on the 22nd of July, 2011. The temporary and the permanent memorials located in Oslo's government quarter will honor the victims and carry on their memory by engaging the relationship between life and responsibility.

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The temporary and permanent memorials consist of an estimated two-thousand large stone tiles into which more than five million names will be engraved. The names belong to the 77 individuals who died, as well as to every other person who is listed as living in Norway in the National Registry on July 22, 2011. The names of those who lost their lives will be engraved with a few centimeters more space around each name. The five million names will not appear in alphabetical order; instead, they will exist side by side at random. So at first glance, what is emphasized is a shared community: we are all people, we are all given a name, we are all witnesses to this particular day. History will be narrated through personal encounters at the memorial, as visitors to the site interact with each other - with friends, loved ones, strangers. For example, imagine a child and an adult are visiting the memorial. The child's curious question – Why do some names look different? – creates a dialog between generations as the adult shares her own story. We will pass down history from one generation to the next through roughly five million people - five million witnesses.

Out of respect to the friends and families of the victims, the initial plan is that the perpetrator's name will not appear among the five million. The intention of the memorial is not to inspire hate, fear, or revenge, but rather to emphasize each visitor's own capacity for responsibility; nevertheless, the decision is a complex one, and one that can be reached together during the many years when the memorial is in its temporary location.



Temporary Memorial

By the opening of the temporary memorial on July 22, 2017, the concept for both the temporary and permanent memorials will be presented. From here the memorial site will gradually expand during the 7-10 years of the renovation (already in progress) of the government quarter. As each of the permanent memorial's large tiles are engraved and completed, they will be added to the temporary memorial site on ceremonial occasions. The completed tiles will eventually form seventy-seven stacks containing the names of those who lost their lives and of every resident of Norway on July 22, 2011. The temporary memorial will not exist as a finished site, rather it will stay continually active, slowly changing and reflecting a process of honoring those who died. Together along with the information center, the temporary memorial will serve as a gathering place that will lay a foundation for the permanent memorial.



Permanent Memorial

When the new government quarter is complete, the stacks of stone tiles from the temporary memorial will be moved and laid on the ground to create the permanent memorial site. The names of the 77 individuals who died, as well as to every other person who is listed as living in Norway in the National Registry on July 22, 2011, will form a public square, an open space of reflection and engagement. A visitor to the permanent memorial might search for her own name - or that of a family member or of a friend. Such a search touches upon a persistent existential need: each individual's search for their place in the world. To see your name engraved in stone is to acknowledge that you existed the 22nd of July 2011, and that you are able to go there and search now, acknowledges that you exist still today. We can imagine moving through the memorial, leaning forward to look more closely at the names on the stone tiles to try to find someone familiar, and then coming across a name that has more space around it, then another. It is a name surrounded by air, like a breath, that belongs to a victim. It's such a meeting that has the capacity to reformulate the existential search: in order to find oneself I have to see and meet others. Finding oneself means facing a wider truth: living implies responsibility to others. It even implies responsibility for what happened in Norway on July 22, 2011.



