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Original citation:
Heath-Kelly, Charlotte. (2015) Picasso at the bombsite : whither resilient place? Politics, Volume 35 (Number 1). pp. 72-77. ISSN 0263-3957

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Publisher's statement:
This is the accepted version of the following article: Heath-Kelly, C. (2015), Picasso at the Bombsite: Whither Resilient Place?. Politics, 35: 72–77. doi: 10.1111/1467-9256.12081, which has been published in final form at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12081

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Running Head: Resilience: A Forum

Picasso at the Bombsite: Whither Resilient Place?

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Places are targeted for terrorist attacks because they are symbolic: they mean something. Anders Breivik's attacks of 22nd July 2011, for example, targeted Norway's pre-eminent site for left-wing activism, Utøya island, and the Government Quarter in Oslo. Similarly, the redevelopment of such sites focuses on consolidating the meanings of places as symbols of national unity and the overcoming of trauma (Heath-Kelly, forthcoming; Lundborg 2012). Place is significant to both terrorism and post-terrorist response. And yet the reshaping of post-terrorist space is rarely discussed as a form of resilience.[1] Why should this be?

In what follows I will explore the controversy and debate surrounding the preliminary decision (now revoked) to tear down the Høyblokka building in the Oslo Government Quarter with reference to several ambiguities of resilience discourse. Whilst an emerging literature is beginning to critically tackle the policy and practical deployments of resilience, this paper instead explores resilience through its absence. Where and when is resilience *not* deployed? What does it mean for the coherence of resilience policy, which centralises the goal of adaptive capacity in the face of contingency, if resilience policy is not applied to the redevelopment of bombsites? This short piece thus explores the debates around the Oslo government quarter to expose the ambiguity and temporality of resilience discourse - which appears unconcerned with the 'bouncing back' of post-terrorist space. I make particular reference to Jon Coaffee's discussion of 'place-making' in anticipatory UK resilience policy (Coaffee 2013) and Dan Bulley's (2013) discussion of the production of communities through UK resilience practice. When considered alongside the non-application of the resilience signifier to bombsite recovery practices, the ambiguity of 'resilient places' becomes apparent. Resilience is not oriented toward the amelioration of disaster events, as policy discourse suggests, but rather the regulation of the everyday through anticipatory techniques.

Image_1.jpg here (centred)

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[1] Although post-disaster cities are somewhat tacitly and uncritically discussed as resilient in Vale & Campanella (eds) (2005).

Caption below: Figure 1: The damaged Høyblokka: (Photo by Alexander Ottesen, https://www.flickr.com/photos/alexao/5978812209/)

The Oslo government quarter is comprised of several different 'blocks', largely modernist and functional in style, all dominated by the overbearing high-rise structure of Høyblokka (Figure 1). Henrik Bull's 'G Block' was constructed in 1906, followed by Erling Viksjø's high-rise (Høyblokka) in 1958 and the Y block in 1969. Viksjø's friendship with Pablo Picasso led to the innovative sandblasting technique developed on the facades and interiors of these buildings, where Picasso's sketches are integrated within the concrete structures themselves (Figures 2 & 3). After Viksjø's death, the development of the government quarter continued with the construction of S block in 1978, R4 in 1988, as well as the adaption in 1980 of Møllergata 19, the city's former police station, built in the 1860s and 70s. Finally in 1996, building R5 was added (Ekman 2013).

Despite the collaboration of noted artists and architects in its construction, the government quarter in Oslo has never generated much public affection. The passionless naming of the buildings, and the absence of alternative public nomenclature for them, points towards their status prior to 22 July 2011. Nobody had much interest in them. As Matthias Ekman has argued, the government quarter is located away from the main tourist trails in Oslo and failed to develop a symbolic persona in the style of the Parliament building or the Royal Palace (Ekman 2013). He argues that while most Norwegians possessed some conceptual understanding of the spatial location of the government buildings, these fragmentary framings located the buildings as somewhat featureless bureaucratic functionaries in the state apparatus.

However, since Brevik's bomb attack on the quarter in 2011, this ambivalence has radically shifted. Suddenly these buildings have come to matter – incorporated into debates concerning the appropriate architectural response to sudden violence. The questions surrounding the architectural and cultural worth of the government quarter have provoked heated discussion in Norway's major newspapers and public fora. The importance and meaning of the buildings have been retrospectively renegotiated since they were targeted by Breivik, and since the report of a government appointed committee of architects, planners and structural engineers originally recommended the removal of key buildings, such as the looming Høyblokka, despite their structural integrity.

The incorporation of Picasso's sketches into the structures became a particularly salient narrative within the spirited defence of the government quarter. For example, after the report on reconstructing the Government Quarter was published, Oslo museum directors Lars Roede and Nina Berre were quoted in an interview with the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* hailing the sandblasting technique used to integrate Picasso's sketches into the concrete structures of government, opining that the buildings represent a 'central work of Norwegian architecture' (Nipen 2011). Similarly, in July/August 2013 the Oslo Museum of

Architecture hosted an exhibit on this very technique, further developing the public narrative of retaining the government buildings as important features of national cultural heritage.

Image_2.jpg here (centred)

Caption below: Figure 2: Picasso mural at the Oslo Government Quarter (Author's collection)

Image_3.jpg here (centred)

Caption below: Figure 3: Inside Høyblokka (reproduced courtesy of LPO Arkitekter)

Simultaneously, the somewhat-bleak concrete modernism of the buildings has been reframed by commentators as a valuable statement of Norwegian egalitarian values, contra the regularly-invoked statement of Minister Rigmor Aasrud (who held the ministerial brief on the reconstruction project) that she is from a 'country background' and struggles to see the worth of 'all this concrete'. For example, Roede and Berre narrate the history of the Government buildings as the 'architectural centre-point for Norwegian nation-building' where the High Rise and Y-Block exemplify the 'foremost examples of modernism in Norway in the 1950s'. Nina Berre further commented that:

> The High-Rise can also be considered as a symbol of the social democracy that evolved in Norway, with the grid architecture which parcels the building into a series of rectangles. This equality and regularity can symbolise the democratic values the building represents (Berre quoted in Nipen 2011).

Similarly Espen Johnsen, an art historian at the University of Oslo, publicly proclaimed after Breivik's bombing that:

> The architect Erling Viksjø's government building stands as our foremost symbol of the new monumental architectural design that was recognized in the decades after the war. The goal was to create new community-symbols to be used under the reestablished democratic society. Through a revised modernist idiom the architect and the artists succeeded to integrate the architecture and the art into a new unanimity. The Government Building represents the primary structure of this architecture ideal (Johnsen, 2011).

After the attacks of 22nd July 2011, then, Høyblokka (as representative of the Government Quarter) suddenly became the most talked about building in Norway. Breivik's attack radically incorporated the Government Quarter buildings into public discussion of Norwegian topographical and architectural identity. Suddenly their disfigured forms have provoked debate about symbolic identity and the importance of retaining cultural heritage and Norwegian identity. While official recommendations initially highlighted the cost-benefits for tearing down Høyblokka and redeveloping the area, and noted the trauma which would potentially affect the officeworkers called upon to return there, public

discussions and exhibits have overwhelmingly called for the government quarter to architecturally 'bounce back' from 22nd July.

Interestingly, for all the debate over the future of the government quarter, these questions have not been framed in terms of resilience. Yet the resilience discourse presents itself as enabling the capacity to 'bounce back' from violent disruption. It has come to dominate national and international approaches to the securing of life and infrastructure against threats. While the implementation of resilience is understood in a number of ways (Coaffee 2013; Holling 1973; Walker & Cooper 2011), policy documents frame resilience as involving the acceptance of disruptive events as inevitable and highlight the importance of fostering adaptive capacities of pre-emption and recovery.

So what do 'bouncing back' and resilience mean, if they are not concerned with the recovery of urban sites? Resilience, it seems, is not applied to disaster sites to render them recoverable. Instead its policy application is almost entirely anticipatory, and when resilience claims relevance to disaster recovery it focuses in an abstract manner on the restoration of networked systems of transportation, communication, business and infrastructure (Cabinet Office 2013: 81-7), articulating a revealing lacunae with regard to place.

So where is 'place' in resilience? And which temporalities does resilience discourse embody and silence? Jon Coaffee (2013) has explored the shifts in UK resilience policy which, he argues, have led away from the spatially focused first wave of resilience – which implemented bi-steel barriers and crash-rated bollards to 'design out' terrorism at high-risk sites. This 'command and control' structure for the resilience roll-out has now given way to a focus on decentralised, local structures which perform community resilience. Coaffee refers to this localised governmentality as 'place-making'. This phrase is utilised to highlight the localised performance of fourth-wave resilience within a 'more community driven social contract between citizens and state' (Coaffee, 2013, p.246), contra the nationalised and securitised first wave articulation or the 'crowded places' agenda of the second and third waves. Similarly, Dan Bulley (2013) discusses the UK Resilient Communities program as a governmental strategy which produces communities as places through the extension of responsibilities for emergency planning and response.

These are identifications of place-making through futurity (against the anticipated threat) in resilience practice. However, should the understanding of 'place' in resilience remain limited to the localisation and decentralisation of anticipatory resilience activities, and anticipatory in temporality? The post-event constitution of the Oslo bombsite as central to Norwegian cultural heritage suggests that public activism retrospectively reclaims and reconstitutes place. This could be called resilience, but it isn't. As such, the renarrativisation of the Oslo government quarter provides an interesting window onto the discursive disregard within resilience discourse for the bombsite of the present and the retrospective reproduction of place.

Why is this silence important? The Government Quarter buildings, while once denigrated and ignored, have now become framed as salient features in a national and cultural heritage. They have been made into crucial symbols of identity, and the proposal to tear down Høyblokka, in particular, has met with powerful public denunciation. The architecture of the damaged Government Quarter has been made representative of Norwegian identity, and the passionate calls for it to 'bounce back' could, in certain readings, symbolise a retrospective invocation of resilience – one which is not directed towards the mediation of future threat, but the restoration of a place damaged by an explosion. These practices could potentially be called resilience, but they aren't. Why, then, doesn't resilience recognise this retroactive place-making?

Because place, for resilience, is only interesting as governmental technique. The 'places' forged through anticipatory community resilience policies (Bulley 2013; Coaffee 2013) fit the governmental remit of conducting conduct through devolving crisis responsibilities and hierarchies. They are not spaces for meaningful participation, discussion, art or dissent. Picasso simply doesn't matter from this perspective. One might explain this discursive disregard for retrospective place-making activities by exploring 'resilience' as a tendency to abstract and depoliticise, and to govern the everyday (rather than the event) through anticipation. The absence of resilience from the bombsite exposes the unthinkability of 'bouncing back' as a restorative principle, then, and instead reveals it as a practice of technocratic and governmental management of population and futurity.

About the Author

Dr. Charlotte Heath-Kelly holds both a Warwick research fellowship and an Institute of Advanced Studies postdoc at the University of Warwick. Currently she holds a British Academy grant to research the 'reclamation' of post-terrorist space through architecture at the Manhattan WTC, Oslo Government Quarter, Utøya island and the Bali bombsites of 2002. Her monograph, *Politics of Violence: Militancy, International Politics, Killing in the Name*, was published in 2013 with the Routledge 'Interventions' series and was shortlisted for the 2014 BISA Susan Strange book prize. She has also published articles in *Security Dialogue*, *The British Journal of Politics and IR*, and *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. Charlotte Heath-Kelly, Politics and International Studies, Social Sciences Building, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL. Email: c.heath-kelly@warwick.ac.uk

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