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The flower actions: Interreligious funerals after the Utøya massacre

Ida Marie Høeg

On Friday afternoon 22 July 2011 extremist right-wing political attitudes led to acts of terror that took the lives of seventy-seven people in Norway. Seven victims died when a fertilizer bomb packed in an illegally parked vehicle exploded outside government office buildings in downtown Oslo. One hour later, sixty-nine mostly young people were fatally shot on a small island 24 miles outside Oslo where 650 people were gathered for the annual social democratic youth camp.

This chapter examines the funeral ceremonies of three Muslim adolescents – Mona Abdinur, with a Somali background, and Bano Rashid and Rafal Jamil, with a Kurdish background – who were victims of the terror attacks at the youth camp on 22 July 2011 on the island of Utøya. The important question in this context is: Did the terror attacks and the subsequent interreligious funeral ceremonies create a community of mourners? Inspired by actor-network theory and material semiotics, I will explore a ritual object that became dominant for the participants in their ritual response to the attacks during the three funerals: flowers. The mourners brought cut flowers with them when they joined the torchlight procession in Oslo (Høeg 2015) and placed them in and outside churches and at spontaneous shrines that were created in cities and towns all across Norway (Høeg 2013). Not surprisingly, there were also many flowers at the local funeral ceremonies for the victims. They were not only brought by young people from the Labour Youth movement; other participants also came to the funerals with cut flowers. Those who did not bring flowers to the funeral acted or refused to act with the flowers present at the funerals, flowers which were ordered by the victims' friends, family, organizations and so on. These ritual responses to the terror attack, where the flowers were a distinctive part of the rituals, prompt the question of whether the cut flowers functioned as ritual

participants in their own right and furthermore worked as relational entities in the funeral assembly. If so, did the flowers operate under some restrictions in these local empirical settings, potentially not only enhancing but also disturbing interactions between the attendees? Based on films, hundreds of photos and in-depth interviews with organizers of and participants at these three funerals, I will argue that once the flowers were assembled within various practices and then shaped within relations, they were more than representations of personal sadness, national solidarity and political commitment. The flowers opened up a ritual relationship between the participants. Even though the plurality among the attendees led some to refuse to interact with the flowers, the funerals' democratic openness to the performance of various ritual actions with various entities did not exclude the restrictive attendees from these multicultural ritual assemblies.

Funeral culture and changing cultural conditions

In the three interreligious funerals the participants mirror the heterogeneous society that the terrorist aimed to attack. Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old ethnic Norwegian, did not specifically target Muslims. Rather, he targeted the Norwegian Labour Party for being too accommodating to Muslims and too tolerant of multiculturalism. The terrorism he perpetrated was not only an attack on the immigration policy that the Labour Party and its youth organization represented. It was first of all an attack on Norwegian democracy which had welcomed a culturally pluralistic society. The terror attacks highlighted the tensions within the Norwegian majority society relating to cultural plurality and integration, a society in which Muslim immigrants, in particular, have found themselves under scrutiny and widespread suspicion.

Two social factors are significant for understanding the cultural context of the interreligious funeral ceremonies in Norway: firstly, the growing pluralization of religions and world views, and, secondly, the stronger position of individuals vis-à-vis church authority when it comes to performing funeral ceremonies. These factors are important social conditions to take into consideration when trying to understand the complex social context the burial rituals were embedded in.

Since the end of the 1960s, when labour immigration and family reunification from non-Western countries started, Norway has developed into a culturally plural society where different religious traditions and communities are represented. In recent years, immigration has accounted for most of Norway's

population growth, not only in the capital but also in the rural areas. Currently, the total number of immigrants amounts to 17.3 per cent of the population.¹ Even though the attitudes towards immigration and immigrants have tended to be more positive over the last fifteen years,² a large number of Norwegians are likely to feel that the government is doing a poor job of managing immigration and integration. The majority of Norwegians are also worried about the increasing level of xenophobia. The terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the recruitment of foreign soldiers and the fear of parallel societies contribute to these concerns (Brekke 2015).

Due to migration, particularly of Muslims, the most visible change in Norwegian society over the last generation has been the growth of non-Christian minorities. Muslims are at the centre of the current controversy over cultural diversity, integration, democratic rights and ethnic and religious identity, which puts pressure on institutional systems. In spite of the huge amount of attention Muslims receive in the Norwegian press (Døving and Kraft 2013), they represent a small minority of the overall population. No more than 3 per cent of the Norwegian population is affiliated with a Muslim community (Statistics Norway),³ and an estimate based on the immigrants' countries of origin sets the group 'Muslims' at just about 4 per cent of the population (Østby and Dalgard 2017).⁴

In Norway, as well as the other Nordic countries, many people turn to the familiar religious institutions to observe the traditional rites of birth, coming of age, marriage and death. The Lutheran majority church, with strong links to the state, plays a dominant role in the Nordic funeral culture (Høeg and Pajari 2013). In 2018, 71 (70.6%) per cent of the population was affiliated to the Church of Norway and 88 per cent of all deceased had a funeral ceremony under the auspices of the Church of Norway. The declining prestige of the ministry, falling membership rates and the church's shrinking influence have had an impact on the Lutheran Church members' approach to the ecclesiastic rites of passage. A small, but steadily growing group of people tend to use private funerals, and bereaved families are demanding more democratic funeral ceremonies, including the right to contribute to developing ceremonies conducted by the church (e.g. introducing popular songs, family members making the memorial speech, decorating the coffin, asking an artist to perform, etc.).

The ongoing process of individualization and cultural diversity in Norwegian society has led to the acknowledgement of pluralism at public cemeteries through multi-faith expressions and articulations. The cemeteries are in a process of re-branding and re-framing earlier policies that previously favoured the Church

of Norway and demanded that dissenters and people with other religious affiliations adapt to Christian norms and rules of funeral culture (Rygnestad 1955). Funeral cultures with and without reference to religious cosmologies now give cemeteries not only a pluralist but also a more democratic look. There are very few private cemeteries, so public graveyards are in a process of providing separate space for Muslims, as well as for some other faith-based communities, where they can conduct their funeral ceremonies and design the grave (Døving 2009).

The transformative aspect of rituals: Entities acting out relational forms

To consider the specific ritual contexts in which human and non-human entities are related, we need a reorientation which leads to a more dynamic comprehension of the multiplicities of *the social*. The French professor of Science Studies Bruno Latour's contribution to social science is his idea of seeing the social as association. Latour convincingly argues that human activities are only one part of the associations that constitute the social collective. To fully understand what collective existence has become, he argues that it is necessary, aside from considering the circulation and formatting of traditionally conceived social ties, to detect other circulating entities than just the human ones (Latour 2005: 233). Accordingly, he calls for the tracing of new connections and new associations produced by entities which are not human and have not always previously been included in 'society'.

Rituals connected to death stand out from other rites of passage as they do not only relate to an embracing cosmological and social system but also have a very practical purpose – to inter or cremate the human remains. From a practical point of view, these are sufficient ritual actions – they provide a grave or places to spread ashes. The functional aspects of religious and secular rituals connected to death are important if we are to understand how non-human and human entities contribute to the enactments of realities. The performative approach of actor-network theory and material semiotics helps to clarify the formation of entities (artefacts, materials, technology) which takes place within practices (Mol 2002; Law 1999: 162). It provides fruitful perspectives for understanding the performativity in the funerals not as static structures but as structures with transformative aspects. This assumes that the non-human entities have to be understood in relational terms (Law 1999; Moll 2002). In

the study of interreligious funerals, the perspective on the interplay between individuals and materiality is further developed with inspiration from ritual scholars who have a relational approach to ritual action. They state that rituals are the key to the act of relation making (see Bell 1992). Pointing out that rituals embed individuals in groups and in the performance of relations, they have a specific focus on constructed relational networks and relational configurations (Houseman and Severi 1998; Moisseff 2017). This prompts the question of how relational forms are acted out in these rituals and whether non-human entities can be perceived as 'living beings' in these networks.

The practice of rituals has become associated with the dynamics of transformation and empowerment. Funeral rituals, as other rituals, encompass social actions which display, construct and promote power relationships. The dynamic and transformative aspect of funeral rituals helps to elucidate the ongoing formation which is enacted through ritual actions. The funerals' entities may act as 'mediators' that shape and affect the content of the funerals, which they transmit, rather than merely acting as tools for transmission or as 'intermediators' (Latour 2005: 39–40). Latour's concepts of mediators and intermediators are used to show how the non-human entities have the power to enact and affect the outcome of the interreligious funerals. The mourners, and the emotional enactment of these funeral rites, make them a potent force for social construction: in performing ritual activities, they challenge existing power structures. The human and non-human entities may have agency to establish contact and cooperation between the participants. In this respect the trajectories of the flowers and their potential as material entities are in a position to establish relations between the dead and the living and between the networks of bereaved people.

I have undertaken ethnographic fieldwork to develop an empirical study based on the assumption that the world has to be understood from the bottom up. I visited the places where the ceremonies took place, interviewed people who took part in them, and people who planned and performed in them, watched films and studied photographs of the participants. When exploring the rituals and their interreligious nature, I did not see the flowers as an analytical entity, I was more focused on the participants and their relational actions, how the actors performed the ritual actions and their relation to those they performed the rituals with. When examining what orchestrated the ritual actions, I saw that many entities were present. The participants framed their actions with objects to shape the ritual contexts and thus I was curious about the relational role of materiality in the rituals. I decided to study and describe the flowers in

these multicultural ritual contexts and see if this could be a way of exploring the social relational network enacted in the rituals. It was somewhat astonishing that the flowers stood out as acting entities when considering that several ritual traditions were in play. Before moving on to explore the use of flowers in the funeral ceremonies, I will give a more detailed description of the ceremonies themselves.

The interreligious funerals

Mona's, Bano's and Rafal's funeral ceremonies were not mainstream Muslim funeral ceremonies according to the religious tradition of their families or the way most Muslim funerals are conducted in a Norwegian context. The ceremonies were interreligious in terms of actions from Muslim and Christian funeral traditions and also ritual actions which hardly represent any religious tradition but encompass symbols and artefacts that are becoming more and more common when death and bereavement are being ritually marked.

These funeral ceremonies do not pre-exist before they are performed. The structure did not exist prior to these events, they were a work in progress – thought about and imagined, but not anchored in established structures. The interviewed organizers of the ceremonies describe a process that did not assign roles and functions to these temporary elements. They could not lean on local, regional or national arrangements, institutions or networks for organizing such burials. The organizers explain that the terror actions called for new structures. People from different communities and organizations had contact with each other and worked together on the funerals. Thus, new networks of actors arose. Formally, the ceremonies were organized by secular and religious institutions cooperating together.⁵ Geographically, the funerals took place in three areas near where the girls lived with their families (west coast, Egersund, eastern Norway, Oslo and Nesodden). Mona's funeral was held in a Muslim field at a cemetery in Oslo, Bano's in the local church and afterwards at the Muslim field in the local churchyard and Rafal's in the auditorium in the local school. To the extent that the ceremonies were planned in advance, the three girls' families were the ones who decided or confirmed external ideas and arrangements for the rituals. According to the organizers, Mona's mother wanted to have *salat-ul-janaza* at the cemetery and not at the Mosque. She also wanted a representative from the Somali community to hold a speech. Bano's parents wanted the Muslim funeral director to hold a speech in the

church and asked him to ensure that only the closest family members lowered the coffin. According to the clergywomen and the Muslim funeral director, the parents' wish was to have a Christian funeral ceremony in the church and afterwards a Muslim funeral by the graveside so they could address Bano's two identities – the Norwegian and the Kurdish (Tronvik 2011a: 445).

The funerals were national events. Prominent people took part and contributed at the funerals. At Mona's funeral the Norwegian prime minister and his wife attended, at Bano's the Foreign Minister was present and at Rafal's the Justice Minister and the Iraqi ambassador attended. At these funerals, as in the funerals of the other victims of the terror attacks, the ministers made speeches. In addition to the ministers, at Mona's funeral, a representative of the Somali community and the leader of the Labour Party made speeches by the graveside. At Bano's funeral, the former local leader of Labour Youth, Bano's cousin, the funeral director and the clergy made speeches in the church. At Mona's and Bano's funerals the *salat-ul-janaza* prayer was led by an imam by the grave and afterwards the coffin was lowered and the graves were filled with earth, with some of the participants praying by the grave. All three had memorial assemblies in public buildings.⁶ For Rafal, the memorial assembly was arranged by the local authority prior to the ceremony for those directly affected. For Bano and Mona, the family invited all the participants to the memorial assembly.

The ritual arrangements for Rafal did not encompass the regular Muslim obligation to pray *salat-ul-janaza* or the custom to pray by the grave. She was buried in northern Iraq, where the local religious customs were observed. In Norway, the Labour Party, on behalf of her family, was responsible for the memorial service and made the arrangements together with the local authority, the Salvation Army, the Church of Norway and the Muslim community in the town (Egersund). Men and women from the organizing institutions made speeches together with representatives from Labour Youth, the Labour Party and the Iraqi ambassador. Even though the burial was not part of the ritual, the memorial ceremony had several of the same ritual actions and objects as Christian funerals, with flower garlands, commiserations directly addressed to the deceased, clergy who made speeches, sing-alongs and praying of the Lord's Prayer. The place for Rafal's memorial ceremony was continuously discussed with her father on the phone from Iraq. It was also his desire to include the Salvation Army (with which the family had a close relationship), Muslim communities and the Norwegian Church in the planning and implementation of the ceremony.

The ritual assemblies were complex and comprehensive. The performing of the two funeral ceremonies and the memorial ceremony forms an association between heterogeneous people of different ages, genders, religious beliefs, political preferences and values. The associations consist of participants who were connected and people who did not have any personal relations to each other or to the deceased. The people who attended the three ceremonies were schoolmates, teammates, friends, neighbours, family members, teachers, politicians, sports coaches, ethnic peers, Kurds and Somalis, clergy, deacons and leaders of Christian and Muslim congregations, Muslim funeral directors and Muslim undertakers, leaders of the Islamic Council of Norway and Muslims who were complying with their obligation to participate in funeral ceremonies and pray for the dead. The shape, size and combinations of associations made the group boundaries uncertain and therefore the social aspect was intricate.

The ritual interactions were not necessarily thoroughly planned or well arranged. According to some of the people who were asked to make speeches, they were not supplied with an explicit aim, not even the expressed intention of cooperating across religious, cultural or gender divides. The Muslim congregations' and the Muslim undertakers' desire to fulfil the Islamic obligation to make the time between death and burial as short as possible meant there was a tight time frame for the development of Mona's and Bano's funerals. The wish to hold the memorial ceremony close to the time when the funeral took place in northern Iraq also left tight time margins. Spontaneous and planned ritual actions from different religions together with actions which in character are not strictly religious or secular were performed. In these rituals we saw particularly young people and females as ritual agents. The Imam and the clergywoman in Bano's funeral who walked side by side out of the church to the grave did not, according to what they say, plan this action; it just happened.

The interviews conducted with adolescents and adults taking part in these rituals reveal an intricate interaction with a juxtaposition of funeral ritual practices. The informants expressed that they had little experience of other burial practices than those of the religious or ethnic group to which they belong. They clarified that it was just natural for them to gather and take part in the funeral ceremonies regardless of whether they were familiar with the funeral ceremony or not. Whether or not the ritual actions came from a Muslim, Christian or other tradition was of secondary importance. The main thing was to attend, to show the bereaved families respect and compassion and to express grief. This does not mean that the rituals were without conflicting emotions.

The funerals did not only express love or compassion but also included actions which indicate that there were conflicting opinions among the participants. One of the attendees in Mona's funeral saw that some of the Muslims who came to perform *salat-ul-janaza* were unhappy about the physical contact between men and women, involving handshakes and hugs. The Bishop of Stavanger felt that it was not appropriate to say the Lord's Prayer at Rafal's memorial ceremony, such as the dean did. In referring to Bano's funeral, clergy in missionary organizations expressed in editorials and letters to the editor that mixing Christian and Muslim preaching is a questionable action.⁷ The minister who conducted the funeral ceremony in the church defended what evolved when she and the Imam led the funeral procession to the grave together: 'Thus, a bridge was built between two separate rituals' (Tronvik 2011b: 41).

The agency of flowers: Flowers transform interactions

Flowers occupied a central position in the 22 July memorial events. People brought flowers to local memorial sites around the country. In Oslo, the planned torchlight procession on 25 July turned into a flower parade. The red rose as the symbol of the Labour Party along with roses in other colours and other kinds of flowers were continuously raised in the air during the parade. Flowers were also highly visible in Mona's and Bano's funeral ceremonies and Rafal's memorial ceremony.

Some will say that there is a strong vitality in flowers. They demand attention and also appeal to several senses. When humans act with flowers, various forms, colours, fragrances and textures of the flowers are displayed. Flowers have always been an integral part of cultures. In various traditions flowers have been associated with worship, celebrations and festivals, but also with death rituals. However, how the ritual is 'translated' is based on a social interactional process which constructs common definitions and meanings. What the participants experience they enact as important. Thus, meaning is relational and performative, and a subject of change. The social interactions between the participants and flowers in the funeral rituals may be seen as an assemblage produced relationally with the vitality to express meaning to the collective of mourners.

Flowers are obvious objects in all Norwegian funerals, Christian or not. In Muslim funerals in a Norwegian context flowers are increasingly present. In Mona's and Bano's funeral ceremonies and Rafal's memorial ceremony the flowers were more than representations of emotions, symbols and identity. They

were not static objects but seem to have had a social role to play. The flowers appeared in almost every funeral action, and the participants acted with them. The Labour Youth members brought red roses with them and many other young people brought white roses. During Mona's and Bano's funeral ceremonies the participants kept the roses in their hands. When the graves had been filled and the observant Muslims who had been standing a while by the grave turned away, the young people and adults approached the grave and placed their roses on the soil. In Rafal's memorial ceremony the roses were put in vases on the stage when the young people entered the school auditorium.

The agency the flowers had for composing the memorial rituals connected to 22 July gave the rituals a particular structure. Apart from the rose as a symbol of 22 July itself, other flowers played a vital part in the rituals. The Christian funeral habit of mourning bouquets and garlands decorated Mona's and Bano's coffins, and for Bano, also the church room prior to and under the Christian funeral ceremony. Mourning bouquets and garlands, as mentioned above, were put on the stage in Rafal's memorial ceremony. The Muslim undertakers received many calls from florists about where they should deliver the flowers for Mona's funeral. They were told to send them to the hospital from where he could carry them to the cemetery. He wrapped the coffin in the carpet with quotes from the Quran, which is the Muslim custom, added the Somali flag, which was a wish from Mona's family, and decorated the coffin with flowers from the florists. The flowers for Bano's funeral were transported to the church. Together with the photo of Bano, and the Kurdish and Norwegian flags, the Muslim undertakers placed them on and near the coffin, on the altar, on the floors and other places in the church where there was room for them.

Flowers in the ceremonies demonstrated that a mourning community is not a pre-existing entity that expresses itself via a fixed set of actions but is rather a formation that comes into being through the circulation and use of shared mourning actions. These funerals reveal that the mourning community is not complete. The flowers had an active role: they acted as 'mediators' in shaping the mourning community. When the hearse arrived at the cemetery where Mona was going to be buried, the funeral director pushed the button to open the back door of the vehicle. As is the custom, several of the Muslim participants stood by ready to fulfil their religious obligation to carry the coffin. But in this case, the many flowers disturbed the first attempt to enact this obligation. They had to change their actions. Before they could start, the Muslim undertakers had to move all the flowers away from the coffin. Then the observant Muslims lifted the coffin out of the car and put it on the catafalque which was standing beside

the baldachin. And then again, before the speeches and prayer could start, the undertakers put the garlands on stands and placed some on the coffin's three sides and on top of the coffin. Participants who had garlands and bouquets that had not been transported in the hearse then approached the coffin. They placed them in the same direction as the funeral director had done – towards where the gender-mixed group of attendees was standing. Then the speeches started from the pulpit placed beside the coffin and afterwards the *salat-ul-janaza* prayer was performed, directed towards the decorated coffin.

Usually when there is a funeral procession from the chapel or church to the grave, the undertakers ask the participants, with the exception of the closest family, to help carry the flowers from the chapel or church to the cemetery and open grave. The participants pick a random bouquet or flower garland, or the undertakers give them one on their way out of the chapel/church. Bano's funeral was no exception. The flowers were to be used to decorate the grave and whether the bereaved were used to this custom or not, they took part in the shared action. All the flower arrangements and all the single roses the young people had brought with them were part of the funeral procession. As the clergywomen and the Imam walked side by side down to the grave, the undertakers ensured that the church was emptied of the flowers.

In a Christian funeral the participants usually lay down flowers around the open grave. The sexton is the one who will later fill in the grave and place the flowers on the soil. Generally, the bereaved family and others do not see the filled grave decorated with fresh flowers. If they are able to visit the grave the next day, they will see an unflattering view of the fading flowers. This time, at Bano's and Mona's funeral the participants were the ones who decorated the filled-in grave. They kept the flowers in their hands during the *salat-ul-janaza* prayer. After the burial prayer the participants took the bouquets of flowers and garlands to the filled-in grave. Other adults and young people also approached the grave to place their roses on the soil. At Mona's funeral ceremony, her mother knelt by the grave and started to pray. Immediately, Ingrid Schulerud, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's wife, stepped up to her, held around her and comforted her while she prayed. The young people stooped to place their flowers. They were standing around the pair, praying or just standing there with their flowers. While the Muslims who had performed their religious obligations were leaving the cemetery and Mona's mother was finishing her prayer, those who had not yet placed their flowers did so. It started to rain but the young people remained. When they were the only people left, they gradually moved away from the grave on their way to the reception.

At Rafal's memorial ceremony, where there was no coffin and no soil, flowers still were present. They greatly influenced the visual impression of the ceremony and gave it the image of an ordinary funeral ceremony. The organizer and participants had filled the stage with flower garlands and bouquets with mourning bands, which were put on supports in the same way as is done at funeral ceremonies in chapels and churches. The entire ceremony was filmed and the recording was later given to the family. Although the bereaved family was not present and could not smell nor see the beautiful flowers on stage, and all the roses that the young people had brought with them, the flowers opened interactions between the participants and the family. The organizers wanted to give the family not only the film from the memorial ceremony, which they could keep, but also the flower objects. One of the organizers collected all the bands and commiserations which were tied to the flowers. He also collected all the commiserations from the local memorial site in the centre of town. He gave all these objects from the ceremony to the family when they came home from Iraq. Thus, the delivering of commiserations was more than an action that could serve the memory of the ceremony. Indirectly the flowers mediated relationality between the family and ritual participants.

Conflicting flowers

Flowers are not universal objects for the expression of grief. In Muslim funeral cultures flowers may be placed on the coffin, and flowers or branches from a tree or bush may be placed on the grave. In the Muslim communities in Norway there are contradictory attitudes about using flowers in a Muslim funeral. The Muslim funeral director for Bano's and Mona's funerals will use flowers in Muslim funerals from time to time even though this is not part of his cultural background. He was often asked by bereaved people whether flowers were appropriate in a Muslim funeral. When we talked about this Norwegian/Christian custom he pointed out that people will always adapt to the surrounding culture. The longer they live in the country, the more the funerals will be characterized by Norwegian customs. He particularly felt that this applied to the second and third generations, with little connection to their parents' or grandparents' homeland.

The large quantity of flowers among the participants at Mona's funeral sparked debate. One of the Muslim participants said they had many discussions in the Mosque about flowers in funerals. Even though he believes there is

nothing wrong in having flowers at a funeral, he responded with surprise at Mona's funeral. He had never seen so many garlands in a Muslim funeral before:

Flowers and garlands are a very unknown Islamic tradition. Then someone began to say: Okay, one thing is that we have accepted that you [non-Muslims] are here, because it's a part of her life and so on. But to mix traditions, this is very undesirable. Some of the Somalis began to talk amongst themselves about this at the funeral.

The Muslim participant knows that flowers are a marker of religious and cultural belonging. He points to some of the tensions that are linked to national and religious identities, and the need for some Norwegian minorities to maintain strict borders that make Muslim culture different from Christian and other religious cultures. For other participants, it is a collective action that marked affiliation to the broader mourning collective. The collective encompasses different people with different cultural backgrounds and different experiences, with different death and mourning cultures. None of the other Muslim participants I interviewed had negative attitudes to flowers. Some of them actually brought flowers to Bano's and Mona's funerals and to Rafal's memorial service on their own volition.

Reassembling the social

Mona's and Bano's funeral ceremonies and Rafal's memorial ceremony reflect some of the dramatic effects of the acts of terror. While this terror was motivated by hatred of Muslims and defence of a Christian homogeneous society, the funeral ceremonies expressed opposite cultural tendencies. People belonging to different ethnic groups came together and the death rituals and spaces from different funeral traditions mobilized joint actions. Understanding interactions where people with different cultural backgrounds gather and contribute to the funeral ceremonies requires a reorientation of social theory. Rather than asking which of these objects count as ritual objects or sacred objects, which ones are mere disposal material and which ones are implements actively used in the rituals (see Grimes 2014: 268), it can be argued that the objects can work in tandem with the people involved.

The dynamics of these funeral ritual actions place emphasis on the contribution to the enactments of realities. The ongoing formation of power which is enacted through ritual actions is not only shared between the

participants but also between participants and entities. These mediators are objects that help the performativity. In this study, mediators are used to examine how entities alter their contributions in three funeral ceremonies and how they acquired agency to affect interactions.

The funeral ceremonies express an ongoing social formation that is handled and performed within actions. Each represented heterogeneous ritual actions within a Christian and Muslim framework: they combined some actions and added others, shared some entities and were exclusive when it comes to the other. In these ritual processes with several ritual leaders, participants with different relations to the deceased had weak scripts. No one had control over the ritual, as would be the case in a mainstream Christian or Muslim funeral ceremony. In these settings there were several scripts and some parts did not have a script at all. The participants were observant, following each other or just acting according to the circumstances. For some this meant following the guidance of the ritual leaders or the group of people they were connected to or what they were used to from other funeral ceremonies. In this open and uncertain ritual process, the cast of participants in the actions involved the relations of human and non-human actants. Following the funeral ceremonies' 'pathways', the flowers were not passive objects.

In one way or another the cut flowers and design bouquets had a fragrance and an appearance, but first of all they seem to call for action. They acquire the agency to trigger emotions, interact in predictable and unpredictable ways and establish an atmosphere of collective mourning. They were brought, carried and placed, but not by every participant. During these three funerals the participants were acting or refusing to act with the flowers. However, when participants acted with them, this assemblage seems to take the initiative. Instead of representing something, the flowers were relational: the participants and flowers created interactions.

The participants who acted directly with the flowers were people who knew the deceased and were related to them through school, a sports team, neighbourhood relations and/or the Labour Youth movement. However, the flowers did not only act in ways that all the participants regarded as positive. As mentioned above, some of the Muslim participants who attended the funeral had religious obligations to perform, and the assemblage in Mona's funeral of human and non-human entities (e.g. soil, rope and shovels) was disturbed by a foreign entity. The funerals they were accustomed to worked fluently with a 'correct' assemblage of mourners and coffin, rope, shovels and soil, but not flowers. In their opinion the assemblage of flowers and participants was inappropriate. The

flowers were not to have an effect on death, grief or dignity. What transpired was that these foreign objects started to work as mediators.

For these participants it was important to reject the actions of flowers, so they refused to act with them, which can be interpreted as a means to destabilize the relations between the flowers and the participants. When they refused to take them out of the car, or to decorate the coffin or fill the grave with flowers, or even touch them, they tried to disempower the flowers from the funerals. When the ritual leaders – the imams, the Islamic undertaker and his staff – did not interfere with the interactions with the flowers, the flowers' transformation continued. They occupied time, influenced the ritual performance and were the subject of performance. Even though this group of Muslim participants did not interact with the flowers, they had to relate to them. More precisely, they had to pay attention to them, and wait for and watch those who enacted the flowers. The assemblage of participants and flowers transformed the ritual.

The funeral ceremonies took place in a context where several anti-authoritarian rituals were performed. The huge ritual response to 22 July with torchlight/rose processions and great numbers of people tending spontaneous shrines all over Norway can be understood as an anti-authoritarian protest against the terrorist's authoritarian behaviour. The terror attack and the three local funeral ceremonies paved the way for under-represented groups to take an active part in the ceremonies. The assemblage of flowers, young people and women, Christian, Muslim, secular and other religious traditions helped to shape the practice of interreligious funeral ceremonies. The enactment of flowers was performed by people who in traditional Christian and Muslim funeral ceremonies usually are submissive ritual actors with few enactments. Even though the large number of flowers escorted an assemblage with an exceptional age range and mix of genders and religions, did the flowers disturb a democratic openness? On the one hand, the flowers inscribed these assemblages within mainstream Christian celebratory tradition, which the observant Muslims were definitely exposed to. On the other hand, the flowers were not the only entities that were enacted and worked as relational entities in the ceremonies. Yet, the observant Muslims were not subordinated to local values which excluded them from every assembly.

The funerals' heterogeneous assemblage demonstrates that face-to-face interactions in funerals have the potential to be prime movers in an increasingly culturally diverse society, challenging the authority and relevance of 'mainstream' funeral ritual managements. Actor-network theory is a useful tool for studying processes and actions where the actor's own actions make a

difference (Latour 2005: 253). Thus, these funerals during a politically tense period show that the actions involved are not lacking in substantive political critique. In a national crisis situation that prompts interreligious funeral ceremonies, the actants seem to be more transparent and easier to follow than in traditional funeral ceremonies. In this chapter actor-network theory has been used as a tool to study the rituals in all their richness and complexity. Generally, it was possible to embrace much more of the original setting. I could follow and describe many other human and non-human entities that functioned in a network of face-to-face ritual actions in the particular situations. Perhaps the social relations could have been held together by more and other networks than I have examined. The participants and ritual organizers were enrolled in a group with a number of interventions with several possible and contradictory calls for regrouping. Relating to one group or another is an ongoing process made up of uncertain, fragile and ever-shifting ties.

Attending funeral ceremonies in the framework of Christian or Muslim traditions requires interaction (like all other funeral ceremonies). The small contingent of Muslims in Norway and their short history here means that there are few traces of Islam in Norwegian culture and the barriers to acting in these arenas seem to be irrelevant for most people. In these three funeral ceremonies caused by terror and the terrorist's motives for the acts of terror, one outcome could be a reduction of the barriers against Muslim burial. The same is the case for the majority of Muslims who were introduced to the Norwegian majority culture's funeral tradition that involves the use of flowers. These funerals mobilized people where interaction between the mourner and the flowers was socially transporting. The focus on the loss of a young life, the mourning and the feeling of being threatened that the terror created did not allow the alien religious acts to become a barrier to attending the ceremonies but instead brought people together in joint actions.