

On not letting a serious crisis go to waste:
Opportunities for institutional learning
following the 22nd of July attacks

Francis Steen, UCLA and PRIO
JD/INN 3 December 2015

When something terrible happens, how do we learn from it?

Dataset

- UCLA NewsScape Project
- International television news
- 335 000 news videos
- 3 billion words in subtitles

I direct the UCLA NewsScape project for the study of international television news
We capture television in a dozen countries, including Norway and the US

The Distributed Little Red Hen Lab



CWRU CogSci



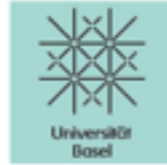
Instituto Politécnico da Guarda



UIUC Computer Science



Troll at SDU



Universität
Basel



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL
DO RIO DE JANEIRO

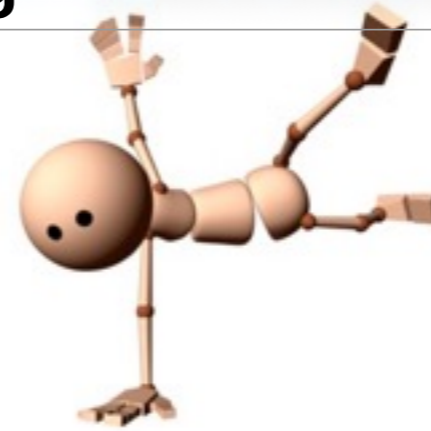


UCLA Library

<http://redhenlab.org>

Institutional Learning

- Police response
- Media criticism
- Political response



The crisis happens precisely because you didn't anticipate it — you didn't see it coming, and you weren't prepared. You failed, perhaps in ways that upset you, or people you are responsible for.

That upset may be grief, or it may be anger. The system has been destabilized, and this loss of balance is a problem.

And that problem is an opportunity. At three levels: police, media, politics. In this brief presentation, I'll focus on the police.

Utenlandsk presse kritiserte tidlig



FOLLOW US

Norway police arrive 90 minutes after firing began

Posted: Jul 23, 2011 7:20 AM

Updated: Jul 25, 2011 6:03 PM

By IAN MacDOUGALL and LOUISE NORDSTROM
Associated Press

OSLO, Norway (AP) - Police arrived at an island massacre about an hour and a half after a gunman first opened fire, slowed because they didn't have quick access to a helicopter and then couldn't find a boat to make their way to the scene just several hundred yards (meters) offshore. The assailant surrendered when police finally reached him, but 82 people died before that.



Men den er heller ikke tilbakeholden med direkte kritikk av politiet.

CNN 28. juli 2011



Norsk presse er mye mer tilbakeholden. Hva lå bak denne strategien? Var den moralsk og praktisk riktig?

VG 30. april 2012

ER FRA POLITIET

17:26

Politiet i Buskerud får melding om skyting.

17:52

Første politipatrulje fra Nordre Buskerud ankommer området. De hevder de ikke fant egnede båter

18:03

Politiet får melding om at en båt er på vei.

18:09

Beredskaps-troppen fra Oslo er på stedet, men venter på fastlandet.

BEKREFTEDE TIDSPUNKTER FRA POLITIET

17:25

En polititjenestemann som sitter i staben i Oslo politidistrikt får telefon fra datteren, som er på Utøya, om skyting. Beredskaps-troppen drar umiddelbart.

17:26

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17:52

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18:09

Beredskaps-troppen fra Oslo er på stedet, men venter på fastlandet.

18:15

Bevæpnede tjenestemenn forlater oppmøtestedet på Storøya i retning Utøya i en rød gummibåt. Etter kort tid får de motorstopp.

18:25

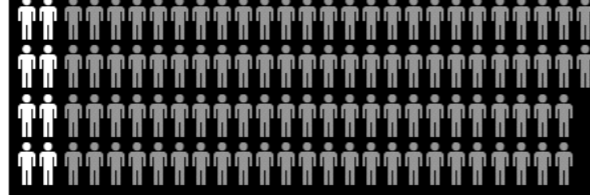
Beredskaps-troppen er i land på Utøya.

ca. 18:34

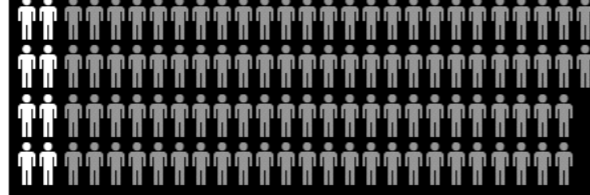
Anders Behring Breivik pågripes. Politiet løser ikke skudd.

REGJERINGSKVARTALET:

8 drept

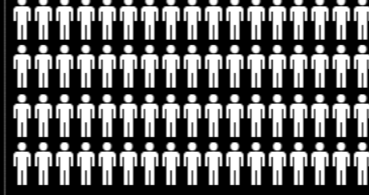


98 skadde

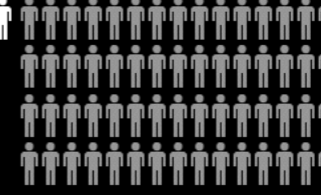


UTØYA:

69 drept



60 skadde



Etter rettsaken beskriver VG hvordan ungdommene på Utøya ser blålysene fra politibilene på land i 42 minutter før politiet ankommer.

Perceiving affordances

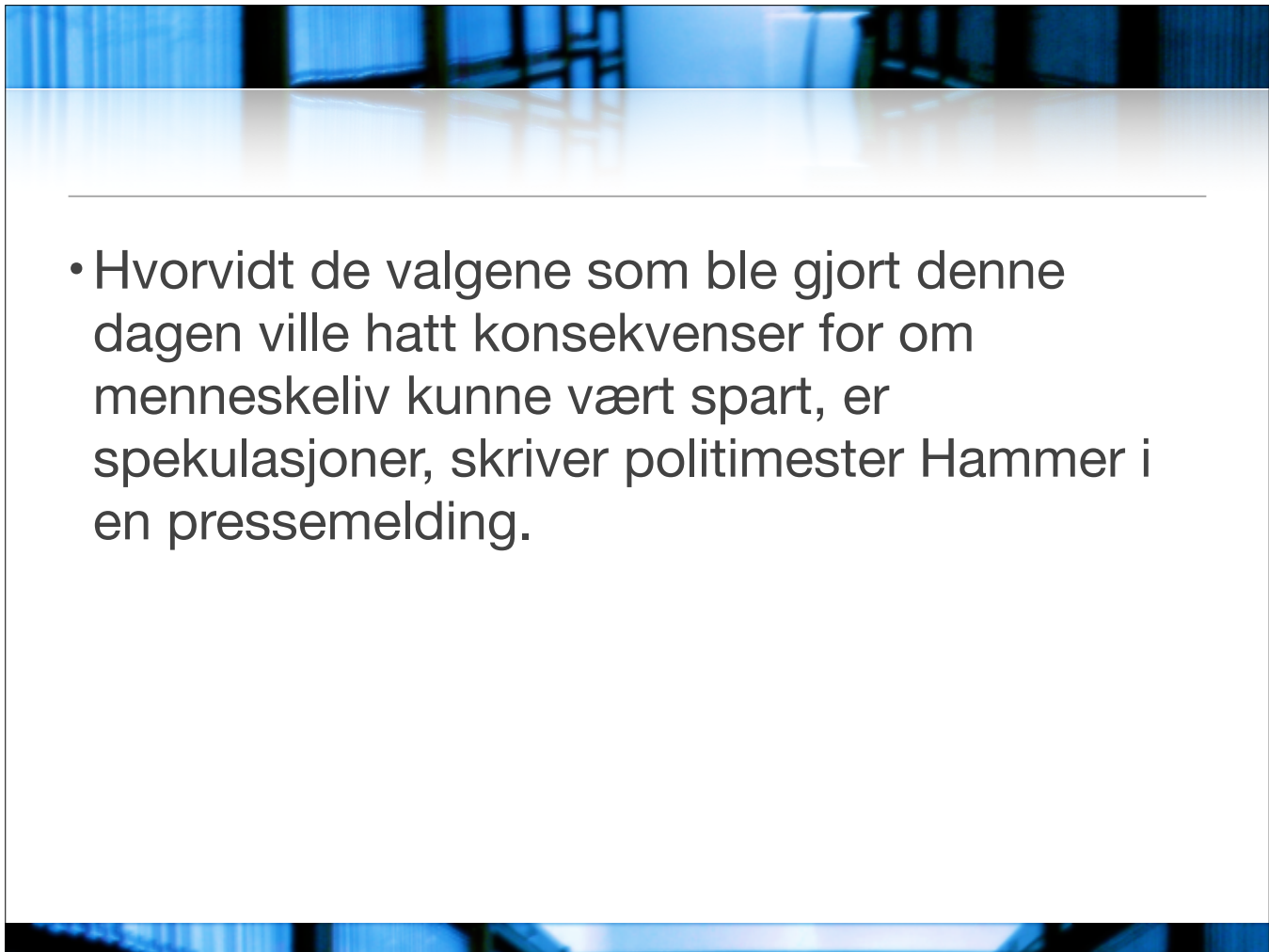
- The delays in the police response appear to relate to the failure to perceive the affordances in the situation
- The police could have established base closer to the island, and commandeered a suitable boat
- The urgency of the situation called for creative solutions that may deviate from standard procedure

These points were obvious to bystanders, many of whom were famously efficient in helping victims.

Politikommisjonen 16. desember 2011



Politiet's interne kommisjon ser imidlertid ingen grunn til å godta kritikken. De unnlater å forestille seg det mulige, som er nødvendig for å skape ny beredskap.

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- Hvorvidt de valgene som ble gjort denne dagen ville hatt konsekvenser for om menneskeliv kunne vært spart, er spekulasjoner, skriver politimester Hammer i en pressemelding.

The appeal is straightforward: the police did what they actually did, and nobody was suggesting malicious intent.

The news disagrees.

Stages of News Processing

1. Present evidence
2. Develop an explanation
3. Imagine what could have happened
4. Assign responsibility and blame
5. Plan for the future

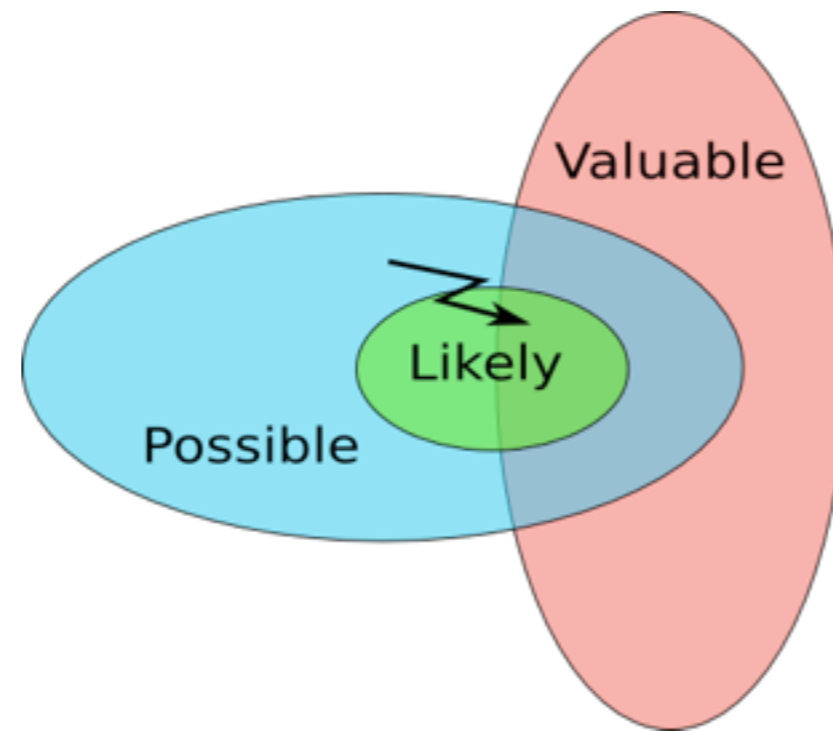


VGs forside 17. august 2011: Karin Elena Holst ble symbolet på det som kunne ha vært.

Hun ble skutt på kloss hold på Sydspissen, etter at politiets første patrulje hadde ankommet Utøya 18.25, en time og ett kvarter etter at massakren startet.

Familien hadde kontakt med henne på telefon under veis.

State spaces events in the news



What could be the purpose of creating counterfactual scenarios at variance with what actually happened?

As it turns out, this is what you have to do to learn from your mistakes. The resource that you have to improve your performance is to examine in detail exactly what was possible in the past -- what you could have done, but did not.

Causal reasoning

- In order to learn from your mistakes, you need to identify the points where you could have done something different
- These are privileged points in an event trajectory
- Much of the time, you have no control
- So you have to reconstruct the moments when you do

You are looking for the moments where the world forks

Relinquishing control

- Time — windows of opportunity close, and you cannot undo an act or recall the past
- Energy — you routinely deploy energies you become hostage to
- Speed — you train to act faster than you can consciously control
- Knowledge — you are subject to your own ignorance of what is possible

This relinquishment may be willing or imposed by circumstances.

... where the world forks

- To learn from your mistakes, you must identify those points in an event trajectory where you have the ability to intervene
- Typically, these are points where you have ample time, where the energies deployed are low, where the speed is low, and where you have sufficient resources to become well-informed

In order to learn from your mistakes, you must first assume that the present moment is amenable to multiple possible actions and is not predetermined, and then you need to project that view back into the past.

Determining what was actually possible is not merely a matter of imagining a better outcome; it is not a frivolous fantasy akin to fiction.

Rather, it requires a realistic assessment of what information was available at the time, cognitive resources for responding to new information, physical resources that could be found and deployed, manpower that could be recruited, actions that could have been made

22. juli-kommisjonens seks hovedfunn

1. **Angrepet på regjeringskvartalet 22/7 kunne ha vært forhindret gjennom effektiv iverksettelse av allerede vedtatte sikringstiltak.**
2. **Myndighetenes evne til å beskytte menneskene på Utøya sviktet. En raskere politiaksjon var reelt mulig. Gjerningsmannen kunne ha vært stanset tidligere 22/7.**
3. **Flere sikrings- og beredskapstiltak for å vanskeliggjøre nye angrep og redusere skadevirkningene burde ha vært iverksatt 22/7.**
4. **Helse- og redningsarbeidet ivaretok de skadde og pårørende i akuttfasen på en god måte.**
5. **Regjeringens kommunikasjon til befolkningen var god. Departementene maktet å videreføre sitt arbeid på tross av skadene.**
6. **Med en bedre arbeidsmetodikk og et bredere fokus kunne PST ha kommet på sporet av gjerningsmannen før 22/7. Kommisjonen har likevel ikke grunnlag for å si at PST dermed kunne og burde ha avverget angrepene.**

Gjørvkommisjonen fastslår at “en raskere politiaksjon var reelt mulig.”

Dette ble mottatt uten murring fra politiet.

Resistance to learning

- The police response to the attacks suggests a failure to identify effective solutions creatively
- The police response to criticism suggests an institutional culture that actively blocks learning
- The Gjørv Commission functioned to definitively assign blame

However, for the police to actually learn from this, they would need examine the choice they made at the time and become aware that they genuinely could have made other choices.

Learning from your mistakes requires the actual realization that you had the ability at the time to act differently.

The reputation of the police suffered as a result

Causal surgery

- Accepting blame is not a sufficient condition to learn
- You need to actually reconstruct the points in time where you could effectively intervene
- Learning from your mistakes requires the realization that you had the ability at the time to act differently
- That new understanding changes you, and forms the foundation for strategic planning.

On the strategic use of instability

- Rahm Emanuel, while White House Chief of Staff, famously remarked, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste”
- A crisis is "is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.”

Let me end on a political note.

What this means is that when a crisis happens, people and institutions are destabilized.

This loss of control represents an opportunity to shape and shift the system into a new regime.

Refleksjoner

- Er det urimelig å klandre politiet, som utvilsomt gjorde det beste de kunne?
- Er politiet urimelig fokusert på å beskytte sine egne mot kritikk — og dermed nekte å dra lærdom fra det som skjedde?
- Er det emosjonelt for tidlig å snakke om beredsskapssvikt?
- Er det klart rom for forbedringer, som krever at vi åpner for det kontrafaktiske?

Her er det en spenning mellom en selvbeskyttende impuls, urimeligheten ved å klandre noen for noe som ikke skjedde (kontrafaktisk), en emosjonell følsomhet i forhold til traumet, og likevel nødvendigheten av å gjøre det bedre.