



Social Media Use in Crisis and Risk Communication

Blood and Security during the Norway Attacks: Authorities' Twitter Activity and Silence

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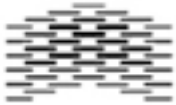
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CHAPTER 3

BLOOD AND SECURITY DURING THE NORWAY ATTACKS: AUTHORITIES' TWITTER ACTIVITY AND SILENCE

Rune Ottosen and Steen Steensen

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the Norwegian authorities' presence on Twitter during the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks. Twitter activity by two official institutions is analysed in particular, namely, the blood bank at Oslo University Hospital and the Norwegian Police Security Services (PST). Our findings show that the Norwegian authorities were almost completely absent on Twitter during the critical hours of the terrorist attack, and that there was no coordination and synchronisation of communication from the authorities. This official silence allowed the diffusion of speculation and misinformation to take place; these were neither corrected nor addressed, as the analysed PST case shows. In contrast, the blood bank used Twitter to



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mobilise blood donors to address an acute problem: a shortage of blood to treat casualties. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations to the authorities for future major incidents.

Keywords: Crisis communication; authorities; social media; Twitter; situation awareness; collaboration with the public

INTRODUCTION

During the terrorist attacks in Oslo and at Utøya on 22 July 2011, in which 77 people were killed, the head of communication at the Norwegian Police Security Services (PST) was monitoring Twitter communication related to the attacks. He found much relevant information circulating on the micro-blogging service. In an interview with the head of communications at The Norwegian PST, we were surprised by a statement regarding 22 July 2011. He stated that he followed Twitter and was thinking that he hoped that Buskerud police district was watching this since they had the operative responsibility. As a contrast to this way of engaging with social media content during the terrorist incident, soon after the attack on the government building in the centre of Oslo, the head of the blood bank at Oslo University Hospital used Twitter to urge citizens to give blood to help out in the treatment of casualties. The response was overwhelming, and the blood bank continued to use Twitter throughout the evening to coordinate blood donations.

These two ways of using Twitter during the terrorist attack represent two different social media strategies employed by authorities during the crisis: the silent bystander (PST), and the active participant (the blood bank). In this chapter, we will take a closer look at the Norwegian authorities' use of Twitter during the attack. Based on an analysis of the presence of authorities and public bodies on the Norwegian Twitter-sphere during the hours of the attack, the chapter seeks answers to the question: *How and to what degree did the Norwegian authorities use Twitter to communicate with the public on 22 July 2011?*

The chapter starts with a literature review of social media use in crisis situations, before the specifics of the attack are presented. The methodological details on how the Twitter data were obtained and analysed are

then presented, before the findings reveal the number of tweets, retweets and mentions of different authorities and their different communicative strategies (or their absence) during the attack. The different communication strategies used by PST and the blood bank are then analysed in detail, before possible implications of our findings are discussed.

SITUATION AWARENESS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Technology in general and social media in particular are increasingly seen as important factors in dealing with crises in a modern society (Bruns & Burgess, 2014; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2013; Kaufmann, 2015). Historically, the Internet is a relatively recent phenomenon in media management of crisis, but today it is unthinkable to develop media strategies to cope with disasters without implementing what is often referred to as Web 2.0 technologies (Kaufmann, 2015). In 2011, the OECD report *Future Global Shocks* tried to identify new communication technologies that could be useful during disasters and concluded that social media 'have the potential to prevent communication breakdown through reliance on just one platform and thereby to reinforce the diffusion of warning messages but also present policy makers with new challenges' (Wendling, Radisch, & Jacobzone, 2013, p. 6).

One obstacle to implementing social media in the media management of crises is that many communicators have reservations about the credibility of social media content (Wright & Hinson, 2009). However, findings from recent research seem to indicate that there is a growing feeling in most organisations that decision makers 'no longer have a choice about whether to integrate social media into crisis management; the only choice is how to do so' (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014, p. 76).

Social media can play a vital role in the creation of 'situation awareness' (SA) during a crisis. Endsley (1995, p. 36) defines situation awareness as 'the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future'. SA is, in other words, being aware of what is going on at a given time and in a given space, how to understand it, and how to act on that knowledge immediately and properly. Creating SA is

vital during an emergency for all parties – the authorities, the police, rescue workers, those affected and the public – to get control of the situation and minimise harm.

In recent years much attention has been given to how SA is not only an individual process, but something which is created in collaboration (Salmon et al., 2008). For the authorities, it is becoming established knowledge that the public can serve as a resource in risk and crisis management and that ‘crisis communication best practices would emphasize a dialogic approach’ (Seeger, 2006, p. 238). Social media are potentially an ‘awareness system’ (Maireder & Ausserhofer, 2014) and tools for making sense of an emergency event (Heverin & Zach, 2012). They thereby represent arenas for collaboratively created SA – arenas authorities can take advantage of in order: (1) to monitor how a crisis situation like a terrorist attack is understood and acted upon; (2) to spread information, correct misinformation and interact with the public in order to secure that a best possible SA is created for the general public and (3) to get information in order to secure a best possible SA for themselves.

However, how such collaborative SA is ‘configured’ via dialogue and distributed through social media during an emergency is not properly addressed by research, according to Perng et al. (2012). Recent research has shown how various authorities have managed to take advantage of social media to configure SA during crisis situations. During the flood in Queensland, Australia in 2011, the Queensland Police played a leading role on Twitter in ‘disseminating timely and relevant information to the public, and in coordinating and guiding the wider discussion’ (Bruns, Burgess, Crawford, & Shaw, 2012, p. 8). The authorities in Kenya used Twitter actively during the Westgate mall terrorist attack in 2013 to communicate with the public and among themselves (Simon, Goldberg, Aharonson-Daniel, Leykin, & Adini, 2014).

There are, however, several challenges for authorities using social media to configure SA during an emergency. One challenge is related to coordination and synchronisation of information. During the Westgate mall attack in Kenya, Simon et al. (2014, p. 9) found that 15 Twitter accounts belonging to various authorities were in use, which caused ‘information overload and synchronization problems’. Another challenge is related to how responding authorities choose to communicate. Simon et al. (2014) found that emergency dispatch operators were more

negative in their Twitter activity than managers and responding authorities during the Westgate mall terrorist attack. Seeger (2006, p. 241) argues that the best practice of official crisis communication implies honesty, candour and openness, and that the public responds more positively to spokespersons who ‘demonstrate appropriate levels of compassion, concern, and empathy’.

BACKGROUND: THE EVENTS OF 22 JULY

On 22 July 2011, the lone terrorist Anders Behring Breivik planted a bomb in the ‘Regjeringskvartalet’, the executive governmental quarter in Oslo. The bomb exploded at 15.25, killing eight people. The second attack was a series of shootings by the perpetrator at a youth camp organised by the youth organisation (AUF) of the Norwegian Labour Party (AP) on the island of Utøya in Tyrifjorden, 40 km from Oslo. At approximately 16.55, Behring Breivik arrived at the shore opposite Utøya. From here, he was transported by the ferry MS Thorbjørn to Utøya. He immediately started shooting and killed 69 people, mostly youngsters. More than an hour later, at 18.34, he was apprehended by the police.

Previous research has shown that social media played a vital role during and in the aftermath of the attack. Social media were pivotal in the ‘meet-hate-with-love’ discourse that dominated the Norwegian public sphere in the aftermath of the attack (Kverndokk, 2013), and such media represented arenas for ‘backchannel discourse negotiations’ (Eriksson, 2016, p. 1) especially related to differing understandings of the event. Activity in the Norwegian Twitter-sphere doubled during the crisis situation (see Chapter 1 for a thorough analysis of dominant actors and themes in the Norwegian Twitter-sphere). Kaufmann (2015, p. 14) found that social media during 22 July created new forms of “selfinitiated and mediated resilience governance,” which emerged spontaneously and have since been implemented in programmes for emergency management. Social media also made it possible for the individuals at Utøya to ‘watch out’ for each other and created a sense of sharing and caring (Kaufmann, 2015, pp. 14–15).

The 22 July Commission appointed by the Norwegian government to investigate what exactly happened on 22 July 2011 concluded that the events offer a unique possibility to analyse the effects of digital

communication, since a successful operation by the authorities demanded coordination and knowledge-based leaderships (NOU, 2012). The police were heavily criticised in the report, among other things for their lack of knowledge of, and routines in the use of social media. The police were side-tracked and lacked efficient means and routines to deal with the dramatic situation, according to the report.

In contrast to the critique of the police, the commission reports favourably on the way the health authorities in general, and especially Oslo University Hospital, dealt with the challenges, even though the report does not go into specific details on the use of social media by these authorities.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question, the chapter is based on a triangulation of methods involving: (1) content analysis of the Norwegian Twitter-sphere on 22 July 2011; (2) qualitative text analysis of the Twitter communication involving the Norwegian Security Police and Oslo University Hospital on 22 July 2011 and (3) a semi-structured, qualitative interview with the head of communication at PST.

The tweets in (1) and (2) were drawn from a dataset of Twitter messages acquired from Gnip, Twitter's enterprise API platform. This dataset consists of 2.2 million tweets posted between 20 July and 28 August 2011. The dataset represents almost the entire Norwegian Twitter-sphere during that period, limited only by the weaknesses of the Twitter API search mechanisms. These weaknesses derive from the limitations of Twitter's language detection and geotagging capabilities in 2011. The dataset was, therefore, obtained based on a Boolean search involving information derived from the bio and other metadata of Twitter users (see Chapter 1 for further details on the dataset).¹

We then constructed a database containing all 2.2 million tweets, and for the purpose of this chapter, we extracted all tweets (58,538) posted between 15.25 (the time of the bomb blast) and 21.00 (when the terrorist had been apprehended and the situation was under control) on 22 July from the database. All user-IDs, retweets and mentions in this set of tweets were then manually analysed to identify activity by any kind of authority or public body. The purpose here was not only to find out which

authorities were active on Twitter, but also which authorities the public turned to, and how information from the authorities was diffused on Twitter.

Furthermore, all the 58,538 tweets were read manually to get a sense of dominant themes and communicators. Based on this manual reading and the authorities identified, the communication from the Norwegian Security Police (PST) and Oslo University Hospital was selected for further analysis, because of these authorities' different approaches to Twitter as a communicative tool during the crises. These two case studies extend beyond the critical hours to also include tweets posted past 21.00 on 22 July.

Lastly, we conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with the head of communication at PST.² The research group in the RESCUE project has conducted several additional interviews with representatives of other authorities on social media strategies related to emergencies, and the findings from these interviews, which are presented in [Hornmoen Backholm, Frey, Ottosen, Reimerth, and Steensen \(2018\)](#), will also be drawn upon in this chapter.

FINDINGS

In the following, we will present the findings of the empirical investigation. First, we will present the general picture of how Norwegian authorities were represented on Twitter during the critical hours on 22 July 2011. Then we will present the social media strategy of the two cases further analysed; PST and Oslo University Hospital. Finally, we will present the analysis of the activities of these two authorities on Twitter during and in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.

Norwegian Authorities on Twitter 22 July

Table 1 displays the authorities and public bodies identified in the Twitter material during the critical hours from the bomb blast in Oslo at 15.25–21.00, when the terrorist had been apprehended and the situation was under control. We have used a wide definition of authorities here, including all state and local level governmental and public bodies,

Table 1: Norwegian Authorities on Twitter 22 July from 15.25 until 21.00 Found in Our Data-set. (Number of tweets posted by the various accounts during this time frame, and number of times these tweets were retweeted by other accounts.)

Username	Description	Tweets	Retweets
@OsloAirport	Official account of Oslo airport	8	29
@Oslounivsykehus	Official account of Oslo University Hospital	5	185
@haukeland_no	Official account of Haukeland Hospital, Bergen.	3	28
@PSTnorge	Official account of Norwegian Security Police (PST)	1	29
@Legemiddelinfo	Official account of The Norwegian Medicines Agency	1	0
@jensstoltenberg	Official account of the prime minister of Norway	1	157
@Tbanen	Official account of the Oslo subway service	1	0
@aurekommune	Official account of the small municipality of Aure, north-west in Norway	1	0
@Oslokommune	Official account of the municipality of Oslo	1	2

institutions responsible for public infrastructure (like transportation), public hospitals, and a few personal accounts which are strongly connected to the authority they represent, like the official account of the prime minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg.

Of the 8,290 Norwegian Twitter accounts found in our material that posted at least one tweet, only the nine shown in [Table 1](#) represent governmental or public bodies. These nine accounts posted in total 22 tweets – 0.004 per cent of the 58,538 tweets posted in our material during the same hours. In other words: Norwegian authorities, such as the police (apart from the one PST tweet), fire departments, ministries, etc., did not use Twitter to communicate with the public about the crisis situation.

Furthermore, not all the 22 tweets in [Table 1](#) dealt with the terror attack. For example, the one tweet posted by @Legemiddelinfor (at 15.38) contained information on how to quit smoking, and the tweet by @aurekommune (posted at 16.52) contained information on chimney sweeping. The most active account – @OsloAirport – posted updates and answered questions on how the terror attacks were affecting traffic at Norway’s biggest airport. There is only one account that used Twitter systematically to deal with the emergency directly, namely @Oslounivsykehus. The activity of this account will be analysed in-depth later in this chapter.

If we look at the number of retweets from other accounts for the 22 tweets in [Table 1](#), we see that at least some of the nine Twitter accounts had a significant outreach. The 22 tweets were retweeted 430 times in total, with @Oslounivsykehus and the prime minister @jensstolteberg attracting most of this attention. This might indicate a public need to get information from authorities during the emergency, an indication that is further strengthened if we look at the authorities mentioned by Norwegian Twitter users during the same time period ([Table 2](#)).

As shown in [Table 2](#), the Norwegian prime minister Jens Stoltenberg had by far the most mentioned Twitter account belonging to a Norwegian authority, followed by the mayor of Oslo’s official account. The 10 accounts in [Table 2](#) were mentioned in total 360 times (excluding mentions that occur as part of a retweet), which – compared to the number of tweets they posted – is a strong indication of people wanting these authorities to be active on Twitter and address the terror attacks. However, only four of the 10 accounts in [Table 2](#) posted something during the same hours.

Interestingly, three of the 10 mentioned accounts in [Table 2](#) are personal accounts, in the sense that they belong to the persons holding the office rather than the office itself (@jensstoltenberg, @fabianstang, @jonasgahrstore).

Of special interest in [Table 2](#) are the mentions of @PSTnorge, the official account of the Norwegian PST. The terror attacks obviously raised questions about national security, and the PST is the most important national authority on such questions. The PST’s silence on Twitter and the frequent mentions of PST therefore deserves some further scrutiny.

Table 2: Mentions of Norwegian Authorities' Twitter Accounts in the Norwegian Twitter-sphere Found in Our Dataset, 22 July 2011 between 15.25 and 21.00. (Excluding mentions in retweets.)

Username	Description	Mentions
@jensstoltenberg	Official account of the prime minister of Norway	211
@fabianstang	Official account of the Mayor of Oslo	78
@Oslounivsykehus	Official account of Oslo University Hospital	33
@PSTnorge	Official account of The Norwegian Security Police (PST)	17
@jonasgahrstore	Official account of the Norwegian minister of foreign affairs	8
@OsloAirport	Official account of Oslo airport	4
@haukeland_no	Official account of Haukeland Hospital, Bergen.	2
@Kronprinsparet	Official account of the Norwegian crown prince and princess	2
@Barneombudet	Official account of the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children	4
@Utlendingsdir	Official account of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration	1

Social Media Strategy of PST and the Oslo University Hospital

Based on an interview with the head of communications at the Norwegian Security police (PST), Trond Hugubakken, we can summarise the social media strategy of this body in the following points.

- (1) The cornerstone in the media strategy at PST is to build a trusting relationship with the public. In order to have efficient communication, PST needs to communicate with the public based on mutual trust.
- (2) The most important aspect of the communicative strategy is optimal precision in the content of the communication, and precision in how to target the audience, the press and other government institutions.

- (3) Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are mainly used to take the temperature on the public discourse. The main objective of their social media activity is to reach the general public. PST's activities on social media started in 2008. They became active on Facebook because they noticed three to four false PST profiles there. PST sent a representative on a global fact-finding mission to decide what social media to choose. They evaluated Second Life (an online virtual world launched in 2003) as an alternative, but chose Facebook as their first priority.
- (4) PST does not use Twitter and Facebook to communicate to the public on a regular basis, but as channels to announce vacant positions, etc.
- (5) PST monitors Twitter and Facebook on a daily basis to identify potential threats to national security.
- (6) After 22 July, Twitter has become the main channel for communication with the media. Twitter has replaced press conferences as a way to communicate with journalists. Twitter messages with links to written statements are spread simultaneously to all the major media when something important is to be announced. PST has been criticised for stopping the practice of sending out press releases. PST also uses blogs on their home page to communicate with the public.

PST followed Twitter and Facebook on 22 July. As mentioned in our introduction, the head of communication made the following reflection: 'I hope Nordre Buskerud police district is following this, since they have the operative responsibility (at Utøya)'. In addition to monitoring Twitter, the head of communication was following the online newspaper *VG Nett* and heard the blast from his office.

Oslo police district had the operative responsibility for the operation in Oslo (i.e. they 'owned' the operation). PST used social media at the time mainly to keep themselves updated. A major challenge in the future, according to the head of communication at PST, is to reach a younger audience. PST therefore considers using Snapchat and the youth channel *NRK Supernytt* more actively.

The blood bank, with help of the communication unit at Oslo University hospital, wanted to control the information strategy themselves and decided to use Twitter and Facebook to communicate their needs and interact with potential blood donors. However, in their first tweet, they

forgot to mention that they only wanted a response from registered blood donors.

According to interviews with staffers at Oslo University Hospital conducted by Måseide (2013), the situation could have gone out of control, both in terms of lack of security and because of the communication overload. The problem was a lack of direct messages to those blood donors the hospital really needed to reach. Other hospitals were also approached by potential blood donors, and one of the lessons learned was that if the administration for the whole health region (Vestre Viken) had been on Twitter, collectively they could have coordinated the campaign more efficiently. When the hospitals handling of the events was evaluated, it was also underlined that Oslo University Hospital should have made clear that no other hospital was to be contacted by blood donors (Måseide, 2013).

The Passive Observer: PST

As we heard from the statement of head of communication at PST, the passive attitude towards social media was explained by the fact that Buskerud Police District 'owned' the operation on Utøya. The 22 July Commission, on the other hand, suggested that PST could have benefitted from a more active role on social media (NOU, 2012).

Of all the 58,538 tweets published between 15.25 and 21.00 on 22 July in our material, the PST Twitter account (@PSTnorge) was mentioned 46 times, 29 of which were mentions in connection with retweets of the one tweet PST posted during the critical hours. In addition, 43 tweets addressed or mentioned PST without mentioning the account name during the time period, 53 if we extend the period to midnight.

The one tweet that @PSTnorge posted, read: 'Powerful explosion in Oslo. PST has at this time no information on the background to the explosion'.³ The first tweet in the dataset that mentioned PST was posted by an individual member of the public, who at 15.56 wrote: 'PST asks people to stay away from Oslo city centre'. There is no source mentioned for this statement and since the source of origin is a private person and not PST, one cannot be sure whether the message is genuine.

The next relevant tweet was the following remark from an anonymous account: 'I wonder how the summer replacements responsible for

answering questions from the press at PST handle this' (16.03). Another Twitter user claims that PST is expecting a new explosion: 'I hope all friends and loved ones are safe. PST is expecting a new explosion' (16.32). We also find that PST is addressed directly: 'PST: Sharper attention!!!!' (16.57). In another direct mention: 'Why have you not advised the military to close the borders, stop all transport apart from officials, etc.' There was also speculation revealing that the public had expectations of PST: 'My guess is a gas tank or something like that. If not, PST has done a lousy job' (16.37).

To summarise the first hour after the blast: since PST had just one tweet directed at the public, we see that some tweeters referred to PST with what they thought PST was saying and doing. We can also sense frustration, since PST was addressed directly with an urge to 'do something'.

During the first period after the attack there was much speculation both in the traditional media and in social media about whether radical Muslims were responsible for the acts of terror (Ottosen & Bull, 2016). When Breivik was arrested, that line was replaced by speculation about the identity of the perpetrator. At 19.11, the perpetrator was identified on Twitter as 'tall blond with Nordic looks'. One tweeter asked: 'Perhaps PST should check if they have surveillance in the right circles?' Another was optimistic about the next state budget on behalf of PST: 'As of today, cuts in the budget for the police and PST is a non-issue' (19.01). An hour later, the same person asked the rhetorical question: 'Why is the police in charge of the investigation and not PST' (20.07) The direct appeal for efficiency continued in a message posted to PST from an individual member of the public: 'One mistake is not acceptable: Important information disappears in the crowd' (19.39). Twenty minutes later, the same person addressed PST directly: 'CNN is reporting that Oslo was chosen as a target in revenge for the killing of Bin Laden, regarded as a "soft target"' (19.59).

A journalist tweeted that 'PST informs that there was no information available about a threat against Norway. The general threat situation is unchanged' (22.47). Another person commented on the tendency to blame Muslims and forwarded a suggestion urging PST to take a closer look at the comments field in the news organisation *Hegnar* (the publisher of the financial newspaper *Finansavisen*): 'PST should look closer at Hegnar.

no. A lot of hatred against Utøya there, some of the links are removed now' (22.07).

Another person was impatient with the lack of response from PST: 'An update from PST-Janne would be in order' (23.32; referring to the head of PST, Janne Kristiansen). But there were also those who praised PST: 'PST receives information from the audience, people are getting organised, hospitals being protected, the terrorist is caught, well done' (23.04). PST is also asked to look at Internet sites with hate speech: 'PST look at this' (with a link attached; 00.10).

When it became known that the perpetrator was a white Norwegian, more serious criticism of PST's lack of interest in right-wing extremists was raised: 'According to PST right-wing extremism represents no threat to Norway in 2011' (00.15). A link to PST's annual report was attached. This tweet was the most retweeted (around 20 times). The criticism got sharper after midnight. One tweeter suggested that: 'If PST has made a mistake, several people should be fired' (00.11).

To summarise, we note that the vast majority of tweets about PST were critical comments and part of discussions related to PST's (lack of) performance. Obviously, the police security service did not use Twitter to communicate with the public. This was also confirmed in the interview with the head of communication at PST.

The Active Participant: Oslo University Hospital

The official account of Oslo University Hospital, @oslounivhospital, was mentioned in total 218 times from 15.25 to 21.00 on 22 July in our material; 185 of those mentions being in retweets of tweets from @oslounivhospital. The main emphasis of the communication concerning the hospital related to the blood bank (which did not have a Twitter account of its own). The word 'Blodbank' (in Norwegian) appears in 306 tweets during the same period, and in as many as 1,290 tweets from 15.25 to midnight.

This blood bank communication starts at 18.56, when the blood bank at Haukeland hospital in Bergen sent a tweet urging the people of Bergen to come to the blood bank before 10 a.m. on Saturday (the following day). The explanation was that their stock of blood had been sent to Oslo because of the need for blood there after the attack. This message

was immediately retweeted by many people. The message was also published on the webpage of NRK (the national public service broadcaster). One hour later, the first message was published by the blood bank at Oslo University Hospital, including a telephone number to use. Then more specific instructions were tweeted: 'The blood bank needs blood type O now use telephone: 22118900' (20.26). This was immediately retweeted by several users.

In the next phase, people started to communicate with each other, giving advice and sharing experiences. One individual member of the public tweeted an important clarification: 'Search for blood bank on twitter, only those registered as donors can give blood' (20.55). Another asked: 'Can I give blood again even if I gave last week?' (22.07).

Some gave practical information and tweeted encouraging slogans: 'The blood bank needs type O- call 22118900, bleed for your countrymen' (21.00). There were also signs that the mobilisation was too efficient: 'I have bloodtype O, but can't get through to the blood bank' (21.02). This kind of frustration was tweeted by several others, and some predicted that the situation could become chaotic: 'Now NRK has sent a message that everyone with type O should go to the blood bank. My guess is chaos' (22.07). One tweeter took the high number of tweets as a sign of the seriousness of the situation: 'How many are hurt? Is the blood bank so vulnerable during a crisis?' (21.09). Another shared an experience from Facebook: 'One of the status updates on Facebook informs that 9 out of 10 questions to 1881 [information service] are requests for the number to the blood bank' (21.10). A journalist combined work with helping out: 'Call the blood bank while I edit news at ABC' (21.13). Someone suggested an alternative: 'OK, but please edit the website giblod.no, I think this can help the traffic'.

In order to avoid phone chaos, the blood bank asked people with bloodtype O to 'go directly to building 25 on the 4th floor at Ullevål hospital' (21.12). One individual asked how to find out about blood type and got the prompt answer: 'Sometimes things are really simple: If your parents have O, then you have O as well' (21.13). In order to handle the phone traffic more efficiently, the blood bank made two phone numbers available: 'Call the blood bank now on telephone 22118900 or 22118865' (21.18).

One active tweeter published a new clarification: ‘Now they don’t need bloodtype O in the blood bank but O negative, BIG life saving difference. No rhesus minus O?’. Someone else asked: ‘Anyone know if the blood bank in Østfold is open?’ (21.18).

Obviously, all these messages created a lot of traffic and chaos, and several tweeters expressed concerns during the evening. One user tweeted directly from the blood bank: ‘I am at the blood bank now, the blood bank is full, no point in going there now. Everyone can come 9 a.m. tomorrow. See you there’ (22.15). At 22.18, Oslo University Hospital tweeted that they had enough blood: ‘The blood bank reports that a lot of people have been giving blood, they now have what they need. We would like to thank everybody who has turned up’ (22.18).

To summarise the Twitter communication on the blood bank and Oslo University Hospital, we see that it was dominated by direct calls from the hospital to the public with an appeal to give blood. The response was immediately picked up, and in less than 3 hours the mission was completed, and the blood bank urged the public to stop coming. The public response had been so massive that it was difficult for the hospital to deal with.

DISCUSSION

The blood bank case serves as an example of what [Ling and Yttri \(2002\)](#) label ‘micro-coordination’ of an emergency response, in which social media helped to obtain situation awareness (SA) related to the potential sub-crisis of acquiring enough blood to save casualties. In line with the findings of [Perng et al. \(2012\)](#), our analysis demonstrates how SA was acquired through collaboration between the hospital and the public. The hospital expressed their need for blood and urged the public to give blood, and the public helped with spreading the information on Twitter and giving instructions and clarifications as the situation changed. Members of the public acted as ‘remote operators’ in awareness configuration ([Heath, Svensson, Hindmarsh, Luff, & Lehn, 2002](#)) and through this collaboration, the University Hospital and the public quickly and efficiently managed to establish a common

understanding of what the potential sub-crisis of blood shortage was, and how to act upon it. Within a few hours, the potential sub-crisis had therefore been resolved. However, the lack of precision in the first tweet on registered blood donors almost caused the situation to get out of control.

The blood bank case is a rare exception to how the authorities used social media during the 22 July crisis. Neither the police nor other emergency institutions used Twitter to communicate with the public on what was going on, and the PST case shows how such an absence of activity could lead to speculation and misinformation about, for instance, how many attacks were going on and who the perpetrator was. Such speculation, when not corrected or in other ways addressed by the PST, obstructed the creation of a proper SA and probably caused more confusion and fear about the crisis than necessary among the public.

The number of retweets and mentions about the authorities during the crisis found in our material suggests that the public's need to get in contact with – and get information from – authorities by far exceeded the authorities' activity on Twitter. However, absence of activity was not the only problem with how the Norwegian authorities used social media during the 22 July crisis. As [Table 1](#) suggests, the authorities that actually did post something during the critical hours are not representative of those one would expect to take the lead in official communication about the event. There was not a single, official institution that took on the role as coordinator of crisis communication in social media during the critical hours, and therefore people were unlikely to know who to turn to. This might be an explanation as to why so many tweeters turned to the personal accounts of the prime minister of Norway (@jensstoltenberg) and the mayor of Oslo (@fabianstang) instead of the official accounts of the authorities, as shown in [Table 2](#). This need to get in contact with individuals instead of institutions echoes [Seeger's \(2006\)](#) finding that the best practice in official crisis communication implies honesty, candour and openness, and that the public respond more positively to spokespersons who are compassionate, concerned and empathetic, because these are subjective traits associated with individuals, not institutions.

CONCLUSION

The research question for this chapter was: how and to what degree did the Norwegian authorities use Twitter to communicate with the public on 22 July 2011? Our findings show that the Norwegian authorities were almost completely absent on Twitter during the critical hours of the terrorist attacks, and that there was no coordination and synchronisation of communication from the authorities. Neither the police, other official emergency institutions, nor governmental bodies took on the role of crisis communication coordinator, despite a clearly articulated public need to get information from, and get into contact with the authorities.

This official silence gave space for the diffusion of speculation and misinformation, which were not corrected or addressed, as the analysed PST case shows. This clearly demonstrates the danger highlighted by the OECD about the effects of leaving social media out of crisis communication preparedness (Wendling et al., 2013). It seems safe to assume that the official silence related to social media crisis communication during the critical hours of the attacks obstructed an efficient configuration of situation awareness, both for the public and for the authorities, especially when we consider the degree to which Twitter was used as a channel of communication in Norway during the attack, with almost 60,000 Norwegian tweets posted during the critical hours.

The blood bank case illustrates the potential of social media in a crisis situation like a terrorist attack with a high number of casualties. Oslo University Hospital had a potential sub-crisis of their own related to not having enough blood to help save the injured, and they dealt with this sub-crisis by configuring situation awareness in collaboration with the public on Twitter. Based on this case, the other findings of this study and previous research, we conclude by offering the following advice to authorities on how to use social media to configure situation awareness during an acute and unforeseen crisis:

- Social media are important arenas for configuring situation awareness during a crisis, and authorities need to coordinate and synchronise their crisis communication in social media. However, messages distributed on social media should be well constructed so as to avoid

unintended consequences like misunderstandings and information overload.

- Members of the public can become remote operators in configuring situation awareness during a crisis, and authorities need to acknowledge that situation awareness is best and most efficiently configured not as directives but as a result of collaboration with the public.
- Previously established relations are important to define who the public will choose to turn to and follow during a crisis, and relations with individuals are stronger than institutional relations. The authorities, therefore, need to establish good, personal relations with the public based on compassion, empathy and openness in their everyday communication, so that the public knows who to turn to in times of crisis, and know that they will be listened to and met with understanding and honesty.

NOTES

1. The rules of the Boolean search were as follows: `country_code:no OR twitter_lang:no OR bio_location:norway OR bio_location:norge OR bio_lang:no OR bio_location_contains:norway OR bio_location_contains:norg`
2. The interview was undertaken on 7 November 2014. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were approved by Hugubakken in an email to Rune Ottosen.
3. All tweets quoted are translated from Norwegian by the authors.

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