

Deciding the Future of Disaster Sites: A Practical Guide

**Humanitarian Assistance and Psychosocial Support (HAPSS) Expert Working Group
Counter Terrorism Preparedness Network (CTPN)**

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About the Humanitarian Assistance and Psychosocial Support (HAPSS) Expert Group

The CTPN Humanitarian Assistance and Psychosocial Support Expert Group consists of researchers, practitioners and subject matter experts spanning Europe, North America, and Australasia. Membership reflects diverse disciplines and experiences relevant to counter-terrorism humanitarian assistance preparedness, post-trauma response, psycho-social support, and wider resilience agendas.

The focus of the Expert Group is on informing, advising, and supporting the CTPN membership on issues and developments related to Humanitarian Assistance (HA) and Psychosocial Support (PSS). This is with a view to enhancing awareness and understanding of the psychosocial impacts of terrorism and promoting the proactive integration of best practice in city HA and PSS arrangements across all phases of emergency management.



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1. Introduction

Terror attacks, mass shootings, and other disasters leave behind not only human trauma but also physical sites scarred by violence. In the aftermath, communities and authorities face a difficult question: what should be done with the buildings and sites where such tragedies occurred? Should they be turned into memorials, returned to regular use, or completely demolished? And if the sites of trauma are returned to use, when and how should this be done?

These guidelines provide a structured approach for those tasked with determining the fate of sites where tragedies have occurred. The document focuses primarily on psychosocial considerations, reflecting the expertise of the CTPN Humanitarian Assistance and Psychosocial Support (HAPSS) expert group, while acknowledging that legal, practical, and financial considerations also play an important role.

Those responsible for response and recovery after disasters are often required to make decisions at an early stage, when there may be understandable pressures to resume activities. However, decisions made early under time pressure may later prove damaging in the long term. It is, therefore, our intention to assist those facing early decision-making by offering lessons drawn from international experience.

Decisions about sites of trauma are often complex, laden with meaning, and potentially contentious. However, the process of making these decisions can itself provide an opportunity for communities to come to terms with a disaster and to envision a common, collective goal.

We recognise that every individual and community experiences trauma and recovery differently. The guidance and frameworks presented in this report reflect lessons learned from a range of incidents, research, and lived experiences. At the same time, we acknowledge that some of those affected by these incidents may hold different perspectives or have experienced these moments in ways that are not fully reflected here. Their experiences and voices remain equally valid and important, and we remain committed to listening, learning, and continuing to evolve this work.

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Guidelines

The focus of this document is decision-making processes related to the future use of a site where a community tragedy has occurred. It does not address the removal of debris, personal belongings, or human remains. Nor does it cover spontaneous memorials or monuments erected at locations other than the site of the event.

These guidelines support decision-makers in the weeks, months, and years following a tragedy to:

- Balance remembrance and recovery with the continuity of services and daily life
- Engage affected communities and individuals through transparent processes
- Navigate options for the future use of the site

Sections 1 and 2 provide background and theoretical framework, and Sections from 3 onwards are practically focused offering case studies and checklists.

1.2 The Role of Place in Collective Memory and Healing

Terrorist attacks and other collective traumas can echo across generations, leaving lasting marks on both society and the physical landscape. Sites of such events often gain new significance. For some, they become sacred spaces — hallowed ground that should be preserved and honoured. For others, however, these places remain tied to unbearable suffering, beyond redemption or healing. For still others, returning such sites to their previous use is an essential expression of resilience and a refusal to give in to violence.

The meaning and future of a tragedy site may also be shaped by political and economic interests. While those affected may wish for the site to be preserved and sanctified, there may be political or economic pressure to minimise reminders of the atrocity, particularly if it is perceived as damaging to the local economy. In addition, site owners may face strong pressures to return the site to use to ensure business continuity. Decisions regarding the site should take all these perspectives into account. When a site is quickly restored to its previous use without consultation with those affected, this may be experienced as a desecration, a dismissal of the dead, or even an intentional attempt to erase memory.

The role of a tragedy site in the recovery process also evolves over time. In the immediate aftermath, while the site may still be under forensic investigation, it often becomes a focal point for spontaneous memorials, with flowers and personal items left by the public. For bereaved families and survivors, carefully managed site visits can also be beneficial.

As the initial shock subsides, differing needs and perspectives become more visible, and tensions may emerge between remembrance, avoidance, and functional reuse. Practical pressures to resume services or economic activity increase, alongside calls to “move on.” Careful, transparent engagement is essential to navigate these competing demands.

Longer term, the site may take on a new form, through memorialisation, redevelopment, or routine use, and new generations may relate to it primarily through collective memory.

Understanding of different options for site development over time should be essential from the early days post disaster.

2. Options for Site Development

Kenneth E. Foote, in his book *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, lays out a framework for how societies deal with places where violence, disaster, or trauma has occurred. He argues that not all traumatic sites are remembered the same way; instead, they tend to fall into four main categories of treatment:

1. **Sanctification** – The site is set apart as sacred ground, often memorialized and protected.
2. **Designation** – The site is marked in some way (plaques, signage, modest recognition), but not treated as fully sacred.
3. **Rectification** – The site is returned to ordinary use, with little overt recognition of the trauma.
4. **Obliteration** – The site is deliberately erased or destroyed, often because the memory is too painful or politically divisive.

Foote's main point is that how a site is treated reflects cultural values, political choices, and the community's relationship with the event.

2.1 Sanctification (Memorialisation)

Sanctification occurs when a site of trauma is set apart as sacred or hallowed ground. Instead of erasing or reusing the space, communities designate it as a place for commemoration, reverence, and collective memory. Sanctification often transforms the site into a memorial landscape.

Sanctification happens when the event is interpreted as a moment of sacrifice, heroism, or profound loss. The site becomes central to national, regional, or group identity, providing a place for ritual, pilgrimage, or ongoing remembrance such as anniversary events. It also has an educational purpose: teaching future generations about what happened and why it matters.

Ground Zero in New York City is one of the clearest examples of **sanctification** in Kenneth Foote's terms. From the very beginning, the footprints of the Twin Towers were regarded as hallowed ground, especially because so many victims' remains were never recovered, rendering the place a burial ground. The **National September 11 Memorial** (opened in 2011, on the 10th anniversary of the attacks) features twin reflecting pools in the exact footprints of the towers, surrounded by the engraved names of all the victims. The **9/11 Museum** (opened in 2014) located next to the Memorial preserves artifacts, stories, and parts of the original structure. Anniversary ceremonies (reading of names, moments of silence) reaffirm the site as a space of collective mourning and national reflection.

Another example of sanctification is the **1996 Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania**, Australia, where 35 people died. The site of the atrocity, the historic Broad Arrow Café structure was not completely removed after the tragedy. Instead, its bullet-riddled shell was retained as part of a quiet memorial garden, with a reflective pool behind the ruined walls. This integration of the physical remnants of tragedy into a memorial allows visitors to confront the reality of the event in situ, much as one does at war memorials or sites like Oklahoma City (where the bombed building's footprint became a memorial). At Port Arthur, the decaying café remains standing in marked contrast to the surrounding tourist

attractions, ensuring that the massacre is not forgotten even as the site moves forward. For more details, see the Port Artur case study in section 5.

2.2 Designation

Designation falls between **Sanctification** (sacralising the site) and **Rectification** (returning it to ordinary use).

Designation means that a site of violence or tragedy is recognized and marked, but not set apart as fully sacred ground. It acknowledges what happened but without the weight of sanctification.

The choice of designation of a site can be made for several reasons, such as to educate the public about an event without turning the site into a permanent memorial or to provide basic recognition where sanctification is not desired, feasible, or politically possible.

There are many examples of designation following terror attacks. After the London 7/7 attacks in 2005, where the sites of the explosion were in the underground railway tunnels and on a bus, it was not feasible to place any markings at the site of the attack. Instead, there is a plaque at the nearest station to the place of each explosion, with names of those who lost their lives.

It is important to add, however, that a permanent memorial was created in Hyde Park, at a distance from the sites of explosion, as a form of sanctification in a different location from the site of trauma.

2.3 Rectification (Return to Use – Business as Usual)

Rectification occurs when a site of trauma is **returned to ordinary, functional use**. The event is **not formally memorialized**, and the landscape is adapted for everyday life. Unlike obliteration, traces of the past may still be visible, but the primary goal is **practical reuse**, not commemoration.

Rectification is chosen because sometimes the land must be used for critical infrastructure, as a choice by the authorities to quickly move past the event to allow life to continue, or to avoid ongoing reminders of the traumatic event.

Reopening or preserving a site can be seen, or be promoted as, an act of resilience – a statement that the community refuses to “let evil win.” This was exemplified by the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, where nine Black parishioners were murdered in 2015 during Bible study. Rather than close or destroy the church, the congregation chose to restore the space and resume worship just four days later. Likewise, the Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, NY – target of a racist mass shooting in 2022 – was cleaned, renovated, and reopened to serve the community’s needs. Both cases reflect how continuing the use of the space can honour victims by carrying on their values and community spirit. Communities sometimes favour this path as a way to reclaim the site: by filling the church pews or grocery aisles again, they transform a scene of death back into a place of everyday life, denying the perpetrator any lasting victory.

However, how the very act of reclaiming is carried out is very important. For example, by using a communal ritual in which lives are honoured, with a full consultation and agreement of those affected.

In other cases, return to use may be necessitated by economic reasons. Private buildings and venues may need to be reopened. This process can be facilitated if an alternative memorial is being planned. One example of this is the Manchester Arena memorial, where the privately owned music venue was reopened four months after the attack, but alternative locations in the City were being considered for a permanent memorial. The re-opening of the music venue was organised as a fundraising event for the future permanent memorial, providing a link between the site of tragedy with a future place of remembrance. For more details, see the Manchester Arena case study in Section 5.

Re-opening can be controversial: it can be seen as being an economic pressure (so that tourism is unaffected, for example) and not necessarily an act of defiance or resilience. This can be harmful to the process of healing. An example is the Barcelona terror attack from 2017, where the site of attack was reopened within 24 hours due to the pressures of local businesses dependent on tourism. A very small marking placed in the street acknowledges the victims. Such prompt reopening could be understood from the point of view of the needs of the local economy to continue, but this was experienced as disrespectful by some of the bereaved relatives. For more details, see the Barcelona case study in Section 5.

2.4 Obliteration (Demolition)

Often, obliteration is chosen when the memory is too painful, politically divisive, or inconvenient to preserve, or when communities prefer to “move on.”

Obliteration involves forgetting or suppressing memory within the landscape. Unlike sanctification or designation, the site is not preserved or honoured, and unlike rectification, the focus is erasure rather than reuse.

For example, in 2003, a series of bombings targeted synagogues in Istanbul, leading to significant casualties. The sites were cleared and rebuilt without public memorials, effectively erasing the physical traces of the attacks and their associated trauma.

After the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012 (where 26 people died, including 20 six-year-olds), the original school building was demolished, and a new school was constructed on the same site. This illustrates a case in which the building was considered so deeply defiled and symbolically contaminated by the violence against children that the only acceptable solution was to erase it. A permanent memorial was later dedicated in a nearby park.



With a budget of USD 50 million, the new Sandy Hook Elementary School opened almost four years after the mass shooting. (Photo: Kjell Brataas)

Another example of obliteration is the shooting at Dunblane Primary School in Scotland in 1996, where 16 children and one adult were killed in the school gymnasium. Shortly after the atrocity, the gymnasium was demolished and turned into a memorial garden, whereas the rest of the school remained unchanged.

While obliteration can feel harsh or even morally troubling, experts note that communities sometimes have pragmatic, social, or psychological reasons for choosing it after mass trauma.

3. Decision-Making Framework

3.1 Site assessment and initial considerations

In responding to sites of mass trauma, city authorities should proceed through a staged assessment rather than assuming memorialisation or return to use. Drawing on Foote’s framework, the central task is to determine which trajectory—**sanctification, designation, rectification, or obliteration**—is most appropriate in light of the site’s function, symbolic meaning, and community needs.

The **first consideration** concerns **how essential the site is**: if the site forms part of critical infrastructure, such as a rail or metro network, major roadway, utilities, hospital facility, or transport hub, the priority will almost inevitably be restoration of function. In such circumstances, sanctification of the physical site is unlikely. Instead, authorities may pursue **rectification** (restoring the site to use) accompanied by **designation** (marking the event through plaques, art, or spatial interventions).

The **second consideration** is whether the site constitutes a space of **essential daily community life**—for example, a school, place of worship, market, or busy commercial street. In such contexts, a temporary pause may be valuable. Suspending immediate reopening can allow for mourning, investigation, site visits, and structured consultation. Where feasible, temporary relocation of activities may provide continuity without compelling affected communities to re-enter a traumatised space prematurely. Within Foote’s terms, this “pause” creates space for deliberation between sanctification, designation, or rectification, rather than forcing a rapid and potentially divisive decision.

It is also essential to establish whether the site of a disaster presents potential risks regarding health, safety, and contamination. This needs to be communicated clearly and honestly to all affected. Potential health and safety concerns also need to be considered before any type of site visit is allowed.

Points to consider when dealing with a school trauma

Schools deserve special consideration. International experience following school shootings suggests that temporary relocation can provide students with continuity, routine, and psychological safety while preventing re-exposure to trauma. Over time, consultation with the school community can determine whether the original building should undergo rectification, partial designation, more substantial sanctification, or obliteration.

In some cases, given how helpful routine and structure is for children after trauma and disruption, a rapid reopening was chosen. However, in more than one instance, this decision was later reconsidered when distress among bereaved families and survivors became evident. Such situations should ideally be avoided, while also ensuring the continuity of the school’s function in an alternative location.

3.2 Site visits

Research indicates that carefully facilitated visits to sites of mass trauma can support bereaved relatives in processing the reality of the event, counteracting denial, and maintaining a sense of connection to

those who died. (Kristensen et al., 2017). For survivors, carefully managed access may form part of evidence-based recovery practices.

Where operationally feasible, and provided safety permits, authorities should allow sufficient time for supported visits before permanent decisions about reopening or redevelopment are implemented. Even when rectification is likely, temporary access can serve an important transitional function.

The Norwegian government has developed recognised expertise in facilitating large-scale visits following tragedy. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, authorities coordinated travel to affected areas in Thailand for bereaved families. Similarly, following the 2011 attacks on Utøya, survivors and bereaved relatives were granted structured access to the island within weeks of the event. These examples demonstrate that, even under intense public scrutiny, carefully organised access can be both logistically feasible and psychologically meaningful.

If it is not essential to re-open the site, it is important to provide sufficient time for those directly affected to visit the place in a supported way.

3.3 Facilitation of Consultations about the site

Consultation about the future use of a site needs to be inclusive and transparent, and a broad range of stakeholders need to be involved in the discussions.

Experience from our expert working group has shown several important principles to be applied:

- 1. Ensure visible and credible leadership**
Establish a trusted advisory board or steering group to provide oversight and build confidence in the consultation process.
- 2. Allow sufficient time for dialogue**
Temporary suspension of the site's use, combined with meaningful consultation, should be regarded as essential components of the process—not as unnecessary delays.
- 3. Design broad and inclusive participation**
The consultation should involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders. At the same time, particular consideration should be given to those most directly affected, such as bereaved families and survivors.
- 4. Use mixed and complementary methodologies**
Go beyond surveys. Combine facilitated dialogue, small-group discussions, artistic engagement, individual interviews, and written submissions to ensure diverse forms of expression.
- 5. Prioritise in-person engagement where feasible**
Face-to-face meetings often foster trust and deeper dialogue. However, digital participation options should also be provided to ensure access for geographically distant or otherwise unable participants.
- 6. Recognise consultation as part of collective processing and healing**
Dialogue about the site's future is not merely a procedural requirement or a means to an end. When skillfully facilitated, it can contribute meaningfully to collective reflection, acknowledgement, and recovery after disaster or terror.

7. **Anticipate and manage predictable tensions**

Differences in perspective are inevitable. Tensions may arise, for example, between those advocating for sanctification (often bereaved families and survivors) and those favouring restoration or commercial redevelopment (such as property owners or business stakeholders). There may also be friction between local residents concerned about long-term disruption and those seeking significant memorialisation. Independent facilitators and professional mediators can help navigate these dynamics constructively.

3.4 **Decide Your Stakeholders**

Key stakeholders typically include:

- Bereaved families
- Survivors
- “Zero responders” (those present at the time of the event)
- First responders
- Engineers, architects, and recovery specialists
- Immediate neighbours
- Wider community members
- Law enforcement agencies
- Local businesses and property owners
- Municipal and national authorities
- Advocacy and victims’ organisations
- Insurers
- Media representatives

3.5 **Multicultural considerations**

Tragedies often affect communities with diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Failing to recognize and integrate these perspectives risks exclusion, secondary trauma, or community division.

Core Principles:

- **Respect plurality:** No single tradition should dominate decisions; balance majority practices with minority needs.
- **Equity of voice:** Ensure underrepresented cultural groups have structured opportunities to contribute.
- **Inclusion by design:** Rituals, spaces, and communications should allow participation across belief systems, including secular perspectives.
- **Inclusive involvement:** Create a strategy for involvement in consultations of those who are geographically distant

4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Sanctification and its limits

Sanctification is most viable when a site can function as a stable national symbol and when the violence has generated a broadly shared public consensus about its meaning.

In practice, however, full sanctification is relatively rare. Most sites of trauma are eventually returned to use in some form.

Rectification does not mean forgetting

Restoring a site to active use does not preclude meaningful remembrance. Rectification and memorialisation are not mutually exclusive.

The case studies of the Manchester attack and the Madrid bombings (see Section 5) demonstrate that:

- Rectification can coexist with powerful and enduring memorialisation.
- Memorials may be located in alternative spaces, ideally prominent and in close proximity to the site of trauma.
- A sensitively managed reopening can itself become part of the commemorative process, marking resilience as well as remembrance.

Preserving Architectural Elements for Future Memorials or Monuments

Even when a building associated with a disaster is demolished or removed, it may be valuable to preserve selected architectural elements – such as a section of a wall, a doorway, or other identifiable structural components. These elements can later be incorporated into a memorial or monument established at the site or elsewhere. Retaining physical fragments of the original structure can provide an important link to the events that occurred and may hold significant meaning for bereaved families, survivors, and the wider community.

Affected communities are not homogeneous

Communities affected by disaster are not singular or uniform. Those most directly impacted – such as bereaved families and survivors – may hold differing and sometimes conflicting needs, interpretations, and expectations.

Transparent and carefully structured consultation is therefore essential to avoid deepening divisions. Skilled facilitation plays a crucial role in helping stakeholders work toward a shared or at least workable vision.

Allowing time is essential

The case studies presented consistently point to the importance of prolonged dialogue and consultation. Transforming sites of trauma, whether through sanctification, designation rectification, obliteration, or a hybrid approach, cannot be rushed.

5. Case Studies

These case studies are written by members of the HAPSS expert group, based primarily on their own involvement in the processes of consultation, with some input from interviews with key individuals and broader research.

5.1 Utøya, Norway

A brief overview and context of the attack or incident

On 22 July 2011, Norway experienced its deadliest peacetime attack when a terrorist detonated a bomb in central Oslo and subsequently carried out a mass shooting at Utøya island. Inside the island's café building, where many young participants had sought refuge, 13 people were killed. In the aftermath, difficult questions arose regarding the building's future.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

Debate quickly centered on whether the café should be demolished, rebuilt, turned into a museum, or preserved in its damaged state. Many survivors and bereaved families emphasized the importance of retaining traces of the attack — such as bullet holes and broken windows — as part of the historical record.

The task of finding a way forward fell to the politician Jørgen Frydnes, who was appointed for the redevelopment of Utøya. Drawing on advice from international experts in memorialization and post-disaster site management, he emphasized dialogue and consultation as the primary tools for decision-making. Initial town hall meetings and group discussions highlighted the range of strong and conflicting views, which made it challenging to find a solution everyone could agree to.

Who were the main stakeholders?

The key stakeholders included the bereaved families, survivors of the attack, the Utøya owners and managers, architects, and the Norwegian society more broadly.

Key challenges and issues encountered

The process was marked by conflicting perspectives. Some families wanted the café destroyed, unable to imagine its continued presence, while others insisted that its preservation was essential to memory and truth-telling. Frydnes observed the difficulty of finding consensus in large meetings, where grief and trauma made dialogue particularly challenging.

To address this, he chose to meet individually with 85 families representing the 69 victims from Utøya. This approach allowed for more open conversations and helped build trust. The eventual compromise was to safeguard the memories of both survival and loss by encasing the original café building within a new protective structure.

The current status of the site and learning from that process

Architect Erlend Blakstad Haffner designed the new structure, known as Hegnhuset (“the House of Protection”). The building both preserves the café and places it within a symbolic frame: 69 supporting beams for the 69 victims, and an outer shield of 495 wooden pillars representing the survivors.



*The “Hegnhuset” building on the island of Utøya covers the original café building.
(Photo: Kjell Brataas)*

Opened in 2015, Hegnhuset functions both as a memorial and as a learning center, offering a place for education, reflection, and dialogue. In 2016, The United Kingdom newspaper The Guardian named it one of the top buildings of the year, praising its ability to embody memory while contributing to Norway’s ongoing process of national reflection.

The case illustrates how individual consultation, rather than large-scale public debate, can sometimes provide a path forward when stakeholders are deeply divided and emotionally affected. It also highlights how architecture can serve both as preservation and as a forward-looking space for learning.

Using Kenneth Foote’s typology of how societies treat sites of trauma, Utøya island is best classified primarily as a case of rectification (buildings were rebuilt or redesigned, the island continues to be used for political summer camps), with elements of sanctification (the cafe building and the memorial sculpture The Clearing).

The island’s primary function remains active and future-oriented.

5.2 Madrid, Spain

A brief overview and context of the attack or incident

On the morning of 11 March 2004, ten bombs exploded almost simultaneously on four commuter trains in Madrid during rush hour. In total, 193 people were killed, including a police officer who died during a later anti-terrorist operation, and around 2,000 were injured. It remains the deadliest terrorist attack in Spanish history and the second deadliest in Europe after the Lockerbie bombing.

The attacks took place three days before the general election, fuelling political controversy. Initial government statements attributed responsibility to ETA, but evidence soon pointed to Islamist extremists. Al-Qaeda later claimed responsibility.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

In the aftermath, Spanish authorities and victims' associations worked to establish permanent sites of remembrance. The Association of Victims of 11M played a leading role in representing families and survivors, ensuring their perspectives were included in decision-making. Monuments were planned both at the main site of the Atocha station attack and at the other affected locations.

The first memorial was a forest in Retiro Park, inaugurated on the first anniversary in 2005. Later, plans for more permanent monuments were developed in collaboration with victims' groups and the broader community.

Who were the main stakeholders?

The key stakeholders included the bereaved families and survivors, represented primarily by the Association of Victims of 11M. State and local authorities, railway operators, and civil society organizations (such as neighbourhood associations) also played important roles. Political actors and the broader Spanish public were significant stakeholders, given the national impact of the attack.

Key challenges and issues encountered

The main challenge was the highly politicized atmosphere in which memorial decisions were made. Controversy over responsibility for the attack created tension between political parties and complicated the public debate.

On a practical level, some memorial projects faced criticism regarding design and accessibility. The original Atocha station memorial, inaugurated in 2007, featured a complex glass dome and membrane system that deteriorated over time and was difficult for many visitors to interpret. These issues eventually led to a redesign.

The current status of the site and learning from that process

Today, multiple memorials mark the attack sites:

- **Atocha station:** The largest memorial, remodeled and reinaugurated in March 2024, integrates a spacious commemorative area within the station, featuring the names of victims, tribute phrases, and 193 ceiling lights symbolizing each life lost.

- **Retiro Park:** The “Forest of Remembrance,” inaugurated in 2005, provides a natural space for reflection, in a park close to Atocha station.
- **El Pozo station:** A fountain with 192 spouts and a mural by prominent artists, inaugurated in 2011, created through collaboration between victims’ groups, local residents, and NGOs.
- **Santa Eugenia station:** The *Truncated Hope* monument commemorates victims, though its inauguration date is unclear.
- **Along the tracks at the fourth blast site:** A smaller memorial opened in 2023.

The Madrid case illustrates both the value and difficulty of creating memorials in a politically charged context. It shows the importance of involving victims’ associations in decision-making and demonstrates how physical memorials, when placed at multiple locations, can together form a wider landscape of remembrance.

Using the previously mentioned typology of sites, the response in Madrid is a case of rectification. The main reason this solution was necessary is that the bombings occurred on **commuter trains** and at **multiple stations** (Atocha, El Pozo, Santa Eugenia). **The sites were essential infrastructures** (rail lines and stations), therefore it was essential that rail service was **restored very quickly** and that stations **resumed their everyday function**.

The situation itself demanded that memorialisation was moved away from the exact location of the terror attacks.

From the Madrid example, we can see that when essential infrastructure is damaged in an attack, the necessity of restoration of function imposes decisions of the future use of sites. Rectification in such cases may be the obvious choice. However, far from forgetting this major terror attack, memorials are positioned in prominent places at stations. Therefore, in Madrid, there was a significant and visible designation as well as rectification as a process.

5.3 La Rambla (Barcelona)

A brief overview and context of the attack

On 17 August 2017, Barcelona was struck by a terrorist attack carried out by members of a jihadist cell. The group had initially planned a larger attack using explosives during the city’s September festivities. However, after an accidental explosion in a house used to store materials, the surviving members shifted to a simpler plan.

The following day, one of the attackers drove a rented van for 600 metres down the pedestrianized Las Ramblas Avenue, a major tourist destination, killing 14 people and injuring over 100 others. Later that evening, another attack was attempted in the seaside town of Cambrils, where one person was killed. The final toll was 16 fatalities, including nationals from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, the United States, Canada, and the UK/Australia. Six of the terrorists were subsequently shot dead by police.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

Immediately after the attack, citizens created spontaneous memorials at the top of Las Ramblas. Thousands of tributes — flowers, drawings, and personal items — were collected, documented, and archived. These materials were later made accessible through the online project *Memorial Rambla 17A*, allowing the public to revisit and reflect on them.

In 2019, a more permanent memorial was installed: a 12-metre ground plaque inscribed in Catalan, Spanish, and Arabic with the words “May peace cover you, oh city of peace,” taken from one of the original tribute messages.

Who were the main stakeholders?

Key stakeholders included the City of Barcelona, local residents and businesses, the Association of Friends of La Rambla (representing commercial and tourism interests), survivors and victims’ relatives (many of whom were foreign nationals), and the broader international community.

Key challenges and issues encountered

Unlike other terrorist attacks in Spain, the Barcelona tragedy was not heavily politicized. However, significant debate arose around whether a larger, more visible monument should be built. The Association of Friends of La Rambla strongly opposed such a project, arguing it would alter the character of the avenue, which remains one of Barcelona’s most iconic and commercially significant areas. Another challenge was the absence of a strong victims’ association. Because many of the fatalities were foreign nationals, there was no single representative body pressing for specific forms of commemoration. This left much of the decision-making in the hands of local authorities and civic organizations.

The current status of the site and learning from that process

Today, the permanent plaque remains the central commemorative marker on Las Ramblas. Each year, on the anniversary, white flowers are laid in large planters placed on the avenue, in a ceremony attended by authorities and relatives.

The debate about whether a larger memorial should be developed remains unresolved, particularly as La Rambla itself is undergoing redevelopment. The Barcelona case highlights the complexities of commemoration in a globalized city where many victims were foreign visitors, and where the balance between remembrance and the city’s everyday life and tourism identity remains contested.

In terms of classification of sites of trauma, Barcelona also applied rectification like Madrid, but in a significantly different way: designation is very light in the form of a plaque and with no other visible memorials.

5.4 Pulse night club (Orlando) - USA

A brief overview and context of the attack or incident

On June 12, 2016, a gunman attacked Pulse, a nightclub in Orlando popular with people who identify as LGBTQ+, killing 49 people and injuring 53 others, marking one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history. The process that followed galvanized widespread and lengthy discussions and the engagement of an external adviser to help finalize the goal of a permanent memorial.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

In the wake of the shooting, the nonprofit onePulse Foundation – founded by Pulse owner Barbara Poma – led efforts to establish a permanent memorial and museum on or near the original nightclub site. Plans envisioned a \$45 million memorial that eventually ballooned to a proposed \$100 million museum, including commercial elements that stirred controversy over the line between commemoration and money making. However, fundraising difficulties and criticism over transparency caused the foundation to dissolve in 2023, leaving the memorial unrealized.

The City of Orlando subsequently stepped in, purchasing the Pulse property in 2023. They hired an independent councilor, who had recently facilitated the memorial project in the wake of the Virginia Beach shooting, to act as a mediator for a stakeholder-driven design process. He aimed for a consensus model that involved a **committee of 18 people** representing the bereaved and survivors who met **on several occasions for two days' meetings and discussions**. Given that many of those impacted by the Pulse tragedy spoke Spanish as their primary language, all meetings – including those accessible live via Zoom – included simultaneous English-Spanish interpretation. Similarly, every document produced throughout the process was made available in both languages.

A design and construction request for proposals was initiated in early 2025, with construction expected to begin in June and be completed by the end of 2027.

Who were the main stakeholders?

The stakeholders included:

- Survivors of the shooting and families of the 49 victims – who advocated forcefully for authentic and respectful commemoration
- Former employees of Pulse
- First responders who came to the aid of those shot, wounded, and traumatized
- The City of Orlando and the Mayor's Office
- LGBTQ+ community leaders and activists – including Commissioner Patty Sheehan and Orlando's LGBTQ+ community

Key challenges and issues encountered

- **Commercialization vs. Memorialization:** The original museum concept included retail elements and extravagant budgets. Many of those directly affected found the proposed “gift shop” deeply offensive, feeling exploitative to survivors and bereaved families.

- **Delays and broken promises:** Families and community members criticized the prolonged inaction.
- **Site-control disputes:** The foundation’s failure to secure the Pulse property undermined its capacity to deliver a memorial at the original location. Negotiations fell through; city intervention was required to buy the site.
- **Language barriers:** All documents had to be translated from English to Spanish, and interpreters were needed at every meeting.
- **Internet connection:** Several bereaved and survivors live in Puerto Rico, where the technical infrastructure is poor, resulting in delays when power outages meant that several individuals could not be reached.

The current status of the site and lessons learned

As of late 2025:

- The City of Orlando has assumed leadership of the memorial project, with most funding secured and design proposals being solicited. Construction is expected to begin on the 10th anniversary in June 2026, with completion aimed for late 2027.
- Temporary commemorations – including the rainbow crosswalk and perimeter memorials – remain in place, serving as ongoing public expressions of remembrance.

Lessons learned:

- Authentic memorialization requires survivors and families to be central to decision-making.
- Memorial projects must balance emotional weight with practical feasibility, avoiding over-ambitious commercial elements.
- Transparency in funding, governance, and communication is vital to maintain trust.
- Public symbolism matters – erasing symbols like the crosswalk shows how memorials remain contested in the broader political landscape.
- A memorial design process, particularly one that happens after deep divisions emerge among key stakeholders like families of the bereaved and survivors, should include opportunities for establishing or re-establishing trust, healing, and reconciliation.
- While providing opportunities for virtual participation helps a process include more stakeholders, members of a memorial advisory committee should, if at all possible, meet in person as an entire group to foster stronger relationships.

In 2017, a crosswalk near the Pulse nightclub was painted in rainbow colors to honor the 49 victims of the shooting.

(Photo: Kjell Brataas)



5.5 Port Arthur, Tasmania, Australia

A brief overview and context of the attack or incident

On 28 April 1996, the historic Port Arthur site in Tasmania was the scene of Australia's worst mass shooting when a shooter entered the Broad Arrow Café and nearby areas, killing 35 people and injuring many more. The café was crowded at the time, and many lives were lost inside it, making the building a focal point for trauma, memory, and debate over how to treat a site that held physical scars and emotional weight.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

Immediately following the massacre, there was discussion about whether the Broad Arrow Café building should be demolished, preserved, or altered. Some people felt that the building – including its ruined or damaged state – must remain as witness to what happened; others saw keeping the café ruins as prolonging trauma.



The walls of the café building at Port Arthur Historic Site were retained to commemorate the mass shooting in 1996.

(Photo: Kjell Brataas)

Authorities initially began partial demolition, but forensic and legal requirements intervened, delaying or altering those plans. Over time, it was decided that some of the structure would be retained – notably the walls – as part of how the site could enable reflection and memorialization, while also being respectful to survivors and family members.

Who were the main stakeholders?

- Survivors of the massacre and families of the 35 people killed
- The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (site managers)
- Tasmanian Government and wider Australian governmental authorities dealing with heritage, law, and public safety
- Local community, including residents, staff at the historic site, and people involved in tourism
- Memory organizations, heritage preservation bodies, and the broader public interested in how tragedies are commemorated

Key challenges and issues encountered

Trauma and sensitivity vs heritage preservation

Balancing the need to preserve an authentic witness to the events (the damaged/new ruins) against the psychological harm or distress that might be caused by making the site too “exposed” or visible. Some family members and community participants preferred not to keep the café standing in its ruinous state, fearing it would keep alive painful memories.

Legal, forensic, and logistical constraints

Immediately after the event, evidence collection meant that demolition or alteration had to wait. Decisions had to respect investigative needs.

Public expectations vs what is feasible

Tourists, memorial visitors, and the media often expect a physical “monument” or museum-like site. However, resources, funding, and site management constraints meant that only certain kinds of memorialization could be sustained.

Visitor management and site experience

The Port Arthur Historic Site is both a heritage and a tourist site. Shaping the visitor experience so as to maintain dignity, solemnity, and reflection (especially around the Broad Arrow Café ruins and memorial garden) is challenging when large numbers of tourists pass through.

The current status of the site and learning from that process

- The Broad Arrow Café structure remains as a ruin (“shell”) rather than being fully rebuilt or completely demolished. This “ruin” status serves as a witness to the event.
- A memorial garden, including a reflection pond or memorial pool and plaques listing victims’ names, was established in 2000 to provide a place for quiet reflection.
- The site management has tried to maintain a balance: allowing visitors to engage with the history, yet also preserving the solemnity of the place. The garden is designed to create separation from more “touristy” energy.

Lessons learned

- Preserving partial structures (ruins) can provide powerful symbolic meaning without forcing demolition or reconstruction.
- Early involvement of survivors and families in decisions about preservation vs demolition is essential.
- Forensic, legal, and heritage concerns may limit immediate actions, but these constraints can also protect memory by preventing premature destruction.

The symbolic weight of the site after the massacre was therefore extremely high; this explains sanctification.

Footo defines sanctification as the process by which a site of trauma is:

- Set aside from normal use
- Preserved as a space of mourning or reverence
- Treated as morally and symbolically exceptional

5.6 Manchester Arena, UK

A brief overview and context of the attack or incident

On 22 May 2017, more than 14,000 people attended an Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena. As they were leaving the venue, a homemade explosive device was detonated by a suicide bomber. It killed 22 people including a child as young as eight, physically injured hundreds, and traumatised thousands more. It was the UK's deadliest terrorist attack since the 7 July 2005 London bombings.

The decision-making process regarding the use of the site

Three months after the attack, the city authorities formed the Manchester Memorials Advisory Group (MMAG) to oversee the creation of a fitting and lasting memorial to the victims. The group consisted of civic, academic, and business leaders and included expertise from consultants who had been involved in previous post-disaster memorialisation and community engagement projects.

At the outset, the MMAG adopted a clear commitment to broad and open consultation with those directly affected and with the wider public. Its terms of reference were made publicly available via a dedicated website, with regular updates sent first to bereaved families and others affected, followed by press releases.

A 'Families First' approach was adopted which included ensuring bereaved families were prioritised during consultation, decision-making, and communications processes. Early advice was offered that at each stage of the consultation process there were likely to be – and indeed were – differing and strongly held views amongst the families.

In line with this approach, an early engagement exercise, based on advice and with facilitation support provided by specialists in collective trauma, brought bereaved families together. It provided a valuable

opportunity for them to meet and connect with one another as well as to begin reflecting together on the meaning and purpose of a permanent memorial ahead of considering its siting.

The MMAG were able to explain that as the incident site itself was a private venue – including the actual site of the explosion which occurred in the foyer (known as the ‘City Room’) of the Arena – this would have implications for the location and accessibility of the memorial. Through discussions, including the option for families to tour in person potential sites on available land close to the Arena (with the option for visitors to see or pass by the Arena itself or not), a site around the corner from the Arena was chosen for what would become the ‘Glade of Light’ Memorial.¹

Who were the main stakeholders?

In deciding the design, form, and location of the Memorial, the stakeholders included those directly affected – bereaved families, those seriously injured and survivors – as well as the wider City and jurisdiction of Manchester (residents, business leaders, visitors).

Key challenges and issues encountered

For some of those directly affected, it was difficult to accept that the Arena would reopen and that concerts would once again take place there. Concerns included fear that the tragedy of 22 May would gradually be forgotten.

The Arena remained closed for nearly four months after the attack. This pause proved valuable, as it mitigated the risk of reopening too soon and the emotional harm that might have resulted.

The delayed reopening allowed time for those affected to process the idea of the venue returning to use. Before reopening, bereaved relatives were given a further opportunity to visit the place where their loved ones had died and to pay their respects. It was also helpful that the first concert held at the Arena was a charitable event that raised funds for the new permanent memorial.

The current status of the site and lessons learned

The permanent memorial, the *Glade of Light*, was dedicated in an opening ceremony attended by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (now Prince William and Princess Kate) in May 2022. It is located in a prominent, historic part of Manchester, next to Manchester Cathedral and within walking distance to Manchester Arena.

Meanwhile, the site of the attack, Manchester Arena, has resumed operation as a major events venue. A memorial plaque has been placed in the foyer of the Arena in honour of those who died in the attack.

¹ [The Glade Of Light Memorial | The Glade Of Light Memorial | Manchester City Council](#)

According to the classification by Foote, the approach used in this case was a combination of **rectification** (repair of the foyer after the explosion and its subsequent return to regular use) and **designation** (placing of the memorial plaque).

The case of Manchester Arena provides an example in which the site of an atrocity was not developed into a permanent memorial – that is, the sanctification option was not chosen. Instead, the permanent memorial was placed at a different location. When such a choice is made, Foote warns us that there may be concerns by those directly affected that the tragedy will be forgotten as the community attempts to move on quickly. However, this has not been the case in Manchester.

The reasons for this include sensitive and timely return of the Arena, the inclusion of a plaque at the venue itself, and the siting of the official memorial in a prominent and nearby location within the city.

When sanctification is not possible, for whatever reason, it is crucial that the return of a site to regular use is managed sensitively, preferably in a dignified ceremony and with appropriate timing, and where possible, positively connected to the broader process of memorialisation, as in this case.

5.7 Case study: Digital documentation, preservation, and use of site (Manchester Arena) to aid psychological recovery

Introduction

The Greater Manchester Resilience Hub, which was established to coordinate the National Health Service (NHS) mental health response, facilitated both physical and digital access to the Manchester Arena for several hundred persons impacted. Following careful planning and triage of potential attendees, in-person site visits were facilitated by a team of mental health professionals over multiple dates within the first 30 months of the incident.

360-degree video footage of the site was captured and processed that enabled the Hub clinicians to additionally offer augmented and virtual reality visits to the site from a safe, private, remote location, sometimes as a precursor to an in-person visit, or as an alternative. Filming was undertaken by Hub clinicians and university staff using a 360-degree camera purchased from an online retailer. Footage was taken from the height perspective of the average 17yr old female to reflect the average concert attendee seeking psychological support. Using online software, the images were ‘stitched’ together to create a complete digital environment of the city room and adjoining spaces and downloaded onto smart phones that could be slotted into readily available virtual reality headsets. All virtual visits were facilitated by a psychological therapies professional commencing with the viewing of still images, progressing to augmented reality, and finally full 360-degree visual immersion, including movement through the scene and with ambient audio. Physiological activation of participants was rated at each stage and progression followed a lowering of subjective anxiety.

Benefits of digital visits

There are several benefits of offering a digital “visit” to a site, including:

- Memory reconsolidation – allows for the updating of the trauma memory to include additional information, such as the spatial relationships between elements, which may have been distorted at the time of the trauma. Also, memory updating with non-threatening information and enabling the revision of self-narrative.
- Predictability and control – by allowing the user to control the pace, duration, and level of immersion when engaging with the site physically and digitally.
- For those receiving ongoing therapeutic support, virtual visits enabled a realistic assessment of their current emotional reactivity and readiness for a real-world site visit, in addition to consistently promoting the likelihood of attending a future crowded event.

Challenges and considerations

Site jurisdiction

The site of the Manchester Arena (a privately owned venue) attack is a space shared by multiple organisations. Access to the site by the public was prohibited following the attack.

Governance

Site access for 360-degree video capture was initially denied by third party gatekeeping agencies, but due to it remaining a crime scene, the police assisted in making a direct approach to the venue owners who were happy to support the initiative.

Safety & Security

One of the requirements of permission being granted was that the footage would not be shared electronically with individuals, to avoid it getting into the public domain or on social media. Filming some environments may pose a security risk to the environment or building. Storage of the material was kept on password protected devices and stored securely. The use of virtual reality headsets come with advisories that are to be followed, such as for those who experience vertigo, and delaying driving for 20 minutes after use in case of dizziness. Participants were accompanied to a private safe space where they were seated on swivel chairs to enable full body rotation while exploring the digital space.

Ethical considerations of virtual visits

It was decided to use equipment robustly tested by manufacturers, most of which are approved for use by those aged 13 years and older. The youngest user was aged 10 as they had a VR headset at home that they were familiar and experienced with, and parental consent was provided. This child was very positive about the experience and following the digital visit was 100% confident of attending another concert there.

Time limits

Physical site visits were undertaken by several hundred people who were triaged and supported by clinical staff, during the first 2.5 years. Virtual visits extended over a longer time period but were suspended during the Covid pandemic.

Geographical distance

Persons impacted came from all over the UK and beyond. Psychological therapy staff from the GM Resilience Hub would travel up to 50 miles to support therapists and individuals affected to facilitate the VR element of support. Individuals from further away were invited to travel to the Hub for pre-planned support, often ahead of an actual site visit.

Learning from the process

Advanced clinical triaging to enable staff to thoughtfully plan, structure and support visits that provide meaningful benefit as part of evidence-based treatment is recommended.

Digital re-exposure via augmented reality-enabled devices can better protect those affected and accompanying family and support personnel from unnecessary exposure.

It is not necessary to film before the environment has been cleaned and made safe.

Those who engaged in the digital visits unanimously expressed satisfaction from having done so, with 100% saying their confidence to attend another crowded music event had increased from doing so.

Concurrent engagement with a recognised therapy delivered by an appropriately qualified, regulated, and supervised clinician was helpful to those who experienced a post-traumatic reaction to the incident.

Persons affected may present to services years after a traumatic event, by which time the site may have transformed or no longer exist. Sites change overtime, and it is helpful to retain digital footage from the original time to maintain authentic integrity of the site at the time.

6. Checklist

This checklist is intended to support authorities, property owners, and stakeholders in managing sites where terrorism, mass violence, or another kind of disaster has occurred.

1. Immediate Phase: Stabilisation and Sensitivity

- Has the site been secured and preserved in a way that respects victims and affected communities?
 - Has communication with bereaved families and survivors been prioritised?
 - Has temporary use (or suspension of use) been considered to allow space for reflection?
 - Has clear leadership responsibility been established?
-

2. Governance and Leadership

- Has a visible and trusted leadership structure been created (e.g., advisory board or steering group)?
 - Does the governance structure include independent voices and relevant expertise?
 - Are roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes clearly defined and publicly communicated?
 - Is there transparency about legal, financial, and property constraints?
-

3. Stakeholder Identification and Inclusion

- Have all relevant stakeholder groups been mapped (bereaved families, survivors, local residents, property owners, authorities, civil society, etc.)?
 - Are directly affected individuals given appropriate weight in the process?
 - Are mechanisms in place to ensure inclusion of geographically distant or marginalised groups?
 - Is there awareness that affected communities are not homogeneous and may hold differing views?
 - Are mechanisms in place to ensure inclusion of those with access and functional needs?
-

4. Consultation Design

- Is the consultation process broad, inclusive, and transparent?
 - Are mixed methodologies being used (e.g., surveys, facilitated dialogue, interviews, written submissions, artistic engagement)?
 - Are in-person opportunities prioritised where possible, alongside digital access?
 - Has sufficient time been allocated to avoid rushed decision-making?
 - Are expectations clearly managed regarding what consultation can and cannot influence?
-

5. Managing Tensions and Conflict

- Have predictable tensions been anticipated (e.g., sanctification vs. rectification; local concerns vs. national memorialisation)?
 - Are independent facilitators or mediators engaged where appropriate?
 - Are emotional, symbolic, and practical dimensions of disagreement acknowledged?
 - Is there a strategy to prevent deepening divisions within affected communities?
-

6. Clarifying the Site's Future Role

- Has there been explicit consideration of whether the site should be sanctified, designated, rectified, obliterated, or a hybrid solution adopted?
 - If rectified, is meaningful remembrance incorporated?
 - If memorialisation is located elsewhere, is it prominent and appropriately connected to the site?
 - Has the symbolic function of the site (local, national, or international) been assessed?
-

7. Reopening and Long-Term Stewardship

- If reopening the site, has this been planned as a carefully managed and potentially commemorative event?
 - Are long-term maintenance and stewardship arrangements clearly defined?
 - Is there a plan for future anniversaries and commemorative practices?
 - Has the sustainability of decisions (socially, politically, financially) been assessed?
-

8. Ethical and Reflective Considerations

- Has the process been treated not merely as a technical decision, but as part of collective processing and healing?
- Has support been made available for everyone involved in the process?
- Has dignity for victims and survivors remained central throughout?
- Have lessons learned been documented for future reference?

7. Further Reading

Foote, Kenneth E. (2003). *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*. University of Texas Press.

The foundational conceptual framework for understanding sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. Essential for grasping how societies symbolically treat sites of trauma.

Frynes, Jorgen Watne (2025) *No Man Is An Island: Community and Commemoration on Norway's Utøya*. University of Massachusetts Press

A first-person reflection on leading Utøya back to life after the devastating mass murder there in July 2011.

Linenthal, Edward T. *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*. Oxford University Press

Linenthal examines how different stories about the bombing were told through positive narratives of civic renewal and of religious redemption and more negative narratives of toxicity and trauma. He writes about the extraordinary bonds of affection that were created in the wake of the bombing, acts of kindness, empathy, and compassion that existed alongside the toxic legacy of the event.

McNaughton, E., Wills, J., & Lallemand, D. (2015). *Leading in disaster recovery: A companion through the chaos*. New Zealand Red Cross. <https://preparecenter.org/resource/leading-in-disaster-recovery-a-companion-through-the-chaos/>

A practical governance-focused guide emphasising leadership, legitimacy, and community engagement during long-term recovery.

Australian Red Cross. *Guidance on Temporary Memorials and Shrines*.

Practical advice on managing spontaneous memorials in ways that respect grief while ensuring safety and long-term planning.

PLAN–CARE–HEAL: A Framework for Collecting and Managing Spontaneous Memorials.

A structured approach to documenting, preserving, and ethically managing spontaneous tributes. Particularly useful in early phases of disaster response.

<https://www.spontaneoumemorials.org/plan-care-heal-a-framework-for-collecting-and-managing-spontaneous-memorials/>

Brataas, Kjell (2023). *Disaster Memorials and Monuments: Politics, Memory, and Meaning*. Routledge.

A comprehensive examination of how societies commemorate disasters and acts of mass violence. Drawing on international case studies, the book analyses the political, ethical, architectural, and psychosocial dimensions of memorial decision-making.

Doss, Erika (2010). *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*. University of Chicago Press.

Explores the rise of memorial culture and how public emotion, politics, and identity shape commemorative practices. Useful for understanding why memorial debates often become intense and contested.

Young, James E. (1993). *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Yale University Press.

A seminal work on how memorials shape public memory. Young's concept of the "counter-monument" is particularly relevant for contemporary design approaches that resist monumental permanence.

Winter, Jay (1995). *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. Cambridge University Press.

Examines how societies commemorate mass death and how rituals of mourning evolve over time. Offers historical depth to contemporary memorial debates.

Hite, Kristin (2012). *Politics and the Art of Commemoration*. Routledge.

Analyses memorials as political spaces where narratives of nationhood, responsibility, and justice are negotiated.

Eyre, Anne (2007). *Remembering: Community Commemoration After Disaster*.

Focuses specifically on post-disaster contexts and highlights the psychosocial value—and risks—of commemorative practices in community recovery.

Kristensen, P., et al. (2017). Can visiting the site of death be beneficial for bereaved families after terror? A qualitative study of parents' and siblings' experiences of visiting Utøya Island after the 2011 Norway terror attack.²

Hogan, Matt. "Remembering the Unthinkable: Thoughtful Approaches to Disaster Memorialisation." (Blog)

A reflective practitioner-oriented discussion of memorial decision-making processes.³

Clark County (Las Vegas) 1 October Memorial Survey Report (2021).

An example of large-scale public consultation on permanent memorialisation.⁴

² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7803072/>

³ <https://mtthwhgn.com/remembering-the-unthinkable-thoughtful-approaches-to-disaster-memorialisation/>

⁴ <https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/adobe/assets/urn:aaid:aem:701704dc-daf8-42ee-a108-1c4dfc7eb236/original/as/1oct-startup-survey-march-website.pdf>

8. Selected Articles and Online Resources

The Independent – Demolition of the Dunblane Primary School gymnasium (1996)

This article reports on the demolition of the gymnasium at Dunblane Primary School following the 1996 school shooting, describing how removal of the building formed part of the community's recovery process.

<https://www.the-independent.com/news/dunblane-school-gym-reduced-to-rubble-1304404.html>

Port Arthur Historic Site – 30th Anniversary Commemoration (1996 / anniversary resource)

This webpage describes commemorative activities marking the 30th anniversary of the Port Arthur massacre and explains how the historic site integrates remembrance, education, and public engagement.

https://portarthur.org.au/30th_anniversary/

KORO – National Memorial for 22 July 2011 (Norway)

This official webpage describes the process of establishing Norway's national memorials for the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks, including artistic competitions and consultation with affected communities.

<https://koro.no/english/a-national-memorial-for-22-july/>

Architect Magazine – Rebuilding Sandy Hook Elementary School (2012)

This article examines the architectural and planning process behind the rebuilding of Sandy Hook Elementary School following the 2012 mass shooting, highlighting the role of design and community consultation in recovery.

https://www.architectmagazine.com/Design/sandy-hook-rebuilds_o

Construction Management – Memorial plans for the Grenfell Tower site (2017 fire)

This article reports on proposals to create a permanent memorial space at the Grenfell Tower site and outlines the consultation process with survivors and bereaved families.

<https://constructionmanagement.co.uk/grenfell-report-reveals-proposed-plans-for-a-memorial-space/>

Memorial Rambla 17A – Barcelona terrorist attack memorial (2017)

This webpage presents the permanent memorial along La Rambla commemorating victims of the 2017 terrorist attack and explains its design and symbolic elements.

<https://www.barcelona.cat/memorialrambla17a/en/>

Associated Press – Demolition of the Parkland school shooting building (2018)

This article examines debates surrounding the demolition of the building at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School where the 2018 mass shooting took place.

<https://apnews.com/article/school-shooting-building-demolish-parkland-columbine-3193ad66681eaffb4bf35188cfbe83cd>

NBC Miami – Planned demolition of the Parkland school building

This report describes preparations for the demolition of the 1200 building at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and documents reactions from families and the community.

<https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/demolition-of-1200-building-at-stoneman-douglas-high-to-begin-in-june/3324002/>

Spectrum News 13 – Pulse memorial crosswalk in Orlando

This article reports on the repainting of the rainbow-coloured crosswalk near the Pulse nightclub site, an informal memorial associated with the 2016 mass shooting.

<https://mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2025/08/21/pulse-memorial-crosswalk-on-orange-avenue-repainted-to-meet-state-standards>

BBC News – Ongoing debate about the future of Grenfell Tower

This article reports on differing views among survivors, families, and authorities regarding demolition and memorialisation of the Grenfell Tower site.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgqngl4d442o>

Reuters – Halted demolition of Grenfell Tower after discovery of handprints (2026)

This article describes how demolition work at Grenfell Tower was temporarily halted after handprints were discovered on interior walls, prompting renewed discussions about preservation and memorialisation.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/uk-halts-demolition-parts-grenfell-tower-after-handprints-found-walls-2026-03-03/>

U.S. Office of Justice Programs – Creating permanent memorials after tragic events

This resource outlines key principles for planning permanent memorials after acts of violence or disaster, emphasising consultation with victims and affected communities.

<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/remembering-tragic-events-creating-permanent-memorial>

Pepperdine University – Trauma, PTSD, and physical environments

This article discusses how physical spaces associated with traumatic events may trigger psychological responses such as PTSD and why environmental changes may support recovery.

<https://onlinegrad.pepperdine.edu/blog/ptsd-trauma-physical-spaces/>

Designblendz – Integrating memory into architectural redevelopment

This article discusses architectural approaches for incorporating elements of remembrance into redevelopment projects while allowing spaces to regain practical use.

<https://www.designblendz.com/blog/honoring-the-past>

BBC News – Debates surrounding sites of tragedy and memorialisation

This article examines public debates about whether sites associated with tragic events should be preserved, redeveloped, or demolished.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq5g99xy979o>