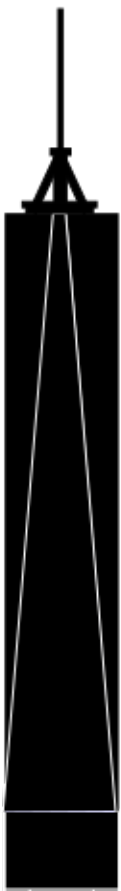




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HOW DID NYC LIVE ON AFTER 9/11?

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INLEIDING

September 11th, 2001. What seemed to be a normal workday in New York City, turned out to become the worst day in American and western history as a terrorist attack stroked the city in its financial heart: The World Trade Center. Since 1970, its two highest towers (WTC 1 and WTC 2) had become an icon for the Western capitalism, the USA and New York City as financial capital of the world.

During the attack, peoples first reaction were the thousands of people inside the building who died because of a useless terror act. However, after a few weeks, the feelings changed into

The New Yorkers were left behind with over 3000 families who were torn apart. They were left without an answer, but they had each other. And instead of thinking about the politics, they looked after each in order to be stronger than ever before.

The attacks had a huge impact on both the (western) world and the city itself.

1 What happened that morning on September 11th, 2001?

Ground Zero, New York City. If you've ever been in the big apple, you know what I'm talking about: A park of 5.5 hectares alongside West Street in downtown Manhattan. It lays in the shadow of the tallest skyscraper outside the Middle East and Asia and is surrounded by the financial heart of the World. And even though it's in the middle of the busiest business district on the Western hemisphere, this park is quiet. No businessmen rushing for a meeting, but standing people thinking about that fatal day in 2001...

1.1 September 11th, 2001

Monday September 11th, 2001 began as a workday like any other: Millions of people rushed to the financial district, located at south of the Manhattan Island, in order to be on time for work. Show piece of the district: The two Twin Towers which were part of a larger World Trade Center complex containing over 1,240,000 m² of office space. The towers were built as the two tallest buildings in the world and were located just 3 blocks from the Stock Exchange on Wall Street. All these incredible numbers however suddenly disappeared between 8.46 and 10.28 AM that day.

While New York City was characterized by the rare flying conditions of what the pilots call 'Severe Clear', an American Airlines Boeing 767 hit the Southern Tower at 8.46 in the morning. The plane had taken off 47 minutes earlier at Logan International Airport in Boston and was scheduled to go to LAX in Los Angeles. There was chaos, both in the tower as on the ground. Nobody could believe what just happened, as it seemed so unreal. There were no real explanations for it being an accident, as the chance was too little to fly right into the building.

The whole world was broadcasting live from New York, with cameras pointing at the burning tower, when a second plane hit the Northern tower. As it was broadcasted live, the whole world instantly knew that the United States were facing a terror attack of unseen measures on the most tragic day in American history that would get worse throughout the day. As the American Flight Department ordered to cancel all flight activities in American airspace, there were 2 other planes who didn't respond to the commanders. These civilian planes would later crash into the Pentagon and into a field, 240 kilometers Northwest of Washington DC. It is assumed that the fourth plane was heading to the White House or the Capitol, both located in the American capital.

The balance after 2 hours of complete chaos is big: The 2 towers of the World Trade Center collapsed, the Pentagon was burning and United 93 was smashed into a field. Three thousand people were killed that day, of which 2606 in the World Trade Center alone.



1.2 Manhattan became Dunkirk

Within 1 minute after the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center, Lower Manhattan was in a complete lockdown: Roads were blocked, Public Transit was shut down, ... There was no way of getting in or out the island other than using a boat. Meanwhile, millions of New Yorkers were stuck on an island full of paperwork, fire and dead bodies. Leaving the island was thus an understandable desire. And just like in Dunkirk, where civilians rescued 340.000 of the 400.000 British and French soldiers who were stuck on the beach, surrounded by almost a million Germans, the New Yorkers helped each other to survive 9/11.

Like the soldiers on the sands of Dunkirk, civilians in Lower Manhattan ran until they ran out of land. And they ended up in Battery Park, the southern point of Manhattan. And in order to evacuate those desperate New Yorkers who were stuck on the Island of terror, a boat lift was set up by people from both Jersey City and Brooklyn. Just like in Dunkirk, where civilian captains risked their lives by sailing to the French shores in order to evacuate the British, French and Belgian army. No call, no evacuation plan, nothing: Just the common sense and goodwill of people who were able to steer a boat on the Hudson that day.

"I just turned my boat around," said New York Waterway ferry captain Rick Thornton, recalling the seconds after a fireball exploded from the side of the South Tower. Instead of making his scheduled run, he steered the ferry south. "I didn't call anybody on the radio, I didn't check in with anyone on board to say, 'I'm going offline.' ... My pure instinct was just to head downtown." –

It's one of many testimonials that came afterwards. And it's because of people like her that tens of thousands of people could escape the island in order to make space for the emergency services and the (heavily) injured or dead victims.



2.1 The first week after 9/11

New York City was, and still is, the financial heart of the (western) world. Therefore, it holds the biggest amount of national and international business of any city worldwide and thus also its employees: New York City became by far the biggest city in the Western world with over 23 million residents and as it's often the case with cities that large, the familial atmosphere where everyone knows everyone and where you greet everyone you see, is long gone. But 9/11 changed this completely. People were all shocked and shared the same sadness. They were willing to accommodate people whose houses weren't accessible and all gathered on Union Square to mourn, to honor the victims, to support their relatives and just to be together.

I wished that I wouldn't have been able to make this comparison, but just like in Paris, Nice and Brussels, people got together and offered their help.

Most of the 19 million New Yorkers were attacked right at their workspace, the area they visit daily, 5 days a week: The financial district of the city.

In respond to the attacks, not only New York City but the whole nation was shocked and in lockdown. The stock market was closed, as well as the public transit. There were no flights in or out the city, nor trains. Streets were blocked and the only people on the street you could find were policemen, military and mourning citizens, heading towards Union Square.

2.2 The first years after 9/11

While the world and the rest of the country was classifying Nine Eleven in its history books as the first day of the era in which Muslim terrorism would be dominating the world, New Yorkers were trying to live on. They didn't care as much as their federal state, the UK and Spain about the political aspects and whether they should invade the *Axis of Evil* by violating UN agreements and human rights or not. The numerous demonstrations held in NYC are a perfect example of this: Even though they had suffered the most from the attacks, half a million people went on the street against the civilian genocide that took place in Iraq in order to find the terrorists. It's because they suffered the same, unbearable pain: thousands of innocent families that are torn apart from one day to the next because of the ideals of certain people and their far-reaching conviction in it.

Since September 11th, they all know how it feels to have your life radically changed without finding a proper reason for it. The question of why they had to die will be unanswered forever.

2.2.1 Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

In order to show the world what 9/11 meant to the everyday life of a New Yorker, 'Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close' by Jonathan Safran Foer was published 4 years after the attacks.

It tells the story of Oskar, a young boy whose dad died in the one of the WTC towers as they collapsed on September 11th, 2001. He's extremely clever and incredibly imaginative and therefore he has a very good bond with his dad and grandmother. Unlike his mom, his father understands him completely and talks with him about the forgotten borough of NYC, which they're trying to search. When his dad dies, Oskar is extremely sad. As he finds a key, he goes on a quest in order to find the matching lock. He doesn't tell his mom as she wouldn't understand him (he thinks) but his lonely quest through the city shows his fears after the attacks. Everything is suspicious, the subway is life threatening and going from his house in Manhattan to Brooklyn can be tricky as bridges are dangerous.

The story shows the enormous sadness that prevailed in many families after 9/11. Families in which moms or dads were suddenly removed from the family because of an ideology that they didn't even know about. It also shows the fears that had the whole city in its grip through the character of Oskar.

2.3 September 11th, 2011

Exactly 10 years after the attacks, former president Barack Obama opened the National September 11 Memorial Site, located at Ground Zero. Two 1-acre (4,000 m²) pools with the largest man-made waterfalls in the United States had replaced the 2 collapsed buildings. Inside the monuments, 2 spotlights that light up the New York skyline where once stood the towers.

It was a very emotional opening for relatives only, but at the same time it was a milestone in the post-9/11 history for both New York City and the United States. Finally, they could go back to the financial heart of the city to honor everyone who died so vainly. On May 15th, 2014, the 9/11 Memorial Museum opened on the site. Its existence is comparable with the memorial museums in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, where very interesting museums tell the stories of the victims and just spread a general message to let those events never happen again.



2.4 November 3rd, 2014

While Obama was opening the Memorial site, right next to him they were finishing a new building: The One World Trade Center. With its 541m, it's the highest tower in the United States and the 6th highest in the world. They built the massive building in 7 years and is a very important building for the American people. Its first name was 'Freedom tower' to highlight the statement of building an even higher tower with more glass to show the terrorists that they have not won, and that they never will. The 'freedom' would refer to the most important American value, as well as the freedom of doing what they want instead of fearing terrorism.

2.5 Criticism

“The place doesn’t feel like New York. It feels like a swath of the National Mall plunked in downtown Manhattan: formal, gigantic, impersonal, flat, built to awe, something for tourists.”

It’s a quote from Michael Kimmelman, the chief architecture critic for the *New York Times*. He shares this opinion with many people. Especially the comments about its impersonality and its tourist-oriented appearance are commonly heard in the Big Apple.

And of course, you can see what those people mean: It is flat, grey and there are a lot of tourists. But at least it blends in with the design of the other buildings in the neighborhood. It isn’t possible to create a space like Hiroshima’s peace park (located on an island in a city with just 1.2 million habitants, far away from busy work/nightlife environments). The 9/11 memorial park is located on Ground Zero, right in the middle of Lower Manhattan, the biggest and most important financial heart of the (Western) world.

As millions of tourists visit New York City every year for many highlights including Wall Street, a visit to the 9/11 memorial park couldn’t lack during the trip. That’s why it’s just impossible to get rid of the tourists, the tourist-oriented appearance and most of all of the busy atmosphere. It would only be possible by moving all the financial buildings from Lower Manhattan to Brooklyn, Upper-Manhattan or Queens.

CONCLUSION

Nine Eleven is the biggest terrorist attack that has ever happened so far, and it'll hopefully always keep that first place. What happened on September 11th, 2001 is just so horrible that it should never be forgotten, nor happen again anywhere in the world. But even though everyone was shocked about the events right after they had taken place, after a few weeks some people just focused on the political reactions to the event while others let go. After the first weeks of sympathizing with the victims, the emotional horror that threatened New York City was forgotten and the warm actions of the New Yorkers were overshadowed in the media by president Bush who was pleading for a 'justified' war in the Middle East.

Meanwhile the openness of the New Yorker closed. They had to live on. They were the habitants from the biggest city in the Western world so they should be strong and live on. Nine Eleven became something that should always be remembered but at the same time shouldn't be over-talked.

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