



# **JORD**

## **Concept for the 22 July memorial site**

Marianne Heier

with Frederica Miller and Julio Perez of Gaia Oslo

*... this mysterious human gift, the ability to start something new, is connected to the fact that every one of us came into the world as a newcomer in birth. In other words, we can begin something because we are beginnings and hence beginners.*

*Hannah Arendt, The Freedom to Be Free*

## Concept

*Jord* is a sculptural, organically formed building of brick and clay surrounded by a herb garden. The building will house and promote academic, political, and public work for midwives, represented by the Norwegian Midwife Association, the Midwives' Union, the educational body for midwifery, and (at least) two clinically practising midwives from maternity wards in Norway. The work of the midwives activates the sculpture/building from within. Their activities must be understood as the conceptual, poetical core of the sculpture and a premise of the project.

The practice and work inside the sculpture/ building is managed by the Council, which is a central part of the project. The Council works freely and independently based on the interests of people in the field and consists of members representing the various groups and interests within the profession. The Council has been appointed, but its work will only commence if the project moves on to the next phase in the work surrounding the memorial. The activities in the building and the design of the rooms are as such not completely defined, but will encompass political work to ensure and strengthen childbirth and maternity services in the whole country, information- and press work, international networking, Knowledge exchange, childbirth- and parenting classes, as well as midwife consultations for those who are pregnant, giving birth, and newborn.

*Jord* lifts the midwife as a symbolic figure at the threshold of life and aims at representing a concrete, diametric opposition to the ideologies behind the terror attacks of 22 July. Thereby, the project points to the entrance to life as a shared, fundamental human experience, a prerequisite for each unique human being's individuality, actions, and participation in the community, independent of and prior to all markers of identity. *Jord* is concretely and directly political through the work of midwives, and functions indirectly/symbolically through the aesthetic composition and public function. As a whole, the memorial is to offer space for consideration, meditation, processing, and insight, while also acting as a frame around commemorations and ceremonies.

**«Kvinnehatet er ikke en bihistorie i dramaet. Uten å se den paradoksale og tette forbindelsen mellom kvinnehat og muslimhat, vil vi aldri forstå de kreftene og ideene som endte i en katastrofe 22. juli.»**

Marie Simonsen, journalist, Dagbladet, 26. august 2011

'The hatred towards women does not play a secondary role in this drama. Without seeing the paradoxical and close link between misogyny and Islamophobia, we will never understand the forces and ideas that culminated in the disaster on 22 July.'

Marie Simonsen, journalist, Dagbladet, 26 August 2011

*Wall text in the 22 July centre.*

## Background

The terrorist attack that struck Norway on 22 July 2011 was a political act of extreme violence. It cannot be undone, and how we subsequently process and address it is our shared responsibility. I believe it is important to prevent the ‘first speaker’, in this case the terrorist, from defining the premises of the conversation after the attack. That a memorial to 22 July should *not* aim to measure muscles with the violence and thereby implicitly accept the terrorist’s conditions for how we talk and what we talk about, but instead build towards presenting a real and concrete alternative. What do WE want to say? And in what way? What did it mean when then Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said in his speech on 24 July 2011: ‘Our response is more democracy, more openness and more humanity. But never naivety.’? What do we mean when we say ‘we’? What do we gather around? Society should protect the defenceless, the exposed, and the weak. This is the core idea of the welfare state and the basis for democratic distribution of resources and power. It is also essential to this memorial concept.

The attack was clearly and explicitly directed at democracy and affected, directly and indirectly, the most important values of society. The terrorist was ideologically motivated, and even though he acted alone he was also part of an ideological wave washing over large parts of the world. The ideas expressed through the attack must still be seen as a real threat to democracy, both in Norway and internationally. These oppressive, totalitarian, and violent impulses terrify most people but are unfortunately also attractive to many. I believe the memorial site in the Government Quarter should act as a concrete counterweight to these forces. Where they place violence, oppression, and ultimately death at the centre, the memorial should insist on *life as its centre*. I believe this to be the best and most respectful way to honour the memory of the 77 victims and carry them with us into the future.

The AUF (Workers’ Youth League) and the labour movement were the terrorist’s immediate targets, but the victims did not necessarily have ties to the political left. Non-whites, Muslims, feminists, and the ‘cultural elite’ were also on the list of political targets for the attack. Relatives, survivors, neighbours, employees in the government buildings, and random passers-by were also affected, independently of where they belonged ideologically. Therefore, the memorial site must strive towards both political clarity and political non-partisanship.

*Jord* draws inspiration from Hannah Arendt’s thoughts on the public realm as a political arena. What she calls natality, which means being born, is the fundamental condition for all of us as well as what allows for new beginnings. Without it no actions and no statements are possible. This concept simultaneously points towards every person’s inviolable individuality, towards the community, and towards the great, inherently political, shared history of humanity that is constantly in the process of being written. Arendt’s description of each person as a new beginning closely ties natality to *hope*. Her thoughts on natality have been central to later, more explicitly feminist thinkers such as Adriana Cavarero and Rosi Braidotti, who have used it to place childbirth at the centre of a critique of the patriarchy in the Western tradition and canon. These thinkers are also important sources for *Jord*.

An equally important source of inspiration are the poignant testimonies from survivors and the bereaved. During a powerful presentation in January at the 22 July Centre, when asked by the audience what she thought could be done to prevent new terrorist attacks, Cecilie Herlovsen (a survivor from Utøya) answered that she hopes for more inclusive attitudes and awareness towards social exclusion to prevent loneliness and social isolation, a known factor in creating vulnerability for radicalization. Several relatives, survivors, and other victims have explicitly mentioned the need to point towards *life*, a theme also present in the successful work with *Hegnhuset*, *Demokratisenteret*, and the memorial site *Lysningen* on Utøya.



*From the performance  
L'Origine du Monde in Oslo  
Cathedral, Marianne Heier,  
2011*



## **The midwives**

Giving birth is life-threatening, being born is life-threatening. Human beings enter life at the very limit of what we can survive. All of us have, individually and in absolute peril, breached this barrier to be in this world as unique components of humanity, the long chain of individuals that ties us to the origin of life in a distant past. Birth is the breakthrough of life, the only experience shared by absolutely all of us, and at the same time something we have no conscious memory of.

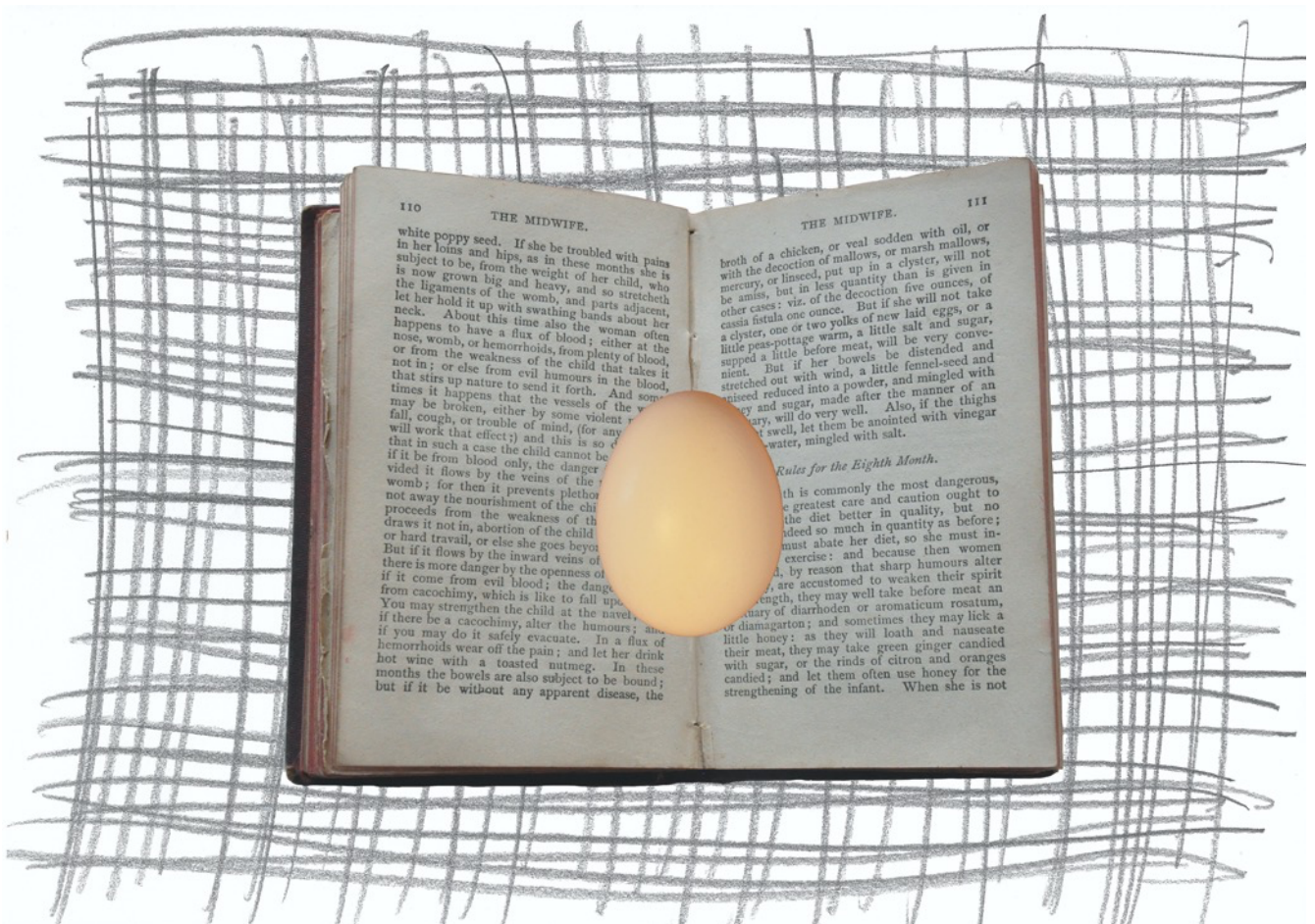
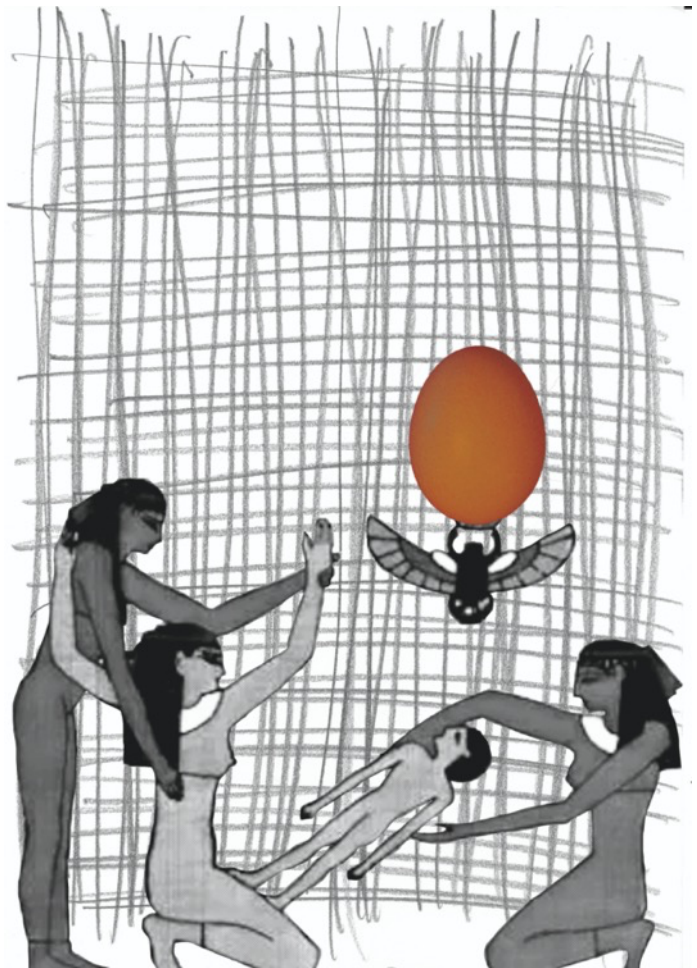
Midwives watch over this border. They have held the door to life open for newborn humans for thousands of years. In European history midwifery has been an exposed and at times persecuted profession (it is the only one specifically mentioned in the Church's manuals for witch processes). This is connected to misogynistic and class oppressive impulses in our culture. In 1818, midwife training became the first vocational education available to women in Norway, while women's suffrage at general elections was only granted in 1913. However, the profession of midwife is much older than the education. The skills of midwifery were traditionally transferred through channels and networks consisting primarily of women, and as such it has to a large extent escaped institutional control. Currently the title of midwife is applied regardless of gender, but historically, the midwife has been a working woman of the people, positioned in an ambivalent relation to the patriarchal family institution. The fact that the healthcare system surrounding childbirth in Norway is still under political and economic pressure must be understood as an extension of this tradition's historical tension with a culture where women's bodies and health are subject to the interests of the patriarchy.



Digital sketches:

Right: collage with Egyptian papyrus (2700 BCE). The first female physician known by name, Merit Ptah, delivering a baby. Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/profile-of-female-pharaohs-3528392>

Below: small, Victorian handbook on midwifery purchased online. The book is published pseudonymously under «Aristotle» and its tiny format allows for easy hiding. Such books were widespread but considered suspect and partly forbidden literature. The genre is called «Pseudo-Aristotle» because the authors often used this pseudonym.







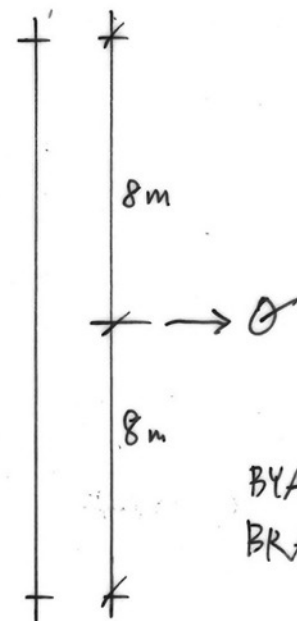
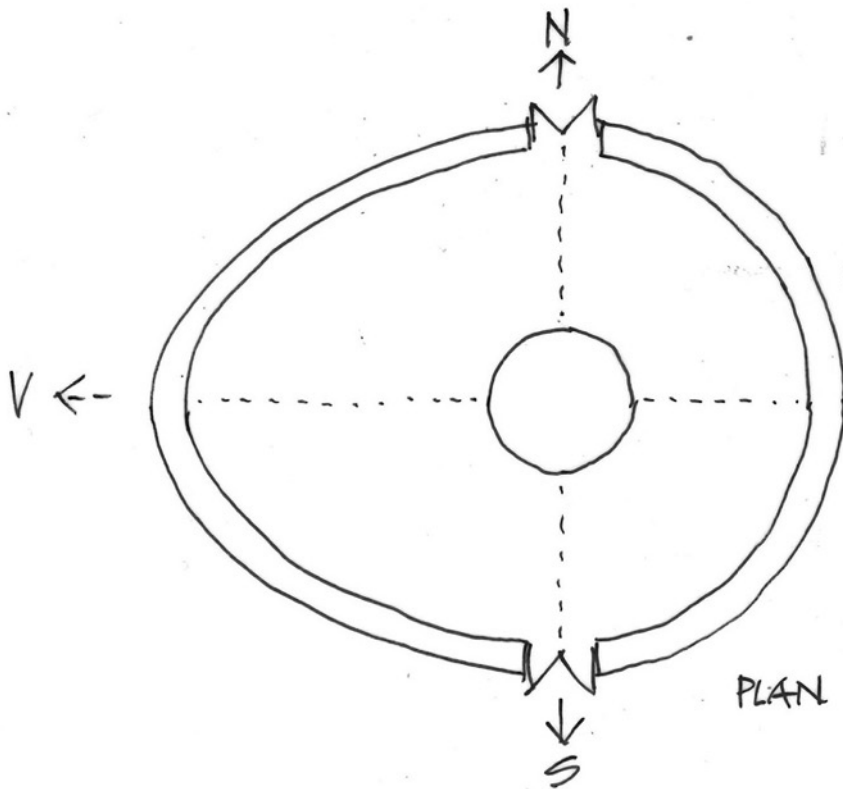
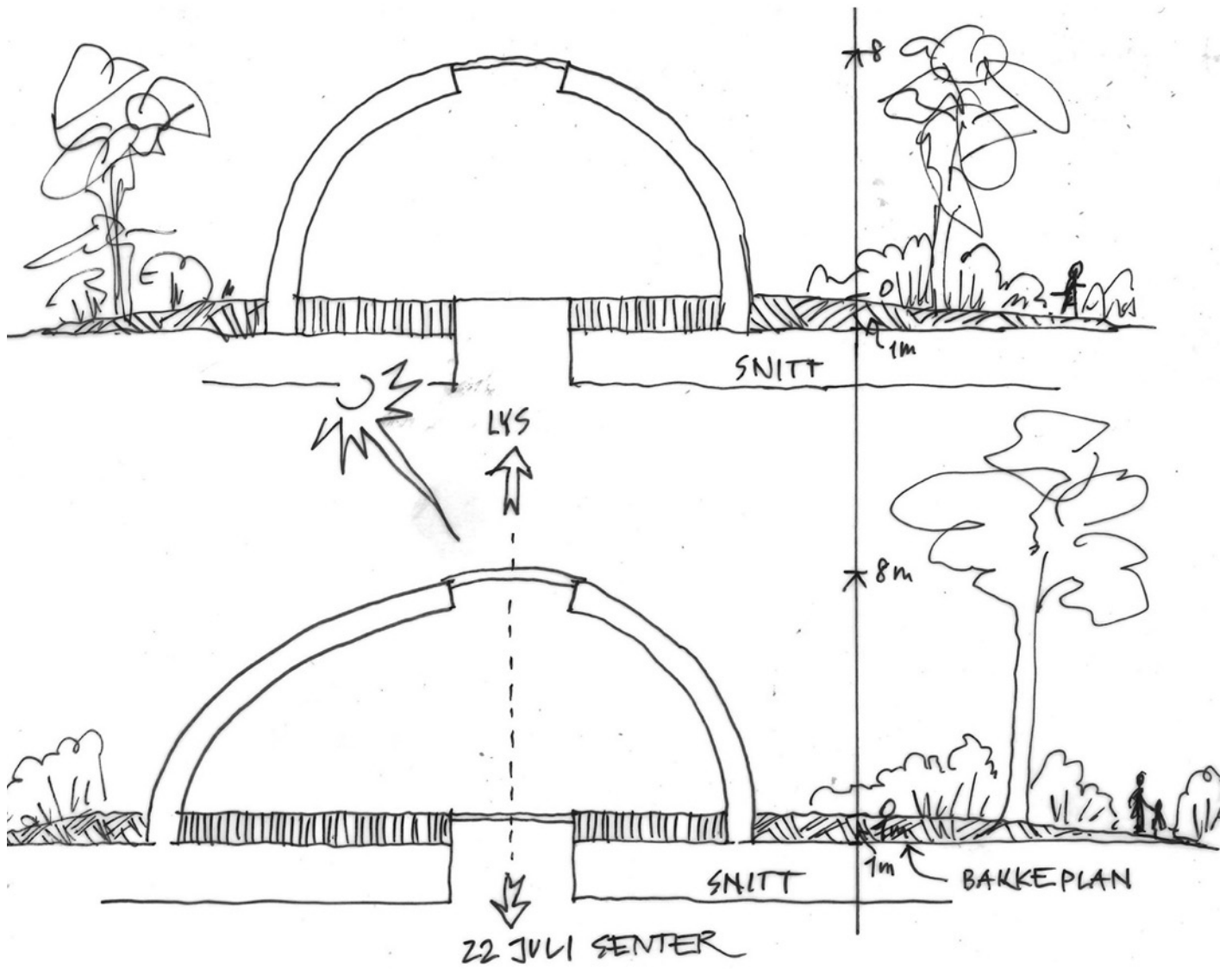
Above: Detail of the Brera Madonna, Piero della Francesca, 1474. An ostrich egg suspended above the head of the Madonna representing fertility, birth and new life. Source: <http://www.arte.it/notizie/italia/la-pala-di-brera-un-gioiello-dell-umanesimo-di-piero-della-francesca-17033>

## The project's form and elements

*Jord* has dual functionality: as a workplace for the midwives, and as a memorial site for the public. This duality is organized as an interior and an exterior. The *interior* will house the activities of the midwives which will be partly public, partly closed off to direct observation. The *exterior* consists of an organic facade that be sculpted/ modelled in order to accommodate the bodies of the public.

Around the building, a *herb garden* with paths and benches will be created. The garden will always be open to the public. Ceremonies and commemorations will take place on the facade and in the garden. The names of the victims can be inserted in the facade, along the path(s) in the garden, or in the dome ceiling inside the building.

The building itself is an egg-shaped dome built with bricks and covered by clay material. It will have natural climate regulation and lighting through a large, round skylight. This light will be led down through a window in the floor to the 22 July Centre underneath the ground in order to create a direct connection between the two spaces along an axis between the sky and the ground. The rounded, organic, unitary shape will interrupt the rhythm of modular, straight-edged shapes in the surrounding architecture, and the warm hues in the material will contrast the blueish-grey colours of the stone, concrete, and asphalt around it.



BYA ca 250m<sup>2</sup>  
 BRA ca 220m<sup>2</sup>

MÅL 1:200  
 22.4.24 fm

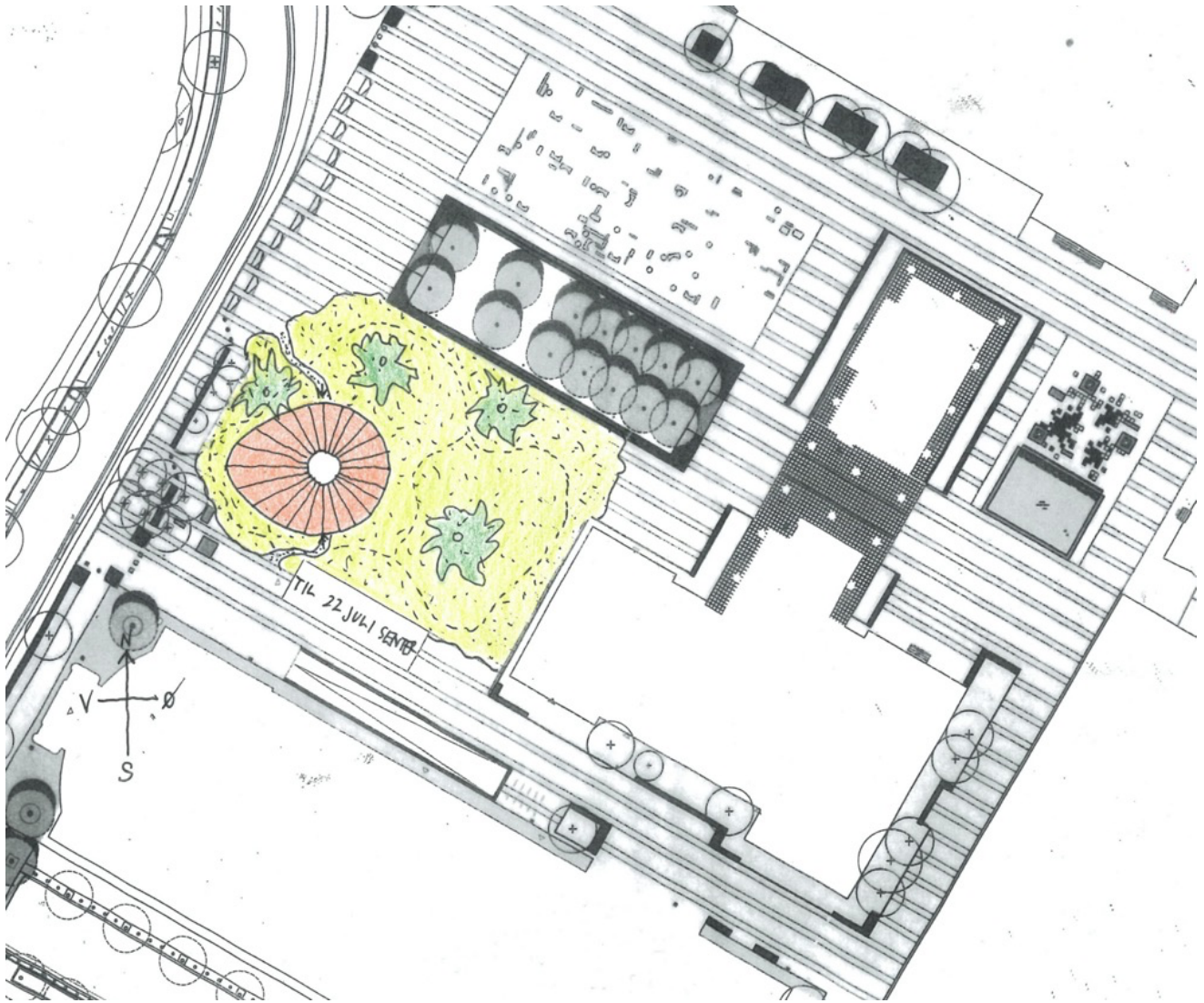




*The surface of the facade can be modelled and activated to make it accessible to the public.*

A natural, organically designed herb garden with benches and paths will be created around the building. Wild raspberry, a pioneer plant which has traditionally been used as a medical herb by midwives will provide the main structure of the vegetation. Wild raspberry is hardy and can grow in poor soil. It is among the first plants to 'move in' after forest fires and other disasters. It heals damaged nature and lays the foundation for new growth. Chamomile, Calendula and Echinacea are other herbs that have been used in connection with pregnancy, birth and maternity, and which will be able to grow well together with Wild raspberries. The composted soil of the *Rose procession* of July 2011 can be mixed into the soil for the garden, and one can imagine that the planting is done as a ceremony, possibly in the form of *dugnad*. A single pine tree will reference the beautiful nature on Utøya, and also provide a vertical line in the facility.





The entire facility will be angled to align with the «natural axes» and thereby contrast the grid-based design in the area. The position indicates a cyclical understanding of time as opposed to a linear one, and a social life based on participation instead of competition. The process of the sun and the seasons points to life as a practice and to history as common property across generations. In the same way as the cycles of nature give new life to the landscape after winter or after fires and disasters, each birth is humanity's way to partake in a larger, continuous history that far exceeds our individual fates and limitations. This is hope, and it is indistinguishable from life itself.



*Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it.  
Hannah Arendt, On Violence*

We are all born