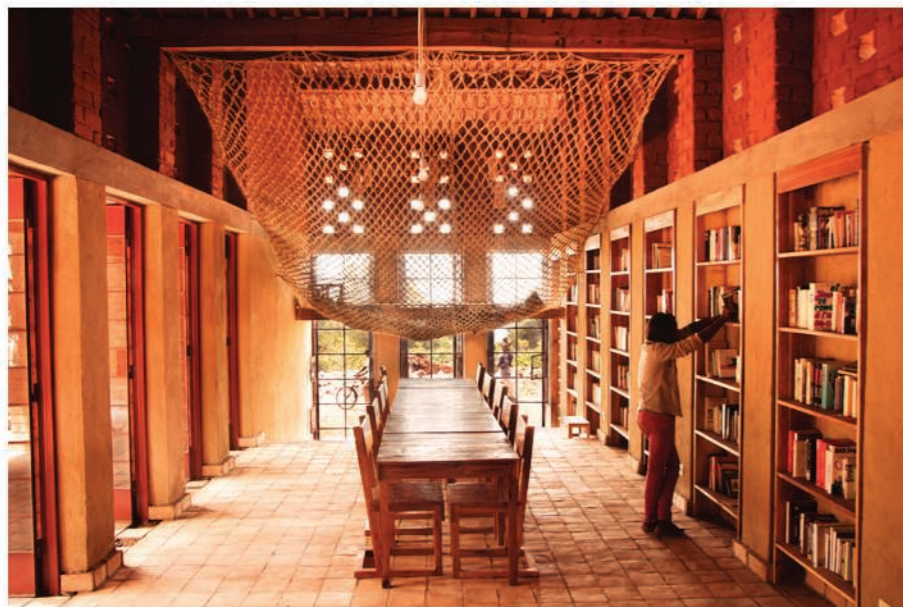




view of the library from the street



view of the interior



view of entrance and external hallway

LIBRARY OF MUYINGA
BC architects and studios

We, the community

1/4

"We" are not only BC architects & studios, "we" are also a director of a high school, a bishop for the Catholic Church, local family men and women, teachers, students and their parents, a nun, a foreman and 40 laborers, an NGO worker, and some hundreds of deaf and blind children. We are a community.

We were leaving to build elsewhere. Over there. Where survival needs and necessities taught us the meaning of architecture. Over there, where we were living within the community: we were searching for our identity in the anonymity and systematics of global development. We were there, very present, leaving our programmed knowledge behind.

We were thinking to build differently. We designed and built with specific local climate and client in mind, letting the characteristics of local materials inspire spaces. We worked together in a setting of trust and respect, where architects were crafting, craftsmen were designing, client was building.

We were desiring to build beautifully. The red earth, the handmade roof tiles, the crafted wood; the library is humble in materials, and bold in its beauty.

This is a story of a search in how to engage meaningfully in contemporary architecture. In trying to redefine architectural practice - learning from the old concept of a master-builder, but now being more of a multiple master-builder: the community. The "we".



The local foreman named Salvator



the labourers, foreman and technician of the Library



view of the library and the second phase of the school namely 2 classrooms



the tile makers in the nearby valley

Foster the socially responsible role of built environment professionals by stimulating social modes of practice before speculative economic profitability;

We try to perceive the architect as in the pre-industrialized concept of a master-builder, in which social skills, technical knowhow and design vision come together.

The project aims at keeping a short supply chain of expertise, labour, and materials. Hand labour, local laborers, a local foreman and architect to avoid the interference of an external contractor; local materials such as earth, clay, sisal and eucalyptus. Cement is used as little as possible and bought in the local shop.

We try to create knowledge transfer in all directions. The laborers master CEB production, construction and earth plaster through our input. We master sisal weaving and tiles detailing through input of the local builders, and so on.

The construction process aims to have an ongoing built capacity. The foreman is considering mounting a CEB production facility to sell CEB blocks to Muyinga residents; 12 laborers have made it to mason-helpers or even masons during the process; we continue learning how to act as architects in a globalizing world; the architecture students and interns have learned design with short-chain materials, to be also applied in a Western construction context.



view of the 4m by 6m hammock in the library



view of the library in the evening



LIBRARY OF MUYINGA
BC architects and studios



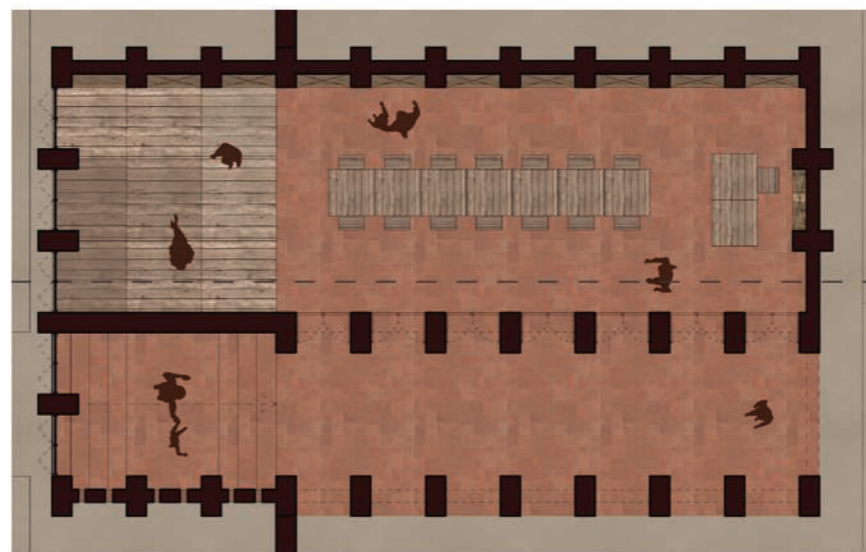
the production of sisal rope on the site



local hunter teaching the weaving techniques



the production of CEB blocks on site



Facilitate the use of appropriate technologies, materials and labour adequate to local values, to the cultural specificity and responsive to the natural environment;

When building for the 90%, resource limitations actually open up new possibilities. The economic and ecological cost of cement, steel and fired bricks, makes our attention go towards other solutions. Through a thorough sensitivity for local materials and their potential, the building starts to show the story of the construction process, specific to the people and place involved. The use of the red earth makes that the building blends in nicely with its environment. Finishing layers such as the roof and floor tiles and the internal earth plaster testify of the hand labour involved. Experimental elements such as the sisal net mezzanine integrate and innovate traditional craftsmanship in rope weaving. The architecture becomes a logic and honest representation of a context. Showing is structural and technical logic such as the openings ventilating the library permanently due to the humid climate. All of these techniques and materials make a vernacular architecture, though not the one of hundreds of years ago, but an innovative vernacular which is fit to address the needs and the challenges of a globalizing society and which reflects the identity of a community and place.



students participating in the design and material research



material research by two internship students



an atmosphere of knowledge transfer



students of Zevenkerken high school



youngsters of the local youth club working on the interior

Share knowledge, promote discussion, reflection and awareness, and collaborate in the advancement of the 'social production of habitat';

The construction process was an still is facilitated by different educational processes:

Summer school with LUCA architecture university Brussels: Every year 3-6 students join us to work on the field in Burundi for at least 6 weeks, supported by a scholarship of VLIR-UOS. These students report on their summer school during an elective in their 1st or 2nd master year in Architecture.

Experience trip for Zevenkerken High School students: Every year, around 20-30 high school students come and enlarge their perspective during a 2 week stay in Burundi. These students help with easy buildingsite tasks such as painting, earthworks,...

Architecture internships: every year 2 people join us for their architectural internship during at least 1 month. Here they help with tasks such as CAD drawings, site supervision assistance, and so on.

A local youth club from Muyinga helped us with the design and construction of the interior of the library during a 3 days workshop.

Whatever the group, everyone joins in small on-site prototyping workshops on diverse topics such as CEB production, adobe production, earth analysis, bamboo weaving, sisal weaving, foundation solutions, furniture design, and so on. These explorations are always done in an atmosphere of mutual contact and respect with local craftsmen, whereby knowledge of all involved is shared. They bring an understanding of the direct social, cultural, ecological and economical effects of certain actions in a globalizing world: small scale actions do matter. We believe that these experiences create a framework of critical reflection and action in a globalizing world.