



The extension project for the LMHS school aims at improving the learning conditions for children of Zanskar, a desertic region in the Indian Himalayas which is cut off from the rest of the world for 8 months a year.

Despite the recent development of the region, Zanskar remains a model of equilibrium between man and environment in one of the most inhospitable regions in the world. The aim of the project is to build upon the traditional autonomy, as it is a fundamental characteristic of Zanskari culture.

Therefore, the extension project attempts to come within the scope of the ancestral way of life by using local material and know-how. An emphasis was put in the conception of the school on using passive solar energy, taking advantage of the main locally available energy: the sun.

The use of simple technology as well as local material (such as stone, earthen bricks, straw, ...) allowed the teachers and the students parents to actively contribute to the construction phase which extended over 4 successive summers.

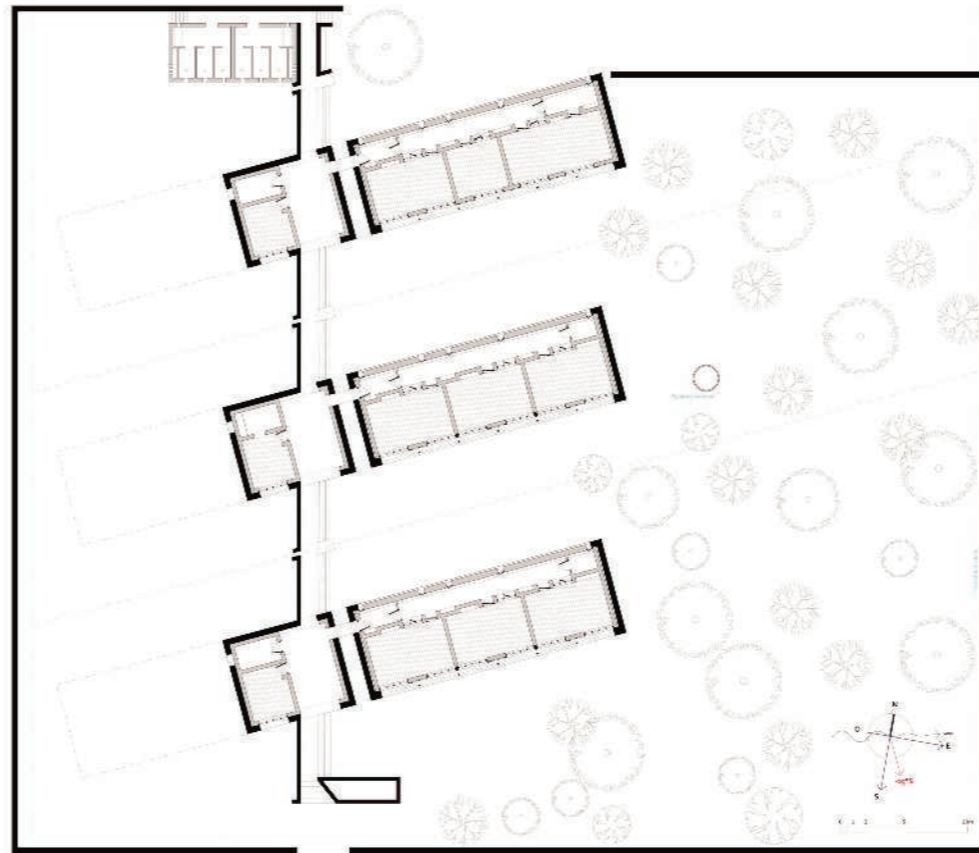
The construction of the new school was carried on simultaneously with the training of teachers to Montessori pedagogy, to which the design of the new classrooms is adapted.

SCHOOL BUILDING IN ZANSKAR, INDIA

PALACIOS / DE CASTRO ARCHITECTS



Interior views of corridor and classrooms



HASSELT CHART

POINT 1. Cooperate for fair and sustainable development initiatives in active collaboration with disadvantaged people or communities. This process shall follow principles of human solidarity, non-discrimination and will be aimed at promoting their self-sufficiency.

The opening of the Zanskar valley by roads built by the government will upset the traditional equilibrium between its inhabitants and their environment.

Though the roads will serve as a vehicle for modernity and its positive attributes (comfort, health, ideas...) to penetrate the valley, they also risk damaging the singularity of Zanskari culture and its values.

What is at stake today is to make sure that local populations will be able to take part in the development of the valley and to remain actors in its development. It starts with the education of new generations, which is guaranteed by quality schooling.

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Traditional cultural landscape of Zanskar

Solar passive facade and playground

Roof insulation layer made out of straw and mud



POINT 5. Facilitate the use of appropriate technologies, materials and labour adequate to local values, to the cultural specificity and responsive to the natural environment.

The project relies mainly on local know-how and resources, for the following reasons :

- Because of the regions isolation and difficulties in bringing resources, it was necessary to build with directly available on location materials : earth, stone, straw, sun.

- The combination of these natural materials is considered to be the best way to control comfort in the classrooms.

- Using the local resources anchors the project in the region's building and architectural culture.

- Using locally available resources and technologies helps involving the community during the construction phases.

SCHOOL BUILDING IN ZANSKAR, INDIA

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Project name : School building in Zanskar, India

Project lead : Douchan Palacios and Vanessa de Castro architects

ASF International Member Organization : ASF France, Toulouse

Names and Roles of Partners : Association AaZ (Aide au Zanskar)

Total Costs : 180 000€

Main Sources of Funding : AaZ self-funding + private donors

Project Start Date : 2010

Project End Date : 2014

Dry granite stone masonry

Student's parent at work



POINT 6. Share knowledge, promote discussion, reflection and awareness, and collaborate in the advancement of the social production of habitat.

The beneficiaries of the school have been consulted and involved during the major phases of the construction process : elaboration of the program, coordination and construction management, guiding the teachers and students in how to use the new facilities.

The passive solar technology used in this project was already part of a dissemination program in the Valley undertaken by another NGO. Nonetheless, setting up the glass facades, parasismic principles, training workers to good building methods were all the object of exchanges during the course of the construction.

The target was to involve as many beneficiaries of the project as possible so that they may take it over and ensure its durability. The question of reproductibility however is not quite so clear. We believe that people insert themselves into an empirical tradition and that they have a great capability in being inspired by what they see and in reproducing what they believe in.

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