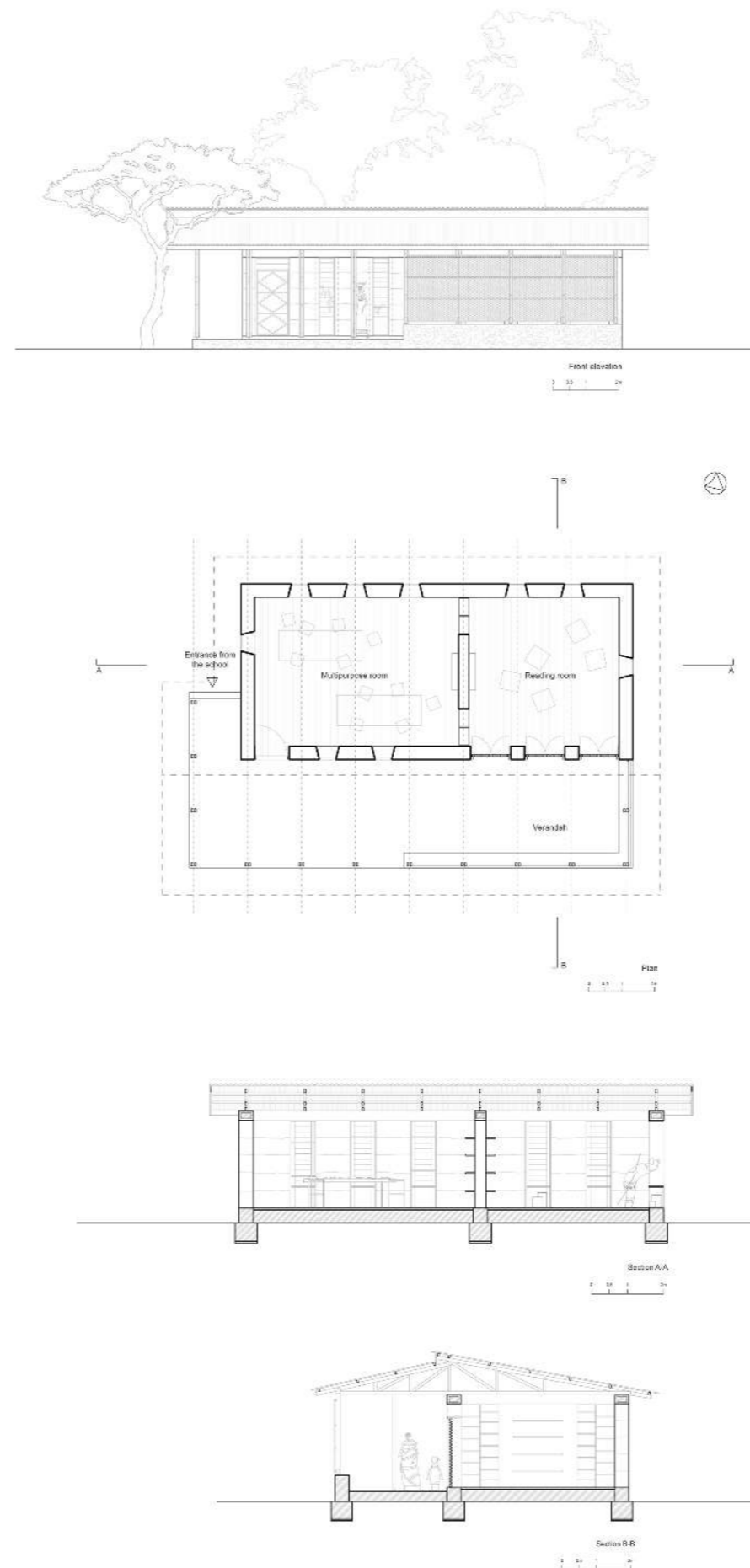




Children reading inside the reading room



Exterior view of the library and the school surroundings



Plan, frontal elevation and sections

The project seeks to encourage the sustainable development of Kibaoni community in Tanzania, from the perspective of reinterpretation of traditional building techniques and participatory planning. The aim was to build a school library made out of earth for less than 8,000 Euros, creating a construction that exemplifies a modern approach to traditional earth construction, showing that earth architecture can be safe, efficient and beautiful.

The project aims to promote earth as an economic and sustainable building material, bringing back the use of local materials and handcraft and encouraging local and international participation in order to improve the quality of housing in Tanzanian communities.

The architecture of Amani library provides different kinds of spaces and uses to promote a different approach to reading and learning, as an alternative to the typical frontal approach to lessons. Enclosed by thick earth walls and with the most direct access from the school, there is a multidisciplinary room for workshops, meetings and lessons. The reading room is by contrast light and open with one of the façades connected to the verandah, creating a large space for recreating and movement. Light and shadows from the bamboo strips play across the floor of the verandah and offer sweeping views across the surroundings.

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Frontal view of the library with Kilimanjaro Mountains behind



Interior view of the multipurpose room with the pin wall



View of the verandah with the sun penetrating through the webbed bamboo



Detail of a window embedded in the earth wall

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In Tanzania, as in many other African countries, stereotypes about earth as a building material and its association to homes of poor people still persist. The traditional construction model adapted to the environment has been replaced by the concrete block as an alternative and “modern” material, but that nevertheless raises the cost of construction and therefore increases poverty of the population. Amani library showcases the potential of good planning and design, from the arrangement of the building on the site to the realization of aspects in detail. Based on local material resources, Amani Library is small-scale, technologically and organizationally simple, and inexpensive. Furthermore it demonstrates the possibilities of building with earth using simple methods as the continuation of a local rural building tradition and can serve as an example for future building developments in the area.

USE OF LOCAL MATERIALS

The project is mainly constructed from the use of two materials; soil excavated from the site and locally collected wood. On site production offered the possibility to employ local material, and the same excavated soil for the wall construction. The perimeter of the library is realized as load-bearing walls using a technique called rammed earth. Apart from its structural capacity, earth regulates indoor humidity and temperature, saves energy and reduces environmental pollution, is reusable and saves expenses in material and transportation. Local handcraft can be found, among others, on the cypress doors and the bamboo enclosure at the verandah, as a way of promoting and strengthening the participation of local craftsmen, as well as raising a awareness to the value of cultural heritage.



View from the reading room to the verandah, with the interplay of lights and shadows



Windows offer different uses such as seats or shelves



The acacia and the library



Wood and earth are the main materials

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PARTICIPATIVE DESIGN AND BUILD

The construction of Amani Library was carried out between July and October 2016 through a workshop with both Kibaoni inhabitants and international participants, regarded as a learning experience through an immersive, collaborative design build project.

The project is therefore conceived as a “training site” where every participant gets involved in the design and building, sharing technical and theoretical knowledge and allow cross-cultural communication and understanding. The idea is to create links and exchanges between architects, international participants, professionals of the construction, village craftsmen, school workers, children, etc. The approach carries a developmental character, acting as “seed”, as it seeks to form a knowledge base, which can contribute to the potential return of traditional materials and techniques in solving the problem of low-cost housing in rural environments

In a project of this size, with a short timeframe of four months, logistics present itself as one of the major challenges. Basic and pragmatic approach to design made it possible to realize this project with an untrained but motivated workforce. The building techniques were implemented and successfully developed on the job through a collaborative team work between Tanzania and Europe.



Different images of the building process

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