



# KULTURARV SOM ET AKTIV I BYFORNYELSE

## Extracts from the Danish report ACTIVE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

(Kulturarv som et aktiv i byfornyelse)

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The report *Kulturarv som et aktiv i byfornyelse* was published by the Danish Interior and Social Ministry to inspire municipalities, government officials, advisors and all those who want to include and activate local cultural heritage into a broader strategy for urban and rural development and regeneration.

The full report in Danish draws on examples from the UK, the Netherlands, Kosovo and Denmark. This shortened document, however, focuses only on the examples from Kosovo and has been translated from Danish into English by the Swedish foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB). All the examples from Kosovo have been taken exactly as they are from the full report. They are all CHwB projects.

# Example projects

Using the recollections and heritage of local people in the regeneration of an area results in acceptance from local citizens of the work being carried out.

**Experience shows that** there are different ways of going about activating cultural heritage. For some projects this may involve saving a building of particular significance, while other projects have a stated goal of regenerating a larger area. And while some projects aim to change the outside world's view of the area, other projects are a matter of strengthening local identity.

Even though there is no such thing as a standard project or a “typical” approach to activating cultural heritage, there is still a wealth of good advice from existing projects that can be used to great advantage. This publication therefore brings together a selection of valuable experience from the following locations:

*Manchester, UK.*

*Hoogvliet, Rotterdam, Netherlands.*

*Kosovo.*

*Albertslund South, Denmark.*

*The district of Holmblad,*

*Copenhagen, Denmark.*

*Nykøbing Falster, Denmark.*

We have visited these locations because one or more projects have been carried out here with a focus on development and preservation. Three of these locations are Danish examples of the way in which urban regeneration processes can benefit from activating the local cultural heritage, with the other three visits being paid to Kosovo, the Netherlands and the UK.

The projects outside Denmark differ in that they are not necessarily part of a formal urban regeneration process, and may instead be driven by local civic groups, grass-roots organisations or other partnerships. We have also drawn knowledge and experience from the UK and Kosovo from more than one individual project.

These projects have demonstrated in a number of ways that it is possible to activate cultural heritage as a tool for urban regeneration and to create valuable synergies between preservation and development.

In order to illustrate the diversity in strategies and effects, experiences are presented within four different central issues that are relevant when involving cultural heritage in the context of urban regeneration.



These four central issues are:

- *How can cultural heritage contribute towards growth?*
- *How can cultural heritage contribute towards a holistic approach within the regeneration initiative?*
- *How can cultural heritage create local support?*
- *How can cultural heritage create social development among weak groups?*



The following pages give a brief description of the context for Kosovo as covered by this publication.

# The role of cultural heritage in the reconstruction of Kosovo

**Since 2001, the Swedish NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders** has worked to rebuild cultural heritage in locations such as Kosovo. This work is often carried out and run by local people, and the aim is to involve the civilian population across different ethnic groups, thereby contributing towards the peace process in the country. The work of the organisation consists of both physical reconstruction projects and creating the right conditions for partners to take responsibility for maintenance and rebuilding in the future. Many projects therefore involve providing advice and training to enable authorities, architects, craftsmen and others to preserve and develop cultural heritage.

By focusing on rebuilding the architecture of everyday life, such as town halls or farms, rather than religious or national monuments, the organisation is able to build bridges between groups that have previously been in deep conflict. Thanks to the organisation's projects, these groups have been given new opportunities to come together in order to rebuild their shared local cultural heritage.



*Local preservation experts are paid through the organisation Cultural Heritage without Borders, and help the local population to create life and value in historical settings.*

## From Kosovo, we will hear about how:

- Preserving buildings creates awareness and new life.
- Knowledge of the past creates strong visions for the future.
- Preservation creates faith in the future and paves the way for reconciliation.
- Single women become entrepreneurs through restoration projects

# Preserving buildings creates awareness and new life

**Stone buildings known as Kullas** were among the cultural monuments that were hit hardest during the civil war in Kosovo. Before the war, there were around 1,200 of these buildings, all built during the 18th and 19th centuries, but after the war only 200 remained and many of these were in a very poor condition.

“Kulla” means tower building, and extended families still live in these tower-like fortified stone buildings to this day. Because the Kullas have a particular significance to Albanians, they came under frequent fire during the war.

In 2001, the Swedish organisation Cultural Heritage without Borders launched a campaign to restore some of these buildings. In addition to saving the buildings, the aim was to improve restoration skills and to emphasise the role of cultural heritage within the peace process. Five Kullas were restored with the help of the Swedish organisation, which found that a focus on everyday culture and local traditions,

*Kullas are focal points for communities in this new country. With time, private contractors have also adopted the idea of restoring these buildings and opening them for new purposes, and public institutions such as a centre for the disabled are considering setting up in old Kullas.*





craftsmanship and materials created goodwill and publicity in connection with its projects.

The restored Kullas have since inspired both individuals and public authorities to carry out similar projects. For example, many of Kosovo's new local authorities have chosen to locate their public offices in converted Kullas. In the small town of Peja, the local brick factory had to start producing what was otherwise an outdated type of building block so that both the local government office and the local school could be housed in converted Kullas. Some of the projects that have generated the greatest amount of interest and have had the most local impact can be found in the village of Dranoc, where a Kulla was converted into a cultural community centre. Here, political public meetings, private parties and other cultural and social events are held, attracting new attention and life to the village. Private owners have also been inspired to invest in Kullas. Today, tourists can visit the village of Junik and stay in the Krasniqi family's newly restored Kulla, which is only rented to tourists.

Not only has the restoration of Kullas meant that local communities have gained beautiful new meeting places, it has also resulted in the craftsmen involved learning about local craftsmanship, materials and architectural styles. It has also led to fresh hope in the future being created all around Kosovo.

Just a few years ago, there was no mention of tourism and there were few foreign visitors other than the international armed forces. Through the restoration of Kullas, the people of Kosovo have rediscovered their cultural heritage, and today all five of the Kullas act as signposts and starting points for budding initiatives that will attract the tourists once again.



*Kullas have traditionally been home to the country's extended families, who lived in these fortified tower buildings.*



# Knowledge of the past creates strong visions for the future

**Kosovo achieved** its independence in 2008, resulting in the formation of new local authorities and institutions throughout the country. These bodies now need to gain a common foothold after more than a decade of political unrest and civil war. The split among the population has meant that a great many practical reconstruction measures have become delayed and lost as a result of internal conflict. It has been hard to find shared will in the area and the political reality has been characterised more by division than by cooperation, a realisation that has resulted in the politics of values and identity taking a central position.

In the new municipality of Junik, it was clear that the first joint exercise had to be a focus on the area's wealth of natural and cultural resources, and hence on the area's common values.

The local authority therefore drew up a preservation and development strategy in partnership with the Swedish NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders. In addition to the economic advantages that the strategy is expected to bring to the town in the form of increased tourism, the local authority has chosen to focus on cultural and

## Valuable experience from Kosovo

- Historical buildings often provide excellent settings for major cultural and social events.
- Stronger cultural heritage can pave the way for more tourism and public activities.
- Visible, valued cultural heritage can transform an otherwise negative image of an area. For many politicians, cultural heritage represents something secure to focus on.
- This is often a subject that most citizens are interested in, as well as being a key to more housing and tourism.

natural resources in order to overcome the internal conflicts and contradictions that are still very much a feature of everyday life.

The process of mapping out cultural heritage was carried out by ten young architects and anthropologists, who



analysed the town's architectural and cultural qualities, with a particular emphasis on the town's cultural heritage and identity. This formed the basis for a number of open "vision seminars", at which the local people's ideas and dreams for the future of the town were discussed.

This process has given the new town government a common foundation and a framework for the way in which the town should move forward. The question of what should be preserved and what should be redeveloped has forced citizens, officials and politicians to focus on collective recollection and shared narratives. Implementing an active preservation policy has also benefited the local authority through the process manifesting itself even more clearly on a daily basis in bricks and mortar, as the historic buildings are restored and brought back into use.

The experiences and discussions arising from the process are thereby preserved by becoming living, central attributes for citizens, officials and politicians.

One of the first steps towards the redevelopment of the town from a cultural heritage point of view has been the acquisition and renovation of two historic Kullas, which are centrally located within the town and are being converted into local government offices. Through this strategy, the municipality has shown essential commitment to and ownership of the area's shared identity and history.





KOMUNA  
OPŠTINA  
MUNICIPALITY

JUNIK

THE GAMING ACTIVITY  
ORGANISATION

**The organisation** Cultural Heritage without Borders has a particular focus on building up skills among the local population through the restoration of historic settings, which can also remind the population of its shared past.

The qualities highlighted by the development and preservation plan at Junik included the way in which many private contractors had for years run and developed the area's historic settings. This historic trout farm, about 30 minutes from the centre of Junik, is a private player that has received assistance in order to open a popular traditional fish restaurant.

The story of the newly established municipality of Junik and the lives that, over the years, have been played out within the boundaries of the municipality is a key element of the development work carried out here. The two twin Kullas that form the gateway to Junik will therefore be used in the future as local government offices and a community centre.

## Valuable experience from Junik

- Cultural heritage reminds us of our shared background, and can shift the focus away from differences towards joint opportunities.
- The process of mapping, managing and activating this shared cultural heritage can be a good place to start if internal disputes and conflicts are to be overcome and attention is turned towards the future.
- The advantage of resource-oriented work – and, in certain cases, conflict resolution work – relating to cultural heritage is that it can subsequently manifest itself in beautiful, newly restored buildings with soul. This thereby becomes a central process for citizens, officials and politicians.
- By focusing on and reinforcing an area's cultural heritage in the form of the underlying narratives, the right conditions are created for a strong tourism strategy.

# Preservation creates faith in the future and paves the way for reconciliation

**Since 2001**, the Swedish NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders has tried to initiate collaboration with the Serbian enclaves in Kosovo. These enclaves do not recognise Kosovo as an independent state. Their inhabitants do not yet drive cars with Kosovar number plates and insist on paying with Serbian currency. The atmosphere between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians was, and still is, one of distrust and fear, and although the Swedish organisation succeeded in initiating cooperation in the small Serbian enclave of Velika Hoça, it was not easy finding a project manager who was willing to accept the commission.

The Albanian-born project manager who took on the task feared for his life each morning when he started work four years ago on organising the restoration of the village's cultural monuments. For many years, the members of the enclave had declined to cooperate at the request of the Serbian Orthodox Church and under pressure from Belgrade in Serbia. The reason was that it would prove problematic accepting help from an organisation that also cooperated with Kosovo – a state that Serbia has not yet recognised.

The atmosphere was therefore tense

when cooperation began on restoring the village hall. The unemployment rate in the village was 70 percent, and most of the people received financial assistance from Serbia as compensation for remaining residents.

Through the joint initiative in relation to the village's cultural heritage, however, the parties gradually began to trust each other. Today, the Albanian-born project manager and the more than 200 young Serbian men who have now taken part in numerous restoration projects in the village view what is now almost a year of cooperation as a partnership characterised by friendship and mutual respect.

For the young men of the village, the reconstruction projects were the first opportunity they had had to acquire a regular trade and to feel a sense of pride in their heritage. Before, no one in the village wanted to carry out restoration or reconstruction work, as everyone regarded their settlement as temporary and as a strategic element of the Serbian state's political pressure on Kosovo. For the young men who have lived their entire lives in the enclave, the restoration projects have been a step towards being able to settle

properly in Kosovo. Many of them have regained the feeling that this is also their country, and see their acquired trade as a way of reintegrating into Kosovo. From having been an extended arm of Belgrade in Kosovo, the dream of integrating and coping has started to spread through the enclave.

Today, the more than 200 men who were involved in the project in the Serbian enclave have set up an enterprise that now bids for restoration work outside the enclave. They hope that, with their skilled trade and their renewed desire to take joint responsibility for the country, they can create a future for themselves without subsidiarity from Serbia. This hope grew even stronger when, in 2009, one of the youngest participants was elected deputy mayor of the municipality.



## Valuable experience from Velika Hoça

- When activating cultural heritage, there is a significant element of practical work that can be used to advantage if the goal is to involve young people who have been affected by problems and to ensure that they do not hinder the project.
- Practical work involving e.g. the restoration of cultural heritage provides opportunities for the participants to see how their efforts lead to change.
- Practical restoration work ensures that the participants continue to feel a strong attachment to the project afterwards.
- Many weak groups do not naturally feel a sense of ownership of cultural heritage which has museological and decorative associations. By focusing on the cultural heritage that is closely linked with these groups' everyday life, a sense of renewed pride is created.
- Focusing on shared cultural heritage and ensuring that everyone's history and monuments are valued calls for the integration of groups that have been disconnected from the local community.

*Conditions in the Serbian enclave of Velika Hoça bear the signs of a people living in uncertainty. When people are unsure how long they will be living in the new country of Kosovo, few of them are willing to repair their homes or integrate into the new country.*

# Single women become entrepreneurs through restoration projects

**The town of Deçan** in Kosovo is characterised by the fact that many of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages are single women who lost their husbands and sons during the civil war. After the war, many women found themselves alone with their grief, fearful of a future without being able to look after themselves.

When the Swedish organisation Cultural Heritage without Borders decided to restore and convert the local Kulla building into a cultural centre, craftsmen, architecture students and building contractors had to live in the area temporarily and find somewhere where they could eat on a daily basis. A small group of local women rose to the challenge.

Every day for three months the women ensured that work on the Kulla was not carried out on empty stomachs. This network of single women grew considerably stronger, and for many of them cooking became a way to escape their lonely existences. They met more and more often, and as well as preparing food together they taught each other traditional needlecrafts. Until then, many of the women had been ashamed of such pastimes and had seen

them as rather old fashioned, but this now became relevant and they developed an interest in the work on the cultural centre and in meeting other like-minded women. The women formed an association called Jeta, which means “life”, and set up a catering business which today provides all the food at the Kulla, where the restoration work has been completed. The business is expected to evolve into a fully fledged restaurant in the near future.

Jeta also holds courses for up to 200 women who are interested in local needlecraft techniques and traditional cookery. Through their cooperation with Cultural Heritage without Borders and a similar Italian organisation, the women now have their own meeting place and shop housed in an old water mill. From here, the women sell the same needlecrafts that they had once been ashamed of, and they now have the opportunity of a new life in which they can take care of themselves.

For these women, the restoration of a historic building proved to be the framework for their community, putting their traditional and cultural skills and knowledge firmly on the agenda.

**Today, they describe** themselves as an important player when it comes to the municipality's plans to attract increased tourism and settlement, and they are a regular partner for the local tourism and planning bodies. This is an example of the way in which activating cultural heritage can create a ripple effect, providing inspiration for other initiatives. Through the restoration and conversion of a historic agricultural building, the women were able to set up a lively organisation of like-minded women, for their own benefit and for that of the region. They were inspired to begin a new life, taking pride in their traditions, their independence and their community.

*As a result of the local women's involvement and the solidarity they showed in relation to Cultural Heritage without Borders' initiatives, this former water mill was converted into a meeting place for the women.*







## Valuable experience from Deçan

- The knowledge and traditions that may appear to have been lost are often simply lying hidden, and urban regeneration initiatives should ensure that contact is made with the groups that still have this “lost” knowledge.
- Work relating to protecting traditions through preserving buildings will often result in other similar enthusiasts and hidden talents emerging, and these can and should be incorporated into the urban regeneration process.
- Older generations who still remember “the good old days” often feel a sense of shame over the traditions and handicrafts they carried out at the time. It is important to encourage and cultivate their hidden talents.
- Meeting others within the context of urban regeneration can be the first of many significant meetings. The project manager should therefore seek out the potential in these communities.
- In order to strengthen these new communities, the project manager should focus on providing good advice when it comes to organisation and marketing. It is often these more technical elements that act as a barrier to the development of the community.

What united the women was their knowledge of traditional cooking, which they used when looking after the craftsmen during the restoration of buildings such as Kullas, and which they now carry out for events held at these Kullas.

*The many single women in the town of Deçan had no established network or meeting place before they became involved in the restoration of the local Kulla and subsequently gained their own meeting place.*



**Cultural Heritage without Borders** is an independent organisation based in Sweden dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage touched by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters. We see our work as a vital contribution to building democracy and supporting human rights. CHwB is neutral when it comes to conflicting parties, but not to the rights of all people to their cultural heritage.



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