



CH
WB

Cultural
Heritage without Borders
KULTURARV UTAN GRÄNSER

BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE

WE RESTORE AND BUILD RELATIONS



CHWB was founded in April 1995 as a response to the systematic destruction of cultural monuments and objects that took place during the wars in former Yugoslavia and the urgent need for development assistance and protection. Today CHWB still works in the Western Balkans but also in other regions.

The book has been printed with support from The Royal Patriotic Society

Cover photo: Mes Bridge, Shkodër in northwestern Albania. The bridge was built in the 18th century, around 1780. It is 108 m long, and represent one of the longest Ottoman bridges in the region.

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THIS IS CHWB!

Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHWB) works with cultural heritage as an active force in reconciliation, peace building and social and economic development. It is done by creating capacity, awareness and opportunities for preserving and rescuing cultural heritage in societies affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters.

Our mission is to promote cultural heritage as both a right in itself and a resource. CHWB works with civil society and institutions at all levels to strengthen democratic development and the realisation of human rights.

CHWB believes in the universality of cultural heritage and its influential power in positive societal change.

CHWB is an organisation that bridges the gap between acute and short-term needs and more long-term development-oriented interventions. CHWB is also an organisation that brings civil society organisations and authorities together in post-conflict situations.

CHWB has in-depth experience of working in situations where tension exists and where government institutions are weak; especially with regard to the management, protection and development of cultural heritage.

CHWB has undertaken vast cultural heritage work in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe for twenty years. We have participated in cultural heritage projects in Tibet, Turkey, Southern Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Belarus and with Syrian cultural heritage. Our experience has given us a wealth of knowledge and competence to be used also in other international contexts.



WAR IN THE 1990s AND THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA

Coinciding with the collapse of communism and resurgent nationalism in Eastern Europe during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Yugoslavia experienced a period of intense political and economic crisis. Central government weakened while militant nationalism grew apace. There was a proliferation of political parties who, on one side, advocated the outright independence of republics and, on the other, urged greater powers for certain republics within the federation.

Political leaders used nationalist rhetoric to erode a common Yugoslav identity and fuel fear and mistrust among different ethnic groups. By 1991, the break-up of the country loomed with Slovenia and Croatia blaming Serbia of unjustly dominating Yugoslavia's government, military and finances. Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. But while Slovenia's withdrawal from the Yugoslav Federation was comparatively bloodless, Croatia's was not.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the conflict was to be the deadliest of all in the disintegrating Yugoslav Federation. In March 1992, in a referendum boycotted by Bosnian Serbs, more than 60 percent of Bosnian citizens voted for independence. Almost immediately Bosnian Serbs rebelled with the support of the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbia. Bosnian Croats soon followed. The conflict turned into a bloody three-sided fight for territories, with civilians of all ethnicities becoming victims of horrendous crimes. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people were killed and two million people, more than half the population, were forced to flee their homes as a result of the war that raged from April 1992 until the initialing of the Dayton Accords in November 1995.

Also Kosovo was hit hard in its efforts for independence from Serbia. Civilians were targeted and villages shelled. NATO carried out air strikes in 1999 which stopped the Serbian forces and some 750,000 Albanian refugees came home and about 100,000 Serbs – roughly half of Serb population in Kosovo – fled in fear of reprisals.

Source: Website of The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, www.icty.org



The Kulla buildings in Kosovo were some of the cultural monuments that were most badly affected by ethnic hostilities of the war 1998-1999. About 1200 existed that had been built during the 18th and 19th centuries but only about 200 were left after the war.

CULTURAL HERITAGE DURING AND AFTER CONFLICTS AND WARS

Time after time we have witnessed the way war, political conflicts, natural catastrophes, climate changes and neglect deprive different ethnic groups of their cultural heritage and history. Modern warfare has become all the more brutal in its attacks on civil populations, brazen examples of which have been the desecration and destruction of cultural monuments and symbols of 'the enemy'. This has been seen in many parts of the world and most recently in Iraq, Syria and Mali. The destruction of monuments has often been a prelude to ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Many conflicts have political, cultural and/or ethnic dimensions. Reconciliation efforts are urgently needed as ways of mitigating against further hostilities and of preparing for a life where peoples and communities can live and work side by side again. There is considerable evidence that working with reconstruction, conservation and the development of historic environments can help promote peace-building processes, strengthen self-esteem, and contribute towards socio-economic development.

Humanitarian assistance is founded on the Geneva Conventions and other sources of international humanitarian law and human rights. The Hague Convention requires the protection of cultural property in war. The right to cultural heritage is an integral part of human rights.



Maglaj mosque, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

”Cultural Heritage without Borders is unique among cultural heritage organisations in its work in conflict and post-conflict countries where it attempts to set cultural heritage in the context of reconciliation and human rights. It is an organisation with several strengths: by bringing people, previously in conflict, together to work on creative projects in a participatory and democratic way, it concretely contributes to reconciliation processes. It operates with a large tool box and an approach that promotes participation, gender equality, inclusion and ownership, while building institutional capacity and strengthening civil society in a way consistent with EU ways of working. It works efficiently, applying democratic leadership with competent, dedicated, dynamic and largely local staff.”

”In sum, CHwB is more than an NGO that arrives in the wake of conflict to rescue cultural heritage buildings. It has proven that it is also an NGO that can mobilise the cultural heritage sector; play a crucial role in networking civil society across borders in a conflict scarred region; contribute to strengthening civil society and support processes that contribute to good governance.”

Independent evaluation by Indevelop, 2011



Community members in Kosovo take active part in producing local heritage plans.

CHwB: 20 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION

The shocking reports from the war in former Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s told not only that people were killed, but also that monuments and other cultural symbols were being targeted for destruction as part of the warfare. In response to the need for protection and restoration of cultural monuments, an initiative was taken by individuals who engaged institutions and organisations in Sweden, in an active process to offer concrete solutions to save heritage in danger. As a result CHwB was founded in 1995. A board was – and still is – appointed by ICOMOS Sweden, ICOM Sweden, the Swedish National Heritage Board and Swedish Association of Architects.

Following the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the initial CHwB project in Maglaj generated a great deal of goodwill. CHwB was successful in restoring and rescuing a 17th century mosque that was one of many targets in the war. However, many other mosques that could have been saved were sadly knocked down and instead new non-traditional buildings were erected by foreign organisations/countries. Many more restorations and museum development projects by CHwB followed.

During the 20 years that have passed, CHwB has broadened and deepened its work considerably: geographically, financially, and in terms of methods and content. The focus at the beginning in 1995 was on concrete restoration projects managed by Scandinavian project leaders. Training of local professionals and non-professionals was an important component of the projects already from the start. Many projects grew in complexity, and gradually more focus was given to developing competence and capacity in order to strengthen local heritage organisations and institutions. As a neutral organisation CHwB has been able to work with different groups of various political, cultural and religious backgrounds, not only within civil society but also with municipalities and national authorities. A successful model has been developed by CHwB to establish platforms where representatives of different levels of society meet, listen to each other and together



The medieval mosque Kursumlija Dzamija in Maglaj, BiH, CHwB's initial project in the Western Balkans.

find solutions to problems and hostilities.

From the start CHwB played an active role in rescuing and restoring cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina and training local professionals in heritage protection and museum management. The work increased gradually and after some years CHwB opened an office in Sarajevo. Serbia also saw museum and restoration activities begin, with support from the Sarajevo office. Since 2001 CHwB has run an office in Prishtina, Kosovo. This office has, apart from restoring historical buildings of great value, worked with cultural heritage integrated in urban and spatial planning, heritage preservation and local community development through cultural tourism. Building on these experiences, and contacts all over the region, two regional programmes were developed in 2006 for countries in the Western Balkans: the South East European (SEE) Heritage Network for NGOs and the Balkan Museum Network (including a programme focusing on museum

Physical exercise and sharing knowledge about cultural heritage can go hand in hand. Tour de Culture, Kosovo.



accessibility issues and a network for female managers in heritage institutions). These networks are now independent organisations registered in the Balkans and run by local staff.

By 2009, a third CHwB office was opened in Albania from where the Regional Restoration Camps are organised with institutions and organisations in Albania, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A variety of activities are also carried out in Albania, including in the world heritage site of Gjirokastra.

At the beginning Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) supported CHwB's work as part of a reconstruction and returnee programme. With the broadening of our activities, Sida funding continued and over the years several other donors such as USAID, the UK and the Netherlands have contributed as well as the EU, UNESCO, a number of foundations (e.g. Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Prince Claus

Journeys of Peace, a CHwB project in Kenya, reclaims hidden histories and empowers individuals and communities to rediscover old and build new ways of creating better lives.





CHwB is working with vulnerable groups. Kosovo.



Storytelling, intangible cultural heritage. Syria.



Craftsmen in Tibet.



Modern technology can create a better understanding. Stolac, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



ICOM Code of Ethic translated into Belarusian.

Cultural heritage is a tool for equality, inclusion, peace building and human rights in all CHwB projects.



The Horse head. Illustration from the anthology *Timeless Tales - Folktales Told by Syrian Refugees*. ILLUSTRATION: SAAD HAJOU

Fund, Headley Trust, Post-code Lottery) and a great number of individual donors and supporters.

There now exists a large number of heritage specialists in Sweden, the Balkans and in CHwB's international network who have been involved in a variety of projects and programmes. This network is valuable in CHwB's work with restoration/conservation, museum development, disability issues, gender equality, education and training, capacity development, cultural tourism, urban development and local heritage plans, awareness raising and other fields relevant for cultural heritage and socio-economic development.

For many years now, local staff has been responsible for managing the three offices in the Balkans. CHwB is very proud of being on the brink of seeing these three professional offices become independent organisations. As such, this is a very evident and successful example of CHwB's way of working with local capacity development and sustainability. The independence of the Balkan offices changes the role and future of the CHwB secretariat in Stockholm. The secretariat will now put more focus on a continued geographical broadening of CHwB's work.

So far, tangible or intangible cultural heritage projects have been carried out in Turkey, Kenya, Belarus, Tibet/India, Ethiopia and southern Africa. At this tragic moment in history when attacks against culture and cultural diversity are one of many cruel factors in the war in and around Syria, CHwB urgently felt the need to respond in relation to Syrian refugees. An active and living tradition of oral storytelling still exists in Syria. These folktales can be considered a common denominator for solidarity across ethnic, geographic, and religious boundaries. An anthology has been produced that is not only meant to archive these stories, but give them a second life to be read and told by the new generations of Syrians wherever they are, as well as introduce the world to these exciting folktales.

CHwB's experience and core belief is that cultural heritage is of decisive importance in ensuring that respect for human rights is upheld and integrated into peaceful democratic societies. As modern warfare is often heavily influenced by political agendas stressing cultural differences, CHwB focuses on turning this issue into a tool for rebuilding communities. Active involvement with cultural heritage is a proven way to foster mutual respect and understanding, whilst also helping to minimise risks of future conflicts.

With the atrocities taking place today in different parts of the world, CHwB's approach and way of working seems unfortunately even more necessary than when we started in 1995.

“At CHwB I have gained invaluable experience, both professionally and personally. I’ve laughed, I’ve cried, I’ve faced challenges, and I’ve experienced so many wonderful moments that will stay forever in my memory. The working environment in CHwB is supportive of learning and development, providing possibility and institutional framework for an individual to make a difference in the world. We all love what we do and are passionate about heritage which shows in the strong relationships we have built with our partners and communities. Working with other experts in CHwB, my efforts have brought back the hope that professionalism and respect for the cultural diversity is not lost in the Balkans. After 20 years of existence, CHwB is recognizable for the quality of its work, hands-on method of implementation and being a flexible and open organisation that is able to respond to daily challenges and find innovative solutions.”

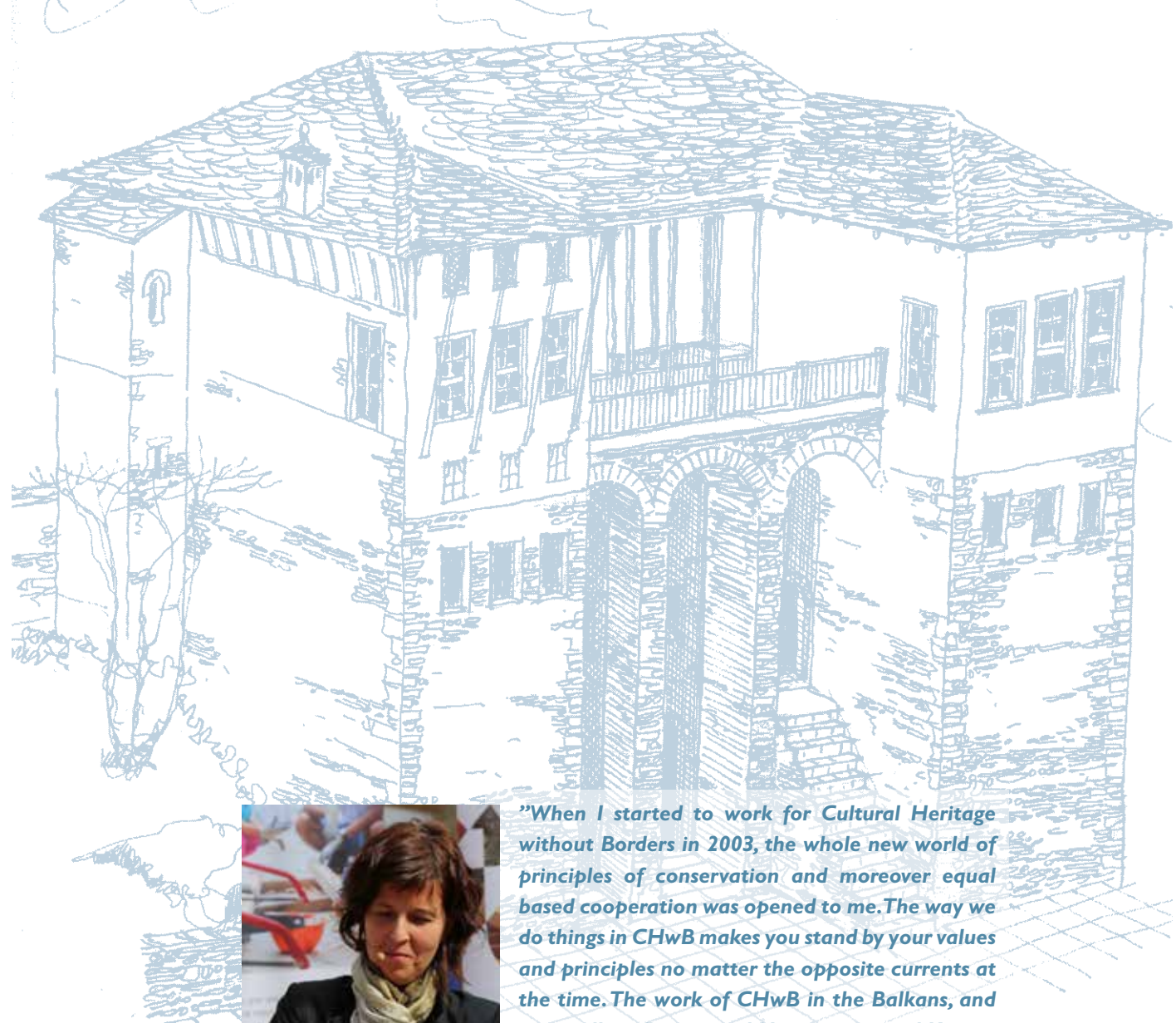


Adisa Džino Šuta, Head of CHwB Bosnia and Herzegovina



“After the conflict in Kosovo (1998-99), the state of cultural heritage in the country was alarming. Hundreds of historical buildings were burned or had been neglected for decades. While the institutions were deeply focused in housing activities, CHwB was the first organisation – the initiator of preserving the historical pieces that are important parts of memories and identity but also as a tool for reconciliation. By the restoration of five typical local stone building, kullas, CHwB mobilized the first group of professionals, craftsmen and institutions and made it possible for craftsmen of different ethnic groups to work together in the restoration of vernacular buildings. Since the CHwB office in Kosovo opened in 2001, I have seen an enormous impact of our work. Cultural heritage is so important and affecting almost everybody in Kosovo. It used to be in a negative way during the war, but CHwB has shown that it can be used in a constructive and sustainable way.”

Sali Shoshi, Head of CHwB Kosovo



“When I started to work for Cultural Heritage without Borders in 2003, the whole new world of principles of conservation and moreover equal based cooperation was opened to me. The way we do things in CHwB makes you stand by your values and principles no matter the opposite currents at the time. The work of CHwB in the Balkans, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo was essential in the times of post-war recovery. Conservation projects initiated by CHwB served not only the tangible outcome of conserved monuments, but they helped boost the sense of belonging and security and gave a reason to people to come back to their places of exile and start a new life. Nowadays the work is even more challenging and hence more important, as further models on cultural heritage serving the local economy and a base for community development are as ever needed and even more appreciated.”

Lejla Hadžić, Head of CHwB Albania



Examples of CHwB projects

'I+I:Life and Love' was the creation of a traveling exhibition and a 'peace bus' as a manifestation of the collaboration between eleven museums in the Western Balkans.

BALKAN MUSEUM NETWORK (2000 – ongoing)

CHwB developed a separate programme for regional museum cooperation in order to develop a broader approach to heritage by including more museums in its work. As a part of the regional efforts towards peace and reconciliation, museums have been identified as a backbone of the cultural sectors in the Western Balkan countries. However, the political transition and post-conflict turbulence have stripped down museums of the possibility to fulfill their roles. With the objective of democratizing museums, CHwB has created different professional development programmes (trainings and workshops) for museum professionals to reconnect and share common strategies for dealing with similar issues that all have dealt with after the conflicts in the region.

Since 2006 more than twenty regional meetings and workshops have been organised; thirty museum projects implemented, increasing the accessibility of museums; skills in specific areas have been improved (conservation, marketing, exhibition design and other related topics); field trips have been organized and thematic working group meetings held.

In 2009, at one of the Balkan Museum network workshops, the decision was taken to create a joint exhibition. Several workshops about the exhibition process were accomplished during the following years. All of the 11 network museums, from six different countries, were taking part as often as they could. Finally, on March 11, 2011 – 11 exhibitions, all named I+I: Life and Love, opened simultaneously. As of 2015, three annual conferences have been organized by the Balkan Museum Network, under the title 'Meet, See, Do.'

One of the key capacity-building areas was developing leadership skills, and the initial result has been the creation of the female leadership network known as WILD© - Women's International Leadership Development programme.

In 2014 the Balkan Museum Network was registered as an association, and today it is an independent, international, non-governmental organization dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Balkans. It gathers museums and museum professionals that are willing to participate in the creation of a better society, in which museums are active forces for democracy, promoting diversity and human rights. The network has expanded and has now nearly 40 institutional members.

“CHwB’s work with museums in fragmented settings of the Balkans changed the institutions and individuals involved. CHwB created a framework for professional change, but more importantly, gave us one of the first opportunities, or the first one, to work together in the post-conflict Balkans. I was really happy to be part of that change, sharing knowledge and experience, passion and commitment to create safe spaces for dialog, support to collaboration, and build up a strong network of colleagues and partners.”

Tatjana Cvjetičanin, Curator and archaeologist, National Museum in Belgrade, Serbia

REGIONAL RESTORATION CAMPS (2007 – ongoing)

The CHwB Regional Restoration Camps represent a simple, successful, scalable training model, which grew from a few students in Albania in 2007 to today's multiple sessions in four countries, with a diverse array of participants. The Camps form part of a Balkans-wide push to encourage people to value and care for their local heritage. Over the course of two weeks, participants follow a rigorous but fulfilling schedule, combining theory – through engaging lectures and presentations – with hands-on restoration work

50 students of architecture, archaeology and art history from ten countries, have developed their skills in restoration and cultural heritage management at a restoration camp in Jajce, BiH.

Examples of CHwB projects



on historic monuments in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo or Serbia.

The main objectives of the Regional Restoration Camps are to use cultural heritage to build relations among young professionals, creating conditions for reconciliation as a prerequisite for peace and democracy, and to preserve traditional crafts and techniques. In addition, each intervention directly helps local residents – using traditional materials and techniques to repair their valuable buildings and providing a new means of understanding, interpreting and revitalizing them.

In 2014, the Regional Restoration Camps were honoured with the prestigious European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award in the category of “Education, Training and Awareness-Raising”:

“The Jury especially admired the sustained success of this project in providing practical training for young professionals and inter-regional networking opportunities. This success has been proven: since 2007, (649) participants from (26) countries have taken part in a succession of intensive, well-organised two-week camps in the Balkan region. The jury appreciated the involvement of master craftspeople and academic teachers from local and international institutions in providing this valuable learning environment.”



CHwB's board is appointed by ICOMOS Sweden, ICOM Sweden, The Swedish National Heritage Board and The Swedish Association of Architects.

CHwB staff from the offices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Sweden join the Swedish board members in Gjirokastra, Albania in 2013.



“From my first contact with CHwB, back in the year 1996, in the dark provisional offices of the Institute for Protection of Cultural-historical and Natural Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, meeting the first project leader in Bosnia, optimistic Mrs. Tuula Rauma, I have witnessed unselfish support of the Board and CHwB experts; that is how we have headed for the first extensive post-war restoration and recovery of the war-damaged and devastated cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From that first project, through all these years in an atmosphere of exceptional collaboration, mutual respect, exchange of views and constructive discussions, we had carried out a number of projects, seminars and training workshops. CHwB provided strong support for the Institute in the first post-war years and continues to be an essential factor for restoration, education and promotion of cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Robert Stergar, Architect, Expert adviser for architectural heritage, Institute for Protection of Cultural-historical and Natural Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Assets of our cultural heritage go back to the point of reference for the values that they have, as well as the potential for local development. Models created by CHwB will be examples for the realization of other similar projects for rehabilitation and reuse of monuments of our country.”

Memli Krasnqi, Former Minister of Culture, Kosovo

“It has been my pleasure and honor to work with CHwB in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the organisation is preserving and restoring not just cultural heritage, but also the trust and understanding between the people which has been lost. Thanks to CHwB’s professionalism, dedication and passion, we have all achieved more and left tangible and intangible results that will remind us and people that worked with us that cultural heritage is a powerful tool to re-unite communities, sharing our joint history. Thank you CHwB for the great opportunity to be a part of that story!”

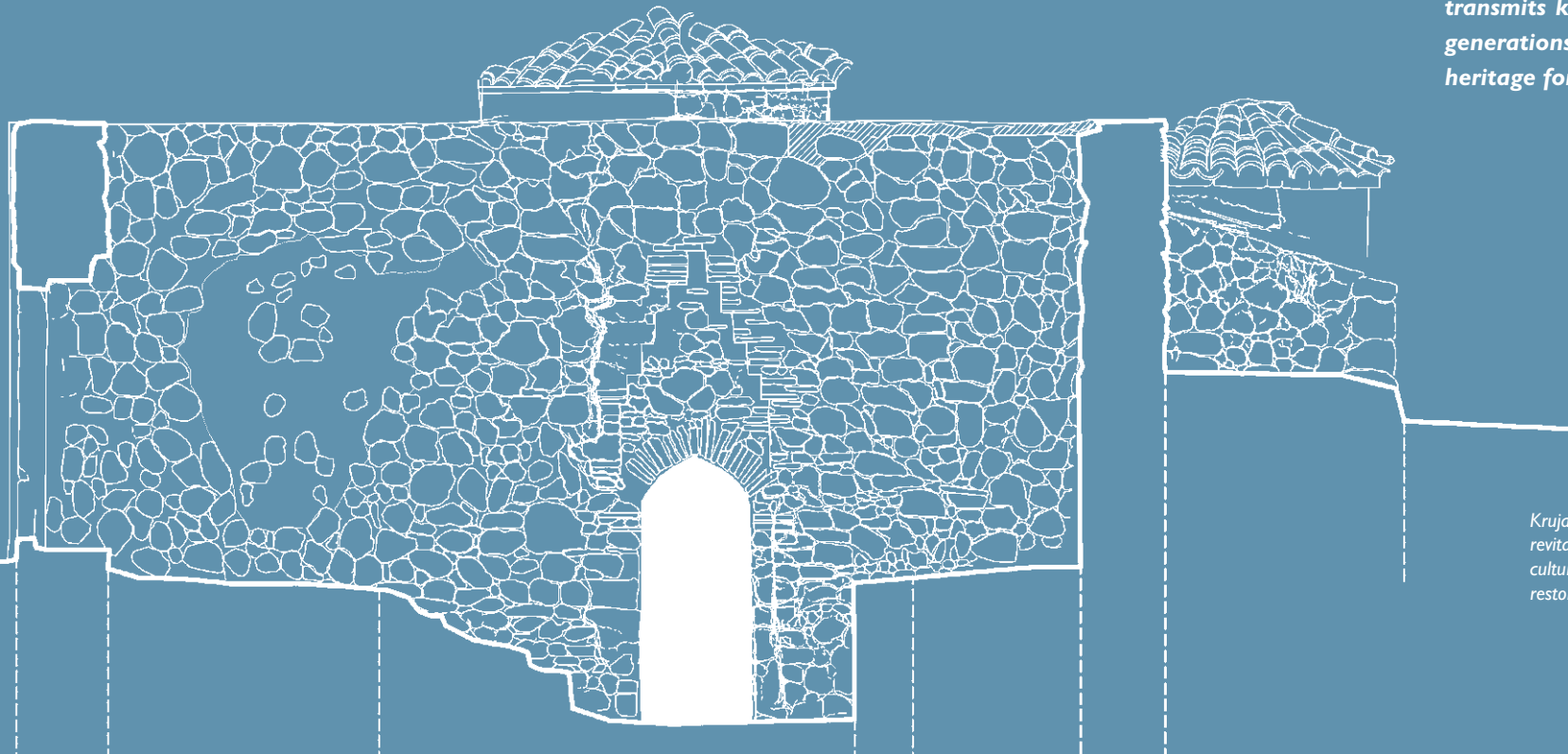
Vesna Bajšanski-Agić, Executive Director of the Mozaik Foundation, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“I suggest that the model of educational site visits to cultural heritage sites be integrated into school curricula of our municipality.”

Bajram Mulaku, Mayor of Vushtrri Municipality, Kosovo

“CHwB Albania is working with us, has worked beyond us, and independently of us. CHwB speaks the language of culture, but it also serves as a model for restoration of cultural heritage sites while it also builds relations. The work CHwB does with children and young people is the wisest thing one could do, as it transmits knowledge to the younger generations, and it safeguards our heritage for the future”.

Mirela Kumbaro, Minister of Culture, Albania



Kruja hammam in Albania. The restoration and revitalization projects by CHwB include developing cultural heritage for sustainable income generation by restoring monuments to their original function.

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF CHwB

Our trademark

CHwB is using cultural heritage in all its forms and in unlimited ways. Cultural heritage has many dimensions and should not be considered as being static. It serves as memory of the past, identities of today and may change in new directions for the future. With a direct link to human rights and sustainable development of societies using cultural heritage as a platform.

Our future

We want to further introduce our trademark and working method, both of which have been successful, into other regions of the world where there is conflict and oppression. A strategic advantage is the human capital built-up in the Balkan offices and a broad resource base in Sweden that will be used when entering new countries and regions.

The devastating war in Syria further deteriorated when the IS terrorist group initiated its brutal actions that have also spilled over to Iraq. These war fanatics have indiscriminately murdered and violated human beings and destroyed cultural heritage under the pretext of establishing an Islamic State. In this war, buildings and places that are thousands of years old and constitute priceless world heritage have been razed to the ground. In this context, so rightly expressed by UNESCO, protecting cultural heritage and integrating the cultural dimension in peace building, conflict prevention and resolution is more than a cultural emergency – it is a political and security imperative.

What is important now is to find new channels for our efforts and to show that cultural heritage that strengthens identity and self-esteem is a good tool of initiatives in, for example, the Middle East and among Syrians who are fleeing from the war. There are also many other areas in the world where our work could make a difference!

Project ideas on cultural heritage in the host communities where Syrian refugees live are being developed. There is also potential for continuing Syrian storytelling, with a focus on the large groups of refugees who find themselves in Sweden. The themes of migration and cultural heritage are highly relevant and may, in time, become an important part of CHwB's future profile.

The Council of Europe has adopted conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe and recently released a program within Horizon 2020 that contains grants and support to a variety of activities within this sector. CHwB is linking up with partners from the academic world and cultural institutions in order to take part in research and lessons learned.



Restoration of the monastery church in Zavala, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The work has aroused a lot of interest and the monastery attracts visitors from other parts of the Balkans.



Children are eager to learn about heritage during a Heritage Atelier arranged as part of the 'E Ka Kush E Ka' children's activity programme, Kruja, Albania.

Structure of the organisation

We are standing at a crossroads in CHwB's history with a division between the Swedish Foundation and the offices in the western Balkans. In 2016 we will split into four independent foundations where each foundation will have its legal base, statutes, Boards and offices running independently.

The brand of CHwB and the partnership between all four is being formalized in agreements for the purpose of safeguarding the successes of the organization, as well as for further cooperation between the different offices. In the future, CHwB will function as a constellation of independent foundations, who will work in cooperation and in response to local needs toward shared goals.

Our overall objective is to create conditions and opportunities for people to enjoy cultural freedom and promote cultural diversity and also for cultural heritage to be increasingly used as a tool to promote human rights, peace building and democratic development. The following are our values:

- *Partnership and trust*
- *Professionalism and creativeness*
- *Transparency and diversity*
- *Inclusion and participation*
- *Flexibility, neutrality, respect and integrity*



Sabbatsbergsvägen 6
SE-113 61 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel +46 8 32 20 71
info@chwb.org

chwb.org