Community builds the future
We restore and build relations
THE REAL DIFFERENCE CANNOT BE SEEN ON THE SURFACE
The clock tower in the city of Rahovec/Orahovac in Kosovo gains a working clock for the first time in 50 years. The clock tower has been restored by people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, using traditional techniques and materials.

People who do not know us might think that we are some kind of developer that restores historical buildings in areas hit by war and natural disaster. We would say that we are experts in human rights, reconciliation and poverty reduction. We restore cultural heritage, but help to build futures.

WAR HAS DESTROYED THEIR HISTORY
NOW THEY ARE BUILDING UP A SHARED FUTURE

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As we see it, there is a clear link between restoring a building and building up human relations, trust, economies, societies – and indeed nations.

A building is more than just bricks and mortar. It is also a link to the past and part of people’s history, security and identity.

CHwB organises restoration camps where students, young professionals and international experts come together in joint cultural heritage projects – work that also facilitates reconciliation.
Velika Hoca is a Serbian enclave in a Kosovo Albanian area of southern Kosovo. One CHwB project converted several traditional private houses into Bed & Breakfast. This has contributed to a rise in female enterprise, and in democracy: having been a closed enclave in 2005, 60% of residents voted in the local elections in 2010.

A link to the past and a door into the future – knowing where you come from makes it easier to decide which path to take next. A building is more than just bricks and mortar and reinstating a building is more than just a restoration project. The result is more than a new facade. The building can end up on the World Heritage list and attract tourists. That is one result. Another is the relations that are built up during the work. The emergence of a “we” in the discussion over who makes the decisions about a particular place and how that place should be used.

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Every restoration project is a potential democratisation process that offers countless opportunities to bridge conflicts, promote trust between former enemies and work on social and economic development.

In concrete, if somewhat simplified, terms: a builder has to be sourced for a restoration. If this is done in open competition, it automatically provides a chance to discuss issues of corruption and how corruption can be combated.
Setting up a workforce of men and women from different ethnic or religious backgrounds means that people who would never otherwise have interacted have a chance to meet. They gain an opportunity to get to know each other, trust each other and build something together.

THIS IS NOT AN ART EXHIBITION
THIS IS ELEVEN MUSEUMS WITH THE COURAGE TO BUILD SOMETHING NEW TOGETHER

CHwB facilitates and supports networks. One of these networks promotes the development of museums into more democratic and creative institutions. After some years of working together, 11 museums from six countries in the Balkans held a simultaneous exhibition project called “1+1: Life & Love”
Before the war in the former Yugoslavia, the medieval centre of Jajce attracted 300,000 tourists per year – which generated work for one in five local inhabitants. Many of the buildings were destroyed in the war. Following restoration work, the city is now seeking World Heritage status from UNESCO.

Using local craftsmen provides an opportunity to use and develop traditional working methods that are often good for the environment and create jobs. Once the restoration is complete, the building needs to be protected by laws that also need to be harmonised with legislation in other countries.

HE IS NOT RESTORING A BUILDING
HE IS CREATING JOBS FOR ONE IN FIVE INHABITANTS

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This in turn creates a need for a functioning administration. At a local level, the restoration has to be incorporated into a development plan, which prompts an open discussion on local development as a whole – a discussion that can strengthen trust between people and confidence in institutions.

THEY SHARE A CONFLICT-FILLED HISTORY
NOW THEY ALSO SHARE A VISION OF THE FUTURE
Our job is to get these processes started. Our goal is for our partners to finish them. Which takes time: demolishing history is quick, but building trust, democracy and a future is often a laborious process. But it can be done – over fifteen years, we have done it over and over again.

OLD RELATIONS WERE DESTROYED
NOW THE FOUNDATION IS BEING LAID FOR A NEW, SHARED SOCIETY
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.

We are supported by Sida, other bilateral funds, the EU and private foundations and grants.
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