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Québec Roadmap: Towards a New Urban Project (2022-2024)

PRIORITY THEMATIC: Irregular architectural interventions that diminish the heritage values

Pilot City: CUENCA (Ecuador)

Draft: Synthesis of the Thematic Worksheet (Step 1.2)

In compliance with Strategic Axis 3 of the Québec Roadmap - "Good governance", which brings a systemic approach to the city", The city of Cuenca presented a *Priority Thematic* that focused on preventing unregulated architectural interventions within the historic perimeter.

Between January 2017 and July 2022, 853 violations involving irregular architectural interventions were identified in Cuenca. These are construction projects that were carried out without the proper municipal authorization and, in many cases, are harmful to the conservation of heritage assets. Among these projects are the substitution or placement of coatings or elements that are not allowed on the internal or external surfaces of buildings, building extensions, non-compliant renovations, partial or total demolitions, and, in general, interventions that do not comply with the approved planning or the current bylaws. While the municipal administration has reached a 95% efficiency rate in resolving cases from an administrative and legal perspective, there is still a need to find sustainable strategies to prevent unregulated interventions and better preserve the cultural heritage of architecture.

Part of the root of this problem lies in a municipal legal framework that is outdated and lacks prevention policies and incentives. This anachronistic framework does not provide the necessary tools to effectively address the lack of compliance with land occupation regulations. In this sense, it is necessary to find parallel strategies to generate new forms of appropriation and co-responsibility for cultural heritage, maintaining a balance that guarantees the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants through sustainable land management, and the conservation of heritage through a public policy that strengthens it.

Associated matters

The city of Cuenca proposes forming a Collaborative Network to discuss a number of related issues, *inter alia* the following:

- Circumstances that may cause citizens to resort to interventions without requesting or receiving the proper municipal authorizations;
- The comprehensive legal framework necessary to prevent the occurrence of unregulated architectural interventions;
- Strategies and incentive policies to encourage the population for the proper conservation of the built heritage;
- Strategies for adapting architectural heritage to the needs of the contemporary population while preserving its outstanding universal value;
- Public sensitization / awareness raising / pedagogical approaches / co-management and community participation.