

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SPACES IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE

The El Barranco Foundation - **Cuenca, Ecuador**

1. DESCRIPTION

To transform the public spaces in its historic centre, Cuenca is drawing on an integrated approach developed by the El Barranco Foundation, a private organisation set up by the City of Cuenca. The Foundation's role is to design, develop and manage the city's public spaces. The urban interventions carried out in the historic centre bring together heritage, social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions. The projects are implemented in coordination with the relevant municipal departments and draw on partnerships with the private sector to develop new sources of funding.

2. CONTEXT THAT MOTIVATED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRACTICE

The public spaces in the historic centre of Cuenca were facing physical and social decline: urban insecurity, low attendance, deterioration of the built environment, unauthorised occupation of public spaces and a gradual loss of residential functions.

3. APPROACH/METHOD

The approach developed by the Foundation is interdisciplinary, collaborative and involves multiple stakeholders throughout the project cycle:

- The **comprehensive assessment** includes historical, anthropological and archaeological studies, a mobility analysis, social mapping and participatory workshops with citizens, to understand users' real needs and identify the specific challenges facing each sector.
- The **preliminary projects** are discussed with local stakeholders and the various municipal bodies.
- The **projects** are subject to further studies (covering mobility, waste management, green spaces, safety, lighting and technical infrastructure, amongst other aspects) before being implemented by the city.
- A **management plan** is then drawn up to coordinate the maintenance of the regenerated spaces amongst the various municipal departments responsible.
- Finally, progress towards the targeted objectives is monitored after project completion through collaboration with universities — via internship programmes — and a technical team.



Pedro Touloup Street after its revitalization © Cuenca Municipal GAD

4. EXPECTED/IMMEDIATE/MEASURABLE EFFECTS

- Consolidation of sustainable pedestrian mobility in the historic centre.
- Strengthening of a network of interconnected and complementary public spaces.
- More orderly and gradual management of informal vendors
- Improvement in residents' quality of life and the attractiveness of the historic centre.
- Development of a culture of cooperation between public institutions, citizens and economic stakeholders.
- Establishment of permanent mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the rehabilitated public spaces.

5. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The quality of a public spaces depends on its management, use and physical design.
- The most sustainable projects are those that involve citizens from the earliest stages of design and foster their long-term ownership.
- Coordination between different municipal departments is essential to ensure the coherence and continuity of projects beyond administrative terms.
- The regeneration of historic centres must be conceived as a collective and comprehensive project, capable of integrating heritage, mobility, social inclusion, economic development and quality of life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION :

<https://fundacionelbarranco.org/>

