

# Citizens' perception on World Heritage sustainability. The case of the historic centre of Santa Ana de Cuenca\*

La percepción ciudadana sobre la sostenibilidad del patrimonio mundial. El caso del centro histórico de Santa Ana de Cuenca

A percepção cidadã sobre a sustentabilidade do patrimônio mundial. O caso do centro histórico de Santa Ana de Cuenca

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## Abstract

The incorporation of the sustainable model in World Heritage Sites management implies a participatory approach in the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission of the outstanding universal values (OUV) for future generations (UNESCO, 2017). Citizens, as relevant social actors, provide a reputation regarding cultural heritage that informs on key issues in order to achieve its sustainable management. The lack of methodologies to comprehend the relationship between society and cultural heritage from a sustainable approach is a limitation to achieve a participatory management. This article provides empirical evidence on the level of sustainability that exists in the World Heritage site of Cuenca (Ecuador), from the citizen's point of view. The statistical results reveal that its sustainability relies on a reputation that is built around multiple interconnected phenomena that determine positive or negative attitudinal patterns. The article thus contributes to the understanding of the relationship between citizenship and heritage, with emphasis on the aspects that must be addressed in order to achieve a sustainable management in the historic centre of Cuenca.

*Key words: Citizenship; management; participatory methodology; UNESCO; World Heritage.*

## Resumen

La incorporación del modelo sostenible en la gestión del Patrimonio Mundial, implica un enfoque participativo en la identificación, protección, conservación, presentación y transmisión de los valores universales excepcionales para las generaciones futuras. La ciudadanía, como actor social relevante, aporta una percepción del patrimonio que informa sobre cuestiones clave para lograr una gestión sostenible del mismo. La carencia de metodologías para comprender la relación entre la sociedad y el patrimonio desde el enfoque sostenible, sin embargo, supone una limitación para la participación de la ciudadanía en la gestión patrimonial. Este artículo proporciona evidencia empírica sobre el nivel de sostenibilidad que existe en el centro histórico Patrimonio Mundial de Cuenca (Ecuador), desde la percepción ciudadana. Los resultados estadísticos revelan que la sostenibilidad del patrimonio depende de una reputación que se construye en torno a múltiples fenómenos interconectados que determinan unos patrones actitudinales positivos o negativos. El artículo contribuye así a la comprensión de la relación entre ciudadanía y patrimonio, haciendo hincapié en los aspectos que deben ser trabajados metodológicamente para lograr una gestión sostenible del centro histórico de Cuenca.

*Palabras Claves: Ciudadanía; gestión; metodología participativa; Patrimonio Mundial; UNESCO.*

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## Resumo

A incorporação do modelo sustentável na gestão do Patrimônio Mundial, implica uma ênfase participativa na identificação, proteção, conservação, apresentação e transmissão dos valores universais excepcionais para as gerações futuras. A cidadania, como ator social relevante, traz uma percepção do patrimônio que indica sobre questões chave para conseguir uma gestão sustentável. A falta de metodologias para compreender a relação entre a sociedade e o patrimônio desde um enfoque sustentável, todavia, supõe uma limitação para a participação da cidadania na gestão patrimonial. O artigo proporciona evidencia empírica sobre o nível de sustentabilidade que existe no centro histórico Patrimônio Mundial de Cuenca (Equador), desde a percepção cidadã. Os resultados estatísticos revelam que a sustentabilidade do patrimônio depende de uma reputação que se construa ao redor de múltiplos fenômenos interconectados que determinam padrões atitudinais positivos ou negativos. O artigo contribui assim para a compreensão da relação entre a cidadania e o patrimônio, tendo ênfase nos aspectos que devem ser trabalhados metodologicamente para obter uma gestão sustentável do centro histórico de Cuenca.

*Palavras-chave:* Cidadania; gestão; metodologia participativa; Patrimônio Mundial; UNESCO.

## Profile

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## Introducción

Sustainability, as a model of human development, establishes that the resources of the present must be used rationally to ensure their availability for future generations (Brundtland, 1987; UN, 1992). From the sustainable approach, world heritage, being considered a finite resource (Throsby, 2017), represents a complex phenomenon, especially with regard to social participation in management processes. This is precisely the problem with which this article deals, since effective methodologies are needed to face such complexity, mainly in the historical centers considered World Heritage, since the study of their sociocultural and dynamic relationships is even more complicated due to the breadth of the context (Carrión, 2008; Landorf, 2011). The analysis of these relationships requires the development of concrete methodologies to identify, understand and adopt in the management the different needs, perceptions and attitudes of the different social actors to ensure the continuity of the heritage. Various authors have argued that if participation is not allowed and decision-making is not effectively negotiated, there is little chance that the local community will support wealth management (Condon, 2012; Landorf, 2011; Monteiro Painho & Vaz, 2015; Nicholas, Thapa & Ko, 2009; Rasoolimanesh, Roldán, Jaafar, & Ramayah, 2017). The recognition of the diversity of visions in decisionmaking regarding heritage assets depends on the political will, openness, transparency and bargaining power of the managing entities, as well as the level of knowledge, the empowerment, the level of social participation and civic engagement (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015; Harrison, 2013; Landorf, 2011; Ripp & Rodwell, 2018; Smith, 2006). In this context, the analysis of citizen perception is key because it provides information that allows mapping the relations-

hips between communities, the heritage landscape and the institutions that manage it, facilitating the design and implementation of urban and regional planning policies that affect heritage, in the territory and in the quality of life of the community (Monteiro et al., 2015).

Citizen perception of historic centers depends on a series of factors related to accessibility, well-being, and positive perception, the interaction of which influences support for heritage, which is decisive for achieving sustainability (Pickard, 2013). Accessibility is understood as the conversion capacity of historic centers to meet current requirements (Levi & Kocher, 2013; Trimarchi, 2004). This implies the provision of physical and urban infrastructures, the existence of goods, products and services, the presence of attractions in the area, mobility, security, a healthy environment, as well as the availability of information and the existence of an active community (Tajani & Morano, 2016; Tira, 2016; Rotondo, Selicato, Marin & Galdeano, 2016). Accessibility depends on openness to change, which is usually conditioned by management by conservation over one by social appropriation (Harrison, 2013; Mišetić and Ursić, 2015; Ramo, 2012; Rodwell, 2007; Smith, 2006; Soini and Dessein, 2016; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007).

Resistance to change is a disadvantage for sustainability insofar as a historic center is a network of different aspects in interaction: urban, cultural, socioeconomic, environmental, among others, as the result of different externalities where conservation is just one of many (Brown and Meczynski, 2009; Carrión, 2008; Cervelló-Royo, Garrido-Yserte y del Río, 2012). Likewise, when the demands of modernity exceed the capacities of heritage to accommodate them, then there would be no sustainability either. The-

refores, we speak of a balance between the preservation of the historical component, but also the development of infrastructures, services and new patrimonial strata (Mišetić & Ursić, 2015) that guarantee the satisfaction of contemporary needs and the continuity of the patrimonial inheritance (Dessein, Soini, Fairclough and Hurlings, 2015; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007; Bandarin and Van Oers, 2014; van Oers and Pereira Roders, 2012).

The second factor associated with citizen perception is well-being. On this we must point out that it is decisive when establishing the value that people give to the heritage. Well-being is associated with the positive experiences that define memory and identity that justify the nature of the social interactions on which sustainability depends (Bitner, 1992; Carbone and Haecckel, 1994; Agapito, Mendes & Valle, 2013). The circumstances that determine the perception of well-being in the heritage space are, among others, the opening and use of public space, crime, the quality of resources and basic services, as well as infrastructures. Particularly relevant is the quality of the environment and, in general, the capacity of the place to guarantee access to healthy, safe and democratic spaces. As wellbeing is a universal objective for sustainable development (UN, 2015, obj. 3), its measurement and study must be carried out considering the citizen perspective since this knowledge contributes to the design of policies and investments (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012) that increases the chances of achieving sustainability.

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Well-being together with accessibility in turn determine the third factor, which is the positive perception of the heritage environment, which is that allows the development of a sense of belonging, pride and identity that increases civic awareness and commit-

ment to cultural heritage (Borowiecki, Forbes and Fresa, 2016; Grimwade and Carter, 2000; Iacono and Brown, 2016; Jimura, 2011; Mišetić and Ursić, 2015; Monteiro et al., 2015; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Achieving civic behavior depends on the perceived vitality of the heritage environment, which is essential to understand the impact that heritage and its changes have on citizens (Carrión, 2008; Galla, 2012; Monteiro et al., 2015; Rodwell, 2007). In the case of historic cities, vitality requires environmental, socio-cultural and economic dynamics that respond to a complex process of appropriation of space through the revitalization of the historical past based on current cultural values that constitute the basis of activities and policies applied in the territory (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2014; Rodwell, 2007; Trimarchi, 2004). This requires understanding in the historical processes that have defined the character of heritage, the keys, which, from the citizen's vision, are necessary to solve problems, satisfy needs and produce new values and cultural products (Harrison, 2015; Mišetić and Ursić, 2015; Molina Neira, 2018). As mentioned, the interaction of the perception factors related to accessibility, well-being and positive perception of the environment determine a fourth that would be the support that is fundamental to guarantee the sustainable management of heritage.

The factors of perception, as we have just seen, are known, but, nevertheless, there is an empirical gap on how to analyze them so that they are useful for the sustainable management of World Heritage (Nicholas et al., 2009; Rachao, Matos & Silva, 2014), as the studies are scarce and highly descriptive, dealing mainly with tourism and less in the context of World Heritage management (Nicholas et al., 2009). Several authors suggest that, in order to work on citizen perception on the complexity of heritage sites, the sur-

vey would be the most effective information gathering technique, since from a sample it is possible to have statistical information representative of the entire population. For example, Nicholas et al. (2009) use it to establish the factors that influence residents' support for the sustainable management of the Pitons area on the island of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean. Similarly, Bakri, Ibrahim, Ahmad, and Zaman (2015) use the survey to understand public perception of heritage buildings and thus establish sustainable conservation strategies for built heritage in Kuala Lumpur. For their part, Terzić, Jovičić and Simeunović-Bajić (2014) apply surveys in the evaluation of residents' perceptions of the state of heritage in the Serbian Danube region, and Tweed and Sutherland (2007) analyze the perceptions and attitudes of people conducting surveys in Belfast to examine the role of heritage in quality of life. In the same way, the objective of this work is, through a survey, to generate evidence that allows understanding the public perception of the sustainability of historic centers. As a case study, the historic center of Cuenca (Ecuador), declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in the 23rd session of the World Heritage Committee in December 1999, has been chosen under criteria II, IV and V that refer to its urban layout. Renaissance, its particular geographical position as a high-altitude colonial agricultural center and its miscegenation of architectural techniques (WHC-99 / CONF.209 / 22, 2000).

Since its inscription on the World Heritage List, the city of Cuenca has undergone multiple urbanarchitectural transformations without a master plan, which has affected the socio-cultural, economic and environmental dynamics of this space. As a consequence, even officially, several degradation agents have been identified in this

space such as gentrification and particularly vehicular traffic, which for eighteen years continues to be the main problem facing this space (GAD Cuenca, 1998: 49, 51; PMEP, 2015). In this regard, several municipal studies over the years mention the need to recover the spaces of the historic center for pedestrians and for socio-economic and cultural use, but on the contrary, each intervention carried out in the heritage space has exponentially increased the parking spaces in this area. From 770 private parking spaces, 1,650

public and 8,000 vehicles of daily circulation registered in 1998, it has increased to 24,000 daily vehicles, 1,471 public parking spaces and 6,588 in private buildings that represent 54% of the total of the canton (GAD Cuenca, 1998: 89, 47; 2015a: 50; 2015b: 124). This means that to create new parking areas in the historic center, the original structures have had to be altered with the negative consequences that this has for the integrity of the heritage complex, its vitality, accessibility and environmental quality.

In order to understand how the issues detailed in the previous paragraph affect the relationship between citizenship and heritage, the article presents the methodology used in the development of the survey and in the analysis of the data obtained to generate a measurement scale of the levels of sustainability of the historic center from the citizen's vision. The work is based on the theoretical principles on the transversality between the environmental, social, economic and cultural dimension that make up the sustainable model (Weiler, 2017), the primary and secondary sources of the local context and the academic production on the subject. In this way, the work provides arguments about the importance of the citizen's vision as a reference for the management of world he-

ritage, thus contributing to the scarce academic and methodological production on the subject.

### Metodología

The study of citizen perception of sustainability in the historic center of Santa Ana de Cuenca was developed from a random probability sample based on the population of urban parishes in the Cuenca canton (fig. 1). The calculation of the sample size was carried out from the classic formula of the total population of the canton, which was 603,269 inhabitants (INEC, 2017), with a 95% confidence obtaining a sample of 400 cases. As there are parishes with a higher population density (INEC, 2010), it was decided to stratify the sample to balance it (Fig. 1). It is important to note that the calculation for the sample was made based on the current statistical estimate of the total inhabitants in the Cuenca canton carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Ecuador in 2017, however, as there is no updated data on the number of inhabitants per urban parishes, the trend set by the results of the 2010 Population Census has been followed.

The questionnaire for the survey was constructed from twenty questions whose responses were structured on 10-point Likert scales with pairwise discrimination where 1-2 represented a criterion of strongly disagree, 3-4 disagree, 5-6 neutral, 7-8 agree, 9-10 strongly agree. The questions were asked based on the information of the local context generated from interviews with key actors and other

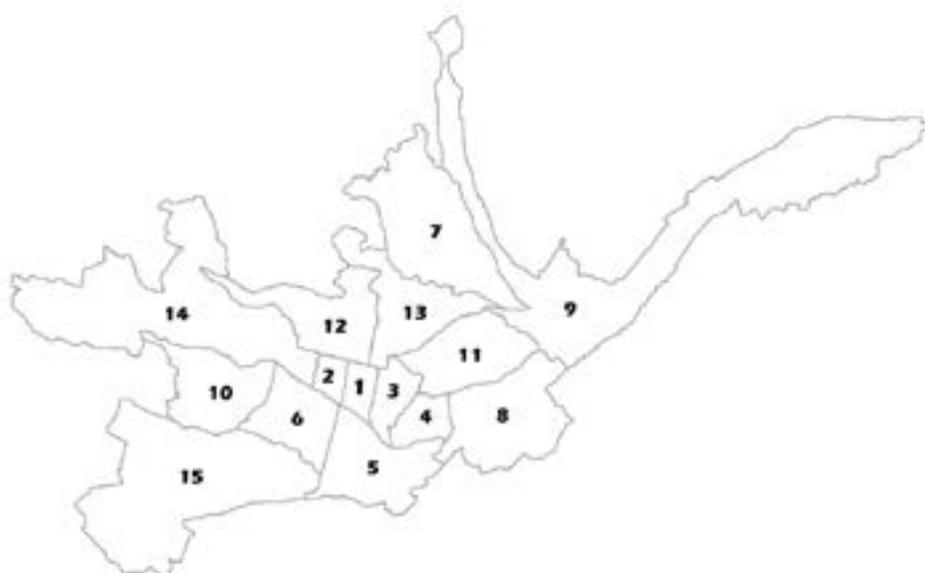
primary sources such as budgets, programs and projects of all the institutions with powers in the management of heritage at the local level. Likewise, the main references

were the surveys on citizen perception of heritage carried out in Edinburgh (Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh World Heritage Site, Historic Environment Scotland, Steering Group, 2011) and in Victoria (Australia) (The Heritage Council of Victoria, 2014). In order to generate supplementary information for the analysis, four open questions were asked about the citizens' knowledge about the Exceptional Universal Values (OUV), the elements of the historic center of Cuenca with which people identify, and the positive and negative aspects that from its vision benefit and affect it.

Before collecting the information, a pilot study was carried out to assess the reliability and validate the tool. Based on the feedback obtained, corrections were made and the contents were adjusted, establishing an average of five minutes for the completion of each survey. In consideration of the size of the sample, its stratification by population density and the time necessary for the preparation of the study, a group of fifty interviewers was trained (Fig. 1) with the support of the Faculty of Hospitality Sciences of the University of Cuenca. To guarantee the randomness of the sample, the information was collected during the first two weeks of April 2017 in public places with intense pedestrian traffic in a period of less than two hours fragmented for a total of two weeks on different days and hours, including a weekend day, and separated into morning and evening groups.

### Analysis of data

The analysis of the quantitative data was carried out with the statistical program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) that was used to code the questions and submit them to a factorial analysis of data reduction for the generation of units called



Parroquias Urbanas del Cantón Cuenca	Población por parroquia (Censo 2010)	No. de encuestas	No. de encuestadores
1. El Sagrario	6.773	20	3
2. Gil Ramírez Dávalos	7.101	20	3
3. San Blas	9.759	20	3
4. Cañaribamba	11.867	24	3
5. Huayna Cápac	16.262	24	3
6. Sucre	17.133	24	3
7. Hermano Miguel	17.386	24	3
8. Monay	21.853	24	3
9. Machángara	23.193	24	3
10. El Batán	24.626	24	3
11. Totoracocha	25.430	24	3
12. Bellavista	26.445	36	4
13. El Vecino	30.737	36	4
14. San Sebastián	39.690	36	4
15. Yanuncay	51.673	40	5
<b>Total parroquias urbanas</b>	<b>329.928</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total Cantón (2017)</b>	<b>603.269</b>		

Figura 1. Distribución de las encuestas en las parroquias urbanas del cantón Cuenca por número de habitantes.

Fuente: INEC, 2010. Elaboración propia.

constructs that establish a pattern. relationship between the survey items that explain the maximum common information contained (LópezRoldán & Fachelli, 2015). The reliability of each of these was established from the results of Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951) as it is the most appropriate method to measure their internal consistency inasmuch as we assume that the items contained therein are highly correlated. The constructs that we call Heritage Support, Heritage Accessibility, Well-being and Positive Perception of the environment were established according to the logic of correlation of the items based on the academic theory of citizen perception and its transversal relationship with heritage and the economic, social dimension, cultural and environmental of the sustainable model (Tuan & Navrud, 2008; Landorf, 2009; Bakri et al., 2015; Nicholas et al., 2009; Axelsson, Angelstam, Degerman, Teitelbaum, Andersson, Elbakidze and Drotz, 2013; Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar, 2017; Jeon, Kang and Desmarais, 2016; Chi, Cai and Li, 2017; Kim, 2016; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017;

Jimura, 2011; Bossel, 1999; Monteiro et al., 2015, Wu, Fan and Chen, 2016; UNESCO, 2014; Terzić et. Al., 2014; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007; Buchel and Frantzeskaki, 2015) 1. From these, and in order to obtain a single value for each one, linear variables were generated that were also subjected to Cronbach's Alpha. Once its reliability was established, these made it possible to establish a high, medium and low scoring scale (Table 2), from the graphic reading of the statistics obtained in each one (figure 2) in order to identify, from the citizen perspective, at what level each variable is in relation to sustainability. To verify the existence of significant correlations between the variables, the Pearson coefficient test was carried out, which allows measuring the level of linear

association between them and thus being able to interpret the data as a whole (Table 3)

## Resultados

The factor analysis carried out from the survey items generated a structure matrix with six well-defined constructs, each containing at least three items with weights greater than 0.30 (Kim and Mueller, 1994; Costello and Osborne, 2005). According to the results of Cronbach's Alpha, of the total, three of them obtained values greater than 0.6 demonstrating consistency (Hair, Tatham and Black, 2006), and one, whose value was greater than 0.5, was also included for its moderate reliability (Hinton, McMurray & Brownlow, 2004) ruling out the rest for their lack of consistency. As we have already mentioned, the constructs called Heritage Support, Heritage Accessibility, Well-being and Positive Perception of the environment were transformed into linear variables, whose statistics (table 2, fig. 2) show that the first variable would be located at a high level in relation to sustainability, since the higher values are concentrated around the mean. As for the rest of the variables (Table 2, Fig. 2), the opposite occurs since the frequencies are grouped closer to 0, which indicates that from the citizen's point of view they are at a midpoint to achieve sustainability.

Regarding the intercorrelations, we know that for the oscillation of the Pearson coefficient index values between 0 and 1 to be significant, it must be closer to the latter (Díaz and Fernández, 2001). Table 3 shows the values obtained, considering the size of the sample, point to a significant and positive correlation between each of the variables, the highest being Support for patrimony and Positive perception of the environment. With regard to qualitative

**Tabla 1**  
**Matriz de extracción de componentes y resultados del Alfa de Cronbach**

Ítems simplificados de la encuesta	Componentes						Alfa de Cronbach
	Apoyo	Accesibilidad	3	Bienestar	Percepción positiva del entorno	6	
Apoyo a la inversión en el centro histórico (CH)	,903*						0,761
Apoyo a la educación patrimonial	,783*						
Felicidad por vivir en un patrimonio mundial	,701*			-,339	-,809		
Celebración del patrimonio	,605*	,308			-,484		
Vitalidad del CH	,501*	,319			-,463	,406	
Conservación del CH		,836*					0,602
Acceso CH		,712*			-,325		
Modificación del CH		,678*	,360				
Calidad de la gestión del CH			,747				0,350
Personalización del CH			,624				
Inversión equitativa en el CH				-,665*			0,330
Condiciones del vida en el CH	,445	,326		-,633*			
Seguridad del CH		,402		-,516*	-,328		
Calidad del entorno natural del CH		,306			-,718*		0,668
Calidad de los servicios de ocio y recreación del CH					-,714*		
Desarrollo económico del CH	,306				-,622*	,338	
Creatividad en el espacio del CH	,471				-,570*	,361	
Afectación del CH	,419				-,520*	,326	
Contaminación del CH						,715	0,352
Información sobre el CH						,695	

\*  $p < ,01$

Método de extracción: Análisis de componentes principales.

Método de rotación: Normalización Oblimin con Káiser.

Fuente: Encuesta de percepción ciudadana sobre la sostenibilidad del centro histórico de Cuenca.

Elaboración propia.

data, when analyzing the open questions of the questionnaire on knowledge of the OUV of the historic center of Cuenca, we found that citizens use generic categories such as architecture (68%), culture and tradition (41%), and multiple other reasons (38%) for referring to them. In relation to the heritage aspects with which citizens identify themselves, we see that the architectural urban

environment (72%), specifically churches, parks and squares are the main elements of identification due to the aesthetic pleasure it provides and because they associate these spaces with memory, socialization, and religious ritualy.

The natural environment of the territory, especially rivers and mountains, are also refe-

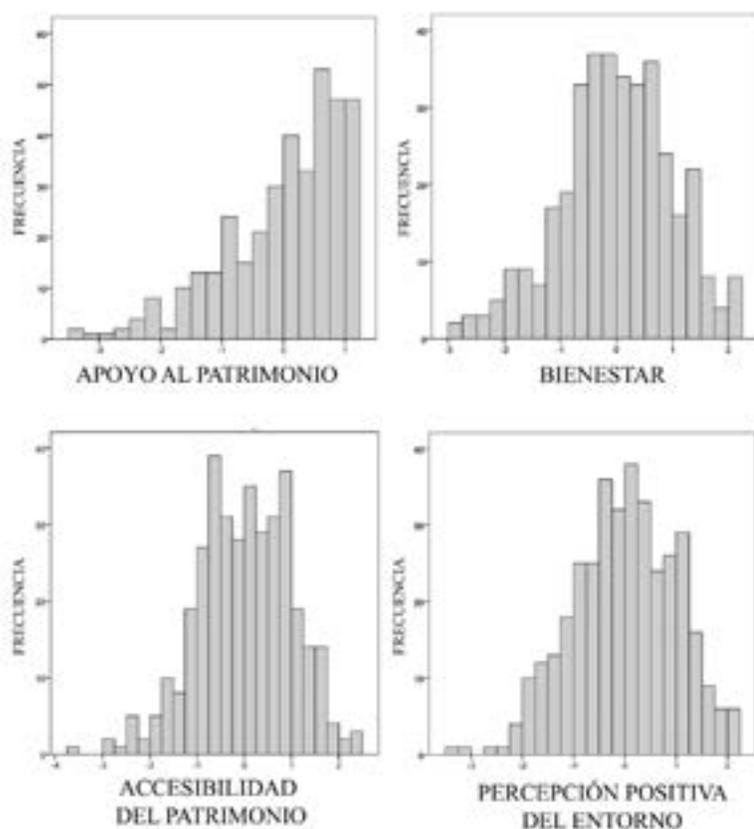


Figura 2. Histogramas de las variables lineales generadas a partir de los componentes del análisis factorial.

Fuente: Encuesta de percepción ciudadana sobre la sostenibilidad del centro histórico de Cuenca. Elaboración propia.

rences with which citizens identify (28%), referring as the main reasons to the nostalgia and well-being that these spaces generate. Regarding the positive and negative aspects of the historic center, 74% of citizens see living in a heritage city as positive and a source of pride, on the contrary, 82% disapprove of traffic and its negative consequences.

## Discusión

The interpretation of the histograms (figure 2) indicates that there is significant support for heritage by citizens and that this is related to the positive perception of the environment (table 3). This result is based on the

theoretical assumptions about the influence that citizens' beliefs and attitudes have on intentions and behaviors towards heritage values (Mišetić & Ursić, 2015; Monteiro et al., 2015). However, the results also show that the positive perception variable did not obtain a high level on the sustainability scale (table 2), and that citizens do not know and do not identify themselves, with which in the Cuenca declaration it has been categorized as VUE, so we need a more careful analysis to understand this correlation.

Critical heritage studies suggest that different views of heritage depend on the experiences of the various actors with herita-

**Tabla 2**  
*Variables lineales generadas a partir de los componentes del análisis factorial*

Variable	Estadísticos	Escala para la medición de la percepción de sostenibilidad*		
		Alto	Medio	Bajo
Apoyo al patrimonio	Media	,0249688		
	Desviación estándar	,9735617	x	
Accesibilidad del patrimonio	Media	-,0110367		
	Desviación estándar	1,0027517		x
Bienestar	Media	-,0043682		
	Desviación estándar	1,0076789		x
Percepción positiva del entorno	Media	-,0104004		
	Desviación estándar	1,0007982		x

! \* La escala se basa en la lectura de los histogramas de cada variable (fig.2).  
Fuente: Encuesta de percepción ciudadana sobre la sostenibilidad del centro histórico de Cuenca.  
Elaboración propia.

**Tabla 3**  
*Correlaciones entre variables (Pearson)*

	Apoyo al patrimonio	Accesibilidad del patrimonio	Bienestar
Apoyo al patrimonio			
Accesibilidad del patrimonio	,308** ,000 379		
Bienestar	,355** ,000 379	,389** ,000 377	
Percepción positiva del entorno	,545** ,000 378	,372** ,000 375	,372** ,000 375

\*\*  $p < ,001$   
Fuente: Encuesta de percepción ciudadana sobre la sostenibilidad del centro histórico de Cuenca.  
Elaboración propia.

ge space (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013) and in the case of Cuenca, the evidence shows precisely this situation. The support is high because there is a feeling of pride that responds specifically to the fact that the city is a World Heritage Site, which affects the positive perception of the historic center, however, people do not know the causes that justify the declaration. This result is contrary to

the objectives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which seek to make knowledge and recognition of exceptional values transcendental for the city, the country and ultimately of humanity (Makuvaza, 2017), since, in the most direct instance, which would be the local one, they would not be recognizing each other. According to UNESCO's opera-

tional guidelines, this situation puts the integrity and / or authenticity of the historic center at risk (UNESCO, 2017: pto I.B, 7, 9; II.D, 78; II.F, 96; VI.A, d; I.C, 12; párr. 114; 137.c)

The reasons that explain why Cuencans do not know the criteria of patrimonial exceptionality are, on the one hand, that the valuation did not arise from a community significance, but from a technical reflection with a clear political purpose. On the other hand, and as recognized by Pablo Barzallo, director of Historical and Heritage Areas of the GAD Cuenca, there are no narratives around these (P. Barzallo, personal communication, April 20, 2017) because management has focused on conservation urban-architectural structures, but not in the immaterial component associated with them. This allows us to conclude that this is precisely the inflection point between what has been classified as official heritage and that perceived by the public, because although people identify with certain aspects of the OUV, they do not do so because they recognize that, for example; the squares belong to a specific urban planning model (relative to criterion II) or because they prefer a certain architecture due to its construction technique (referring to criterion V), but rather because of the immaterial relationships they have with these spaces (Carrión, 2008). These are scenarios in which discrimination based on criteria of materiality, nature or immateriality does not

exist from the citizen's point of view. For this, they are spaces where they satisfy their social and identity needs related to aspects of their own being, the community, culture and the environment with which each individual associates the concept of heritage and that conditions the positive perception of the environment (Cowell, 2004; Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006; Carrión, 2008). In this sense, although support for heritage is high,

the identification and value that society gives it does not correspond to the values that justify the designation of World Heritage. In our understanding this means that, in order to meet UNESCO's objectives, it is necessary to reconcile OUVs with the various views of heritage in order to ensure a collective consciousness that protects the heritage site in the long term.

Once the Support variable has been analyzed, we proceed to examine the Accessibility, Well-being and Positive Perception of the environment. As we can see, in addition to being related (table 3), these variables also obtained an average sustainability rating (table 2). When considering these results from the point of view of the transversality of the processes of the sustainable model, we see that there is an agent of deterioration of the historic center recognized both in academic theory, as well as in the local context and in the perception survey that is the Vehicular traffic. According to the evidence we have generated, 82% of Cuencans identify this problem as the cause of the negative repercussions in terms of safety, mobility, access to space and pollution (environmental, visual, auditory) that affect accessibility, well-being and therefore to the positive perception of the environment. Therefore, we can conclude that in the case of Cuenca the consequences derived from the privilege of vehicular mobilization over pedestrian traffic affect the transversal relationships between the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions that threaten the quality of life and limit the sustainable development of the area. historical Center. The perception of the problem therefore has a direct relationship with the average level obtained on the sustainability measurement scale. It is important, therefore, that the managing bodies solve this situation from a logic consistent with the

needs and positions of citizens. This last statement underlines the importance of understanding perception, since from the integral approach of the model, while there is a conflict for the local community, it cannot be managed effectively (UNESCO 2013: 137).

## Conclusiones

The study presented has explained the importance of public perception for understanding their relationships with World Heritage sites and as a tool in identifying the limitations that prevent achieving sustainable heritage management. It has been

argued that the sustainability of historical heritage centers is determined by several factors that interact transversally between the different dimensions of the sustainable model where political will and openness, civic empowerment and the consideration of the citizen's vision are determining factors in the wealth management processes.

It has been stated that citizen perception informs management about their most urgent needs in relation to heritage, and therefore, research and methodologies are essential to study how the heritage phenomenon is understood from criteria external to the institutionality. To this end, we have carried out a citizen survey in the historic center of Cuenca del Ecuador, which has allowed us to contrast the theory with the quantitative and qualitative data obtained, the primary sources of the local context and the theoretical assumptions about the interdependence of the phenomena in the context of sustainability (Lawton & Weaver, 2015; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007) to conclude a series of questions. The first of them would be that the variables support for heritage, accessibility of heritage, well-being and positive perception of the environment gene-

rated from the statistical analysis are related, which shows that the phenomena that occur in the historic center must be worked from a comprehensive approach. Second, we conclude that citizens do not know and do not identify with the exceptional universal values of the Cuenca declaration, which, according to UNESCO, represents a risk for the sustainability of the world heritage site. At the same time, however, it is confirmed that the perceived patrimony, although not official, is also relevant because it informs about the true needs of the people in relation to the patrimony. In this sense, we believe that it is vital to diversify the narratives around heritage to guarantee a coexistence of visions around it where each actor recognizes their contribution and in this way is recognized in their heritage legacy. Finally, we conclude that vehicular traffic, identified as one of the greatest agents of degradation of the historic center, is an obstacle that must be solved considering the citizen's perception because by doing so, the attitudinal patterns would be modified towards a more positive perception, which would help implementation of wealth management strategies based on social needs in coherence and in balance with those of the historic center. Finally, we propose that the methodology developed in this article is not only valid for the city of Cuenca, but that it can be extrapolated to other historical World Heritage centers.

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