

How can the HUL approach improve heritage management in Cuenca?

María Siguencia Avila*,

Universidad de Cuenca, Cuenca Canton, Ecuador

Ana Pereira Roders

Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, and

Koen Van Balen

Leuven University, Leuven, Belgium

Abstract

Historic urban landscapes are a challenge to urban planning, especially whose cultural heritage and significance has been acknowledge and designated. They require informed decision-making, not only on the impact of development in natural environment, but also, on its cultural resources, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable. The last decades a broadening can be noticed in heritage definitions, designations and management, from singular objects towards entire landscapes. That entails a similar widening in disciplines involved in heritage management and the integration of socio-economic and environmental values amongst others.

This evolution in heritage management, fostered in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL approach) rooted in previous Charters and Recommendations, acknowledges the desirability to integrate heritage in environmental planning and management. Though, the context did change and urban resources are under greater development pressures. This way, the HUL approach could be seen as a tool to assist the implementation of procedures aimed at integrating heritage, handling side by side strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, in cities where heritage is both a driver and target of economic growth. This paper aims to take the city of Cuenca (Ecuador) as case study, inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1999, to discuss how the HUL approach can improve heritage management.

The case of Cuenca revealed that despite outdated planning policies and regulations, pioneer efforts have been made to provide the city with more holistic tools in heritage management. A close cooperation between local government, academics and students are laying the basis for the HUL approach. This paper evaluates the outcomes of its first stages, the significance assessment of Cuenca's resources. It compares these outcomes with the state-of-the-art. These results will enable the implementation of HUL to be evaluated and further developed, as well as, to contribute to innovation in heritage management.