

## DON VICTOR AND THE MAINTENANCE BOOKLETS: A STRATEGY TO STIMULATE THE RESILIENCE OF THE VERNACULAR HERITAGE OF SOUTHERN ECUADOR

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### ABSTRACT:

Among the most powerful reasons for the loss of heritage buildings in Ecuadorian Andean cities, the lack of valuation of these buildings by their owners has been persistently noted. Faced with this weakness, the value of the property is considered only for its exclusive real estate value which exposes the demolition to old buildings for speculative purposes. The gap established between the technical valuation of buildings by “experts” and the valuation of these by their owners or inhabitants, has not been possible to overcome for many reasons: The diverse interests, the economic needs of the owners, the difficulties to activate maintenance actions in a more spontaneous and simple way, and the progressive disappearance of people who know how to do it. Understanding the communication of ideas, values and procedures as a powerful tool to mitigate the distances between diverse actors, the CPM project of the University of Cuenca, has developed a series of tools aimed at maintaining the heritage buildings of Cuenca and its region. For this, the characteristics of local architecture, the colloquial language, the tradition of local graphic expressions and other forms of popular dissemination have been considered, resulting in a compendium of 11 documents that includes a cartoon with the name “The Adventures of Don Victor” and 10 thematic booklets in which problems are identified and basic solutions for heritage preservation are offered.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, the historic site of Cuenca was included in the List of World Heritage by UNESCO and even years before, its protection was constituted at national level. During this period privileged aspects such as inventories and regulations expressed in ordinances and local initiatives like partial management plans. Processes that frequently resorted to sanctions as a single mechanism for the protection of the values or the integrity of the buildings that constitute the heritage city. These sanction mechanisms although they managed to define the rules of the game in protected areas, also had a negative and pernicious effect, causing an ever more acute and growing distance between institutions and the community. This resulted distrust, lack of communication and loss of interests and shared goals between these two fundamental parts for the protection of the city’s heritage.

This situation could be seen in a tangible way, from the academic point of view by getting involved in the University of Cuenca in the studies on the city in a progressive way, especially from 1998–99, years in which the declaration and the Historic Center of Cuenca is included in the World Heritage List.

The Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Cuenca introduces an optional training branch linked to heritage, creating a specialization called: Option of Conservation and Management of Cities and Heritage Sites. This specialization added to the existing options linked to the Contemporary Architecture and Urban Planning Projects. (Astudillo, 2018) and in 2007, in agreement with the Consortium of Flemish Universities (VLIR), it launched a research project called Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial Preservation Management (vlirCPM <sup>1</sup>), with the idea of developing tools to improve the management of built heritage of Cuenca.

Within the framework of this Project, understanding the heritage city as a complex technical, social and environmental reality, during the first years it seeks to delineate a baseline on the information of the city. It was obtained as a result various exercises applied at different times of the recent history of Cuenca especially in 1976-78 (House of Ecuadorian Culture), 1982 (Land Management Plan of Cuenca-Consulplan, Municipality of Cuenca - National Institute of Cultural Heritage) and 1999-2000, Update of the Patrimonial Inventory, Municipality from Cuenca.

The approach to the information of these processes revealed that each one of them applied their own methodologies and tools of information gathering, and that the second and third experience in practice did not establish links with the previous exercises. This prevented the development of reflections or articulated comparative analyzes that would allow us to understand what was happening in the heritage in those years.

This situation encouraged the need to promote a new inventory update initiative since 2009. In its execution was able to verify in a tangible and direct way, the difficulties in establishing a straightforward and constructive communication with the owners or inhabitants of the historical buildings. The need to reconstitute a relationship of open dialogue without pressure between diverse actors, a relationship in which the inhabitants are fundamental, and the need to have their own initiatives to develop preventive

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<sup>1</sup> The vlirCPM project (Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad - City Preservation Management), in coordination with the consortium of Flemish universities, lasted from 2007 to 2018. Its objective was to develop scientific bases and provide high-level education to contribute to the objective of improving management of world heritage sites in southern Ecuador through the generation of tools and the dissemination of knowledge. It is currently known as the CPM project (Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial).

conservation actions, were determinants in the construction of new work strategies and particularly of communication with the community.

## 2. TOWARDS A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

### 2.1 Preventive conservation

In the twentieth century, several institutions historically promote reflection on conservation through congresses and seminars, the results of which are made visible in recommendations set forth in international letters and conventions (Barsallo, 2019). Documents such as The Letter of Venice, The Letter of Burra and the Letter of Nara, among others, are the foundations on which this new concept of action on heritage is based, in which the conservation of its cultural meanings takes possession through various places in the world (Cardoso, 2015).

Towards the year 2008, ICOM-CC defines the conservation of heritage as: "those measures or actions that aim to safeguard tangible cultural heritage... Conservation includes preventive, curative and restoration conservation" (ICOM-CC, 2008). Emphasizing respect in the application of measures and actions that are consistent with maintaining the meaning and physical properties of the good.

In this context, preventive conservation is developed as a concept or concern raised from various approaches, such as in the field of medicine clearly indicates "prevention is better than cure", is an immemorial saying mentioned by Erasmus of Rotterdam, with emphasis in health care, safeguarding everyday controls and disease prevention. (Astudillo, 2011). This phrase, cradled by the Dutch philosopher and theologian, has been transferred to the heritage field, referring to care and conservation focused on the prevention of deterioration and the mitigation of damages. Contributing to boost and stimulate maintenance and counteract the degradation of real estate; promoting the identification of maintenance actions in order to reduce or avoid important interventions that put the assets at risk or require large investments of money. (García et al., 2015). Undoubtedly, social participation is an important axis in these actions through sharing the responsibility for the care of heritage assets, generating training, involving stakeholders in different ways. (Van Balen, 2013). Avoiding the effects of the lack of maintenance, such as the loss of important qualities manifested in the values of the building, as well as the integrity of the good and those who inhabit it. In addition to the strong economic investments that cannot be assumed by its owners or communities that occupy said heritage. Causing the loss of heritage values that constitutes a cultural legacy of the peoples. (Cardoso, 2018). The role played by each actor is very important to ensure the sustainability of preventive conservation processes.

### 2.2 Inventory System - registration-catalog-monograph

Heritage conservation goes hand in hand with its management. One of the tools proposed by the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial project is the inventory system, which manages three levels of depth in the collection of information: registration, catalog and monograph (Figure 1); The information collected is the input for the elaboration of a geo data base, a tool that supports the systematic study of monitoring and maintenance, allowing, in addition, the spatial analysis of heritage assets.

REGISTER	CATALOGUE	MONOGRAPH
Elementary level of identification of movable goods	Collection of information in greater depth (value / damages)	Deep analysis of the building. (knowledge of construction systems, analysis and registration of damages per element)
Establishes a first legal protection	For the application of this tool it is necessary to enter the good and know its construction systems.	Define needed intervention actions.
General analysis at the facade level	Determine in general some emergent measures	Application in a monument
The good is not accessed	This tool is complemented with audio and video.	
Application to a wide territory for example: the city	Application in a specific sector such as: an apple tree	

Figure 1. Inventory System..  
 Source: Achig, 2017. Development: Authors.

### 2.3 The relationship with the community and owners

Within the framework of the Preventive Conservation System proposed for the Historic Center of Cuenca (Cardoso, et al, 2011), it was found that, in the exposed order, the factors with the greatest impact on the loss of heritage values of the buildings in the area UNESCO of Cuenca, in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, are the constructions without authorization (...), the non-respect to the planning approved by the governing institution (...) and the placement of signs and advertisements. Although the city's heritage is predominantly constituted by vulnerable technologies and materials, human actions in their various modalities were identified as the main cause of deterioration of the city's built heritage. It is to be understood then that if the management of the built heritage, which in more than 90% of the goods is under the domain and management of the private sector, that it is this sector who has taken the initiatives with respect to itself, not necessarily with the desire to care for the heritage, generating actions that diminish or jeopardize its values and that an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion between society and technicians in general. This prevents a fluid and healthy communication between actors who have an interest focused on the conservation of heritage, it would be necessary to promote and cement actions that allow to reverse this situation.

In the field of Preventive Heritage Conservation, the CPM Project, promoted its work from 2011 and 2012, through a series of strategies aimed at reducing these distances through visits and community meetings, intervention initiatives under the model Maintenance Campaigns, workshops inside and outside the University, which strengthened the need to build communication bridges that are fluid and accessible to all. If the commitment of society is required, the principles and strategies of conservation had to be accessible not only to those with studies and expertise from the institutions or the academy handling the issues of preservation, but also to the common citizen, he who day to day is related to the heritage building. Maintenance cards aimed at citizens are not new, but the way to address them is. It facilitates this communication, through a novel conception of the strategy used which is reinforced in the role of the instruments created, "Cartoon of the Adventures of Don Víctor" and the Booklets for the maintenance of buildings of Patrimonial value "Do it yourself".

## 2.4 The maintenance booklets

The declaration of the Historic Center of Cuenca as Cultural Heritage of Humanity, revealed unique and unrepeatable conditions, which made it worthy of this title. In spite of this, the scarcity of economic and technical resources for its conservation, added to the insufficient availability of information and the lack of education in heritage matters, and the little involvement of the population in its protection, have determined its exposure to a gradual deterioration process.

As indicated above, the vIirCPM research team with the purpose of conserving the cultural heritage of Cuenca, develops the proposal of preventive conservation. Through a series of actions and tools that allow the control and intervention in buildings in a preventive way, avoiding as much as possible the deterioration, before the goods reach levels of damage that endanger the conservation of their values and even their very existence. This paradigm shift, from the interventionist and aggressive practice of repairing a good, to conservation based on the registration of a good and its constant documentation, led among other things to generate a set of tools for heritage conservation, among which are the "Manuals of Preventive Conservation", the "Cartoon of the Adventures of Don Victor" and the Booklets for the maintenance of buildings of Patrimonial value "Do it yourself". These last two are aimed at directing the owners in preventive conservation actions.

The development of the maintenance booklets was based on previous experiences carried out in different cities of the world. But especially in those carried out in the University of Cuenca; given the need to involve the owners and holders of the goods in the processes of conservation and programmed maintenance of these, and to face the daily practices on the margin of the technique and of the local constructive knowledge. This evidenced as a result the use of materials, construction techniques and procedures that are inappropriate or incompatible with respect to the originals. Previous experiences, one of them academic, in the neighbourhood San Francisco in Oña, and the other, a consulting project called Cuenca Ciudad Universitaria, whose objective was to propose intervention and improvement cards for the buildings of El Barranco in Río Tomebamba, also evidenced the fact that the lack of economic resources by the owners of the goods prevented the development of conservation actions. In the best case it was the hiring of labor, not always qualified in the traditional construction techniques, almost always dispensing with the hiring of professional architects in the area, resulting in actions that ended up being rather damaging to the goods, as well as more expensive and not very durable.

In 2011, a group of researchers from the vIirCPM project, through a consulting project convened by the Municipality of Cuenca and the Directorate of Historical and Heritage Areas, carried out the Preventive Conservation Plan project for the Historic Center of Cuenca. Among the results of the investigations carried out within the framework of this project, it is worth highlighting the fact that citizens "do not have a preventive attitude towards the conservation of their heritage assets" (Cardoso, et al., 2011). On the other hand, this project emphasizes the need to involve property owners, custodians and administrators in conservation and maintenance processes. Faced with this reality, it defines a set of actors and a system of competences, considering the realities and capacities of each of the actors involved. In Phase I: Information, maintenance cards are evidenced as a management tool, described as follows: "Maintenance booklets are instruments designed to be a first-

hand guide that orients owners, administrators and custodians of heritage assets on simple actions to be executed, in order to guarantee the proper maintenance of their assets and prevent the progress of damages that may become more serious over time. Through these it is intended to comply with the precept that prevention is better than cure." (Cardoso, et al., 2011).

It stipulates that "The report on compliance with the maintenance cards will be part of the annual report that the owners, custodians or administrators of the property are required to present, in relation to the state of the buildings" (Cardoso, et al., 2011). The cards thus conceptualized, should be published and delivered to each of the owners of the heritage properties, being responsible for their development, edition, publication and dissemination of the Municipality of Cuenca. In the first instance, the focus would lie on the booklets for the main and most frequent elements of the building, then completing the series with new cards for the other elements. The cards would include, according to the Plan, the identification of possible damages, the technical solutions and a series of recommendations to keep in mind in order to guarantee an adequate maintenance of the buildings.

Although the Preventive Conservation Plan for the Historic Center of Cuenca was not implemented by the successive municipal administrations, nor by the one that contracted the study in 2011. In years later, the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial project, would resume and develop the booklets of maintenance under the slogan "Booklets for the maintenance of buildings of heritage value - Do It Yourself", having as premise the development of an awareness cartoon called "The Adventures of Don Victor". This being the starting point from where the graphic and technical idea, the contents and even the characters arise that would later illustrate the cards.

## 2.5 Don Victor and the development of booklets.

The creation and dissemination of maintenance cards in a context with very low levels of interest, knowledge and citizen involvement in the management and preventive conservation processes, forced the research team to think about a previous step with clear objectives: to gain attention of citizens in relation to heritage issues, while gradually raising awareness.

This is how the comic strip "The Adventures of Don Victor" was born, with a technical concept and objectives that are reflected in an easily digestible graphic message, through which can disseminate the operation of the preventive conservation, monitoring and maintenance, developed at the time by the vIirCPM project, while re-building the relationship with users.

Paraphrasing Barsallo, in his article Maintenance booklets for the built heritage, applied in the historical center of Cuenca, (Barsallo, 2020), the comic aims to remove the mystery that surrounds the world of technology, in a comic and attractive way, using everyday language to bring it closer to citizens. In the comic, Don Víctor, an old craftsman from the El Vado neighborhood, faces the need to maintain his old house, realizing that, although some situations can be corrected by himself, others necessarily require support of qualified personnel and/or specialized professionals.

The booklets are therefore an instrument that aims to anticipate the needs of Don Víctor in the process of maintenance and systematic control of his heritage home. To do this, using the graphic concept and some characters positioned through the comic strip, the booklets are developed with an easy to

understand language, focused on the identification of the most common damages that occur in certain components of the building, such as the roofs, adobe and bahareque walls, plasters, paintings, ceilings, etc. The opportunity to raise awareness and educate the population, through the texts, about some technical terms about the importance of heritage assets and about the damages that are present and how to prevent them from being repeated once corrected, through prevention.

The development of intervention booklets in heritage buildings, was based on a systematic study of the construction context in the Historic Center of the city of Cuenca. Identifying not only the predominant construction materials and techniques, but also the most frequent damages, their causes and effects on heritage buildings. Subsequently, restorative experts were consulted about techniques, procedures and materials used in the conservation and restoration processes. Once the preliminary draft of the booklets was ready, both its graphics and its texts, it was necessary to submit them to a validation process by some citizens, in order to demonstrate and assess how feasible their understanding was. Finally, the booklets were revised again, trying to express some complex technical terms through colloquial expressions and names.

In the development of the booklets, intervention levels were defined related to the types of actors that should be involved in order to guarantee maintenance in adequate and relevant conditions. "Do it yourself", was based on maintenance actions that could be resolved by the owners or holders of the goods (a); a second level of action identified the participation of the owner and skilled labor (b); The third level of action, directly related to the magnitude and complexity of the damage, and therefore the actions to be carried out, required the convergence of professionals specialized in restoration or conservation, with the support of skilled labor (c). Maintenance booklets basically cover the intervention levels (a) and (b), being able to suggest when interventions of level (c) are required.

The tool developed, the booklets, had the objective of making the social actors involved aware of the value of their buildings, of the constitutive elements, of some constructive techniques and local materials, expressing it in a colloquial and simple way.

Although the proposal also aimed to identify the social and institutional actors involved in the conservation and maintenance processes, and in general with the management of the built heritage. This helped define their roles and competences, it is clear that the owners and holders of the goods are primarily responsible for their conservation and maintenance, so the booklets were directed towards them in particular.

### 3. INSPIRATION SOURCES

#### 3.1 Don Víctor and the characters

The idea of developing a symbolic character to stimulate a good relationship with local heritage is not new. This responsibility had already been placed in the hands of a beloved Italian Salesian priest loved for his simplicity and for the apparent naivety with which he related to his community (Carlos Crespi), who died three decades ago in Cuenca. However, that effort was diluted over time.

Don Víctor, (Víctor Aguilar, who died in 2010) (Figure 2), on the other hand, is a common character, from Cuenca and typical of the city. His job was to restore toquilla straw hats (recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012) and he was a prominent neighbor of one of the neighborhoods assumed as a

study area in 2008: the El Vado neighborhood. The restoration in his craft is to return the quality to the object, so that it continues to be useful and maintains its beauty.



Figure 2. Víctor Aguilar.

Source: Photographic Repository of the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial project.

With the contribution of designers from a small local creative office (Jiráfica, Story Factory), the search was launched for an aesthetic in which many characters in local life are protagonists. This way you can recognize former mayors, CPM and municipal technicians, classic citizens, vendors, sweepers, photographers, and even the inevitable drunkard in the corner. A nourishing and theoretically infinite palette of characters from the city that are potentially part of the Comic "The Adventures of Don Víctor" (Figure 3). Conceived with a delicate sense of humor and with the premise to laugh at themselves, the designer ventures into a world of communication that facilitates the story and that draws the reader into the story.



Figure 3. Comic characters "The Adventures of Don Víctor".

Source: Photographic Repository of the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial project.

In accordance with the purposes of inclusion and participation with which this new approach to preventive conservation seeks to assume work in heritage. That is, with the participation of most citizens and owners, the series of editions around Don Víctor also promote the inclusion of many important and plain characters, with the same right and the same presence in the field of cartoons and maintenance booklets.

#### 4. THE GRAPHICS AND THE FORCE OF THE MESSAGE

Graphic design was an element of intense discussions and debates. In the era of computing and digital resources, the options multiply exponentially, so a careful reflection process was launched. The need to have a consistent conceptual path, without restricting the creativity and inspiration of designers, led the team to explore the local graphic history and attitudes, behaviors and language forms of the common citizens of Cuenca, expressed in more remote images such as the graphic chronicles of Guamán Poma de Ayala who lived between 1534-1615 (Albornoz, 2006), with characters always expressed in profile, or the most recent graphic publications and cartoons of the twentieth century, as well as a very wide range of images and photographs of characters and episodes of the local and common life in which the focus lies on the essence of the local personality of the society and in which an easy recognition (and therefore a quick identity link) with the common reader is raised.

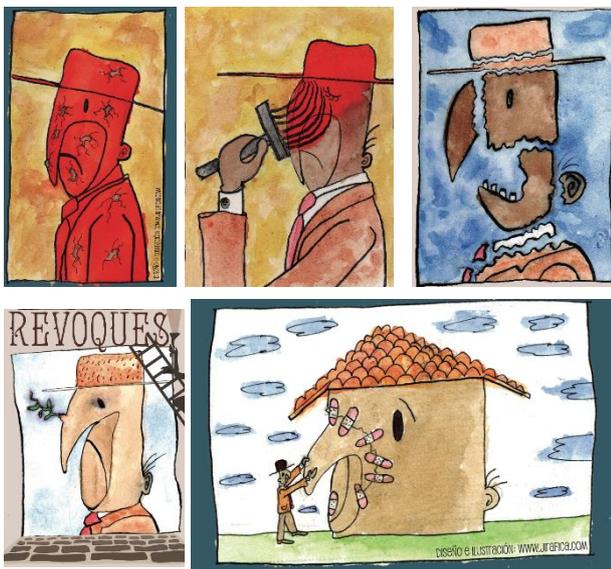


Figure 4. Don Víctor personified in heritage.

Source: Photographic Repository of the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial project.

According to *Jiráfica, fábrica de Cuentos* (Cardoso, Jiráfica, 2011; responsible for the image and content, respectively), “the comic is based on the Brand Manual of the Preventive Conservation, Monitoring and Maintenance Plan (CPM<sup>2</sup>, Corporate Manual) that has been developed based on a process of linguistic perception of the heritage of Cuenca and the technical-scientific contents developed by the Project vlrCPM of the University of Cuenca.” The Brand Manual raises the need to work with one’s own language, local and recognizable to the common reader, which allows to develop a rapid identity link between the reader and the story told. But, in addition, the comic strip must take on the challenge of relating the technical processes presented in a colloquial, clear and simple way. The goal is not to impress the reader or overwhelm him with complex technical approaches, but rather that these approaches are accessible and invite the reader (neighbor, owner) to be part of them. The cartoon of Don Víctor and the Maintenance Booklets also appeal to the sense of humor, as a vehicle to demystify the technique and technicians.

The graphic option takes on a crucial sense at this point: Don Víctor personifies in his own skin the heritage and, especially in the booklets, embodies the surface on which the moth nests, which is bathed by moisture or affected by fissures and then repaired and which receives layers of paint. It is the heritage material itself that is subject to deterioration, cures and treatments, which is assumed by the graphic designer (Jiráfica) with great skill. (Figure 4)

The technique turns into a simple human creation, reasonably accessible to all, and the technicians in ordinary people, in companions of adventures that unleash their experiences in the patrimonial environment of Cuenca.

#### 5. THE LANGUAGE AND THE CONTENT

The idea of developing a tool for the maintenance of the built heritage that had its final concretion in 2018, with the culmination of the maintenance booklets, had more than one attempt, and more than one predecessor. However, during the creative process, the need for a generic story about the importance of applying systematic and methodical maintenance processes in the buildings of Cuenca germinated, while the booklets were developed with the technical support of conservation experts of heritage and graphic design, the first introductory document on the topic of Preventive Conservation came to light, as is the cartoon of “The Adventures of Don Víctor.”

The cartoon appeals not only to local and colloquial forms of expression, but also to technical terms that are commonly used by masons and teachers in the region. The sense of humor - understood as a value of the local culture - is interwoven intermittently with the messages, which strengthens the link with the documents. The Adventures of Don Víctor tell a simple and linear story with a happy ending: A common citizen from Cuenca (Don Víctor) who tries to solve the technical problems of his house in an ingenious, but not very technical way, until a heroine appears (the Architect, the girl of Don Víctor), a young architect who accompanies him in the unfolding of the comic until the end and that helps him to take a better look at the city, its values and its problems, while Don Víctor is increasingly seduced by the beauty (hers and the local heritage’s). The happy ending is concretized with a strengthened friendship, and above all with a clear idea of how to assume - with expert technical support, when necessary - the responsibility of operating on the built cultural heritage of Cuenca.

#### 6. RESULTS

##### 6.1 The products of the Don Víctor 2007-2017

The graphic proposal developed by the group of designers Jiráfica: Story Factory, in close coordination with the research project team vlrCPM, started from the objective of creating documents that are welcomed by all the social sectors involved. Even by children, who could learn from an early age and in a playful way, about the importance of built heritage and some of its particularities. The final result was, as Barsallo explains, “a kind, accessible document, in many ways jocular and caricatural, but at the same time rigorous and clear” (Barsallo 2020), which has allowed it to be well received by the local community and, more specifically, by the inhabitants of the neighborhoods.

The common message in all the documents of the Don Víctor series, which include the comic “The Adventures of Don Víctor”, presentations for various audiences, and finally the “Do it yourself” booklets, reiterates the starting point of conservation and preventive maintenance “prevention is better than cure”. Currently the series has 12 booklets focused on the most characteristic elements of the heritage buildings of Cuenca and the traditional architecture of the southern part of the country.

The booklet signed with the number “0” intends to introduce the reader in the management of the Booklets, emphasizing maintenance practices as an alternative to ensure adequate conditions of stability and use of buildings, while avoiding deterioration and consequent loss of their qualities and integrity. This booklet “0” also presents a glossary of the main constitutive elements of traditional architecture, obviously expressed in specific technical terms, but taking care to ensure that its description is as concrete and simple as possible, accompanied by a graphic scheme developed with a lot of neatness, so that it expresses clearly and simply what it seeks to demonstrate. In addition to the “0” booklet, the series includes eleven booklets of elements typical of local architecture: Woodwork, Roofs, Walls, Lime and mud plasters, Stone coverings, Ornamental elements, Paintings, Floors, Ceilings, Stairs and Interior mezzanines and Balconies. (Figure 5)

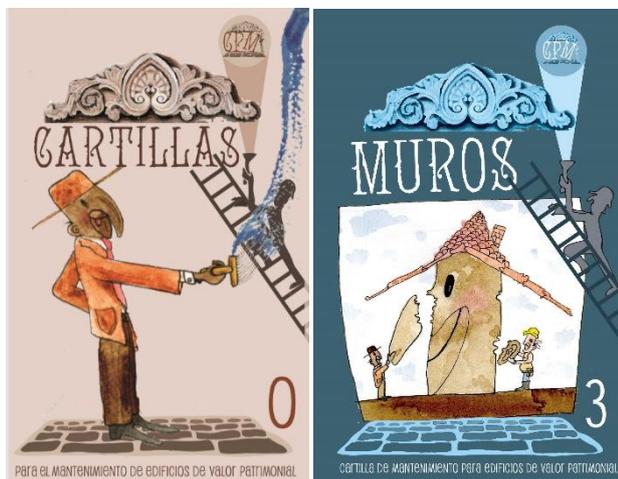


Figure 5. The covers of the maintenance booklets.

Source: Booklet for the maintenance of buildings of Patrimonial value. “Do it yourself” 2017.

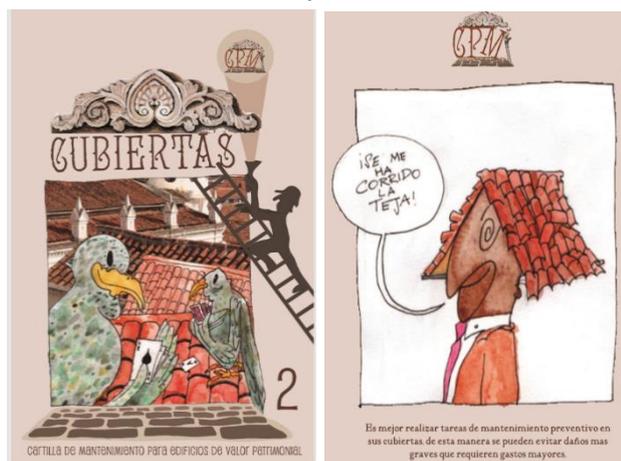


Figure 6. Maintenance chart N°2. Roofs.

Source: Booklet for the maintenance of buildings of Patrimonial value. “Do It Yourself”, 2017.

The general scheme that all the cards follow includes the approach and a graphic glossary of its main components; the identification of the problems and the proposed solution for each of them; a set of recommendations emphasizing periodic maintenance and monitoring practices, as well as security for the owner. By way of conclusion and as a means of raising awareness, each booklet includes a short text that aims to guide the owner towards a set of good practices in the management of heritage assets. As an example, the text and image of booklet No. 2 are cited. Roofs (Figure 6).

It is better to perform preventive maintenance tasks on your roofs; this way you can avoid more serious damage that require higher expenses. (Astudillo, et al 2017)

## 6.2 Local dissemination

At the local level, the dissemination of the Do It Yourself Maintenance booklet series was carried out in the traditional neighborhood of San Roque, after the heritage building maintenance campaign carried out in 2014. This Campaign and its prior process, which lasted several months, contributed to strengthening the rapprochement with the community and the recovery of the confidence of the owners and neighbors in the institutions, so that the delivery of the cards had a high degree of receptivity.

In the processes carried out as part of the monitoring and control phase, the comparison of the results of the campaign with the state of the buildings some time later showed that the owners continued to carry out maintenance actions, such as cleaning of roofs, painting of facades, etc., demonstrating an interesting change in attitude, not only in relation to maintenance, but also to the valuation of their properties.

A second delivery of the booklets was held in the Las Herrerías neighborhood, prior to the development of the building maintenance campaign carried out in 2018. Unlike for the first experience in San Roque, this time the cards were disseminated during the stage of diagnosis and planning of the Campaign. Because the control and monitoring phase is still in process, it is not possible to elaborate the results achieved. With the previous experience of San Roque as a reference, and with the approach to the neighbors of the Las Herrerías neighborhood, it can be concluded that the booklets were received with curiosity and interest by those involved in the process.

## 6.3 The BAQ prize 2018 (honorable mention)

The “Do It Yourself Booklets for the maintenance of buildings of heritage value” were presented at the Pan American Architecture Biennial of Quito BAQ2018, in the category Theory, History and Criticism of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape, obtaining the National Mention BAQ 2018.

The mention given emphasizes the real contribution of the publication to the field of built heritage, delivering a pertinent lesson when generating participatory research processes, whose purpose is the conservation and maintenance of heritage as a fundamental aspect to ensure the survival of local identities , while spreading knowledge and criteria, subtly but drastically breaking the distance between the technical, complex and specialized, and the daily life of the owners and users of the heritage, who live and interact with it.

The context in which the expressive graphic story and the text of the books are developed is none other than the city of Cuenca, Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 1999, urged by a comprehensive project of continuous maintenance and scheduled for the conservation of its Historical Center. Also urged by social activation in the tasks of its care, and in citizen awareness of its values and attributes. A context that is not alien to the change that suggests social and economic development, not always well understood, and where pressures of all kinds, especially those in the economic order, have induced the change of typologies, the alteration of the section morphology, population loss and gentrification, progressive deterioration of the fifth facade, drastic changes in use, etc.

<http://www.arquitecturapanamericana.com/?s=cartillas>

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The Adventures of Don Víctor and the Booklets for the Maintenance of buildings of Patrimonial value of the city of Cuenca, in Ecuador, surpass their status as a product to become a true creative process of developing a way of communication with the communities, which is born of the identification, more than a decade ago, of the existence of an abyss between the technicians and the users or inhabitants of the heritage (owners, tenants, etc.). In this process have been combined technical aspirations, knowledge of the local culture and its forms of expression, linguistic efforts that stimulate facilitated communication, knowledge of heritage and a very important dose of creativity.

The format of the documents invites them to be explored and read and converts it into a product that is not easily disposed of, as it brings about appreciation and care. Its tradition in English for the purpose of printing in Belgium and recognition at an International Architecture Biennial are clear signs of the need of the heritage for this type of products to reduce the gap between technicians and society. But probably the most important result achieved with these products has been measured in the reaction and enthusiasm with which the local inhabitants of heritage neighborhoods, in which the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial university project is held, in alliance with local municipal governments, have welcomed these products.

The booklet and the comic strip of Don Víctor have been products that stimulate dialogue between the parties involved about the preservation of heritage. The dialogue thus understood, has been erected as the foundation to facilitate co-creation and co-design processes, which have been launched especially in the last experiences of working with the communities that developed in las Herrerías (2018), Susudel's house-hacienda (2019) and in the process that is underway, which studies the San Francisco neighborhood of Oña aiming at a new work experience shared between institutions and community, led by the FAUC School of Architecture and Urbanism and the Ciudad Patrimonio Mundial Project of the University of Cuenca.

From the experiences developed in the maintenance campaigns of heritage buildings in San Roque and Las Herrerías, the favorable reception of the neighbors towards the Don Víctor Comics and Maintenance Booklets Do it yourself, evidencing, especially in the case of San Roque, what the development of good conservation and maintenance practices by the owners of the buildings.

Indeed, the developed graphic concept, as well as the use of simple and colloquial texts, while still being rigorous and precise, have had an impact on citizens, generating a first-hand manual, useful to direct the actions of the owners on their heritage assets, approaching in this way the processes and technical guidelines to the daily lives of those who inhabit and/or use the built heritage.

The incorporation of written and graphic glossaries, as well as the insertion of ideas on the importance of heritage and the elements that are part of buildings, have contributed to raising awareness and educating citizens about heritage issues: materiality, values, authenticity, integrity, and more terms are gradually being coined, not only in the lexicon, but also in the understanding of neighborhood neighbors.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight how heritage can be a sector that strongly stimulates creativity. Understanding heritage as a resource for social development is not only considered as a set of elements of the past conducive to be included in tourist circuits, but as the essence of creative processes for the re-consolidation of local cultures, for the search for new social or economic opportunities, or even, as in this case, for the generation of products that include art and creativity as new territories of action, which invest in the wellbeing of society.

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