



Faculty of Legal Sciences

School of International Studies

**Urban Diplomacy in Cuenca's Development toward
a Smart and Sustainable City Model in Ecuador
(2022 - 2025)**

**Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in
International Studies**

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Urban Diplomacy in Cuenca's Development toward a Smart and Sustainable City Model in Ecuador (2022–2025)

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between Cuenca's urban diplomacy and its alignment with a Smart and Sustainable City (SSC) model in Ecuador during the 2022–2025 period. To this end, this research examined how the international activities of the Decentralized Autonomous Municipal Government of Cuenca relate to the dimensions, sub-dimensions, and categories of the SSC model based on the UN's United for Smart and Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) framework. The methodology involved a mixed exploratory-descriptive approach with an emphasis on qualitative analysis, triangulating results from techniques such as literature review, case study, and perception surveys administered to key stakeholders in the sector. The findings revealed a growing trend in urban diplomacy initiatives, primarily linked to the Economy dimension, followed by Environment and, Society and Culture, identifying these as a real starting point for Cuenca's development in alignment with the model. However, a higher level of coordination between these initiatives and local governance is required to consolidate their impact.

Keywords: diplomacy, international cooperation, smart city, sustainability, urban development

Diplomacia Urbana en el Desarrollo de Cuenca hacia un Modelo de Ciudad Inteligente y Sostenible del Ecuador (Periodo 2022 – 2025)

RESUMEN

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la vinculación de la diplomacia urbana de Cuenca y su orientación hacia un modelo de Ciudad Inteligente y Sostenible (CIS) en el Ecuador durante el periodo 2022–2025. Para ello, se examinó cómo la actividad internacional del Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Municipal de Cuenca se relaciona con las dimensiones, sub-dimensiones y categorías del modelo CIS, basado en el marco Unidos por Ciudades Inteligentes y Sostenibles (U4SSC) de la ONU. La metodología empleada implicó un enfoque mixto de tipo exploratorio-descriptivo con énfasis en el análisis cualitativo, donde se triangularon los resultados provenientes de técnicas como la revisión de literatura, el estudio de caso y la aplicación de encuestas de percepción a actores clave del área. Los hallazgos evidenciaron una tendencia creciente en las acciones de diplomacia urbana, vinculadas principalmente a la dimensión de Economía, seguida de Medio Ambiente y, Sociedad y Cultura, identificándose como un punto de partida real para el desarrollo de Cuenca en alineación al modelo. Sin embargo, se requiere un mayor nivel de articulación de estas acciones con la gestión local para consolidar su impacto.

Palabras clave: diplomacia, cooperación internacional, ciudad inteligente, sostenibilidad, desarrollo urbano