



**Faculty of Legal Sciences**

**School of International Studies**

Social Impact of the Gentrification Process in the  
Historic Center of Cuenca-Ecuador, as a consequence of  
Immigration

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To me, for trying again, for not giving up despite the fear and for moving forward, trusting in myself.

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## **Social Impact of the Gentrification Process in the Historic Center of Cuenca- Ecuador, as a Consequence of Immigration**

### **ABSTRACT**

Gentrification, as a process of urban transformation that socially and culturally reconfigures historic spaces, is the central focus of this research, which aims to analyze its social impact on the Historic Center of Cuenca, Ecuador, as a consequence of immigration, by identifying the main transformations in the area and the perceptions of residents and merchants regarding the social, economic and cultural changes generated by this process. The study adopts a critical perspective of urban transformations, employing concepts such as privileged mobility, geographic arbitrage, subordinated financialization and de-homing to understand the local phenomenon as part of the global dynamics of urban restructuring. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through sixteen semi-structured interviews with residents and merchants in the area, complemented by non-participant observation conducted at various locations within the Historic Center. The results reveal an increase in rental prices, the closure of traditional businesses, the displacement of local population toward peripheral areas, and the reorientation of urban space toward tourist consumption, driven by the arrival of foreign retirees with greater purchasing power. At the social level, a deterioration of neighborhood coexistence and weak neighborhood organization were identified, while at the socio-emotional level participants expressed feelings of uncertainty and a progressive loss of sense of belonging. The findings confirm that gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca operates in a heterogeneous manner and responds to transnational dynamics that deepen inequalities and affect the local population's right to remain in their own territory.

**Keywords:** displacement, gentrification, heritage, historic center, human mobility, immigration, social impact.

## **Impacto Social del Proceso de Gentrificación en el Centro Histórico de Cuenca- Ecuador, como consecuencia de la Inmigración**

### **RESUMEN**

La gentrificación, como proceso de transformación urbana que reconfigura social y culturalmente los espacios históricos, es el eje central de esta investigación, que tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto social en el Centro Histórico de Cuenca, Ecuador, como consecuencia de la inmigración, identificando las principales transformaciones del sector y las percepciones de habitantes y comerciantes sobre los cambios sociales, económicos y culturales generados por este proceso. El estudio parte desde una perspectiva crítica sobre las transformaciones urbanas, empleando conceptos como la movilidad privilegiada, el arbitraje geográfico, la financiarización subordinada y la deshogarización, para comprender el fenómeno local como parte de las dinámicas globales de reestructuración urbana. Desde un enfoque cualitativo, la recolección de datos se realizó mediante dieciséis entrevistas semiestructuradas a habitantes y comerciantes del sector, complementadas con observación no participante en distintos puntos del Centro Histórico. Los resultados evidencian un encarecimiento de arriendos, el cierre de negocios tradicionales, el desplazamiento de población local hacia las periferias y la reorientación del espacio hacia el consumo turístico, impulsada por la llegada de jubilados extranjeros con mayor poder adquisitivo. A nivel social, se identificó un deterioro de la convivencia barrial y una organización vecinal débil, mientras que en el ámbito socioemocional los participantes expresaron sentimientos de incertidumbre y pérdida progresiva del sentido de pertenencia. Los hallazgos confirman que la gentrificación en el Centro Histórico de Cuenca opera de forma heterogénea y responde a lógicas transnacionales que profundizan las desigualdades y afectan el derecho de la población local a permanecer en su propio territorio.

**Palabras clave:** desplazamiento, gentrificación, patrimonio, centro histórico, movilidad humana, inmigración, impacto social.

## **1. Introduction**

Gentrification has been consolidated in recent decades as a key process for understanding contemporary urban transformations, especially in cities where both national and international migratory flows are linked with real estate investment and tourism activities. The concept was introduced by Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe the changes observed in working-class neighborhoods in London; however, over time, its use has expanded to diverse contexts, including those of the Global South (Garnier, 2017). In Latin America, gentrification is often associated with the patrimonialization of historic centers, the arrival of migrants with high purchasing power, the commodification of housing, and the implementation of urban policies aimed at increasing land value.

In this context, the Historic Center of Cuenca represents a relevant case of analysis. After its declaration as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999, this area has experienced, since the mid-2000s, a sustained increase in foreign immigrants, mainly retirees from the United States and Europe, attracted by the city's heritage value, climate, cost of living and urban services (Hayes, 2020). The arrival of these new residents, along with the growth of tourism, the expansion of short-term rental accommodations, and heritage conservation policies, has contributed to real estate revaluation processes that have progressively transformed the social dynamics of the historic center.

These transformations have had direct effects on the local population. The increase in land and housing prices, the reduction of the resident population, and the displacement of informal merchants have altered the social dynamics of the sector and generated tensions between local residents and new foreign residents Hayes & Celleri, (2023). Income differences between foreign retirees and households in Cuenca also affect the possibilities of lower-income sectors to remain in the historic center (Hayes, 2020).

Beyond its theoretical relevance, the study of gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca is significant due to its effects on the daily lives of the local population. Urban revaluation processes not only affect land use and real estate dynamics, but also the ways in which space is inhabited and the social relations that develop within this sector (Baringo Ezquerro, 2013; Davidson, 2009). In this context, this research seeks to analyze, from a qualitative approach, the social impact of the gentrification process in the Historic Center of Cuenca as a consequence of immigration, based on the experiences and perceptions of residents and

merchants, in order to understand the extent to which these transformations generate benefits, tensions or inequalities.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and State of the Art**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 Human Mobility and Privileged Mobility**

Human mobility constitutes a broad conceptual framework for understanding the population displacement processes, which result from the interaction of various personal, social, structural, and circumstantial factors that influence the decision to migrate and operate at different scales. These processes encompass different forms of mobility, both internal and international, as well as those that are voluntary or forced (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020). However, these forms of mobility do not occur under equal conditions, as they are shaped by economic, social and geopolitical inequalities.

In this context, Croucher (2012) introduces the concept of privileged mobility to refer to the movement of people with high economic and symbolic capital, whose migration trajectories are facilitated not only by their individual resources but also by the hegemonic position occupied by their countries of origin within the international system, granting them relative advantages in their destination territories. This privilege is sustained through institutional frameworks, such as visa regimes and migration policies that selectively facilitate certain types of mobility while restricting others based on nationality and socioeconomic status (Cranston & Duplan, 2023).

In the case of Cuenca, Hayes (2014) explains that this mobility responds to a strategy of geographic arbitrage, through which migrants from countries such as the United States and Canada generate their income in high-cost countries while transferring their consumption to lower-cost locations such as Ecuador, thereby maximizing their quality of life. The arrival of these agents of gentrification can contribute to the revaluation of urban space, distorting real estate market prices, and deepening socio-spatial inequalities in receiving cities (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2016).

### **2.1.2 Conceptualization of Gentrification**

The concept of gentrification was first introduced by the sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe and analyze the socio-spatial transformations observed in working-class neighborhoods of London's East End, where the progressive arrival of higher-income middle classes led to the displacement of the working population, transforming their homes into upscale residences, increasing land values, and creating a new social and residential composition (Garnier, 2017). Since then, the term has established itself as a central concept for understanding contemporary processes of urban restructuring.

Various authors agree that gentrification is a process of social and real estate transformation that generates elitization, increases in land value and the displacement of the original residents (Ruiz Solano, 2016). Garcia Marco (2015) also conceives it as a class conflict, which in extreme cases can lead to supergentrification, understood as an advanced phase in which already affluent neighborhoods are transformed into even more exclusive enclaves for very high-income sectors, characterized by greater private financing and deeper social transformations (Lees, 2003, cited in Podagrosi et al., 2011; Delgadillo-Polanco, 2010). Far from being a phenomenon exclusive to major global cities, supergentrification has expanded to medium-sized cities and suburban areas, where affected neighborhoods tend to exhibit less racial diversity, highlighting its role as a mechanism of urban segregation (Lauermann et al., 2025).

Oviedo Costales et al. (2020) argue that gentrification involves the displacement of vulnerable populations as a consequence of urban gentrification. According to Delgadillo-Polanco (2010), this phenomenon entails the revaluation of central neighborhoods traditionally inhabited by lower-income classes which, after being rehabilitated, are repurposed for housing and consumption by groups with greater purchasing power. An analysis of these perspectives reveals similarities regarding the fact that gentrification combines physical, social and economic transformations that profoundly alter both the residential fabric and the identity of the affected neighborhoods.

To understand the causes of gentrification, studies on the phenomenon emphasize two predominant theoretical approaches within the literature: supply-side and demand-side. As explained by López-Morales et al. (2016), the supply-side approach, based on the rent gap theory proposed by Neil Smith in 1979, understands gentrification as the result of a

significant difference between the current value of a property and its potential value, which encourages real estate reinvestment in central areas with the possibility of capturing higher rents. For its part, the demand-side approach emphasizes the sociocultural transformations of middle-class sectors, linked to changes in urban lifestyles, new labor dynamics, and a stronger preference for inhabiting central neighborhoods with historical and cultural value. As the author points out, far from being opposed, both approaches allow us to understand, in a complementary way, gentrification as a process that articulates the logic of the real estate market with social and cultural changes in the ways people inhabit the city.

This phenomenon has evolved in scale, intensity and internationalization over time. López Morales (2009) notes that in the early 1970, the first manifestations occurred in a limited and localized manner within certain neighborhoods, while in the following decades it began to be integrated into urban development strategies promoted through public-private partnerships and state policies. Beginning in the 1990s, as the author mentions, the process consolidated into a third phase, with greater participation by financial capital and the expansion of new modalities, demonstrating its global reach as a mechanism for urban restructuring and capital accumulation. In this contemporary stage, the reorientation of accumulation towards urban space, land valorization associated with the rent gap, and urban entrepreneurship strategies have driven real estate projects aimed at higher-income sectors and a reorganization of urban space in different cities around the world (Alexandri, 2016).

### **2.1.3 Transnational Gentrification**

In this regard, as noted by Marín et al. (2019), gentrification cannot be understood solely as a local phenomenon, but must be analyzed through the logic of global investment and real estate speculation, where cities in the Global South become scenarios of transnational capital that seek profitability through land revaluation and the transformation of the urban fabric, understood as the spatial, social and functional structure that organizes life in neighborhoods.

In the current context, these dynamics are essential for understanding what is occurring in cities of the Global South, where the arrival of foreigners with greater purchasing power directly impacts real estate markets. Hayes (2020), through the concept of transnational gentrification, describes how these migratory flows, mostly originating from developed countries, generate pressure on housing prices and contribute to the displacement and exclusion of the local population. This urban restructuring is also linked to global investment

dynamics that create differential advantages in access to land and housing, influencing the segmentation of the real estate market and the transformation of residential and commercial uses (Janoschka et al., 2014).

#### **2.1.4 Subordinate Financialization**

Complementarily, Hayes & Celleri (2023) develop the concept of subordinate financialization to describe the asymmetric integration of urban economies of the Global South into transnational capital flows, particularly those linked to migration. This process reorients local real estate markets toward the interests and payment capacity of foreign actors, generating segmentation, rising housing costs, and new forms of residential exclusion.

#### **2.1.5 Urban Economic Circuits and the Rent Gap in Latin America**

Although gentrification has been widely analyzed at the global level, specific conceptual frameworks are required to understand it within the context of Latin American cities, since urban processes and realities differ significantly from those observed in the Anglo-Saxon world (Janoschka et al., 2014). For this reason, Richmond & Garmany (2024) propose expanding the rent gap theory by relating it to Milton Santos's (1979) thesis on the two circuits of the urban economy, which posits that in Latin American cities, an upper circuit, linked to formal capital and high profitability, coexists with a lower circuit that integrates small-scale economic activities focused on the subsistence of lower-income sectors. From this perspective, the territorial consolidation of the lower circuit may limit or delay the expansion of the upper circuit, which would explain why income gaps do not necessarily lead to massive gentrification processes in Latin America (Richmond & Garmany, 2024).

#### **2.1.6 Sociospatial Consequences of Gentrification**

The consequences of gentrification do not occur as an isolated or singular process, but rather simultaneously across the social, cultural, and economic spheres. At the social level, the most significant impact is the displacement of original residents. In this regard, Phillips et al. (2021) propose a reconceptualization of this phenomenon, viewing it as a multidimensional and temporal process; that it is not limited to physical eviction, but also includes constant pressures such as rising rental costs, the non-renewal of housing contracts, and the general increase in the cost of living.

Displacement occurs either directly through formal evictions or indirectly, when families are forced to leave due to constant economic pressures (Navarrete et al., 2025). Although both lead to the displacement of the original residents, indirect displacement is often more difficult to detect; therefore, it has a more profound impact on the social reconfiguration of urban space. According to these authors, the process also goes through three temporal phases: first, displacement associated with urban divestment; second, displacement directly linked to capital reinvestment through gentrification; and a third stage, in which the sustained increase in prices hinders and restricts access for lower-income sectors.

Other approaches further develop this idea. Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020) argue that displacement is, in essence, a process of de-homing or "un-homing". This concept describes the breakdown of connections between people and the place they inhabit, based on a series of micro-events that unfold over time, generating states of anxiety, confusion, and a deep sense of loss among those affected. From this perspective, displacement is not only an event of direct expulsion, but also a gradual process through which neighborhoods become progressively more hostile to their residents, undermining their right to live and remain within them.

From a phenomenological perspective, Davidson (2009) expands this interpretation by drawing on Lefebvre's (1974) distinction between abstract space and lived space, arguing that displacement implies a profound rupture in the bond between people and the space they inhabit. While abstract space responds to technical, economic and capitalist planning logics, lived space is constructed through everyday experiences, social relations and shared meanings. Under advanced capitalism, the predominance of abstract space transforms urban space into a commodity, generating symbolic and material dispossession that particularly affects groups with less capacity to influence the configuration of urban space, which translates into forms of indirect displacement and a loss of belonging (Baringo Ezquerro, 2013; Davidson, 2009).

### **2.1.7 Urban Transformations and the Symbolic Preparation of Space**

These dynamics of both symbolic and material dispossession are particularly evident in cities across Spain and Latin America. Janoschka et al. (2014) explain that the symbolic preparation of the space is a key element of gentrification, especially through heritage

renewal policies aimed at attracting higher-income populations to the historic centers. On the other hand, Delgado (2008, as cited in Janoschka et al., 2014) defines this process as "artistization", a concept referring to the corporate and consumerist reappropriation of urban centers through public policies that facilitate the transformation of these spaces into environments oriented towards consumption and economic profitability.

These transformations are linked to neoliberal urban planning policies that combine privatization, control, and the depoliticization of public space under market-oriented planning, which in the Latin American context is reflected in the expulsion of street vendors, homeless people, and stigmatized populations through urban "revitalization" programs and security policies (Janoschka et al., 2014). For, Díaz-Parra & Cuberos-Gallardo (2018), these dynamics represent a form of social sanitization that reconfigures the city according to its profitability, implemented through urban strategies that exclude those who do not fit the profile of the new desired resident. As the authors argue, these mechanisms eliminate legitimate ways of inhabiting the city, affect everyday practices and fracture community ties. This process is further reinforced by the commodification of social housing, which remains insufficient to guarantee the permanence of lower-income households in central areas, thereby contributing to the indirect displacement and exclusion of the working-class population (Díaz-Parra & Cuberos-Gallardo, 2018).

### **2.1.8 Urban Resistance as a Consequence**

Gentrification cannot be understood only as a spontaneous process of urban transformation, but rather as the result of the interaction between public policies, urban planning and local social dynamics. Government decisions and land-use regulations may encourage the revaluation of certain neighborhoods while generating processes of exclusion that affect vulnerable sectors. In response to these transformations, residents develop strategies of resistance and collective mobilization in an effort to defend their permanence and preserve community ties, demonstrating that urban reconfiguration is continuously redefined through the tension between institutional management and citizen action (Pérez Gañán & Rodríguez-Fariña, 2018).

In this context, squatting can be understood as a form of collective action that challenges the capitalist logic of private property and real estate speculation (Rivero & Abasolo, 2010). Beyond the physical occupation of buildings, it represents a form of appropriation of urban

space in response to processes of exclusion derived from the capitalist restructuring of cities (Martínez López, 2003). These movements prioritize use value over exchange value, making visible the denial of the right to the city (Orive Agriano & Rojas Arredondo, 2021). However, its relationship with gentrification is ambivalent, as their countercultural practices may indirectly contribute to the symbolic revaluation of degraded areas, generating what Morell (2014) calls urban labor, understood as the production of symbolic value that can later be capitalized upon by real estate actors. Thus, squatting can function as an early indicator of urban transformations rather than as their direct cause (Vivant and Charmes, 2008, cited in Tutor Anton & Hernández Cordero, 2023).

### **2.1.9 Historic Center of Cuenca**

The Historic Center of Cuenca, covering an area of 224.14 hectares, constitutes the setting where patrimonialization, land revaluation and international immigration converge. It comprises a historic core, special areas and an archaeological area, as well as a landscape protection zone (Cardoso Martínez et al., 2017). Its physical boundaries are defined to the south by the Tomebamba River ravine, a natural border between the historic city and El Ejido; to the north by the Cullca hill and Héroes de Verdeloma Avenue; to the east by Huayna Cápac Avenue; and to the west by Coronel Tálbot Street, which represents the most diffuse border due to the absence of a natural element clearly delimiting the transition (Autonomous Government Descentralizado Municipal del Cantón Cuenca, n.d.). Its urban grid structure, inherited from the Spanish colonial layout of 1557, is organized around Parque Calderón and extends toward traditional neighborhoods such as San Blas, San Sebastián, El Vado, and Todos Santos, areas that have historically structured the urban life of the sector (Cardoso Martínez et al., 2017; Autonomous Decentralized Municipal Government of the Canton of Cuenca, n.d.).

By the end of the twentieth century, the area concentrated nearly 40,000 residents and around 600 artisan workshops, reflecting a strong residential and productive presence. However, between 1982 and 1990 the population of the Historic Center decline from 41,474 to 27,047 residents, representing an annual decrease rate of 2.2%, a trend that continues (Municipal Decentralized Autonomous Government of the Canton of Cuenca, n.d.). This residential decline resulted from the progressive replacement of housing by commercial and service activities, a process that intensified following its designation as a World Heritage Site in 1999. The deterioration of environmental conditions caused by excessive vehicular traffic,

noise pollution and the scarcity of green spaces are some of the factors that discouraged the permanence of the traditional population, many of whom chose to relocate to expanding peripheral areas (Cardoso Martínez et al., 2017).

Since the mid-2000s, the growing influx of foreign retirees attracted by the city's heritage and cultural value, climate and low cost of living has reshaped Cuenca (Hayes, 2020). This process is closely linked to touristification, which transforms urban centers into nodes of tourist consumption and leads to the gradual displacement of traditional residential uses (Janoschka, 2016; Cocola-Gant, 2018). Concurrently, the rise and expansion of short-term rental platforms have intensified this situation by reducing the supply of permanent housing and driving up real estate market prices (Wachsmuth & Weisler, 2018). Due to the combination of patrimonialization, privileged migration, touristification and land revaluation policies, the Historic Center has become a space of dispute and tension, where the economic benefits derived from urban renewal coexist with displacement, the fragmentation of the social fabric, and profound transformations in the ways of inhabiting the space.

## **2.2 State of the Art**

In recent decades, gentrification has established itself as one of the key concepts for understanding urban transformations, especially in cities where migratory flows, investment and tourism are linked to local processes of social transformation, as cities are integrated into global dynamics of real estate valorization and receive international migration flows that reconfigure social and spatial structures.

### **2.2.1 Gentrification in Latin America**

In Latin America, gentrification develops within contexts marked by deep socio-spatial inequalities inherited from historical processes of urbanization, coloniality, and urban segregation. Various studies have shown that public and private interventions in infrastructure, transportation, and urban planning can promote processes of land revaluation that transform the social composition of neighborhoods.

In their analysis of neighborhoods in Santiago de Chile, Marín et al. (2019) observe how state investment in transportation, combined with more flexible urban regulations,

encouraged densification and real estate development that significantly altered the urban fabric. According to the authors, these changes not only affect the physical environment, but also generate symbolic disputes that directly impact the neighborhood's identity, cultural practices, and sense of belonging. Along the same lines, other studies in the region link gentrification to processes of touristification and urban segregation; in the case of Lima, Rodríguez Rivero et al. (2023) argue that these transformations deepen social fractures through a cultural dimension marked by racism and rejection of indigenous peoples. This exclusion materializes through unequal access to public space and an evident gap in the quality of urban infrastructure and services available to different sectors of the Peruvian capital.

Similarly, Nuñez Suárez et al. (2025) identify that in Bogotá urban segregation is not exclusive to the peripheries, but also fractures the historic center, where opposing realities coexist, such as “pagadarios” for the vulnerable population alongside Airbnb-type accommodations aimed at higher-income sectors, which highlights a social inequality gap resulting from gentrification processes fueled by neoliberal urban planning. Meanwhile, Ribeiro dos Santos (2022) analyzes the Brazilian case, where the touristification of heritage centers in cities such as Salvador, Ouro Preto, Olinda, São Luís and Goiás acts as the main driver of gentrification. In these contexts, the commodification of heritage and the growth of tourism reinforce urban inequalities and displace lower-income populations, as heritage conservation and tourism promotion policies prioritize profitability and aesthetics over the needs of the local population, affecting informal commerce and increasing land prices.

Furthermore, the physical conditions of these historic centers, such as cobblestone streets, steep slopes, and a lack of accessibility, hinder the daily mobility of residents, especially those with disabilities. This demonstrates that urban transformations have been designed to meet the needs of the visitor, while concerns regarding the quality of life of its residents remain secondary.

### **2.2.2 Heritage Preservation, Tourism, and Gentrification in Historic Centers**

The link between gentrification, heritage and tourism in historic centers has been widely documented in different cities around the world. In the European case, Mazorra Rodríguez (2023) analyzes the transformation of the Lavapiés neighborhood in the historic center of Madrid, demonstrating that public rehabilitation policies, together with state investment in

infrastructure and cultural facilities, encouraged the arrival of professionals and tourists, increased land values, progressively displaced vulnerable sectors, and also generated population resistance. These dynamics consolidated the transition toward a dual-city model characterized by growing socioeconomic inequality in the metropolis. Although the context is different, these transformations reflect how historic centers tend to become attractive spaces for tourism and investment, as is the case in Latin American cities such as Quito and Cuenca, where public intervention in heritage areas has generated processes of progressive social exclusion.

In the Ecuadorian case, Oviedo Costales et al. (2020) analyze the gentrification process in the historic center of Quito, showing how public and private investment, together with the arrival of higher-income groups and the implementation of Special Tourism Zones, in the Historic Center and the La Mariscal neighborhood, promoted land valorization, the transformation of the urban landscape, and the displacement of working-class residents. These policies produced a significant depopulation of the historic center, whose population decreased from 81,384 inhabitants in 1990 to 40,913 in 2010, as well as the forced relocation of more than 5,200 informal merchants, affecting more than 320,000 people linked to the informal economy. The authors point out that this process transforms housing into spaces of consumption and generates a fragmentation between the historic center inhabited by residents and that frequented by visitors, with the active participation of governments, where poverty is rendered invisible in order to maintain the idealized image of the heritage city.

Durán et al. (2022) mention that during the Citizens' Revolution, the Ecuadorian government was the principal driver of gentrification in Quito. Through urban investment policies, patrimonialization and new land-use regulations, the government revalued strategic areas of the city; however, these measures ultimately displaced lower-income residents and exacerbated the exclusion of working-class communities. This demonstrates that urban policies, far from being neutral, primarily benefit middle- and high-income sectors by restricting the access of the popular classes to the city's central areas. This recurring pattern in studies across Latin America emphasizes the role of the State as a determining actor in gentrification processes, a dynamic that is similarly reflected in the case of Cuenca.

### **2.2.3. Transnational Gentrification and Urban Transformations in Cuenca**

The case of Cuenca, Ecuador, has become a key reference within debates on transnational gentrification. Various studies have sought to understand how this phenomenon manifests and what its social and urban implications are. Among them, the work of Hayes (2020) on Cuenca stands out, revealing that after the declaration of the Historic Center of Cuenca as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, the city has experienced an accelerated real estate revaluation, associated with touristification and the arrival of foreign immigrants, mostly retirees from the United States and Europe attracted by the low cost of living, tranquility and cultural attraction. Along the same lines, Orellana-Alvear et al. (2024) point out that, over the past decade, the value per square meter in the Historic Center has increased significantly, driven both by the demand from foreign buyers with sufficient purchasing power and by the proliferation of short-term tourist rentals.

Studies on the case of Cuenca reveal that its positioning as a favorite destination for North American and European retirees has reconfigured the city's urban dynamics. Although their settlement in the Historic Center and surrounding neighborhoods has stimulated the real estate economy, it also generates tensions with the local population. Jiménez Pacheco & Marcillo Chasy (2020) analyze how, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the massive arrival of retirees has contributed to the reconfiguration of the city as a destination of "global leisure", promoting forms of "cultural rentierism" through the use of its heritage designation and cultural wealth to attract international real estate capital. Their study highlights real estate pressure especially in central areas and along the Tomebamba River, where the indirect displacement of residents occurs mainly due to the preference of owners for foreign tenants. The authors emphasize that Cuenca combines the symbolic value of heritage with migration flows of privileged people, from a coloniality of power that demonstrates how gentrification reproduces racial and cultural inequalities by granting foreign migrants a social prestige that contributes to the marginalization of the local population.

The ethnographic analysis conducted by Hayes (2020) highlights the tensions that emerged in the city following the arrival of North American citizens after the 2008 financial crisis, both in the housing market and in the displacement of informal vendors from historic spaces. One of the most representative cases is the intervention in the Plaza San Francisco, where heritage conservation projects financed with support of the Inter-American Development

Bank resulted in an exclusionary reorganization of public space that severely affected local merchants. Hayes links these dynamics to “accumulation by dispossession”, highlighting how the economic disparity between the incomes of foreign retirees, averaging USD 1,680 per month, compared to USD 733 for local families, accelerates land revaluation and displaces lower-income sectors from their own territory.

This process of subordinate financialization is clearly evidenced in the ethnographic analysis of Hayes & Celleri (2023), who documented between 2011 and 2020 how housing in Cuenca has been progressively appropriated by transnational groups with greater purchasing power. This process has been driven by policies aimed at the financialization of housing and the securitization of mortgages, supported both by remittances from Ecuadorian emigrants and by the savings of North American retirees. Under this logic, the authors interpret the phenomenon as a form of contemporary colonialism, manifested through the unequal appropriation of the historic center and the consolidation of the neighborhood known as “Gringolandia”, characterized by a high presence of American retirees where housing prices are constantly rising.

According to the authors, this scenario has been further aggravated by the flow of remittances originating from the southern region of the country; this investment directed toward construction projects in strategic areas of the city has contributed to the formation of a real estate bubble with prices that are nearly unaffordable for the local population and rank among the highest in the country. Added to this is the expansion of digital platforms such as Airbnb, which, as Orellana-Alvear et al. (2024) also argue, have transformed the traditional use of properties into temporary tourist accommodation, reducing the supply of housing for permanent residents and placing Cuenca at the center of debates on transnational gentrification and urban exclusion.

In another area, Pérez Gañán & Rodríguez-Fariña (2018) examine the skilled migration of Spanish professionals to Ecuador following the European financial crisis, showing that this flow gave rise to processes of “academic gentrification”, in which not only real estate market dynamics are involved, but also cultural and scientific production. The authors use this concept to describe how educational capital and the privilege associated with European nationality allow these migrants to occupy advantageous positions, with salaries exceeding USD 3,000 per month, compared to the precarious conditions faced by local academics. This

approach, grounded in the “coloniality of knowledge”, reveals a migratory pattern from the Global North to Ecuador that shares direct parallels with gentrification in Cuenca, including social and cultural hierarchies, as well as unequal access to resources that reinforce exclusionary social structures.

#### **2.2.4 Spatial Transformations, Heritage Policies, and Displacement in the Historic Center of Cuenca**

Cabrera-Jara & Bernal-Reino (2020) analyze the interaction between gentrification, heritage preservation, and tourism development in the Historic Center of Cuenca, demonstrating how conservation and tourism promotion policies implemented after its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site prioritized profitability and competitiveness over the needs of the local population. Programs such as the Special Plan for the Historic Center, the Ordinance for the Management and Conservation of Historic Areas, and projects supported by the Inter-American Development Bank such as Plaza San Francisco, Plaza Rotary and Mercado 9 de Octubre, led to the displacement of merchants and informal vendors, as well as rising urban land prices, transforming heritage into a space of consumption in which cultural value gives way to tourism-oriented interests. The authors point out that touristification should not be understood solely as a form of gentrification, but also as a strategy promoted by state and local policies that conceive heritage as an economic resource, shaping the historic center into a visitor-oriented space that deepens social inequalities and threatens the right to the city of those who have historically inhabited it.

Similarly, Cedillo-Mendoza et al. (2021) conducted a study on interventions in public spaces such as El Vergel and Plaza El Carbón, showing how intervention policies within the heritage area promote projects that generate gentrification, displacement, and dispossession. The research highlights a fundamental contradiction: while authorities and developers view the historic center as an asset for investment, an attraction for visitors, and a source of civic pride, for residents these spaces have become places of uncertainty. Daily coexistence must adapt to the changes produced by mass tourism, which saturate streets, plazas, commercial establishments and public spaces, forcing residents into a process of forced adaptation. Under this logic of urban marketing, heritage has increasingly been transformed into an economic resource oriented towards consumption, sacrificing local identity in favor of real estate profitability and tourism exploitation.

Recent research emphasizes that gentrification should not be understood as a linear or uniform process, but rather a heterogeneous and complex phenomenon that adopts different forms according to the local context. In a comparative study on Cuenca between 2015 and 2022, García-Cazorla et al. (2023) identified two opposing urban dynamics: one characterized by elitization on Avenida Roberto Crespo, driven by high-standard services and elite consumption; and another marked by “popularization” along Avenida Panamericana Sur, where informal commerce, mixed land use, and the resistance of historical residents persist. This contrast reveals that, in the face of pressure from tourism and foreign migration, lower-income sectors manage to adapt and contest urban space in order to avoid complete displacement, even under conditions of stigmatization.

This coexistence of these realities reflects a profound duality within the city: the capital of international migrants coexists with and overlaps the vulnerability of local residents. Complementarily, Cabrera-Jara & Bernal-Reino (2020) argue that indirect displacement and the tensions generated between residents and visitors are the result of heritage conservation policies which, together with tourism, have prioritized urban aesthetics and real estate profitability over the social fabric.

Given this complexity, the proposal by Orellana-Alvear et al. (2024) is fundamental for analyzing social impact. Unlike previous studies, this one makes gentrification visible beyond traditional architectural transformations, demonstrating that the phenomenon is also linked to invisible changes in the demographic and economic composition of neighborhoods, without necessarily altering the physical environment. Through a predictive model, the study identifies vulnerable areas using indicators such as changes in the socioeconomic profile of residents, shifts in land use, and increase in the price of housing and service costs that prioritize consumers with greater purchasing power. This research contributes preventive tools by combining census data organized at the block level with historical photographs, obtained from platforms such as Google, allowing for early identification of areas susceptible to gentrification and the implementation of mitigation policies. In this way, the study demonstrates that gentrification in the Historic Center extends beyond aesthetics to profoundly transform the city’s social and cultural structure.

Marulanda Hernandez & Martí (2019) developed a comparative analysis of resistance movements in Quito and Cuenca in order to understand how communities organize and

respond to displacements caused by gentrification processes in historic centers. In both cases, the study demonstrates that these forms of resistance can slow direct or chain displacements, but are unable to stop the constant pressure of the market and urban policies, mainly due to the lack of a strong collective identity and interpretative frameworks capable of sustaining long-term mobilization. The study draws on Marcuse's 1985 typology, distinguishing four types of displacement: direct, chain, exclusionary and pressure-driven, thereby understanding displacement as a continuous process that affects both those who are expelled and those who remain in transformed neighborhoods.

In Quito, the Eugenio de Santa Cruz y Espejo Improvement Committee emerged during the 2013 municipal elections and managed to recover six of eleven threatened homes, taking advantage of the conflict between the local and national government regarding the Casas de Embajadas project. However, once the threat was overcome, most members disengaged, revealing the organizational fragility of the movement. On the other hand, the Central Committee of Vendors of the Plaza San Francisco in Cuenca demonstrated a stronger structure due to its trajectory of more than fifty years and the coordination among five merchants' associations, although it also faced internal tensions that threatened its cohesion. In this context, the authors propose that the sustainability of these collectives depends not only on the presence of an external threat, but also on the strength of internal ties, as well as the consolidation of bonds of trust and a shared sense of community.

### **2.2.5 Gaps in the Literature and Relevance of Research**

The comparison of these cases reveals that, although gentrification in Latin America aligns with global trends, its effects are shaped by colonial legacies, inherited urban structures, and heritage management practices that frequently prioritize private interests. The result is an accumulation of economic, spatial and cultural inequalities that generate social exclusion. In this regard, studies on Quito and Cuenca demonstrate that gentrification not only involves physical displacement, but also symbolic transformations that reconfigure historic centers according to tourism-oriented interests rather than the well-being of their inhabitants.

In Cuenca, the phenomenon of gentrification forms part of more complex dynamics in which international migration, tourism and urban financialization converge under neoliberal urban policies, deepening urban transformations and accelerating social segregation. However, existing studies show that the phenomenon does not manifest uniformly; the existence of

popular appropriation practices and community resistance complicates the panorama. Despite these contributions, the literature still presents important gaps, particularly regarding the actual impact of foreign immigration on residents' living conditions and their adaptation strategies in the face of the threat of displacement. Currently, qualitative and conceptual approaches predominate, while systematic empirical evidence capable of evaluating the social and cultural impact of gentrification with greater precision remains limited. The present research seeks to contribute to this gap by combining theoretical perspectives with the analysis of local dynamics in order to understand how real estate and migratory pressure affect the social configuration of the Historic Center of Cuenca.

### **3. Methods**

The present research adopted a qualitative approach aimed at understanding how gentrification has transformed the Historic Center of Cuenca from the perspective of residents and merchants in the area. As noted by Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), this approach allows social phenomena to be analyzed from the experiences of their own actors within specific contexts, prioritizing the understanding of meanings over the measurement of frequencies. This methodological choice is pertinent for examining dynamics of displacement, touristification and foreign migration in heritage areas, where subjective experience and direct testimonies constitute irreplaceable sources of information regarding urban processes that, due to their progressive and indirect nature, are difficult to capture through quantitative instruments.

#### **3.1 Research Context and Participants**

The study was conducted in the Historic Center of Cuenca, a heritage area designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, which over the last two decades has experienced significant urban transformations associated with touristification, the arrival of foreign retirees and real estate revaluation. The research focused on two key groups: long-term residents and economic actors, primarily traditional merchants with a sustained presence in the area.

The inclusion criteria considered the participation of individuals over 20 years of age who reside or work in the different neighborhoods of the Historic Center, with a minimum permanence of five years in the area, ensuring that their testimonies reflect both gradual changes and the direct and indirect impacts derived from tourism and migration. Participants

from various sectors with differentiated dynamics were included, such as El Sagrario, Bellavista, El Vado and San Sebastián. This territorial diversity responds to the evidence presented by García-Cazorla et al. (2023), who identified differentiated processes of elitization and popularization depending on the area within the Historic Center, thereby justifying the inclusion of a territorially diverse sample to represent this heterogeneity.

Minors, tourists, temporary residents and people who did not provide authorization by signing the informed consent were excluded. In a complementary way, the El Vergel neighborhood was incorporated as an additional case study, given that it represents an area with a strong artisanal tradition that has undergone an accelerated transformation of land use towards tourism-oriented gastronomy, a phenomenon that allowed for a broader understanding of dynamics in surrounding sectors.

### **3.2 Data Collection Techniques and Instruments**

Data collection was carried out using two complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Interviews were chosen due to their capacity to provide deeper insight into the experiences and perceptions that participants attribute to the urban changes occurring in the area. Following Jansen (2013), this instrument allows for capturing the diversity of meanings within the studied reality rather than measuring numerical frequencies. Three differentiated interview guides were designed for residents, active merchants and merchants who have left the Historic Center, incorporating open-ended and closed-ended questions in order to identify and systematize participants' testimonies. The questions were organized around two central categories of analysis: human mobility and the consequences of gentrification.

The total number of interviews conducted was sixteen, distributed among eight residents, seven active merchants and one merchant who left the area. According to the criterion of informational saturation proposed by Guest et al. (2006), data collection was carried out until the testimonies no longer provide substantially new information regarding the two previously defined categories of analysis. This criterion was reached within the anticipated range of participants, supporting the adequacy of the sample in relation to the objectives of the study.

Non-participant observation was conducted in three sectors of the Historic Center characterized by differentiated dynamics: the area surrounding Parque Calderón and Calle

Larga, Plaza San Sebastián and its surroundings, and the El Vado neighborhood. Observation sessions, documented through field notes, focused on four dimensions: the type and profile of businesses present, the composition of pedestrian flows and the presence of foreigners, the condition of housing and the uses of public space, and the relationship between tourism-oriented commerce and traditional commerce. This technique complemented the interviews by allowing the perceptions of the participants to be contrasted with transformations directly observed within the urban space.

### **3.3 Research Phases**

The research was developed in four sequential phases that enabled the fulfillment of the proposed objectives.

1. **Exploratory phase:** focused on the literature review available in order to define initial categories such as migration, displacement and patrimonialization.
2. **Fieldwork phase:** consisted of conducting interviews and non-participant observation sessions within the Historic Center of Cuenca.
3. **Data processing phase:** through the transcription and organization of the collected information based on the defined categories and subcategories of analysis.
4. **Interpretation phase:** analysis and comparison of the findings with the existing literature and previous studies on gentrification in Cuenca and Latin America.

### **3.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations**

Data were analyzed through a qualitative content analysis process using a deductive approach; the categories of analysis were defined a priori based on the theoretical framework, and participants' testimonies were manually classified according to these categories and subcategories. This procedure made it possible to identify patterns, relationships and contrasts in the perceptions of the different participant groups regarding the transformations of the Historic Center of Cuenca.

For the systematization of the information, a categorization matrix was established containing the categories, subcategories and indicators used in the analysis (see Table 1). This structure allowed the data to be classified in an organized manner and in coherence with the objectives of the research.

It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations inherent to the qualitative approach employed, as this type of study does not seek to generalize findings to the entire population, but rather aims to achieve in-depth understanding of the experiences of the analyzed groups within a specific context. Likewise, because the sample focused primarily on individuals who remain in the Historic Center, the perspectives of those who have relocated to other areas are not fully represented; therefore, the actual extent of displacement may not be entirely reflected. This limitation is related to participant accessibility and should be considered when interpreting the results.

Regarding ethical aspects, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were guaranteed throughout the entire process through the use of informed consent, ensuring that the collected information would be used exclusively for academic purposes. The alphanumeric codes assigned to each participant (R for residents, M for merchants, and DM for displaced merchants) replace real names in all study records.

**Table 1**  
*Categories and Subcategories of Analysis*

Category	Concept	Subcategory	Indicators
Human Mobility	Population displacements, both internal and international, voluntary or forced, developed in contexts of inequality (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020)	Dynamics of displacement in the Historic Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrival of foreign population</li> <li>- Perception of increase in foreign residents</li> </ul>
		Mobility motivations, presence of new residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attractiveness of the Historic Center as a factor of residence</li> <li>- Cost of living as a factor of mobility or permanence</li> </ul>
Consequences of Gentrification	A process of socio-spatial transformation associated with the arrival of a population with greater purchasing power that generates land revaluation, changes in dynamics and displacement of residents (Garnier, 2017).	Social impacts on residents and merchants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in lifestyle and neighborhood coexistence</li> <li>- Difficulty in staying in the neighborhood</li> <li>- Displacement, exclusion and reduction of the traditional population</li> </ul>
		Economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rising cost of living</li> <li>- Rising house prices</li> <li>- Transformation of economic circuits (emergence of tourism-oriented businesses and replacement of traditional shops)</li> </ul>
		Social-emotional impact on residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perception of the transformation of the neighborhood (practices, uses and customs)</li> <li>- Emotional affectation (uncertainty, worry, fear and loss of belonging)</li> </ul>

#### 4. Results

The results of this study were constructed from sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted with residents and merchants from the Historic Center of Cuenca, including one merchant

who had left the area. In addition, the study was complemented by non-participant observation carried out in different sectors within the heritage area. The collected information was organized into two central categories of analysis: human mobility and the consequences of gentrification, each with its corresponding subcategories, in order to identify patterns and contrasts in the experiences of the participants. The findings are presented below in a systematized manner, accompanied by the corresponding interpretation that allows for the identification of the main patterns, the internal tensions within the data, and their relationship with the theoretical framework.

#### 4.1 Results of Interviews with Residents of the Historic Center

This section presents the results obtained from the interviews conducted with eight residents from different sectors within the Historic Center of Cuenca. The sample includes participants with different ages, occupations and lengths of residence, with a predominance of residents who have remained in the area for more than twenty years, making it possible to identify perceived changes over time. This information is organized according to the defined categories of analysis: human mobility and the consequences of gentrification, allowing different perspectives to be collected based on direct experience regarding the transformations occurring in the area (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Categorization of Participants: Residents of the Historic Center*

Code	Age	Gender	Occupation	Residence Time	Type of housing	Sector
R1	65	Male	Merchant	30 years	Own	El Sagrario
R2	59	Male	Industrial Engineer	59 years	Own	El Sagrario
R3	37	Female	Housewife	10 years	Leased	Bellavista
R4	70	Female	Secretary	70 years	Own	Bellavista
R5	37	Male	Merchant	30 years	Own	San Sebastian
R6	23	Female	Merchant	23 years	Own	El Vado
R7	51	Female	Housewife	28 years	Own	El Barranco
R8	56	Male	Merchant	35 years	Own	El Vergel

*Note:* R = interviewed resident

The sample includes seven participants who own their homes and one participant living in rented housing, a factor that should be considered when interpreting perceptions regarding rental pressure.

### 4.1.1 Human Mobility

The dominant pattern in this category is the generalized perception of a progressive decline in the resident population, characterized by the relocation of the local population toward peripheral areas and the arrival of new residents with different profiles, including both foreigners with greater purchasing power and migrants in vulnerable situations, primarily Venezuelans. This coexistence of unequal migratory flows generates dynamics of coexistence that several participants identify as a source of tension in everyday life. However, it is important to note that R3 does not identify significant changes in the composition of their neighborhood, which demonstrates the diversity that exists within the specific sector itself and confirms that the intensity of the process varies according to the specific sector of the Historic Center.

**Table 3**  
*Human Mobility in Residents of the Historic Center*

<b>Human Mobility</b>			
	<b>Displacement dynamics</b>		<b>Motivations/new residents</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q2. Changes in the neighborhood</b>	<b>Q4. Arrival and departure of residents</b>	<b>Q3. Attractions for foreigners</b>
R1	Commerce predominates; just two or three residents left.	Very few people live there; they prefer the outskirts of the city.	The tranquility of the city.
R2	The sector is purely commercial, because people abandon their homes.	Fewer houses are inhabited by locals; Venezuelan foreigners have arrived to occupy.	The proximity of the city and access to basic services.
R3	There are no changes, the neighborhood is still quiet.	Constant movement of people.	Economic opportunities, architecture, and gastronomy.
R4	Change from residential to commercial; there is purchase and renovation of houses.	Notable departure of premises to the outskirts due to the commerciality of the sector.	The tranquility of the city, its people, landscapes and architecture.
R5	Growth and evolution as a commercial sector.	Notable arrival of foreigners and investors. The homes are occupied by new residents or foreigners.	The size and accessibility of the city. The climate, the tranquility, the order and the type of people.
R6	Changes in neighborhood security, increase in foreigners.	Neighbors leave to the outskirts, looking for tranquility. There are more houses oriented to rent.	The architecture, tourist places and the tranquility of the city.
R7	Loss of its tranquility; there is more presence of Venezuelan foreigners.	Arrival of new residents; The houses are intended for temporary rentals	The tranquility and size of the city.
R8	Change of commerce, focused on gastronomy.	Mainly nationals arrive. There are more rental houses and new constructions.	Tourist areas and recognition as a cultural heritage of humanity

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; R = resident

### 4.1.2 Consequences of Gentrification

The following section presents three tables containing the synthesized results corresponding to the category of consequences of gentrification among residents of the Historic Center of Cuenca, organized into the subcategories of social, economic and socioemotional impacts perceived by the participants.

At the social level, the most consistent finding is the weakening of community life; R2 describes neighborhood relationships as being limited mainly to work-related interactions, R7 refers to a decline in coexistence and social cohesion, and R5, associates the loss of neighborhood ties with rising rental costs. This deterioration is not uniform: R4 and R6 report more cordial relationships; however, in sectors experiencing greater tourism pressure, a clear pattern of social fragmentation can be observed. When neighborhood organization exists, it tends to focus primarily on security concerns rather than on the defending residents' permanence within the neighborhood, revealing collective weakness in the face of structural pressures.

**Table 4**  
*Social Impacts of Gentrification on Residents of the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>					
<b>Social impacts on residents</b>					
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q5. Living with new residents</b>	<b>Q6. Ways of relating</b>	<b>Q8. Abandoned sector and reasons</b>	<b>Q13. Benefits of Switching</b>	<b>Q17. Neighborhood Organization</b>
R1	Low resident population; no difference.	Loss of neighbors and coexistence.	There is no recent mobility; previously, it was given in search of comfort.	Negative effects: higher prices, depopulation and less tourism.	Neighborhood organization focused on neighborhood safety.
R2	Unequal coexistence according to the origin of foreigners.	Neighborhood relations are purely labour-related.	Young people's preference for living outside the city.	There are no perceived benefits or changes.	Absence of organization, individualism predominates.
R3	Little or no coexistence, no differences are perceived.	Neighborhood distancing due to high residential mobility.	Scarce moves recently, mobility for improvement or family.	No benefits are perceived; scarce opening of businesses.	Ignorance of neighborhood organization.
R4	Good relationship and coexistence, without distinction between foreigners or tourists.	Lack of knowledge of new residents due to high population renewal.	Recent departures without clear causes. Property purchases.	More benefits are perceived, greater comfort due to the movement of businesses.	Organization for security, not focused on permanence.
R5	Coexistence differences according to the origin and profile of foreigners.	Loss of neighborhood due to the increase in rents.	Departures due to high maintenance costs and sales to investors.	The closure of businesses implies a loss of neighborhood identity.	Weak neighborhood organization, low participation.
R6	Cordial relationship; differences in treatment and expression.	There are no changes in neighborhood relations.	Few cases of departures, without clear reasons.	Benefits and harms such as higher prices.	Neighborhood groups for security.
R7	Perception of insecurity and cultural clashes.	Decreased coexistence and social union.	Displacements due to insecurity and search for tranquility.	Luxury businesses benefit a few and make the sector more expensive.	Security-oriented neighborhood organization.
R8	Occasional cohabitation, without notable differences.	Distrust for security that decreases coexistence.	There are no departures or closures of recent workshops.	Only commercial, limited and temporary benefits.	Absence of neighborhood organization.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; R = resident

At the economic level, the results show a generalized increase in the cost of living, particularly in rents and services, associated both with local market dynamics and with real estate revaluation driven by the arrival of foreigners and the growth of tourism. It is evident that most of the participants who own their homes do not report direct impact on their housing conditions, whereas R3, the only tenant in the sample, describes annual increases in rent prices without a clear explanation. This pattern suggests that homeownership functions as a partial shield against the economic pressures of gentrification, although it does not prevent the effects of the increase in services, food, and nearby commercial activities.

**Table 5**  
*Economic Impacts of Gentrification on Residents of the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>				
<b>Economic impacts</b>				
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q10. Changes in the cost of living</b>	<b>Q11. Impact of rising housing prices</b>	<b>Q12. Business Transformation</b>	<b>Q14. Changes in consumption habits</b>
R1	Overall increase in the cost of living in the sector.	Without personal affectation. Impact on business due to high rents.	Benefit aimed at people with higher incomes.	Shopping habits are maintained in the same places.
R2	Increased costs and difficulty in accessing housing.	No personal affectation, increase in rent of commercial premises.	Displacement of traditional commerce by large businesses.	Unchanged shopping habits.
R3	General increase in the cost of living, with no major change in the sector.	Increase in the price of rents according to the criteria of each owner.	Impact on small businesses and access to neighborhood services.	No changes in places of purchase.
R4	Rising overall cost of living and foreign influence.	No impact for not leasing.	Normal business turnover and stability of old businesses.	Commonly consumed in supermarkets and local shops.
R5	Increase in the cost of living due to the arrival of foreigners and urban growth.	Increased costs in construction materials with an impact on rents and land values.	Need for support to preserve traditional trade and identity.	Usual combination of shopping in supermarkets and neighborhood stores.
R6	General increase in the cost of living with foreign influence.	Without significant direct affectation.	Negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of neighbors.	Maintenance of places of consumption.
R7	Increase in the cost of rents in the sector.	Increase in the cost of living, strong local impact and influence of foreigners.	Negative impact, store closures, precarious employment and rising prices.	Unchanged shopping habits.
R8	General increase in prices and rents. Benefits for the commercial and impact on the quality of life.	Without personal affectation.	Resignation to the loss of commercial tradition in the face of new business models.	No changes in places of purchase and maintenance of traditional habits

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; R = resident

The socioemotional impacts represent perhaps one of the most significant dimensions of the research. Beyond material effects, several participants describe a progressive disconnection

from the space they inhabit: the Historic Center of Cuenca is increasingly perceived as a place oriented toward the visitor rather than as a space of belonging. R1 expresses uncertainty and fear regarding the ongoing changes, R5 mentions anxiety and uncertainty associated with insecurity, R7 manifests anxiety, unease, and loss of belonging while R8 describes a loss of connection, identity, and community ties within neighborhood. This pattern coexists with more resilient responses such as those of R3 and R4, who do not express uncertainty regarding their permanence in the area. The main difference appears, once again, to be homeownership status and the location of the sector, as those living in rented housing and in areas with greater tourism pressure exhibit a stronger emotional impact.

**Table 6**  
*Socioemotional Impacts of Gentrification on Residents of the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>				
<b>Socioemotional impacts on residents</b>				
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q7. Touristification of the Historic Center</b>	<b>Q9. Neighborhood symbols and identity</b>	<b>Q15. Sense of belonging</b>	<b>Q16. Uncertainty of permanence</b>
R1	Space aimed at tourists and foreigners.	Maintenance and preservation of neighborhood identity.	Belonging to the neighborhood due to years of occupation.	Uncertainty and fear of changes in the Historic Center.
R2	Historic Center more for tourists than for residents.	Loss of identity and community life due to commercial predominance.	The sense of belonging to the neighborhood is maintained.	Without uncertainty or fear of staying in the neighborhood.
R3	Oriented to tourists, causing an increase in costs.	The identity and symbols of the neighborhood are maintained.	It retains a sense of belonging to the sector.	No uncertainty of continuing to live in the sector.
R4	Oriented to tourism, with effects on coexistence.	Loss of identity and neighborhood unity.	Belonging to the neighborhood, sense of well-being and stability.	No uncertainty of permanence.
R5	Oriented to the visitor, it limits the stay of residents.	Traditions oriented to tourist attraction weaken identity.	Belonging and distancing due to the arrival of foreigners	Anxiety and uncertainty of permanence due to insecurity.
R6	Perceived as a space intended for foreigners.	Partial maintenance of traditions and weakening of neighborhood coexistence.	Sense of belonging to the maintained neighborhood.	Without anxiety and uncertainty in the face of changes.
R7	Priority to tourism with changes in the use of spaces.	Loss of most traditions, with maintenance of religious ones.	Loss of belonging and perception of insecurity.	Anxiety, uncertainty and uneasiness about changes.
R8	Focused on the tourist, it brings inconvenience to residents.	Loss of religious traditions due to the arrival of new residents.	Loss of connection, identity and union with the neighborhood.	Fear and concern for the future safety of the neighborhood.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; R = resident

## 4.2 Results of Interviews with Merchants in the Historic Center

The seven interviewed merchants represent traditional business profiles with long-standing trajectories in the sector, ranging from 17 and 80 years of permanence. The most relevant characteristic of this sample is that none of the participants has experienced direct physical displacement, although this does not imply the absence of pressures. Most participants report changes in the dynamics of the surrounding environment that affect their economic activities, although in unequal ways depending on the type of business, the sector, and the ownership status of the commercial premises. This diversity constitutes an important finding, as it demonstrates that gentrification does not produce uniform effects on traditional commerce, but instead operates in differentiated ways according to the level of vulnerability of each actor.

**Table 7**

*Categorization of Participants: Merchants of the Historic Center*

Code	Age	Sex	Type of business	Time in Business	Business Condition	Sector
M1	71	Female	Bakery	58 years	Leased	El Sagrario
M2	38	Female	Fast food	17 years	Leased	El Sagrario
M3	35	Male	Bakery	80 years	Own	Bellavista
M4	52	Male	Jewelry	30 years	Leased	Bellavista
M5	65	Female	Florist	40 years	Own	San Sebastian
M6	63	Male	Bazaar, Housewares	22 years	Own	San Blas
M7	54	Male	Blacksmithing workshop	46 years	Own	El Vergel

*Note:* M = merchant

Four out of seven merchants own their business premises, which contributes to a greater capacity to remain in the area despite displacement pressures. In contrast, the three tenants (M1, M2, M4) demonstrate greater vulnerability to the pressures generated by the real estate market.

### 4.2.1 Human Mobility Category

In relation to human mobility, merchants clearly identify the arrival of tourists and new actors in the area, although their perceptions vary. For M4, this presence generates chaos and urban disorder, negatively affecting the functioning of urban space, whereas for M3 and M5 it represents a source of economic dynamization. The case of M7 is a particularly illustrative: in the Las Herrerías neighborhood of El Vergel, the presence of foreigners is

limited, and the principal transformation is not associated with the arrival of North American retirees, but rather with the replacement of artisanal workshops by gastronomy-oriented businesses, driven by changes in land use and the lack of generational continuity. This case demonstrates that gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca does not respond to a single process, but instead adopts different forms depending on the local context.

**Table 8**  
*Human Mobility in Merchants of the Historic Center*

Human Mobility		
C.	Displacement dynamics Q2. Industry transformation	Motivations/New residents Q3. Attractions for foreigners
M1	Decrease in nighttime activity due to insecurity and increase in tourists and foreigners.	The historic center stands out for the cathedral as a cultural heritage and for traditional businesses.
M2	Reduction of opening hours due to insecurity and arrival of national and international tourists.	Tranquility and security, in addition to its infrastructure and typical food.
M3	Increase in national and international tourism and commercial development.	Ease of mobility, in addition to its tranquility and attractiveness of the Historic Center.
M4	Increased urban disorder and greater chaos associated with the arrival of visitors.	Architectural attraction, accessible services and efficient transportation for the visitor.
M5	Increase in trade on special dates and greater presence of foreign customers.	Tranquility, order and security, in addition to traditional gastronomy and local traditions.
M6	Increased insecurity and disorder in the sector, along with a greater arrival of foreigners.	Attractive due to its proximity and accessibility to services.
M7	Transformation into a gastronomic area with mostly national tourism and little foreign presence.	Rental demand due to the proximity to services, with a predominance of national tourists.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; M = merchant

#### 4.2.2 Consequences of Gentrification

This section presents three tables summarizing the results corresponding to the category of consequences of gentrification as perceived by the active merchants of the Historic Center of Cuenca. The information is organized into the subcategories of social, economic, and socioemotional impacts as reported by the participants.

At the level of social impacts, most participants acknowledge the closure of some traditional businesses and the arrival of new enterprises, although with ambivalent interpretations. M7 understands the closure of workshops as a significant cultural loss linked to changes in land use, M4 notes that the departure of neighbors and the purchase of housing by foreigners, and M2 associates businesses closures with the tram infrastructure works. This diversity of perceived causes reinforces the idea that commercial displacement in Cuenca is a multifactorial phenomenon that cannot be attributed to a single variable.

**Table 9***Social Impacts of Gentrification on Merchants in the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>			
<b>Social impacts on merchants</b>			
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q7. Commercial displacement</b>	<b>Q10. Perceived benefits</b>	<b>Q16. Commercial organization strategies</b>
M1	No significant changes in traditional businesses.	No significant changes in the flow of tourists.	Lack of collective coordination, prioritizing traditional legacy.
M2	Closure of businesses due to tram works and arrival of new businesses.	Increase in insecurity and new neighborhood.	There is no communication between merchants.
M3	No recent departure of neighbors or merchants from the sector has been observed.	Greater tourist influx that boosts the activity of locals.	No conflicts reported, there is a close relationship between neighbors
M4	Sudden departure of neighbors and purchase of homes by foreigners	Increase in trade due to tourist influx.	Neighborhood organization for security (alarms - panic buttons).
M5	Predominance of traditional businesses and constant opening of new businesses.	Benefit from the implementation of new premises according to demand.	Coordination between merchants in security and prevention.
M6	Departure of residents associated with the growing presence of foreigners.	Benefit from the increase in national tourists.	Organization between security and advertising merchants in the neighborhood.
M7	Closure of traditional workshops due to change in land use.	Growth in trade and increased insecurity.	Citizen participation and institutional management to promote the craft trade.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; M = merchant

The main findings of this subcategory are presented below in a systematized manner. At the economic level, the increase in the commercial rents prices is the most frequently mentioned pressure, particularly among those who lease their business premises. M4 reports that during the pandemic they received support from the property owner in order to maintain the rental agreement, while M1 and M2 highlight the general rise in costs as a constant source of pressure on their business activities. In contrast, merchants who own their premises (M3, M5, M6 and M7) show greater stability and perceive changes in the surrounding environment with less concern, which confirms that property ownership functions as a protective factor against economic pressures.

**Table 10***Economic Impacts of Gentrification on Merchants in the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>							
<b>Economic impacts</b>							
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q3. Changes in the sector</b>	<b>Q4. Customer profile</b>	<b>Q5. Product and price adaptation</b>	<b>Q7. Merchant Departure</b>	<b>Q8. Transform ation of Businesses</b>	<b>Q10. Perception of benefits</b>	<b>Q11. Better infrastru cture</b>
M1	Heritage attractions and traditional spaces linked to memories.	Diversity of clients, national and foreign, but with local predominance	Stable products and slight price adjustment due to general price increases.	Permanence of traditional merchants, without recent departures.	Departure and arrival of business due to high rents and low profitability.	No significant changes, no benefits or effects.	Few improvements, no benefits and low tourist influx due to insecurity.
M2	Relative safety, central park and typical gastronomy.	Regular local customers, and national and foreign visitors.	Stable products with price adjustment due to general cost increases.	Closure and replacement of businesses due to tram works.	New international food and clothing businesses.	It does not perceive benefits; there is distrust and loss of neighborhood closeness.	Oriented to tourism, with indirect benefits in visits and sales.
M3	Ease of mobility, visual appeal, order and tranquility.	Stable clientele, no significant changes are evident.	There are no changes in products or prices.	No recent abandonments are identified; there is a constant turnover of businesses.	Arrival of new businesses without replacing traditional ones.	Benefits are perceived due to greater movement and activity in the sector.	Oriented to tourism, with mostly local clientele.
M4	Architecture, natural environment, services and transport	Local clientele with a tourist and foreign presence predominates.	No changes in products or prices, affected by gold and silver costs.	Departure of merchants due to the pandemic, high rents and nighttime dynamics.	Decrease in traditional businesses and increase in new ones after the pandemic.	Benefits are perceived due to greater tourism and commercial dynamism.	Oriented to tourism, with a positive perception for the beautification and conservation of the city.
M5	Tranquility, security, cleanliness and cultural attraction.	Local and business clientele, with the presence of tourists.	Stable prices and expansion of the product offering.	Business continuity predominates.	No changes in business dynamics.	Benefits are perceived from the supply of new premises.	Oriented to tourism, with positive effects on consumption and demand.
M6	Proximity to services and activities.	Local and national clientele with a low presence of foreigners.	No changes to the products offered.	Departure associated with the arrival of foreign population.	Opening new businesses such as cell phone repair.	Benefits from an increase in national tourist customers.	Oriented to tourism, with benefits in local and national clientele.
M7	Infrastructure, artisan workshops, leases and proximity to services.	Local and national clientele. Decrease in demand due to foreign competition.	Partial changes in the offer, without price adjustment due to unfair competition.	Closure of workshops due to competition, change of land use and lack of generational replacement.	Predominance of new gastronomic businesses and decrease of traditional ones.	Benefits in the growth of commerce, along with increased insecurity.	Indirect benefits due to a greater influx of customers, with increased costs and rents.

Note: C = code; Q = interview question; M = merchant

The main findings of this subcategory are presented below in a systematized manner. At the socioemotional level, most merchants manifest a strong sense of belonging to the Historic Center, closely associated with their professional trajectory and occupational identity. The main exception is C7, who highlights a lack of institutional recognition for artisans and the perception that heritage is promoted more toward external audiences than toward the local community.

**Table 11**  
*Socio-emotional Impacts of Gentrification on Merchants in the Historic Center*

<b>Consequences of Gentrification</b>		
<b>Socio-emotional impacts on merchants</b>		
<b>C.</b>	<b>Q14. Security and business continuity</b>	<b>Q15. Sense of belonging</b>
M1	Stability and security of maintaining the business in the sector.	A feeling of belonging as Cuencanos, despite the presence of foreigners.
M2	Business continuity by fixed clientele.	No intention of transfer, but conditional on the lease of the premises.
M3	Security of permanence, and expectation of arrival of more customers.	Sense of belonging to the Historic Center due to the presence of traditional shops.
M4	No intention of transfer, security of permanence of the business with support for security, order and public investment.	Sense of belonging by commercial trajectory.
M5	Security of permanence of the family business without uncertainty or intention of transfer.	A sense of belonging as a traditional merchant, with a vision of improving the sector.
M6	Low concern and expansion of the business outside the sector.	Sense of belonging through trajectory and customer recognition.
M7	Security of permanence. Strong family and professional roots in the business.	A feeling of their own space, but with a lack of institutional support for artisans and entrepreneurs.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; M = merchant

The results reflect a clear intention of permanence among most merchants in the area, supported by loyal local clientele and a deeply rooted identity linked to Cuenca's traditions. However, perceptions of uncertainty and adaptation processes are also identified in response to changes in the environment, such as rising rental costs and a perceived lack of institutional support.

### **4.3 Results of Interviews with Displaced Merchants from the Historic Center**

This section presents the results obtained from the interview conducted with a displaced merchant from the Historic Center of Cuenca, organized around the two main analytical categories: human mobility and consequences of gentrification. The first category examines displacement dynamics, including the reasons and conditions that led to leaving the area, while the second addresses the effects of this process through three subcategories covering social, economic and socioemotional impacts. Although this is a single case, its analysis

provides a meaningful approximation for understanding the transformations of the Historic Center and their implications for traditional merchants.

The following table presents the categorization of the displaced merchant, organizing the responses according to the defined analytical categories and subcategories.

**Table 12**  
*Categorization of the Displaced Merchant from the Historic Center*

Code	Age	Gender	Type of business	Time in Business	Business Condition	Sector
DM1	65	Female	Bakery	10 years	Leased	El Sagrario

*Note:* DM = Displaced Merchant

#### 4.3.1 Human Mobility

The interview with the displaced merchant (DM1) provides a relevant historical perspective on human mobility processes in the Historic Center of Cuenca. Her departure from the area occurred in the year 2000, prior to the large-scale arrival of foreign retirees that characterizes the current period of analysis. At that time, the presence of foreigners was minimal, and tourism had not yet played a transformative role in the area. This background makes it possible to identify changes in population flows over time, showing a transition from limited foreign mobility toward a greater presence of international residents and visitors in the Historic Center.

**Table 13**  
*Human Mobility in the Displaced Merchant from the Historic Center*

Human Mobility		
Displacement dynamics		
C.	Q2. Past Characterization of the Sector	Q4. Presence of tourists and/or foreigners
DM1	Commercial sector and very active.	Low tourist presence at that time.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; DM = displaced merchant

#### 4.3.2 Consequences of Gentrification

This section analyzes the effects of displacement on the merchant, considering the changes generated in her activity and living conditions. Based on the responses obtained, social, economic and socioemotional impacts derived from the transformations of the Historic Center are identified.

At the social level, the interview shows that the transformations in the Historic Center have been accompanied by changes in the urban environment and in patterns of space use. The

displacement of DM1 was associated with processes such as the closure of Vega Muñoz Street due to redevelopment works and the reduction in customer flow, factors that altered the functioning of commerce in the area. These elements make it possible to observe that urban transformations have historically influenced the configuration of the Historic Center and the continuity of its commercial activities.

**Table 14**  
*Social Impacts of Gentrification on the Displaced Merchant from the Historic Center*

Consequences of Gentrification				
Social impacts				
C.	Q3. Pre-closing changes	P9 Closing of traditional businesses	P13. Type of decision (voluntary/external)	P14. Current situation or activity
DM1	Increase in business and remodeling of streets and sidewalks in the sector.	Closure of most businesses, some temporarily and others permanently.	Involuntary departure due to rent increases, dollarization and road changes.	Transfer of the business to the own home, Miraflores sector.

Note: C = code; Q = interview question; DM = displaced merchant

Regarding economic impacts, the case of DM1 demonstrates that the increase in rent following dollarization was one of the central factors in her displacement, compounded by the decline in customers resulting from urban construction; this scenario reflects the vulnerability of leased businesses. Likewise, it is observed that pressure on operating costs and declining commercial income are factors that have historically influenced merchants' ability to remain in the Historic Center, beyond the specific period of gentrification analyzed.

**Table 15**  
*Economic Impacts of Gentrification on the Displaced Merchant from the Historic Center*

Consequences of Gentrification					
Economic impacts					
C.	Q5. Type of clientele and changes	Q6. Cost Variation	Q7. Economic influence on the decision	Q8. Tourism-oriented businesses	Q10. Pressure of the environment on the business
DM1	Merchants and local people who visited the center.	Price increases due to dollarization and lower sales due to street closures.	Inability to cover rent, employee, and supplier costs.	There was no large influx of tourists or high-income customers.	Direct pressure on the stability of the environment for business permanence.
	Q12. Main reason for closure	Q15. Differences between sectors	Q16. Change in the economic situation	Q17. Benefits of changes in the sector	
	Works on Vega Muñoz Street, relocation of merchants and costs increases due to dollarization.	Reduction in sales due to lower demand and less product diversity.	Unfavorable, as relocation led to a significant reduction in sales volume.	Aesthetic improvement that attracted businesses, but encouraged higher rental prices.	

Note: C = code; Q = interview question; DM = displaced merchant

From a socioemotional perspective, the testimony of DM1 highlights the persistence of her connection to the Historic Center, despite her displacement. The participant expresses her willingness to return to the area if economic conditions allowed it, stating: “If I were young, I would always do it because there is more dynamism in the sector, sales are higher.” This statement shows that the emotional bond with the place does not disappear with displacement, but is maintained over time. In this sense, the case reflects what Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020) describes as un-homing, understood not as the complete loss of attachment to space, but as a progressive separation between the desire to belong and the actual possibilities of remaining in it.

**Table 16**

*Socioemotional Impacts of Gentrification on the Displaced Merchant from the Historic Center*

Consequences of Gentrification		
Socioemotional impacts		
C.	Q11. Uncertainty about permanence	P18. Willingness to return to the Historic Center
DM1	Fear and uncertainty due to the lack of profitability in the face of the excessive rise in rents after dollarization.	Positive disposition due to the dynamism of the sector and sales potential.

*Note:* C = code; Q = interview question; DM = displaced merchant

In summary, the results obtained from both residents and merchants show that the Historic Center of Cuenca is undergoing a process of profound transformation that affects all its actors. Within the category of human mobility, an alteration in the composition of the area is identified, marked by the arrival of new foreign residents, mainly North Americans linked to residential tourism, and investment processes, as well as by recent forced migratory flows, such as the Venezuelan population. This phenomenon has contributed to changes in social dynamics, customs and forms of interaction within the neighborhood. Likewise, a progressive departure of the local population toward the city’s peripheral areas is observed, reflecting a transition from a traditionally residential space to one that is increasingly commercial and oriented toward visitors. At the social level, this translates into a deterioration of neighborhood life, characterized by reduced coexistence, weakening of neighborly ties due to increased relocation, and the closure of traditional businesses, reinforcing a sense of change and displacement among those who remain in the area.

At the economic level, a general increase in the cost of living is evident, especially in rents, and services, along with a reconfiguration of commercial dynamics and customer profiles that favors businesses oriented towards new demands, to the detriment of traditional ones.

While tourism is perceived as a potential source of economic dynamization, its benefits are not distributed equitably, and in many cases, it implies higher costs and requirements to sustain businesses, increasing the vulnerability of small merchants. The case of the displaced merchant reinforces this situation, showing how these conditions can influence business closure or relocation and forced departure from the Historic Center.

Finally, at the socioemotional level, participants express feelings of uncertainty, concern and a progressive loss of identity and belonging, influenced both by economic changes and perceived insecurity, as well as by the transformation of the environment, where the Historic Center ceases to function as a space of everyday life and becomes a setting oriented toward tourist consumption that ignores the needs of those who live and work there, leading to both symbolic and material displacement of the traditional population.

#### **4.4 Non-Participant Observation**

The non-participant observation conducted in three sectors of the Historic Center of Cuenca, the central area of Parque Calderón and Calle Larga, the Plaza de San Sebastián and its surroundings, and the El Vado neighborhood, allowed for the comparison between interview perceptions and the transformations directly observed in urban space. The findings confirm that, in spatial terms, the process is heterogeneous, as described by participants in their testimonies and related to the categories of human mobility and consequences of gentrification.

In the most commercial area corresponding to Parque Calderón and Calle Larga, the highest concentration of signs of touristification was registered, with a high presence of national visitors, especially from the coastal of the country, and foreigner visitors. The area shows a predominance of restaurants offering international cuisine, cafeterias and bars, many of them recently opened or renovated, menus in English and higher prices than local neighborhood commerce. Traditional businesses, such as small shops, bakeries, and small pharmacies, appear in secondary position compared to a commercial model that prioritizes tourism. This spatial configuration is consistent with what Janoschka et al. (2014) define as the symbolic preparation of space, understood as the reorganization of the built environment to attract and retain higher income consumers.

In the San Sebastián area, a more nuanced transitional dynamic was identified. In the immediate surroundings of the square there is a concentration of cafes, restaurants and accommodation services, while the surrounding blocks still maintain traditional characteristics, with residential housing and small neighborhood business. This unequal coexistence of tourist and traditional circuits without full integration reflects what Richmond & Garmany (2024) describe as the tension between the two circuits of the urban economy in Latin American cities.

The El Vado neighborhood presents an earlier stage of transformation. Traditional workshops and neighborhood commerce are still part of everyday life, but the emergence of new cafeterias, properties adapted for temporary accommodation and tourism-oriented businesses places traditional actors in a vulnerable position and signals an emerging pressure of change that, if it continues, may follow the same pattern observed in more consolidated areas. This difference between transformed areas, transitional zones and traditional sectors confirms that gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca does not occur uniformly, but advances unevenly across the territory.

An additional finding is that foreign visitors mainly consume in establishments oriented toward them, without significant integration into the local traditional economy. This pattern generates an unequal distribution of tourism benefits and reinforces the segmentation of urban space between a high consumption circuit and a popular circuit whose coexistence generates tensions described by participants as a symbolic displacement and loss of belonging. This shows that tourist consumption tends to concentrate in specific areas, reinforcing relatively closed circuits within the Historic Center and limiting contact interaction with the daily economy of the sector.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study support three central arguments that, articulated with the theoretical framework, contribute to understanding the social impact of gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca beyond its visible manifestations. The first is that gentrification in this city operates in a heterogeneous and differentiated manner depending on the sector, the profile of the actor and the tenure status of housing or commercial premises. The second is that the socioemotional impact, understood as a process of progressive un-homing, is more widespread than direct physical displacement and constitutes the most common way in which gentrification affects those who remain in the territory. The third is the weakness of

collective organization, which is not accidental, but rather the result of specific conditions that can be explained through comparative literature. These three arguments are developed below based on the results obtained, the categories of analysis and their contrast with previous studies on Cuenca and Latin America.

### **5.1 Human Mobility in the Historic Center of Cuenca**

The results show a gradual transformation in the residential composition of the Historic Center. Most interviewed residents perceive a significant outflow of the local population toward the city's peripheral areas and a growing arrival of new residents with markedly different profiles, including both higher-income foreign nationals and migrants in vulnerable conditions, particularly the Venezuelan population. This contrast in migratory flows confirms the perspective of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2020), which understands human mobility as a process shaped by economic and geopolitical inequalities. While some migrants arrive in privileged conditions (Cranston & Duplan, 2023; Croucher, 2012), others arrive in situations of precarity, generating unequal coexistence dynamics that reshape everyday life in the area (Van Noorloos & Steel, 2016). What this study contributes to this discussion is that both flows coexist simultaneously within the same space, complicating the representation of the territory as either solely a place of expulsion or reception.

The perception of the interviewees about the departure of traditional neighbors aligns with Hayes (2020), who documents how the arrival of North American citizens after the 2008 financial crisis generated direct pressures on the housing market and contributed to the displacement of long-standing residents and informal vendors. This trend is further supported by official historical data, as the Municipal Decentralized Autonomous Government of the Canton of Cuenca (n.d.) records that between 1982 and 1990 the population of the Historic Center decline from 41,474 to 27,047 residents, a pattern that, according to the findings of this study, continues to persist. Participants H4 and H5 suggest that this trend has not been reversed but rather continues to manifest itself in new forms, particularly through the transformation of residential use into predominantly commercial and tourist-oriented functions, leading to a progressive loss of neighborhood life.

Regarding mobility motivations and the presence of new residents, participants identified key attractions such as the city's tranquility and accessibility, its architectural heritage,

climate, gastronomy and low cost of living. These attractions respond to the concept of geographic arbitrage described by Hayes (2014), through which migrants from countries such as the United States and Canada relocate their consumption to lower-cost destinations, thereby maximizing their quality of life. This migratory logic, which Croucher (2012) defines as privileged mobility, does not operate in isolation but within a broader context of structural inequality in which the hegemonic position of the country of origin facilitates preferential access to housing, resources, and services in the destination territories (Cranston & Duplan, 2023). As Van Noorloos & Steel (2016) argue, this form of mobility is not neutral, as it produces direct consequences on local housing markets, deepening pre-existing socio-spatial inequalities.

## **5.2 Heterogeneity of the Process and Contributing Factors**

One of the most significant findings of this study is the heterogeneity of the participants' experiences. While R7 and R5 describe a clear deterioration in their living situation and express anxiety about the possibility of being displaced, R3 and R4 do not perceive major transformations nor report uncertainty. Similarly, M3 views the arrival of tourists positively as a source of economic dynamization, whereas M7 describes the closure of artisanal workshops as a profound cultural loss. This diversity does not invalidate the argument that gentrification is underway in the Historic Center, but rather reveals that its effects are uneven and depend on at least three articulated factors.

The first is the tenure status. Participants who own their homes or business premises show considerably lower vulnerability to real estate market pressures. This finding is consistent with Phillips et al. (2021), who distinguish between direct displacement, produced through formal eviction, and indirect displacement, generated by sustained economic pressures. Property owners are more resistant to the former, but they are not exempt from broader economic pressures nor from the symbolic de-homing process produced by gentrification.

The second factor is territorial sector. The spatial differentiation observed between areas already consolidated as tourist consumption, such as Parque Calderón and Calle Larga, areas transitional zones such as San Sebastián, and still predominantly traditional areas such as El Vado, coincides with what was identified by García-Cazorla et al. (2023) in their comparative analysis of the Historic Center between 2015 and 2022, where process of

elitization coexist with patterns of popular persistence across different intensities across space.

The third factor is the type of economic activity. The case of C7 is particularly significant in this regard. The artisanal blacksmith workshop in El Vergel does not face direct pressure from foreign retirees, but rather from imported products, the lack of generational succession, and the substitution of land use toward gastronomic businesses. This mechanism, which Richmond & Garmany (2024) associate with the displacement of the lower urban economic circuit by the upper one, operates independently of the presence of foreigners and responds to broader market logics beyond transnational gentrification in its strict sense. Recognizing these multiple pathways of transformation is essential to understanding the complexity of the phenomenon and to designing appropriate public policy responses to each territorial context.

Regarding economic impacts, the results reveal a generalized increase in the cost of living, particularly in commercial and residential rents, alongside a restructuring of commercial activity that displaces traditional businesses in favor of tourism-oriented establishments, as described by M4 and M7 in relation to neighborhood outmigration and workshop closures due to rising rents and land-use change. This pressure is consistent with the concept of subordinate financialization developed by Hayes & Celleri (2023), who document how housing in Cuenca has been progressively appropriated by transnational groups through policies supported by remittances from Ecuadorian emigrants and savings from North American retirees, widening the economic gap with the income of local families Hayes (2020). This process is further intensified by the expansion of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb, which reduce the supply of long-term housing and drive up prices (Orellana-Alvear et al., 2024; Wachsmuth & Weisler, 2018).

Although participants such as M1 and M3 perceive tourism as a source of economic dynamization, the results show that its benefits are unevenly distributed, as M7 describes how foreign competition and land-use changes have affected the viability of traditional artisanal workshops. This coexistence confirms what was found by García-Cazorla et al. (2023), who identify coexisting dynamics of elitization and popular resistance in different areas of Cuenca, evidencing that gentrification operates in a heterogeneous manner depending on the specific context of each sector.

### **5.3 De-homing as the Main Form of Impact**

Beyond material effects, the results show that the socio-emotional dimension of gentrification is the most widespread and, at the same time, the least visible. Participants who have not been physically displaced express a progressive sense of disconnection from the space they inhabit. R8 reports a loss of identity and attachment to the neighborhood, R7 describes restlessness and diminished sense of belonging, and R5 expresses anxiety linked to the perception that the Historic Center is no longer their own space. This experience corresponds to what Elliott-Cooper et al. (2020) define as de-homing, understood as the rupture of the bonds between people and the places they inhabit. This process is not the result of a single act of expulsion but rather the accumulation of micro-events that gradually make the neighborhood increasingly hostile for its original residents.

Davidson (2009), drawing on Lefebvre, allows us to deepen this argument. When abstract space, governed by market logics, tourism investment and patrimonial planning, prevails over lived space, constructed through everyday practices, social relations and shared meanings, original residents experience a form of symbolic dispossession that precedes and, in many cases, accompanies physical displacement. The participants' testimonies reflect this condition, as they indicate that the Historic Center is increasingly perceived as a stage for visitors, where every day needs are subordinated to the demands of tourist consumption. This aligns with what Baringo Ezquerro (2013) identifies as a sustained sense of non-belonging within one's own lived space. This form of impact, often invisible by economic or physical displacement, represents the most widespread way in which gentrification operates on those who remain in the territory, and its real magnitude can only be captured through the qualitative analysis of actors' subjective experiences, as undertaken in this study. In this sense, the results extend what Cedillo-Mendoza et al. (2021) documented in the Historic Center of Cuenca, showing that uncertainty is not limited to those facing immediate threat of eviction, but is present, to varying degrees, across all areas of the study site.

The case of the displaced trader DM1 clearly illustrates this process. Her separation from her workplace was not the result of a direct eviction but rather the accumulation of pressures such as the sustained rising rents, roadworks, and the effects of dollarization on operating costs. This type of indirect displacement, which Navarrete et al. (2025) describe as difficult

to detect at the moment it occurs, generates profound impacts on the reconfiguration of urban space.

The non-participant observation conducted in areas such as Parque Calderón and Calle Larga, reinforces this argument as these spaces exhibit a commercial offer oriented almost exclusively toward tourist consumption, excluding much of the local population. This transformation reflects what Janoschka et al. (2014) term the symbolic preparation of the space and aligns with what has been documented by Cabrera-Jara & Bernal-Reino (2020), who demonstrate that programs such as the Historic Center Special Plan and projects like the Plaza San Francisco contributed to the displacement of informal vendors and the increase in land values. Participants' accounts confirm that these dynamics remain ongoing and unresolved. In El Vado, a transitional area where artisanal workshops and traditional business still persist, these activities are increasingly vulnerable to new urban logics that tend to prevail, progressively displacing legitimate ways of inhabiting the city, as noted by Díaz-Parra & Cuberos-Gallardo (2018).

#### **5.4 Weakness of Collective Resistance and Structural Factors**

A recurring finding is the weakness of the collective organization among residents and merchants in the Historic Center. Most participants describe neighborhood associations oriented exclusively on neighborhood security, without the capacity to coordinate an organized response to the economic and real estate pressures that threaten their permanence. This result aligns with the findings of Marulanda Hernandez & Martí (2019) in their comparative analysis of resistance movements in Quito and Cuenca, where they conclude that forms of resistance may temporarily halt direct displacements, but are unable to withstand sustained market pressure due to the lack of a strong collective identity and shared interpretative frameworks that could sustain long-term mobilization.

The findings of this research further suggest that this weakness cannot be explained solely by a lack of willingness or awareness among actors, but also by structural conditions that hinder collective action. The high residential turnover reported by R2, R3 and R5 prevents the formation of the trust-based relationships necessary for sustained organization. The heterogeneity of impacts across property owners, renters, traditional merchants and new entrepreneurs complicates the construction of a shared problem capable of generating collective mobilization. In addition, the ambivalence toward ongoing changes, since several

participants recognize both benefits and drawbacks, further reduces the possibility of an organized collective response.

### **5.5 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study presents three limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results. The qualitative approach allows for a deep understanding of the participants' experiences but does not enable generalization to the entire Historic Center, meaning that the findings primarily reflect the groups studied in the selected areas. Second, the sample is concentrated on individuals who still reside or operate within the area, which leaves the experiences of those who have already relocated to other parts of the city underrepresented, despite these cases likely corresponding to the most severely affected populations. For this reason, future research focused specifically on displaced residents and merchants would be important to complement these findings. Finally, the inclusion of case DM1, a displaced merchant who left the sector in 2000 prior the current gentrification cycle, limits its relevance as direct evidence of the contemporary processes, although it functions as a useful historical reference for comparison.

Based on these findings, three priority directions for future research are proposed. The first involves developing a mixed-methods study that combines in-depth interviews with data on land price changes and census population records, which would allow a more precise measurement of the magnitude of the indirect displacement suggested by the qualitative evidence. The second proposes tracking and interviewing residents and merchants who have left the Historic Center within the last ten years in order to document their displacement trajectories and their impacts on living conditions.

Finally, the third line proposes the analysis of forms of resistance and community organization in the Historic Center, considering that, as Marulanda Hernandez & Martí (2019) argue, the sustainability of these movements depends not only on external factors, but also on the strength of internal ties and the shared sense of community, as well as the role of local public policies, especially those related to heritage conservation and land use, as factors that either accelerate or mitigate gentrification processes. These research directions would contribute address the empirical gaps identified in the literature and provide a stronger basis for public policy recommendations regarding housing, heritage and the right to the city.

## **6. Conclusions**

This study analyzed the social impact of the gentrification process in the Historic Center of Cuenca as a consequence of immigration, based on the perceptions of residents and merchants within the area. The findings indicate that the Historic Center is going through a profound and sustained transformation, driven by the convergence of international migratory flows, real estate revaluation, touristification and heritage conservation policies. These dynamics have progressively reconfigured the use of urban space, the social composition of the sector and the living conditions of those who inhabit and work in it, generating impacts that extend beyond the physical or economic dimensions to affect daily life, identity and the sense of belonging of the local population.

Regarding the construction of the conceptual framework, the study articulated a set of theoretical categories that proved relevant for understanding the phenomenon in the local context. Concepts such as privileged mobility (Croucher, 2012), geographic arbitrage (Hayes, 2014), subordinated financialization (Hayes & Celleri, 2023), the symbolic preparation of space (Janoschka et al., 2014), and de-homing (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020) were useful in understanding participants' experiences not as isolated individual cases, but as part of broader structural processes operating on a global scale. This conceptual foundation demonstrated that gentrification in Cuenca is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of transnational dynamics of urban accumulation and restructuring that manifest in specific ways within cities of the Global South.

With respect to the main transformations identified in the Historic Center, the results reveal that the sector has experienced a progressive displacement of traditional residential and commercial uses in favor of activities oriented to tourism and higher-income consumers. The outmigration of the local population to the peripheries, the closure of artisanal workshops and neighborhood businesses, rising rents, and the proliferation of gastronomic establishments and temporary accommodation services are transformations clearly perceived by the local population. This reconfiguration has unfolded in a heterogeneous way across the territory, with areas already consolidated as spaces of tourist consumption, such as Parque Calderón and Calle Larga, along with others in transition such as El Vado, where traditional ways of life resist, but face increasing pressure.

Regarding residents' and merchants' perceptions of the changes generated by gentrification, the findings reveal an experience marked by ambivalence. Although some participants recognize certain benefits associated with tourism and commercial dynamization, most describe a sustained deterioration of neighborhood coexistence, a progressive weakening of community ties, and a growing sense of uncertainty about their permanence in the sector. The socio-emotional impacts revealed diverse experiences, while some participants maintain a sense of belonging despite ongoing transformations, several expressed a rupture with the space they inhabit, perceiving it as increasingly detached from their needs and daily practices. This loss of belonging, which does not necessarily imply physical displacement but rather a profound loss of belonging, constitutes one of the most relevant aspects of this study.

When contrasted with the theoretical framework, the results confirm that the processes documented in Cuenca are consistent with patterns described in the literature on transnational gentrification in cities of the Global South. The economic disparity between foreign retirees and local families, the progressive appropriation of the real estate market by transnational actors, the weakness of forms of community resistance, and the symbolic transformation of historic space into a setting for consumption are dynamics supported by previous studies (Cabrera-Jara & Bernal-Reino, 2020; García-Cazorla et al., 2023; Hayes, 2020; Hayes & Celleri, 2023; Janoschka et al., 2014). At the same time, the findings show that gentrification in Cuenca does not operate linearly or uniformly, but rather coexists with traditional forms of urban life that slow the process, although without sufficient organization and strength to halt it.

The main contribution of this study lies in providing an empirical and qualitative approach to the social impact of gentrification in the Historic Center of Cuenca, from the perspectives of those who inhabit and work within it. Unlike previous studies focused on quantitative indicators or the analysis of urban and architectural policies, this research highlights the lived dimension of the process, including its effects on identity, social coexistence and the sense of belonging among the local population. In a context where cultural heritage tends to be managed as an economic resource rather than as a social good, this study demonstrates that behind urban transformations are people whose ways of inhabiting, relating to, and belonging to a place are profoundly affected, an issue that should concern both academia

and those responsible for decision-making regarding the future of the Historic Center of Cuenca.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Guide to Semi-Structured Interviews for Residents of the Historic Center

##### Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Residents

Title of the research: Social Impact of the Gentrification Process in the Historic Center of Cuenca-Ecuador, as a consequence of Immigration.

This interview is part of academic research that aims to analyze the social impact on the residents of the Historic Center of Cuenca from the recent changes, related to the arrival of foreigners, as well as to know their experience and perception of these transformations.

Your participation is voluntary and the information provided will be used for academic purposes only. The anonymity and confidentiality of your answers is guaranteed. The interview will be recorded only with your permission, in order to facilitate subsequent analysis.

1. Characterization of the participant:

How old are you? - What is your current occupation? - How long have you lived in this sector?

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood, in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security, etc.? What do you think about these changes?
3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the Historic Center of Cuenca?
4. In recent years, have you noticed if more people are moving to the Historic Center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left? What do you think is the reason for this situation?
  - Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses than before in the sector? What do you think is the reason for this situation?
5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector?
  - Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?
6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?
7. Have you felt that the Historic Center has become a space designed more for the visitor or foreigner than for the local resident?
8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently? Do you know what the reasons were?

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood (festivals, customs, use of public spaces) are maintained or have been lost?
10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new people? For example, in rent, food or services. How would you describe them?
11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?
12. What is your opinion on the closure of traditional businesses (workshops, grocery stores) and the opening of new businesses (luxury cafes, galleries) aimed at tourism or high-net-worth customers?
13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you? Which ones?
14. In your day-to-day life, do you still do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to other areas due to changes in prices or supply?
15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from here?
16. Seeing the constant changes in the Historic Center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?
17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that organizes to defend the permanence of the traditional residents in the face of these changes?

## **Appendix B**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Merchants of the Historic Center**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Traders**

Title of the research: Social Impact of the Gentrification Process in the Historic Center of Cuenca-Ecuador, as a consequence of Immigration.

This interview is part of academic research that aims to analyze the social impact on merchants in the Historic Center of Cuenca from the recent changes, related to the arrival of foreigners, as well as to know their experience and perception of these transformations.

Your participation is voluntary and the information provided will be used for academic purposes only. The anonymity and confidentiality of your answers is guaranteed. The interview will be recorded only with your permission, in order to facilitate subsequent analysis.

1. Characterization of the participant:  
How old are you? - What is your current occupation? - How long have you worked in this sector? - Why did you choose the Historic Center for your business?
2. What main changes have you noticed in the configuration of the sector in recent years, for example, in the type of customers, businesses or atmosphere of the neighborhood? Have you noticed an increase in the arrival of foreigners? How would you describe it?
3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the Historic Center of Cuenca?
4. Who are the people who buy from you or visit your business the most today compared to previous years?
5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?
6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before? How has this changed over time?
7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently? Do you know what the reasons were?
8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing? How would you describe this change?
9. How does the closure of traditional businesses (such as workshops or grocery stores) affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power (such as luxury cafes, galleries or temporary rental apartments)?
10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you? Which ones?
11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the sector's infrastructures (such as Plaza San Francisco, the 9 de Octubre Market, Vergel Park, SOLCA hospital, motorway, etc.) have benefited your business or are they mainly oriented towards tourism?
12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?  
– If you answer that it is your own, question 11 does not apply.
13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.
14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

15. Do you feel that the Historic Center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where you started?
16. Have you joined or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce in the face of these changes that the Historic Center is experiencing?

## **Appendix C**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Displaced Merchants**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Displaced Merchants of the Historic Center**

1. Characterization of the participant:
  - How old are you?
  - What was your activity or business in the Historic Center?
  - How long did you work in that sector?
  - Where in the Historic Center was your business located?
  - How long ago did you stop working or close your business in the Historic Center?
2. How would you describe the industry when you had your business there?
3. What changes did you begin to notice in the sector before closing or moving your business?
4. Did you notice an increase in the arrival of foreigners or tourists in that time? How would you describe it?
5. Who were your main customers at that time? Did this change over time?
6. Did you notice changes in the cost of rents, products or services in the sector? How would you describe them?
7. Did these economic changes influence your decision to close or relocate your business? In what way?
8. Did you notice if new businesses aimed at tourists or people with greater purchasing power appeared? How did this affect your business?
9. How did the closure of traditional businesses in the sector affect you?
10. Do you think your business was pressured by these changes in the environment? How?
11. Did you feel uncertainty or concern about the possibility of keeping your business in the sector before leaving?
12. What was the main reason why you decided to close or move your business?
13. Was the decision voluntary or was it influenced by external factors such as rent increases, changes in clientele or the environment?
14. Where did you move your business or what activity are you currently in?
15. What differences do you perceive between the Historic Center and the sector to which you moved?
16. Do you think that your economic situation has improved, worsened or remained the same since you left the sector? Why?
17. Do you think that the changes in the Historic Center have brought any benefit to the commercial sector? Which ones?
18. Would you reopen a business in the Historic Center? Why?

## **Appendix D**

### **Transcript of Conducted Interviews**

#### **Semi-Structured Interview for Residents**

H1 Interview with the resident – El Sagrario sector Simón Bolívar streets between Padre Aguirre and General Torres (lives on the second floor above his Folklor Latino Artesanías store)

1. How old are you?

65.

What is your current occupation?

Commerce.

How long do you live or have you lived in this sector?

30 years.

2. What changes have been noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of residents, commerce, security, etc.? And what do you think about these changes?

Well, there are few people who live here in this area of the Historic Center and practically no one lives anymore. There are few of us who are on this block, two, three people, there are no more.

Most have moved.

They are commerce, of course, they remain only as a commercial activity.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the Historic Center of Cuenca?

Let's say, the city, the tranquility.

4. In recent years, have you noticed if more people are moving to the Historic Center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

Well, in the Historic Center there are really very few foreigners, right? More are looking for the outskirts of the city.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector?

Well, I have hardly noticed the difference, as I say, practically no one lives in this area.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation?

Yes, of course, absolutely.

There are not so many neighbors left.

There are no neighbors left, that is, we have no neighbors.

7. Have you felt that the Historic Center has become a space designed more for the visitor or the foreigner than for the local resident?

Yes, I think it's more for people from outside.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently? And do you know what the reasons were?

No, not really. In other words, there are neighbors, but they already lived and built their houses outside the Historic Center area and are outside.

Maybe they left the sector for convenience to have more access, let's say, better access to their homes. And for that space too. With more privacy.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood, such as festivals, customs, use of public spaces, are maintained or have been lost?

I think they are maintained, yes.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new residents, for example, in rents, food or services?

Of course, the price of everything here in the Historic Center has gone up.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

Well, luckily my house is already my own, so it hasn't really affected me. But many businesses open and close after a short time. For the value of the rents and above all the area is already destined more for tourism, with restaurants, cafes and many things.

In the event that you have a business, have you been affected or have you had to raise the costs of your products?

Well, I think it's gone up by a whole percentage. But tourism has declined entirely, perhaps for safety. Then comes a certain type of tourism that does not spend much. They come for a weekend, one or two days, but the European, the North American is very low in their presence now.

There are not so many anymore. You saw about five, eight years ago, there were a number of tourists who went with the guides, twenty, thirty people. Now they can't find anyone. Because they are afraid. Or they arrive only in Guayaquil and there they take the plane and go to Galapagos for eight or ten days and they still come back and leave.

In other words, there is a lack of more promotion at the local level for people from abroad.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses and the opening of new businesses such as luxury cafes, galleries aimed at tourism or customers with high purchasing power?

Well, I think they are oriented towards tourism, right? And a certain type of person also by a higher level.

Well, on the one hand, it would be fine, let's say it's fine, but it also harms other small ones, for example. So the biggest ones are going to hoard more and the others are going to close.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Honestly, I don't think these changes have brought any real benefits. Although I am lucky enough to have my own house and not suffer from the rise in rents, I see with sadness how the neighborhood has been left without neighbors and social life has disappeared to make way for a business that excludes the small owner. The center now seems designed only for tourists, but even that tourism has gone down due to insecurity, leaving us in a more expensive environment, more alone and with customs that now generate fear or suspicion instead of well-being.

14. In your day-to-day life do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to move to other areas due to the change in prices or supply?

No, no, here I always shop in the center, here everything is close to me and there is no problem.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or do you feel a loss of connection with the space you inhabit? Well, with 30, 40 years living here, the space is ours, right? I don't think there has been much change either, precisely because of the lack of people.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

I think that many people also think this because at parties and things I see a number of people that the elderly or the elderly are already suspicious of. It is now, it is another way of seeing, of protecting tourism and also protecting people.

For example, in carnival see that, what is that carnival going to be? That park, that crap, because that's how it was. And the people, the old or the elderly who always pass by, there was no one in the park anymore.

Out of fear, for a total change in customs. In other words, it was really savagery. And they did nothing.

17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that is organized to defend the permanence of traditional residents in the face of these changes?

Not around here, I don't know.

## **H2 Interview Resident – El Sagrario sector Presidente Borrero and Gran Colombia Street**

1. How old are you?

59 years old.

What is your current occupation?

Commercial Engineer.

How long have you lived in this sector?

All my life.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security, etc.? What do you think about these changes?

People are increasingly abandoning housing. It is now only in the commercial area.

It's bad because young people don't want to live in the city center anymore. He no longer values heritage or old houses. They only want to go to Challuabamba.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center of Cuenca?

The proximity. That there are all the basic services.

4. In recent years have you noticed if more people are moving to the historic center or on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

No, those who have moved are Venezuelans, who are the ones who damage the city's heritage. Unfortunately, they are occupying those heritage houses that no one wants to occupy.

What do you think is the reason for this situation?

To a lack of control by all governments.

Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses than before in the sector?

No, there are fewer inhabited houses than before.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector?

With Venezuelans very boisterous and relaxed and even of dubious reputation. With foreigners, Europeans or Americans there is no problem, they are people who know how to live together, they are basically older people.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

No, there is no social relationship of any kind.

They are all dedicated to work, they need their businesses.

The purely labor relationship. There are no more base neighbors.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for the visitor or the foreigner than for the local resident?

That's right, and it's more for the visitor.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Young people. The children of the owners of the houses no longer live here, everyone is going, they are living abroad.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood such as festivals, customs, use of public spaces, are maintained or gone?

No, there is no more. Zero. Here there is no longer a neighborhood to hold meetings, everything is commercial.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new people, for example, in rents, food or services?

No, in the center of the city, because it has increased. Commercial premises. It is very difficult to achieve the issue of housing, but no one wants to live here.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

It does not affect me personally because I do not rent. But I know that the rent for commercial premises has gone up, and that the rent of the homes is maintained because no one wants to rent.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores and the opening of new businesses such as luxury cafeterias, galleries, oriented to tourism or to customers with high purchasing power?

It's a shame to say, before there were tinsmiths, shoe shops, seamstresses, hardware stores and everything. The big businesses have been absorbing it and it has had to be weird.

There used to be neighborhood stores and it is still very few.

What do you think about that?

It is terrible that the law of monopoly is not applied. I'm talking about the Coral Centro case, the case of the Tutis that destroyed all the neighborhood stores, the hardware stores.

When the supermarkets arrived, they already destroyed certain neighborhood stores for the elderly. And when the Coral Centro arrived, they completely eliminated stores, hardware stores and plastic stores.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

No, I live the same, I don't feel changed.

14. In your day-to-day life do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to another area?

Yes, always. In the same places as always.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or do you feel a loss of connection with the space you inhabit? Yes, it still belongs

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

No, I will continue to live here, yes, I like it. I love it because you save on transport.

17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that is organized to defend the permanence of the traditional residents?

No, it does not exist. Each one in their business.

### **H3 Interview Resident – Bellavista sector Juan Montalvo and Rafael María Arizaga Street**

1. How old are you?

37.

What is your current occupation?

He loves home.

How long have you lived in this sector?

10 years.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security?

Don't worry, there have been no changes.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

Well, for foreign people, well, it depends on the foreigners we talk about, right?

I think that, if they talk about Venezuelans, sometimes those who start receiving money, let's say, it is because there are also more foreigners in the center, so there are more possibilities of receiving money.

And to American or European foreigners I think the architecture, the restaurants, the beautiful places that we have.

4. In recent years have you noticed if more people are moving to the historic center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

People are always moving, some come, others come from another sector.

In other words, there has been a constant change here in the sector. Since you don't also have the same house of your own, then some go, others come, like that.

Have you suddenly noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses in the sector?

That is, if they focus only on businesses in the center, but in this neighborhood, there are more inhabited houses. They are just living in, let's say. But that is, it would also be necessary to see how long, sometimes they last, because sometimes they don't, they don't last.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreign and national, who have arrived in the sector?

Well, because we don't have much, much contact like that, we're not very friendly.

- Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?

It hasn't touched me, no, not yet. Because there is not much relationship with the people who live or pass through here.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

Yes, there is more estrangement, there is no longer much relationship because they are constantly moving.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for visitors or foreigners than for the local resident?

Well, I feel like it does. Yes, because rents are high or that is what you hear.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

No, not just now.

In other words, you can see that people are changed, but sometimes because we say sometimes, they find something better or sometimes they say that they are going to a relative's house.

But not recently, a long time ago when it was a pandemic there was a lot of change, but not recently. There were quite a few closed, but not now, not lately.

Maybe it changes as is normal, sometimes it gets closer to work, closer to children, then they leave.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood such as festivals, customs, are maintained or have continued to be lost?

I see that they are maintained.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new people? For example, in rent, food or services. How would you describe them?

I think it's not just the sector, it's at a general level. For example, they opened the Plaza Santa Ana and the Gran Akí supermarket but not much has changed because I live here for years, and it doesn't make much difference. There is no more because it is not very commercial around here.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

Here they raised the rent per year to make a new contract, I don't know if it is the usual or custom of the people, because when we lived two years in another house, they did not raise the rent. On the other hand, here they raised us 50 dollars more. I also think it depends on each owner.

12. What do you think about the closure of traditional businesses, such as workshops or grocery stores, and the opening of new businesses, such as luxury cafes, galleries aimed at tourism or high-net-worth customers?

Well, I think that a little yes, maybe it affects small businesses like the neighborhood stores. It affects us that they close because they serve until the evening, if we have a need to buy at eight or nine at night, the supermarkets are already closed, then there would be nowhere to buy, so we do feel affected.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

No, because there are not also, that is, there are no new stores, only the Gran Aki supermarket that we have now and the plaza.

14. In your day-to-day life, do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to move to other areas?

Yes, in the same old ones.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from here?

Yes, it's the same, it feels the same.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety or uncertainty at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

No, I think I'm staying here.

17. Do you participate in or know of any group of neighbors that is organized to defend the permanence of the traditional residents?

No, I don't know.

#### **H4 Interview with resident – Bellavista sector Pio Bravo and Juan Montalvo streets**

1. How old are you?

70.

What is your current occupation?

I am retired, but I work as a secretary at the artisan center.

How long have you lived in this sector?

All my life.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security, etc.? What do you think about these changes?

Well, the truth is that before this was a residential sector, this time everything has already become commercial. What strikes me the most is that houses are sold and three months later there is a new home. And before that was forbidden in this neighborhood.

It could be good because there are houses that are no longer useful, so they bring something modern.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

Maybe the tranquility, how beautiful Cuenca is, in the historic center there are many churches, parks and people.

4. In recent years have you noticed if more people are moving to the historic center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left? What do you think is the reason for these changes? Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses in the center?

I think they are gone. Quite a few people have gone to Turi, Challuabamba.

I think they are leaving because there is a lot of commerce and a lot of noise, a lot of movement. People want peace of mind.

In my neighborhood the houses are still maintained, but within the historic center it is already totally commerce.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived at this center? Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?

Normal, I've never had any problems. I have my neighbors; I get along well.

No, no difference.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

Well, I think so. We don't know each other for a while. I, for example, here in the neighborhood do not know most of them, before perhaps they were. There are new people.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for the visitor or abroad than for the local resident?

I think so. Above all, our mayor is now working for tourism in the center. It doesn't affect me much, but in the center, I heard that there is a lot of discomfort because there is no respect. For example, during carnival I knew that it had been a horror, the center.

I was not here, but there was a lot of complaint that people from the coast took to the streets and it was disrespectful.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently? Do you know the reasons? Yes. Some are gone. I don't know why, I had a neighbor who had an upholstery shop and he disappeared overnight, I don't know what happened. I had another neighbor who had a little store himself, he disappeared overnight. But they are gone.

Well, now house sales, as always, are bought by people from the United States and refurbished them. For example, you look at that house, it is renovated with five apartments and is abandoned.

So, they buy, invest and leave abandoned. At least in this sector.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood such as festivals and customs are maintained or have been lost?

Well, they have been lost, because before as we knew each other, there was unity in the neighborhood.

Now everyone is dedicated to their home.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new people? For example, in rent, food or services. How would you describe them?

Well, with the arrival of new people I don't think. It is the measures taken by the government that everything has gone up. I believe that the arrival of foreigners, especially Americans, does have an influence, they pay what they are asked for. On the other hand, other foreigners or we do not pay, sometimes we want something cheaper.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

That has not affected me because I do not rent.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores and the opening of new shops, luxury cafes, galleries aimed at tourism or the customer with greater purchasing power?

Well, that is always going to happen, closing some premises and other premises opening.

Maybe they close because they don't have a good marketing experience. Sometimes they open them and want to start from the top and no, they have to start from the bottom and then spread. That's why I imagine that some of them close.

But as for the businesses that have been around for years, I don't know that they have left, they have all remained here.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Well, with the Gran AKÍ, the Plaza Santa Ana there has been more movement and amenities that benefit those of us in the sector. Having a large supermarket is a great advantage.

14. In your day-to-day life, do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to other areas due to price changes?

Well, I usually go to the Coral Centro de Racar, I like to go there because I do the shopping for just one, because there is everything. But when I have small purchases, I have the stores here.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from here?

No, no, I'm always comfortable here. I don't feel any disadvantage. I'm always calm.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

No, no, not at all.

17. Do you participate in or know of any group of neighbors that organizes to defend the permanence of the traditional residents in the face of these changes?

In other words, to prevent permanence, no. But we do organize ourselves for the security of the neighborhood, but with the loss of permanence, no.

#### **H5 Interview with resident – San Sebastián sector Sucre and Coronel Tálbot Streets**

1. How old are you?

37.

What is your current occupation?

Merchant.

How long have you lived in this sector?

30 years.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security, etc.?

There has been an evolution that is good for every city, for the community, however, it is not enough because there are many cities that evolve a little faster and Cuenca should not be the exception.

The neighborhood has grown; it has evolved with the businesses that have been taking place. Fortunately, we have a square nearby (Plaza de San Sebastián) and that is an advantage, it helps us.

We have tried as neighbors to make the neighborhood something safe so that it becomes a very commercial place but not to the point of bars, nightclubs because although this energizes the economy, it does not help because it attracts younger people. On the other hand, having cafeteria-type restaurants, it is much better because there is a little more tranquility.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population and people with greater purchasing power to settle in the Historic Center of the Cuenca?

The size of the city, because being a small city, because one can walk through the entire Historic Center, in less than half an hour you can cross the entire city. It's not like other much larger cities that you have to spend hours in traffic, so being a small city, everything is close to you and accessible. Another attraction is the climate helps us a lot and also the type of people, Cuenca is a slightly more conservative city. Well, things change too, there are many people who are no longer so, however, we continue to be calm, polite and that is what attracts the attention of the tourist.

4. In recent years, have you noticed if more people are moving to the Historic Center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left? Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses than before in the sector?

I think there will always be a coming and going of people. In general, those who arrive are foreigners, construction companies, investors who are buying goods, heritage properties, restoring them and converting them into rental apartments that are quite expensive for the investment, so those who can afford this are foreigners.

The investor makes a strong purchase and investment, so he also needs to recover and at one point this is good because it energizes the economy, but, on the other hand, it makes everything more expensive because they help make everything more expensive. But in the expensive there is a little security as well. Because that way you don't bring people who think it's cheap or easy to live here.

I have noticed that now there are more inhabited houses but the people who own heirs or owners of the houses, usually go out. Those who are accessing this, investing in this, are builders, people from abroad with purchasing power.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector? Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?

Well, it also depends a lot on the foreigner. It could not be generalized, but if we talk about the American foreigner specifically, they help us a lot, they are calm and most of them are retired, the coexistence is quite pleasant, one can talk with them calmly

But if we talk about the Venezuelan tourist or foreigner, they are usually a little younger people, which does affect the appearance of the city, the way of treating them is much more different and they cause mistrust due to the issue of crime and insecurity. So, that also scares the national and foreign tourist.

Coexistence depends on the type of foreign population. With U.S. foreigners, she is calm and positive, while with some Venezuelan migrants, differences in treatment and behavior are perceived that generate mistrust and concern for security.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

Yes, well, in the historic center it is a bit complicated because in reality the neighborhood is not known much, it is not very common for people to know each other and meet much in the center. Here in reality many of the times not even the person next to them is known, if they are the owners perhaps, but since they usually rent the spaces, they are not known. We can no longer speak of neighborliness.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for visitors or foreigners than for the local resident?

Yes, because of everything that is happening.

While it is true, it is very important to preserve the houses, the historic area, to conserve all the assets, but that also makes it difficult for people, homeowners, to continue living here.

Yes, the Historic Center is becoming more visitor-oriented. Although heritage conservation is necessary, it makes it difficult for owners to continue living in the sector.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Yes, I do. Having a house in the historic center is quite complicated due to tax issues, land, it is complicated and expensive. And a lot of the time the owners of the houses inherit one or two children and they prefer to go out, sell them and get rid of these houses.

And that's when investors, builders, come in. It is a bit complicated with family businesses, but I think that, with administration and advice to the owners, this could be improved because it is complicated to carry out a family project.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood, such as festivals, customs, use of public spaces are maintained or have been lost?

In the center it is very complicated, there has been almost none. On the part of the municipality, it has been encouraged, but more as a tourist attraction, not to preserve the traditions of the neighborhood. But I also think it is very good because that is what attracts attention, it is what energizes the economy.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of new people?

Well, the cost of living has always become more expensive over the years. However, this also relates to population growth and different social and political factors. The arrival of foreigners, although it helps to boost the economy, also makes it more expensive, which makes living in the Historic Center increasingly expensive.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

There is a general increase in costs. When construction materials become more expensive, it also increases the costs of a remodeling project, so one has to try to recover that investment and, in the end, this influences the value of rents, land, and sales.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses, such as workshops or grocery stores, and the opening of new businesses, such as luxury cafes, galleries, aimed at tourism or high-net-worth customers?

My opinion is that this obviously should not be lost, it should be supported and promoted, above all the support of large companies, municipalities, mayors, who have the power not to let this be lost, because it is our identity and if our people are in crisis, it affects the local economy.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Yes, a change for the worse, you could say, because some traditional businesses have been lost as forge workshops, some customs are also lost, such as having a morocho with a huma. And in reality, it is a loss that affects and extinguishes the neighborhood and our identity.

14. In your day-to-day life, do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always, or have you had to go to other areas due to changes in prices or supply?

Yes, out of necessity we have to go to the supermarkets, but daily we do go to the neighborhood store. I think that there is the option of giving this type of store a plus so as not to let them lose.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from here?

Well, by living here, by investing and having all your work here, well, you do feel like you belong to the place. However, many times one moves away and is left alone because of the notable arrival of foreigners.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

Yes, more because of the issue of insecurity, one is afraid to continue living here, for fear of contract killings and extortion. Because of that issue, it does give us anxiety, it makes one desperate. In reality, seeing so much crime is alarming.

17. Do you participate in or know of any group of neighbors that organizes to defend the permanence of the traditional residents in the face of these changes?

Yes, I know, I have rarely attended these meetings. But one or two people cannot do the work of an entire community, because for there to be security and the neighborhood not to be lost, the neighborhood is needed, as its name says, of all people, or at least several.

#### **H6 Interview with resident – El Vado sector Sucre and Juan Montalvo Streets**

1. How old are you?

23

What is your current occupation?

I work in a shop.

How long have you lived in this sector?

All my life.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security?

I don't know, it's changed quite a bit about security and all that.

Have you noticed that there is a greater arrival of foreigners?

Yes, quite a lot, yes. Here, those who pass by are always more foreigners, Europeans, French, like that. They come like this, quite a few.

What do you think about these changes?

I don't know, I think it's good, I don't know why it's good for me.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population or people with more money to settle in the historic center?

Yes, I think it's about tourism. They really like what it is, things, the structures of everyone here, from what I've heard, right? I mean, they like everything that way.

At most for the peace of mind, I think too. And since they also come here to go for a walk, it is...

4. In recent years have you noticed if more people are moving to the historic center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

Well, some have left and have gone as if to live on the outskirts, like that. That it's quieter, they say, or that I'd rather live over there than... Well, because it's a lot of noise and all that, so they prefer to live on the outskirts.

And the people who have lived here, for example, the neighbors who have lived here for years, have they moved?

Yes, some yes, some have left, yes. But most of them are still here.

Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses in the sector than before?

Yes, there are more houses inhabited, but mostly by students. They have been converted into rental houses.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both national and international foreigners, who have arrived in the sector?

Well, too. Well, also, I don't know, I mean, since I'm like that, friend, I mean, yes, yes, I've gotten along well with people and everyone.

Do you notice any difference in the coexistence between foreigners or people arriving from other cities in the country?

Yes. Yes, you can tell the difference. Sometimes in the treatment, in the way they express themselves and all that, yes.

I mean, well, it depends on the person as well, not how you treat.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

Well, I've always been, well, I mean, since I've been here, I've always been the same, so nothing has changed, everything remains the same.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for the visitor or the foreigner than for the local resident?

Yes, it's more foreigners. Now, here what you see are only the neighbors, like that. But to say more about foreigners who already live here.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Yes. Well, I found out, a neighbor next door left.

Do you know what the reasons were?

No, no, no, no, since he is gone, no. I haven't spoken to him either. But there are few who leave.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood, such as festivals, customs or use of public spaces, are maintained or have been lost?

No, yes, well, the only thing that is here in the neighborhood is some parties. It's that there is no longer much coexistence with the neighbors, as some already leave and new ones come, that is, sometimes they don't collide, sometimes. I could see each one for themselves.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of these new people?

Yes, they raised it a lot, in general, it's quite a difference. And in part the arrival of foreigners does have an influence.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

It hasn't affected me much, to be honest.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops, grocery stores, and the opening of new businesses such as luxury cafes, galleries, oriented to tourism or to customers with high purchasing power?

In other words, I think that on the one hand it is bad, because sometimes people live from it. For example, the neighbor here lived off that and had to close.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

No, I think, I mean, I think it's half and half, there are things that do benefit and there are other things that don't, such as the increase in prices.

14. In your day-to-day life do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to other areas?

No, in the same places as always.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit?

Always. I've always been here, that's why I feel like I'm still from here.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

No, no, nothing to do with it.

17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that is organized to defend the permanence of the traditional residents?

Yes, all the neighbors sometimes have WhatsApp groups, sometimes for alarms and all that more for security. Sometimes there's a guard who comes here.

#### **H7 Interview with resident – El Barranco sector Jesús Arriaga and Calle Larga Streets**

My name is Ana Narváez, I live on Jesús Arriaga Street and Calle Larga.

1. How old are you?

I am 51 years old.

What is your current occupation?

Housewife.

How long have you lived in the industry?

I live here for exactly 28 years.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live there, the type of commerce, security, etc.?

Well, I mean, when I came to live here it was super quiet, it was all beautiful, but now there is a sudden change now. There are strange things that are seen in the neighborhood that I didn't see before, it does impact him because it wasn't like that before. Now there are many foreigners who come with bad habits. What Cuenca was is different.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center of Cuenca?

Well, I mean, why Cuenca is quiet, it's also why everything is close in the center. I don't use buses; I walk out to the center. So, that helps to live in the center. And the tranquility of Cuenca too, compared to other cities that you see, Cuenca is still quiet, well.

4. In recent years, have you noticed if more people are moving to the historic center or, on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

Well, at least I'm talking about my neighborhood, it seems that some of them are already elderly people who have already died, the houses have been sold and others have arrived who have bought.

Others have also left, because of a lot of pollution, a lot of noise, some that I knew so many years ago.

Have you also noticed if there are more inhabited houses in your neighborhood than before or less?

Oh, no, yes, oops, right now everything is full, everything is full, they have built those little houses that are for temporary rentals not like before, where you rented an apartment and stayed to, when the owner of the house told you, vacate. On the other hand, now they are departments that only occupy days, weeks, depending on what they come to do, I think, or for tourism, I don't know, or for parties.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector?

Ah, well, you know that at least I talk about myself as, sometimes, I see foreign people with a little fear because they are, sometimes it seems to be people from the coast, I don't know if they are Venezuelans, they are Colombians, but yes, well it kind of gives a little fear.

Because you see so many things that are happening, then, it's like it's better to avoid it, and if they say hello, you say hello, if you don't it happens the same.

Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?

Oh, no, yes, it shows in everything, in the way they act, behave, in everything, customs, everything. In other words, they are clashes of customs, of culture.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

Yes, yes, very, very much, now, you put it, we too, as if the neighborhood itself alerts us. Our neighborhood is known as the little hole they say where they sell alcohol, other things, so it has changed a lot.

And the relationship between the neighbors, what is it like?

Well, I mean, it's everyone, in their home, it's a good morning, a good afternoon, neighbor, and chao, nothing more than that.

Do you think this has changed over time?

Yes, yes, yes, yes, of course, before, I mean, it was different, I even think that, if you did something, I told her, neighbor, I made you a sweet from this, I'm going to leave you. Now nothing, everyone is doing their own thing.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for the visitor or foreigner than for the local resident?

Yes, of course, almost the entire historic center is aimed at foreigners, tourists. It is totally changed. I live by the Central Bank, so a lot of tourists arrive. Our street was not tarified, right now it is tarified, you can't leave your car, because they fill the cars on the weekend by the Central Bank, foreign tourists come in, everything. So, it has changed a lot, the priority is for them.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Well, in my neighborhood there is more housing than businesses. I think quite a few have left, I had some neighbors so they have already left for Challuabamba for the tranquility, he says that they have left, they have left the house there and they have left, they do not even rent, but they are leaving like this, thrown away and they are looking for more tranquility, more security. It's that we're all dealing with the issue that we see foreigners. Well, of course, not all of them will be bad, but one is already with that concept.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood, such as festivals, customs, use of public spaces, are maintained or have they been lost?

He knows that it is better, of course, they have been lost, but that is, tranquility, because right now I see that some I don't know where they are from, they better come to take their speakers out into the street, that was not seen, well, in the neighborhood because it was quiet.

The party was held between neighbors in the Luis Cordero Park, it was done as an orchestra, but that no longer exists, it disappeared.

The neighborhood's religious traditions have been maintained. I still attend the church of San Blas and Corazón de María

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years, especially with the arrival of foreigners, for example, in rent, food or services?

Oh, yes, yes, the rents tell me that they have gone up a lot. Before, the rent of an apartment was two hundred and fifty, now it says that only a room is worth eighty dollars.

11. How has the increase in the cost of living affected it in general?

Very much. Imagine how food has gone up, that is the law, one that is very complicated, that has hit you hard.

Do you think that the arrival of U.S. foreigners, Europeans, or Venezuelans themselves has affected in any way?

Ah, yes with them is what I know, the cost of living went up, because they have a retirement of about four, three thousand dollars, they live quietly here with that salary. On the other hand, we here live with the basic salary with just enough, they live limited to many things.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops, grocery stores and the opening of new luxury businesses such as cafeterias, galleries, oriented to tourism or to customers with high purchasing power?

Oh, no, well imagine, that's terrible, because put it, those are already more expensive, those are no longer economical. What a traditional little store is, you ask for a discount, instead of a commissariat you don't do that anymore, you take and pay.

And what do you think of the opening of new luxury stores aimed at people with greater purchasing power?

Well, more sources of work are opening up, but a source of work that keeps workers enslaved, isn't it?

But from there, they are finishing off the neighborhood stores, put on the Coralitos, they are finishing the typical neighborhood stores. That is why the shops are closing and families are left without their livelihood.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Well, as changes you can see that, on Calle Larga, there more or less by the museum they opened cafes, galleries, those are luxurious, but they are very expensive, they opened some.

It is typical of the rich, as before it was the famous Remigio Street and now the Long Street, it is like that.

And do you think this has brought any benefit or is it more negative for the neighborhood?

Well, I think it's more negative because it attracts people who come to drink, there's a lot of alcohol, a lot more people come for the holidays.

14. In your day-to-day life, do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to other areas due to changes in prices or supply?

Oh, no, well, you know that I always go to the same market, to the same places as always.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from there?

Oh, no, yes. The feeling of loss is quite a lot, now one is more limited. That's why many foreign people came, who came with their bad habits, so one also has a little suspicion, afraid to go out. In other words, the neighborhood is no longer ours, let's say, of the people who lived here.

Before, you could go out one or two in the morning. Now at seven o'clock at night we are no longer outside because it is dangerous. Totally changed.

16. As you see the constant changes at the center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear that you may not be able to continue living there in the future?

Well, of course, yes, yes, yes, yes, it does happen. And we all comment because they continue to arrive, that is, they are looking more for the center. We used to have peace, now we have anguish about what will happen, what, how it will end. Because of the chaos. As I said, on Thursdays, Fridays, there is too much alcohol, music, noise. Now the neighborhood is better known for that

17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that is organized to defend the permanence of the traditional residents?

The neighborhood already has its board of directors that holds meetings to take care of the neighborhood, for security, all that.

#### **H8 Interview with resident – El Vergel sector**

1. How old are you?

56 years old

What is your current occupation?

Merchant.

How long have you lived in this sector?

About 35 years.

2. What changes have you noticed in the configuration of the neighborhood in terms of the people who live here, the type of commerce, security, etc.?

Well, before it was a neighborhood that was not commercial, but for about 7 years it must be, it became the street of the blacksmiths a gastronomic commercial, that is what has changed, mainly in the neighborhood.

Before, there were also forging workshops,

So, that has already disappeared and has given way to what is the question of restaurants and food.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

I think that the information that the city is a tourist destination and also that it is a cultural heritage of humanity, I think that attracts both national and foreign visitors.

4. In recent years, have you noticed if more people are moving to this sector or on the contrary, if those who lived here have left?

I think that there are people who have arrived, mainly nationals, but I think it is also because of the issue that there is the hospital, there are universities, so it is a matter of leasing.

There are rental houses around here, in the sector.

So that has changed.

Have you also noticed if there are more or fewer inhabited houses than before in the sector?

I think so, that is, there have been new constructions and there are more residents.

5. How would you describe your relationship and daily coexistence with the new residents, both foreigners and nationals who have arrived in the sector?

Well, it's occasional, let's say, because sometimes they don't know them, they're tenants, then.

There are days when they are there, other times they are not there and sometimes they are already definitively gone, that is, the neighbors are not known very well.

And for those of us who have lived here for a long time, then a relationship has been established with them.

Do you notice any difference in this coexistence depending on whether they are foreigners or people who arrive from other cities in the country?

I don't think so, not really.

6. Do you think that social activities and ways of relating between neighbors have changed due to the transformation of the sector?

I think so, or they should be.

The neighbors are a little more suspicious, especially for security reasons, I think so.

So, they don't give you much information, let's say.

7. Have you felt that the historic center has become a space designed more for the visitor or the foreigner than for the local resident?

I think so. In other words, the historic center is more focused on the visitor.

And that can bring some inconvenience to those who live in the historic center.

8. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Well, no. As I told you about 10 years ago there was the question of what these artisan workshops were, but that has long since gone. Not lately.

9. Do you feel that the identity and traditional symbols of your neighborhood, such as festivals, customs, uses of public spaces, are maintained or have been lost?

No, they have been lost. More than anything else in religious matters, I think.

This neighborhood was traditionally religious, especially at this time of Easter; That type of party is no longer there now.

It is precisely because that is precisely what the people who have come to live have changed, no longer those religious manifestations.

10. Have you noticed changes in the cost of living in the sector in recent years? For example, in rents, food and services. In general, prices have gone up, in terms of rents it has gone up, due to the supply and demand that there is precisely for renting in the sector.

In terms of trade, it may have benefited me, because you can sell more to foreigners and people from the coast, which is what is also moving around here the most. But, as a resident it harms me because there is more noise on weekends and there is a lot of movement of cars, sometimes that interferes at night with rest.

11. How has the increase in rental prices or land values affected your personal situation?

Well, no, not at all.

12. What is your opinion about the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores and the opening of new businesses such as luxury cafes, galleries, oriented to tourism or to customers with high purchasing power?

I think that it should not have been lost, that is, the tradition that the neighborhood had, but things have happened that way and they have been lost and have given way to this new commercial rhythm of the neighborhood.

13. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

I think not, that is, personally for me no, no. Maybe in the commercial part yes, a little, improve sales. At the beginning because in recent years it has declined anyway.

14. In your day-to-day life, do you continue to do your shopping and activities in the same places as always or have you had to go to other areas due to changes in prices or supply?

Well, yes, I still do my shopping right here all my life. When there is a need to, for example, go to the market, whether they leave or not. There have been no changes, let's say.

15. Do you feel that the neighborhood still belongs to you or have you experienced a loss of connection with the space you inhabit, even if you have not moved from here?

I think there is a bit of a disconnect with respect to the identity of the neighborhood.

In other words, he is already a little oblivious to the situation, there is no longer that union that suddenly existed before and now already. Everyone lives their life now.

16. Seeing the constant changes in the historic center, have you experienced feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or fear at the possibility of not being able to continue living here in the future?

Perhaps because of the problem of insecurity that may come. It can cause a little fear, fear. More than anything in the future, because the sector is still calm. But in the future, especially with new visitors, then the neighborhood can become a little unsafe.

17. Do you participate or know of any group of neighbors that organizes to defend the permanence of the traditional residents in the face of these changes?

There really hasn't been.

### **Semi-Structured Interview for Merchants**

#### **C1 Merchant Interview – La Colmena**

1. How old are you?

71.

What is your current occupation?

Merchant, I sell in the bakery.

How long have you worked in this sector?

More or less 58 years old.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Due to the dynamism, sales move a lot here. And the gentlemen have been here for years.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years?

I think that after half past six, more or less, there are no longer many people due to the danger of crime. Before, at that time there was still a lot of movement.

Have you noticed an increase in the arrival of foreigners?

Yes, yes, there are quite a few foreigners, like from other countries, they have really come especially from the coast on weekends, since Friday.

You can see the number of coastal people who come to our country.

And as for foreigners, North Americans, Europeans?

Everything. It has been maintained.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

In the historic center it really is the cathedral, which is one of the cultural heritages here in Cuenca. And the places that are old like this bakery, there are few places like that and people like that, to relive the memories from childhood.

4. Who are the people who buy or visit the business the most currently, compared to previous years?

They come from all over the country, both cuencanos and other cities come and do the shopping.

Foreigners also arrive, but local people predominate.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

The products have been maintained, they remain the same, the same process and all that does not change. Sometimes the price does, so it also goes up in other things, we have to go up a little.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before?

No, I really do everything here, generally.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Neighbors who have left, no. We are the same traditional ones.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing?

The traditional ones have not, but other businesses have left, and new ones have arrived who have set up their business or entrepreneurship. I think it's normal, sometimes they last a long time, but sometimes because of bad administration or because of the rent that goes up every time people decide to go to another sector. Maybe that's why, because really here in the center it is a little expensive, rents continue to rise and people don't adapt, sometimes it's not profitable. Sometimes situations like in this time, if there are the downsides, the businesses, maybe that's why they prefer to go and look for another place a little cheaper than people.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power?

Those that have been around for years continue to be maintained. There are new places that come and start, but they come and go, the traditional ones have been maintained. It is also for renting, for looking for new places.

No, it affects us because we have a lot of sales to be known, there is movement in that sense. Even though we are a little low with sales, but the same people arrive. There are people who come with the attitude of remembering the tradition of the ancients.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to the premises?

I think that exaggerated changes have not really happened. The people have always been maintained, both from Cuenca and from other places that come to remember.

As for foreigners, there have always been people from other places, both foreigners and from other cities who come to visit. So, I think that has not affected us and has not benefited us much either.

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the infrastructure of the sector have benefited your business or are they more oriented mainly to tourism?

The changes in this area are very few, there are not many tourists in this area, they are more around the cathedral, here it is very little. There are very low times like now, due to the concern of insecurity, tourists and foreigners no longer come.

12. Is the premises owned or leased?

Own.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

Not applicable.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

Well, the owners do feel confident about maintaining the business in the sector for years to come.

15. Do you feel that the historic center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where it started?

I think the historic center is still the same. There is a lot of presence of people from outside but we are still the people of Cuenca, who see the historic center as a very beautiful place, it is a beautiful city in every sense and that is why people come to visit us. In addition, we are clean people and the city is kept orderly, without so much garbage.

16. Have you teamed up or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce?

Not with other neighbors, but it is always about maintaining the legacy of our traditional business, so that it perseveres over time and the tradition is not lost.

## **C2 Interview with merchant – San Blas sector: Simón Bolívar and Vargas Machuca streets - Sánduches de Pernil El Vecino**

1. How old are you?

38 years old.

What is your current occupation?

I work here in fast food.

How long have you worked in this sector?

17 years old.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Because it has more reception, more customers, as it is an old and well-known business.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years? For example, in the type of customers, businesses or the atmosphere of the neighborhood.

As far as customers are concerned, thank God we have a good reception, both tourists who come in the team, come abroad. The changes we have noticed in the neighborhood are the hours of operation. And also, the large arrival of national and international tourists.

3. What do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center of Cuenca?

Cuenca is not so quiet anymore, but it is one of the quietest and safest cities in the country. Tourists like what can be done in Cuenca, Calderón Park, the typical foods.

4. Who are the people who buy from you the most or visit your business today?

They are little customers who have known us for years. Regular customers, but there are also new customers, for example, they come from, as I said before, from abroad, people from Quito, who have recommended us, so they come to visit us and try the pork sandwich.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

The products are maintained. Prices do, because as we all know, things go up a little more every day, so we had to raise the price a little.

Do you think that the arrival of foreigners has affected anything?

Well, yes, the crime that is being experienced, which we all know, is what affects all businesses.

Previously, before the pandemic, let's talk about ourselves, the hours of operation were from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., 11 p.m.

Today we are opening businesses here in the historic center more than anything, 9:30, we are leaving at 7, a little before 7, everything closes there.

So that's why they say the danger, because people come from the coast, people from Venezuela come, Colombians, which is what people are most afraid of and more cautious about.

6. Would you say that your businesses are more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before?

Well, as I told you earlier, we have our fixed clientele.

A little bit it has increased, as I say, that they visit us from other places, but since they are people passing through, then, they are practically people from here, from the area itself, who consume us, the cuencanos themselves.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Well, as a result of the closure of the streets due to the construction of the tram tracks, quite a few businesses left Gran Colombia, because they were affected a lot by the fact that there is no parking and all that. Most of the previous businesses left, although now they are all up and running again, but they are not the same as before.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing?

Many new businesses have arrived, most of them are fast food, due to the proximity to Calderón Park, there are even more international food restaurants such as Mexican tacos. Also, there is a lot of clothing trade.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power, such as luxury cafes, galleries or temporary rental apartments?

Well, I mean, from the previous new businesses, such as here there was Morejón, it was like they brought people, so they have brought people for us too. El Morejón who was well named, of clothes. So, we were affected by their closure. And because of the restaurant, we have almost not been affected much.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Well, not changes.

Knowing the new neighbors is always to the point of narrowing down who it will be, where they will come from and as I say, with this crime thing you always don't know who you are with.

It's not like before, when we knew each other, they have been there for years and we were known neighbors.

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the infrastructure of the sector, such as the Plaza San Francisco, the 9 de Octubre Market, have benefited your business or are they only oriented to tourism?

Just for tourism orientation. Because we are not so close to them. For example, the renovations they have made in the park. Do you think it is more for the tourist or for the people of Cuenca?

I don't think it's convenient for tourists as much as for cuencanos as well.

We cuencanos always go out to take a walk and see something different.

it attracts us. As there is the remodeling of Calderón Park, one is curious,

they are remodeling, many visitors, to those who are not there. I do see him well because of what he said

that many elderly people slipped, fell and such. As security also does not

for tourists, not so much for tourists as for us. And by the way, they are already attracted

That and they come to buy the car too.

12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?

It is leased.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

The price as every year always, I think everywhere always a little, it doesn't go up much but it always is.

I've been told that especially in the United States, there are people who have started businesses a lot. Of course, and everything goes up there too.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come?

Yes, because we already have our fixed clientele, despite the fact that there are low moments and that it will not be like years ago as a result of the pandemic, we are going to continue working here. We hope that we continue to stay as we are right now with sales.

15. Have these changes generated uncertainty, concern and made you think about moving to another place?

Well, the truth is that we haven't thought about leaving here but as I say, it's a local lease. As long as the owners continue to keep us here, we would have no problem staying here because we don't like the dynamics of the sector.

16. Do you feel that the historic center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where you started?

No, yes. Yes. What is the main street like?

and all that. You still feel part of the center. Yes, exactly. That's it. Have you joined

talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional trade

in the face of these changes that the historic center is experiencing? No, no, no. Well, that would be it. Let's see how.

### **C3 Merchant interview – El Sagrario sector El Royal Bakery**

1. How old are you?

I am 35 years old.

What is your current occupation?

He managed this bakery.

How long have you worked in this sector?

I work here 7 years, but the bakery has been in the city for more than 80 years.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Because we own this place, so we use it. This bakery started from my grandparents; they have lived here in the center all their lives.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years? For example, the type of customers, businesses or the atmosphere of the neighborhood.

I notice that there has been an increase in tourism, there is a little more movement especially in this sector that used to be a street that had a little less movement in traffic. As for the customers, it has been maintained, we receive quite a few older people because we are like an old bakery.

Yes, the increase in the arrival of foreigners has been noticed a little, although this street is not directly touristy, but the traffic is still noticeable, what you see people walking.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

For me it is that they are easy to walk, it is also attractive because of how colorful it is, because the city is orderly and relatively quiet.

4. Who are the people who buy from you or visit your business the most today compared to previous years?

As I say, we have more or less maintained the same. The clientele has not changed much.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

No.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before?

No.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

No. Because there hasn't been a lot of traditional business on this street, there's always been a constant movement of business around here.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing? How would you describe this change?

There are new technology stores, but it is not that they have replaced old ones because there were none. The fabric store that has been here for about 20 years, is still right there.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses such as workshops or grocery stores affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power?

No, that doesn't affect me because that doesn't happen in this sector. In addition, we already have our fixed clientele, so we don't have a competition, let's say. It doesn't affect us that people come from other places or anything.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

I think so. It kind of moves a little bit more. In other words, there is... Well, up here, it's not true, the ship of the law, that has affected a lot.

Yes, there are movements even at night or that before it was half forgotten and not many people passed by.

To find out if there are people who give life to the sector.

11. Do you think that the adaptations or improvements in the sector's infrastructures, such as Calderón Park or San Blas Park, have benefited your business or are they more oriented mainly to tourism?

Yes, it is more oriented towards tourism. But we don't have foreign clients currently, a bit like internal tourism from the country, they do arrive, but the majority are still people from Cuenca.

12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?

Own.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

Not applicable.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

I do feel safe, I don't have uncertainty, rather the fact that they are building here in front, gives me the impression that the number of sales customers is going to increase.

15. Do you feel that the historic center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where you started?

No, it still feels like Cuenca is ours. There are all the shops that I remember with the ones I grew up with since I was a child, such as the pernil sandwiches of San Blas, or higher up, the Raymipampa or the Botica Internacional, they have been in the neighborhood all my life.

16. Have you joined or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce in the face of these changes that the historic center is experiencing?

No, we have not talked. Although we do get along with the people from here in the neighborhood, yes. But no one has told me that they have those problems, honestly.

#### **C4 Merchant interview – El Sagrario sector Padre Aguirre and Gran Colombia streets - Argó Joyería**

1. How old are you?

I am 52 years old.

What is your current occupation?

Handmade jewelry box. We have a workshop and jewelry shop.

How long have you worked in this sector?

Already 30 years in this place. But I've been downtown since I was a kid, because my parents also had their business here.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Because it has always been the most important commercial part of the city. And in our case, these areas are where all the jewellery business has been concentrated, so we have always been in this sector.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years? For example, the type of customers, businesses or the atmosphere of the neighborhood.

The first thing, which we have noticed in the last two or three years, is the increase in disorder, especially in the entire organizational part of the center. For us, the most notorious and the most annoying are the street vendors who cause disorder because from the beginning of the day until the end of the day the center seems to be a fair, there are shouts everywhere, something that did not happen before and the city was characterized by having that order. It was a clean city in that sense. That, on the one hand. On the other hand, we feel that the arrival of visitors also somehow generates a little chaos for us. Before, the services were at the service of local citizens, but from one moment to the next with too large an influx of tourists, everything becomes crowded and begins to be more difficult for us to access.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

Mainly the architecture, all the people who visit us say that we have an architecturally beautiful city, they compare it with Europe. Then there are its landscapes and rivers; also, services and transport such as the tram, pharmacies, restaurants that from the pandemic also opened quite a bit in the center. This has greatly favored the services to be of better quality and the visitor to be at ease.

4. Who are the people who buy from you the most or visit your business today?

Our main buyers are the people of the city who visit us all the time, then there are also national tourists and foreign tourists, mostly Americans, but we also have European and Latin tourists such as Argentines and Chileans who appreciate our products a lot, sometimes they come to study. So, there is really a fairly large exchange of a Chilean public that comes to the city.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

No, the truth is that we stick with the prices. What affects us is the global problem that has occurred in the last year with the variation in the price of silver and gold. That makes it a little difficult for us to produce and keep us stable, but we are doing it.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before?

Yes, tourism has increased a lot, especially nationally for two or three years. We also continue to have the same flow of local people arriving at the premises.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Since the pandemic, there has been a fairly large outflow of people who had to leave their business, their commerce, but that was a consequence of the pandemic. Many neighbors could not support themselves because of the rents and had to leave.

But now there are also people who had to leave their homes in the center, because they had a bar next door, a nightclub that did not allow them to sleep until late at night. Although it is a type of commerce that the city needs, it is also displacing the people who lived here in the center.

I don't live here, but you do see a lot more movement than before, at night the park is full.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing?

The traditional ones have been disappearing. There are businesses that have been with us for years and it's a shame, we just saw a lifelong business here in General Torres that is closing its doors, that has been a little sad. But we have seen the increase of other businesses.

In Calderón Park, we feel that, with this Casa Amarilla, history changed a lot here, in the commercial part, all restaurant services began to increase and the same happened with the house that Vatex has, for example.

They, for me, are the pioneers of change, after the pandemic and from there it is another city, because before the city remained linear, but after that, on the other hand, now we see other businesses that have been increasing, new brands, things that are coming to the center. Now we have the malls that also attract a fairly large sector of public, but the center is the center.

Another problem is security; we have seen the influx of foreigners who came to settle here and security has changed. And that is a point that has weakened the image of the city, because tourists come and are worried about what they see in the news. But of course, when they get here, they say wonderful, because we can walk calmly at night, nothing happens to them.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses, such as workshops or grocery stores, affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power?

Well, I tell you that rather that, before being a problem, energizes the economy a little. In other words, I believe that this brings movement and the more they move, the more services, the more products can be made, I believe that we are all going to be fine because we are going to be successful.

This is a chain and we don't really see anything that affects us, but rather it energizes a lot, they attract more people and that favors the businesses that are here. So, it really is advantageous rather than being a problem.

10. Do you think that these changes, such as the arrival of new people, changes in infrastructure or businesses, have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to your business?

Of course, of course. As I say, the benefit is immediate, there is knowledge of the city, there are people who are preparing to come here to Cuenca to get to know it, to enjoy it.

And, obviously, it helps the hotels, the entire commercial part.

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the infrastructure of the sector have benefited your business or are they mainly oriented to tourism?

Well, they are oriented to tourism, but it is a beautiful city, which is becoming more beautiful. So, we should rather be grateful to the people who are investing in the city, because it is an advance for everyone, as long as it is controlled. Hopefully the municipality will always keep Cuenca orderly, that they do not touch the architecture because that is the charm of the city and it must be preserved and preserved. If I would disagree with the loss of buildings, so representative for the city, that would be a shame. But from there, imagine if someone comes to restore a house, of the beautiful houses that are in the city, the city wins. I am proud, very proud, and happy to see that this type of work is being done.

12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?

It is leased.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease such as price increases?

No, not at all. It is a lease that is within the norm, it has been maintained well. I don't know about the rest of the venues, how they work, but we've done well. Despite the fact that the area is highly sought-after, there has been no increase.

During the pandemic they were friendly, they helped us with a decrease in price.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes perhaps generated uncertainty, concern and made you think about moving from the place?

Yes, yes, totally safe. As long as the governments of the day invest in security, invest in order, in cleaning the streets, we are in a paradise and hopefully it can be maintained that way. Also, I believe that as long as the tenant allows us to have the business here, we will continue.

We have not thought about leaving this sector because we know that the center is a very commercial place and a very important part of the city. Besides, all my life I've been here in the center, I haven't considered that idea, I wouldn't know where to go. Maybe a mall could be an option for safety, but I don't change here, in any way. Yes, more investment should be made, so that the city is not neglected, the Citizen Guard is an advantage, but it could be better.

15. Do you feel that the historic center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where it started?

Yes, of course, I feel that it is part of us, we have made our commercial life here.

16. Have you joined or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce from these changes?

In safety, yes. We had to make a chat of the block to be in communication, we set alarms, panic buttons, we have had to take precautions. Because I believe that security is not only ours, but also that of the people who arrive here and we have to take care of it because we are at that limit that, if we do not take care of the city, if we do not invest in security, very soon it can get out of hand.

And the rest of the blocks and neighbors around the center have also done so due to this increase in people who have arrived.

### **C5 Merchant Interview – San Sebastián sector with Sucre and Coronel Talbot streets – Florería Azuay**

1. How old are you?

65 years old

What is your current occupation?

Merchant.

How long have you worked in this sector?

More or less 40 years.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Because we ourselves grew and we had nowhere to sell to them, so we set up the premises to take out all the merchandise that we grew ourselves, all the products that we grew ourselves, which is how much, flowers, because we also included more things right here, such as, for example, milk, vegetables.

We started from here because the most previous years that they sold to Plaza de las Flores.

Since we had good production, we decided to set up as a florist, as a warehouse, to have a place to store the products we took out.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years? For example, in the type of customers, businesses or the atmosphere of the neighborhood.

Well, before people didn't have much knowledge about details and flowers, now they buy a lot more on each special date. As for customers, it is seen that more foreigners are arriving.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

They like the tranquility, cleanliness and security of the city. They are also attracted to the food, the traditions, which is why they stay for months, years or already stay to live here.

4. Who are the people who buy from you the most or visit your business today?

The people of the city who know us, the companies, the hotels, restaurants, the wholesalers. But tourists also arrive from all sides.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

No, we have always maintained the prices. In terms of products, we expanded what is offered.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before?

No, the people of Cuenca are the ones who buy the most, foreigners come more to visit and look at the place.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently?

Most of the businesses that have always been there have been here. Few have left, because they were in a situation impossible to continue. Some have always opened, others have closed for some reason, but other businesses have opened again.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing?

No, everything is normal.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses that give way to new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power affect you?

We have had no problems with new businesses, everything is normal. It's nice that there are more places that attract people.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you?

Of course, the changes have brought benefits. The new premises are useful for each person according to what they are looking for.

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the infrastructure of the sector have benefited your business or are they mainly oriented to tourism?

Yes, it's more for the tourist, this is good because improvements and events attract people and they consume more in the business. But they should benefit everyone equally.

12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?

Own.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

Not applicable.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector in the coming years? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

I would say yes, because it is family, we are six owners. I have no uncertainty or fear of continuing here in the future.

15. Do you feel that the historic center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where it started?

Yes, I feel that it still belongs to me in every way, as a traditional merchant, although sometimes I consider that it would be good if there were changes, as long as they benefit everyone and not just a part.

16. Have you teamed up or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce?

Yes, because we want there to be more security, we have to be more prepared to face any situation.

#### **C6 Merchant Interview– San Blas sector Calle Gran Colombia and Mariano Cueva – Comercial Francis**

1. How old are you?

63 years old.

What is your current occupation?

Merchant.

How long have you been working or have you worked in this sector?

In this sector, 22 years.

Why did you choose the historic center for your business?

Because business moves differently.

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years?

In the sector. First, in insecurity, then disorder.

- Have you noticed an increase in the arrival of foreign residents in your block or nearby neighborhood? How would you describe it?

Yes. Encouraging disorder. More than anything they are Venezuelans.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the historic center?

They have everything nearby.

4. Who are the people who buy from you or visit your business the most today compared to previous years?

Well, our customers are more tourists and city people, foreigners are not frequent customers.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer or their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

I haven't had to change the products.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before? How has this changed over time?

No, it has never depended on foreigners, but rather on the people of Cuenca and the surrounding cantons who visit us.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector? What were the reasons?

A little bit because of a proliferation of foreigners.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses are now arriving or if traditional ones are disappearing? How would you describe this change?

New businesses are arriving in this sector, especially the cell phone business. I don't know where it came from, but they make arrangements. Before I think there was only one technician who fixed, now there are 15 only on the block.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses (such as workshops or grocery stores) affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power (such as luxury cafes, galleries or temporary rental apartments)?

It doesn't really affect me; it's the new trend. Now there are more chefs, more young people who have money who use this consumption.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you? Which ones?

Yes, the changes have benefited me because now I have more national tourists as customers

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the sector's infrastructures have benefited your business or are they mainly oriented towards tourism?

Yes, they are more oriented to tourists, but it also helps me because as I told you I have quite a few national clients.

12. Is the premises in which you work your own or in the dice?

Own.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

Not applicable.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

Very little concern, the truth is almost not. Well, we made a change, but not to leave the sector but to reach more people, we opened a place outside the city because people do not come because of the traffic, it is too saturated. The new customers, the customers who buy the most are out of town.

15. Do you feel that the Historic Center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where you started?

Yes, because of our history here, my customers from other cantons have recognized us for 35 years and come here to buy

16. Have you teamed up or talked to other business owners to try to protect traditional business from these changes?

Yes, we have. Above all, with a little security, management of advertising.

Additional Comment by Mr. Claudio Rolando Contreras:

It used to be beautiful around here, people in the center of the city, they came out well dressed, it was cute. Now, if he sees a woman he shows her whole body, men walk around in sneakers and have a vocabulary that is scary. It caught my attention and I noticed, here people even rode motorcycles with motorcycle boots. Now they walk around in sneakers, they walk around in shorts.

I used to stand out here and say hello to the neighbors. Now, they greet each other shouting from corner to corner, insulting each other.

Where our people were, our manners, at what point where they neglected.

They were walking here, on the margins of the sidewalk out of respect to let pass, they don't, they obstruct the passage with motorcycles, sometimes they stop in the middle of the street and we can't say anything to them out of fear. Better avoid. They are masters of the city, as an arrogance, as a bad education.

Before it was a pleasure that people came to the premises to serve them, now we have to follow them to make sure they don't take anything. So, those are the very ugly changes that have been made.

That's how I think we've had to adapt to ourselves.

### **C7 Merchant interview – El Vergel Herrerías sector**

1. How old are you?

54 years old

What is your current occupation?

Industrial Mechanics and Wrought Iron Engineer – Blacksmithing

How long have you worked in this sector?

46 years old

Why did you choose the Historic Center for your business?

By family inheritance

2. What main changes have you noticed in the population of the sector in recent years, for example, in the type of customers, businesses or atmosphere of the neighborhood? Have you noticed an increase in the arrival of foreigners?

How would you describe it?

The change is remarkable, before it was a blacksmith neighborhood now it is gastronomic, it is a fairly large change in land use.

In this sector there is no increase in foreigners because unfortunately it is not a sector for these groups of people, because of the spaces. You do see local and national tourism.

3. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the main attractions that motivate the foreign population to settle in the Historic Center of Cuenca?

As I say, there is not much presence of foreigners here. What there is a boom in construction for rent.

Due to the proximity to universities and hospitals, it is well received to rent.

But the people who arrive are not foreigners, it is more national tourism. A lot of people come from places like Azogues, from the coast and from different places. He is not so much a foreigner.

4. Who are the people who buy from you or visit your business the most today compared to previous years?

I will tell you that unfortunately the local product has been quite underestimated due to the competition we have with the Chinese product. The profession has been declining a lot. We used to have a general consumption, but now there are very few people who accept or value local work.

5. Have you had to change the products you offer at their prices to adapt to new residents or tourists?

In some things yes, but in most things no. Chinese products are cheaper, but the quality is inferior.

We have to produce in dollars and also pay taxes, so there is no way to compete, it is unfair competition.

6. Would you say that your business is more dependent on foreign customers or tourists now than before? How has this changed over time?

No. Here the customer is local, we survive with the local customer. Foreigners hardly buy from us. The few who arrive just look, take photos, but don't send anything to be done.

7. Do you know of neighbors or traditional merchants who have had to leave the sector recently? Do you know what the reasons were?

Yes, many enterprises, especially workshops by teachers that have been generational, have closed, some due to poor competition. Also, due to the change in land use, since many spaces have been used for gastronomy.

In addition, there are no new generations that continue with these trades, so many workshops have disappeared. Although these trades have been an important livelihood for years, even to support families and studies, they have been declining over time.

8. Have you noticed if more new businesses have arrived in recent years or if traditional ones have been disappearing? How would you describe this change?

There is much more gastronomic business. The traditional ones, those of the trade, are disappearing.

About 40 years ago, every space on this street had its workshop, either indoors or outdoors, but all that has been changing. Now there are very few of us left, about half a dozen.

On the other hand, gastronomy has grown a lot, it is a strong change in land use.

Some families have even changed jobs; For example, they closed blacksmith shops to sell food because it is more profitable for them.

It also influences that the new generations do not continue with the trade and use the inherited resources to undertake other activities such as gastronomy.

9. How does the closure of traditional businesses (such as workshops or grocery stores) affect you to make way for new businesses aimed at tourists or customers with greater purchasing power (such as luxury cafes, galleries or temporary rental apartments)?

It's not a disadvantage. Gastronomy and blacksmithing can go hand in hand.

By having a workshop next to food establishments, people who come to eat are also interested in the workshop. Many do not know these trades, but when they pass by they see the workshop and that helps us to promote ourselves.

So, in a way, gastronomy drives our work and allows us to survive.

10. Do you think that these changes have brought any benefit to the neighborhood or to you? Which ones?

Of course, every change brings benefits in some aspects. Trade growth can be positive for the sector. But also, when trade grows, crime increases, especially due to the lack of adequate spaces and control.

11. Do you consider that the adaptations or improvements in the sector's infrastructures (such as Plaza San Francisco, the 9 de Octubre Market, Vergel Park, SOLCA hospital, motorway, etc.) have benefited your business or are they mainly oriented towards tourism?

Every business depends on the customer and the knowledge they have about the service. Many people do not know where to go or how to have their products made.

Spaces like SOLCA attract people, and when they come, they also get to know other businesses such as blacksmithing or food places. In that sense, it goes hand in hand and can be a benefit.

However, it also has a negative side, because land use increases rental and consumption costs. So, the increase in prices does not always go hand in hand with the reality of the trade.

12. Is the premises in which you work owned or leased?

Own.

13. If you rent, have you had difficulties with the lease, such as price increases or problems renewing the lease? – because the area is now more valued by foreigners or investors.

Not applicable.

14. Do you feel confident that you will be able to maintain your business in this sector for years to come? Have these changes generated uncertainty or concern and made you think about moving to another place?

Not at all, I don't plan to leave here. It is the best thing that could have happened to me and it is the best inheritance that my father left me. Thanks to this profession we have had many opportunities and we have broken stigmas, participating in spaces such as cinema, television and cultural programs. We were even the only artisan blacksmiths invited to hold a private exhibition for King Felipe VI at the Ibero-American Summit of Nations.

15. Do you feel that the Historic Center is still a space that belongs to you as a traditional merchant or have you experienced a feeling that the sector is no longer the same place where you started?

The authorities in charge of the axes of the territory do not agree with the reality of the artisan or the enterprises. If there were greater dissemination and knowledge, there would be a better fluidity in social, economic and commercial aspects.

The El Vergel neighborhood is characterized by its work, its people and above all by its solidarity. It is a traditional neighborhood that maintains trades that enhance the city as a cultural heritage. In addition, it has something important, which is entrepreneurship, perseverance and discipline at work

16. Have you joined or talked with other business owners to try to protect traditional commerce in the face of these changes that the Historic Center is experiencing?

I have always been involved as an active social actor. I have participated for several years in citizen oversight related to the inspection and projection of projects to support the artisanal sector as a cultural manager and defender of the trade, I have worked with different institutions, authorities and public spaces to promote that blacksmithing does not disappear or be forgotten. I have participated in conservation projects with universities and have received recognition for my work.

Through the municipality of Cuenca, heritage and different political spaces, both local and national, we seek to maintain and promote this trade. Blacksmithing is an essence and a virtue that is part of the city's identity.

However, I believe that in Cuenca it is not given enough importance, since many times recognition comes more from abroad than at the local level.

### **Semi-Structured Interview for Displaced Trader**

DM1 – Interview with a Merchant Who Left the Sector – Blanca Pillaga Panadería Migajitas

1. How old are you?

65 years old.

What was your activity or business in the historic center?

Pastry.

How long did you work in that sector?

10 years.

Where in the historic center was your business located?

In the Vega Muñoz and Mariano Cueva.

How long ago did you stop working or close your business in the historic center?

In the year 2000.

2. How would you describe the industry when you had your business there?

Very good. Very commercial.

3. What changes did you begin to notice in the sector before closing or moving your business?

There were more and more businesses, the sector was becoming more commercialized. They began to remodel the streets and sidewalks.

4. Did you notice an increase in the arrival of foreigners or tourists in that time?

No, at that time there were not so many tourists.

5. Who were your main customers at that time? Did this change over time?

The main customers were merchants and neighbors. People from other sectors also came to shop in the center and so they also went through the pastry shop.

6. Did you notice changes in the cost of rents, products or services in the sector?

With dollarization, yes. Everything went up in price. Because they closed the street, there was not so much commerce anymore.

7. Did these economic changes influence your decision to close or relocate your business?

Oh, yes, of course, because we had to pay the rent, to the employees, suppliers, etc.

8. Did you notice if new businesses aimed at tourists or people with greater purchasing power appeared? How did this affect your business?

At that time there were not so many tourists. Very few people with a lot of purchasing power so that did not affect me much.

9. How did the closure of traditional businesses in the sector affect you?

Most businesses closed, some temporarily, others never returned, like me.

10. Do you think your business was pressured by these changes in the environment? How?

Yes. He was under pressure because he depended on these changes.

11. Did you feel uncertainty or concern about the possibility of keeping your business in the sector before leaving?

Of course. I was very afraid, uncertain and worried about not knowing if it was going to be profitable and pay the rent that rose too much with dollarization and the opening of the new street.

12. What was the main reason why you decided to close or move your business?

The closure of Vega Muñoz Street due to the reconstruction caused businesses to close, they also relocated informal merchants and with all this, many customers who passed through the premises no longer arrived in the sector. Another reason, as I have already mentioned, was dollarization, the price of rent and products rose too much.

13. Was the decision voluntary or was it influenced by external factors such as rent increases, change in clientele or the environment?

It was not voluntary, it was influenced by the increase in rental prices, dollarization and the closure of the main street and caused the entire sector to change.

14. Where did you move your business or what activity are you currently in?

I took him to my house through Miraflores Park.

15. What differences do you perceive between the Historic Center and the sector to which you moved?

The economic difference, above all, in this sector there were fewer sales. Another difference is the preference of products, in the center they sold a lot of pastry products, while here in the neighborhood they only sold bread, so they are less income.

16. Do you think that your economic situation has improved, worsened or remained the same since you left the sector?

It has worsened, because in the center they moved more, it had many more sales.

17. Do you think that the changes in the historic center have brought any benefit to the commercial sector?

The changes, of course. Due to the aesthetics of the sector, more businesses began to open, even benefiting the owners of the houses, because they took advantage and raised the prices of rents.

18. Would you reopen a business in the historic center?

Yes, if I were young. I would always do it because there is more dynamism in the sector, sales are higher.

## Appendix E

### Informed Consent Form for Participants

9. **Uso de la información:** entiendo que mis declaraciones serán utilizadas en el trabajo de titulación y en posibles productos académicos derivados del mismo.
10. **Confidencialidad y anonimato:** reconozco que no se publicarán nombres reales en los resultados. Se tomarán medidas de anonimización para reducir riesgos.
11. **Observación del entorno (si aplica):** entiendo que la investigadora podrá realizar observación no participante en espacios públicos del Centro Histórico, sin intervenir en las actividades cotidianas.
12. **Finalidad académica:** comprendo que toda la información proporcionada será utilizada **exclusivamente para fines académicos**.

Al firmar este documento, confirmo que he leído (o se me ha leído) el contenido anterior y acepto participar bajo las condiciones descritas en calidad de:

- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

#### Datos del participante:

Nombres y Apellidos: \_\_\_\_\_

C.I./ Pasaporte: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: 03 / 04 / 26

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Datos de contacto de la investigadora:

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

9. **Uso de la información:** entiendo que mis declaraciones serán utilizadas en el trabajo de titulación y en posibles productos académicos derivados del mismo.
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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: GALO JOSE PICON CABRERA

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0102275716

Fecha: 30 / 03 / 2026

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

9. **Uso de la información:** entiendo que mis declaraciones serán utilizadas en el trabajo de titulación y en posibles productos académicos derivados del mismo.
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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: ANA NARVAEZ

C.I./ Pasaporte: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: 06 / 04 / 26

Firma: ANA NARVAEZ P.

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Edwin Albornoz

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0104650262

Fecha: 04 / 04 / 26

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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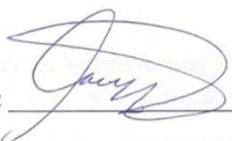
- Habitante del Centro Histórico
- Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: ANA CARDENAS

C.I./ Pasaporte: 9106504137

Fecha: 02/04/2016

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico
- Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Lia Fernández

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0151812076

Fecha: 2/04/26

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:


- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Martha Lucia Serrano

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0101112001

Fecha: 02/04/2026

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

## FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Estimado/a colaborador usted ha sido invitado a participar en una entrevista para el desarrollo del trabajo de titulación de grado titulado: **Impacto Social del Proceso de Gentrificación en el Centro Histórico de Cuenca-Ecuador, como consecuencia de la Inmigración**, proyecto que se encuentra siendo realizado por Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga, estudiante de la Universidad del Azuay, perteneciente a la facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y a la Escuela de Estudios Internacionales.

El presente estudio se desarrolla bajo un enfoque cualitativo, con el objetivo de comprender cómo las transformaciones urbanas asociadas a la gentrificación han impactado en la vida cotidiana, las actividades económicas y las dinámicas sociales en el Centro Histórico de Cuenca.

Para ellos, se realizarán entrevistas semiestructuradas dirigidas a habitantes y comerciantes del sector, con el fin de recopilar sus percepciones, experiencias y opiniones con respecto a las transformaciones percibidas en la zona.

Su participación es muy valiosa, ya que permitirá obtener una comprensión más profunda y contextualizada de este proceso.

Antes de decidir su participación, es importante que lea y comprenda los siguientes aspectos.

Al firmar este documento, declaro y acepto los siguientes puntos:

1. **Participación voluntaria:** declaro que participo en la presente investigación de manera libre y voluntaria, sin que medie coacción o presión de ningún tipo.
2. **Propósito de la investigación:** he leído y comprendido el propósito del estudio y la importancia de mi aporte en el mismo.
3. **Oportunidad para preguntas:** se me ha brindado la oportunidad de realizar preguntas sobre el estudio y he recibido respuestas claras y satisfactorias.
4. **Entrevistas:** acepto participar en la entrevista semiestructurada relacionada con mi experiencia como habitante o comerciante del Centro Histórico de Cuenca.
5. **Duración:** comprendo que la entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de 30 a 45 minutos, aunque podría extenderse o acortarse en función de mi disponibilidad.
6. **Derecho a no responder:** entiendo que puedo negarme a responder cualquier pregunta, sin necesidad de justificar mi decisión.
7. **Derecho a retirarme:** comprendo que puedo retirarme de la entrevista en cualquier momento y por cualquier motivo, sin repercusiones de ningún tipo.
8. **Grabación de audio:** acepto que mi entrevista sea grabada en audio con el fin de garantizar la precisión en el análisis de datos y facilitar los procesos de transcripción.

9. **Uso de la información:** entiendo que mis declaraciones serán utilizadas en el trabajo de titulación y en posibles productos académicos derivados del mismo.

10. **Confidencialidad y anonimato:** reconozco que no se publicarán nombres reales

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

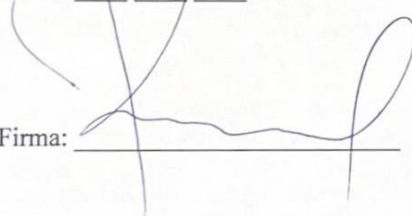
- Habitante del Centro Histórico
- Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Claudio Bolando Contreras

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0101868347

Fecha: 24/03/2026

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Ubaldo Calle

C.I./ Pasaporte: 010219316-6

Fecha: 30 / 3 / 26

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico
- Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Sandra Tapia

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0106458292

Fecha: 01/04/2016

Firma:  \_\_\_\_\_

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: JUAN JOSE NEIRA CARVALLO

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0102645678

Fecha: 02/04/2026

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

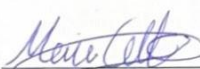
- Habitante del Centro Histórico
- Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Maria Calle

C.I./ Pasaporte: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: 06 / 04 / 26

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

Nombre: Ana Belén Cárdenas Pillaga

Teléfono: 099 559 7345

Correo electrónico institucional: [ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec](mailto:ana.cardenas@es.uazuay.edu.ec)

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- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Rosa Piñedo

C.I./ Pasaporte: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: 07 / 04 / 26

Firma: Rosa Piñedo

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

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9. **Uso de la información:** entiendo que mis declaraciones serán utilizadas en el trabajo de titulación y en posibles productos académicos derivados del mismo.
10. **Confidencialidad y anonimato:** reconozco que no se publicarán nombres reales en los resultados. Se tomarán medidas de anonimización para reducir riesgos.
11. **Observación del entorno (si aplica):** entiendo que la investigadora podrá realizar observación no participante en espacios públicos del Centro Histórico, sin intervenir en las actividades cotidianas.
12. **Finalidad académica:** comprendo que toda la información proporcionada será utilizada **exclusivamente para fines académicos**.

Al firmar este documento, confirmo que he leído (o se me ha leído) el contenido anterior y acepto participar bajo las condiciones descritas en calidad de:

- Señalar una de las opciones:

- Habitante del Centro Histórico  
 Comerciante del Centro Histórico

**Datos del participante:**

Nombres y Apellidos: Blanca Pillaga

C.I./ Pasaporte: 0300859899

Fecha: 08 / 04 / 26

Firma: 

**Datos de contacto de la investigadora:**

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