

## ECUADOR

### Introduction

The cultural heritage of Ecuador is at risk at a national level, due to threats from both natural causes and human action. In the case of natural phenomena, the risks are mostly related to eruptions, earthquakes, lava flow and floods. Human factors are related to issues such as poverty (on one hand) and wealth (on the other), and with a significant weakness in the area of cultural and political administration.

This report will discuss three specific situations: the city of Quito in general, the Quito 'calle La Ronda' (street of La Ronda) more particularly, and the city of Zaruma, which is included on the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list.

### Heritage at Risk in Quito

The more extensive and general discussion of this situation was contained in a paper presented in June 2001 in Toledo: 'Charter of Toledo and Quito in the frame of a sustainable development in the Iberoamerican cities'.

Highlighted in this paper are the problems arising from the flagrant disregard for international norms and guidelines in Quito, the first city in the world to be declared as 'World Cultural Heritage'. It is evident that the abovementioned charters need urgent amendments and corrections, to ensure that they comply more precisely and strictly with an international level of heritage protection. These amendments should include the conclusions and recommendations of the paper delivered at the abovementioned Toledo Seminar.

More specifically, Quito cultural heritage is at risk for the following reasons:

- The historic city centre is crossed by a highway that has damaged and destroyed the urban fabric and increased the level of detrimental impact from pollution.
- Many structures have been demolished over the last 40 years, among which we can highlight the Palacio Municipal, located in the Plaza de la Independencia, where the new buildings that have been constructed are unacceptable from all points of view.
- The local population has been systematically evicted from the area, which has seriously changed the historical uses and traditional customs of the city.
- The planning of new uses lacks technical, social and cultural support and has produced an economic hiatus, because most of the buildings that have undergone 'rehabilitation' and 'restoration' are empty and for the most part abandoned. There is an urgent need to identify new use-proposals in order to gain some benefit from these investments.
- Among these buildings are large car parks, luxury shopping centres, 5-star hotels – but without any enticement for a tourist investor.
- In the historic town centre the biggest transport terminal has been built, with its corresponding highways.
- Around 70% of the professionals responsible for relevant studies and projects do not have the necessary specialised training, and many are engaged in works that favour personal interest over historical and cultural value.

We must ask, therefore, what is more important – financial interests, or culture and society?



Nuevo centro cultural ubicado en una de las esquinas de la Plaza de la Independencia; vista de sus cubiertas.



Estación central de tránsito rutero nacional ubicada en el corazón del Centro Histórico de Quito.



Viaducto de alta velocidad que atraviesa el centro histórico de Quito de oriente a occidente.



Uno de los 6 grandes estacionamientos vehiculares ubicados en el centro histórico, de los cuales solamente uno funciona para esa función, mientras que los otros se están readecuando para centros comerciales populares.



Venta ambulante en el exterior del convento de La Merced, en cuyo claustro hace algunos años se construyó un estacionamiento vehicular que en la actualidad está siendo ocupado por venta ambulante.

Claustro del convento de La Merced, convertido tanto en estacionamiento vehicular cuanto en comercio popular.

Antiguo estacionamiento vehicular de propiedad municipal, en proceso de conversión en comercio popular ambulante.





Autopista de penetración al centro histórico de Quito y nuevo "mall" centro comercial de lujo, vacío ya muchos años por falta de demanda.



"Vivienda popular" de reciente factura, en el centro histórico de Quito, convertida en nuevo tugurio.

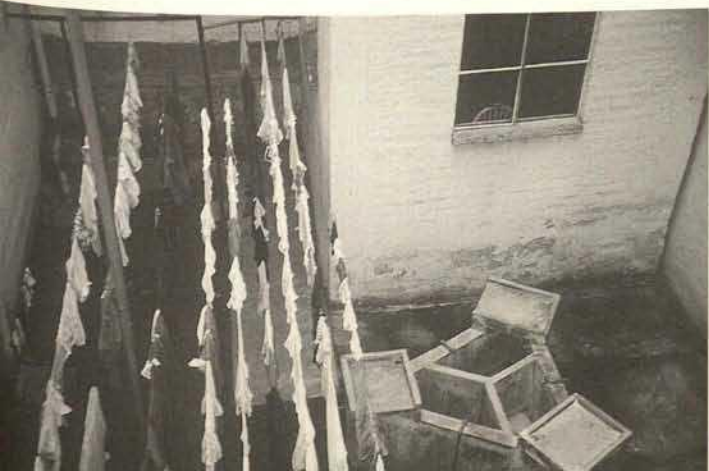
### Heritage at Risk in the Calle La Ronda, in Quito

This street is probably one of the most emblematic of the culture of the city, because of its spatial configuration and morphology.

It has been completely abandoned for many decades; its old owners have left due to the existing social 'atmosphere' and its identification today as the 'red-light area' of the city. In addition, many residential buildings have collapsed because of the highway construction.

The Calle La Ronda is the subject of a project aligned with the 'sustainable development' programme, carried out by the Universidad Central; however, the Town Council refuses to put this initiative into practice, in spite of its low cost and its high technical, social and economic benefits and qualities. This project was even given an award by Habitat-Estambul.

Interior del complejo de vivienda popular de la fotografía N° 9.



### Heritage at Risk in the City of Zaruma

Among a number of serious problems, Zaruma suffers from an old and pre-technological period of mining exploitation. As a result, sub-surface mining galleries cross the city in all directions and are causing the subsidence of entire areas. In addition, there are serious urban traffic affronts and demolition of the most valuable 'inventoried heritage'.

Today, however, ICOMOS Ecuador and the Municipality are committed and determined to ensure the declaration of Zaruma as a town of 'World Cultural Heritage'.

ICOMOS Ecuador

Nuevo centro cultural de la fotografía N° 11 y sus formas de articulación entre lo viejo y lo nuevo.

