

Informal traders and planners in the regeneration of historic city centres: the case of Quito, Ecuador

by

Alan Middleton

In:

[Progress in Planning](#)

[Volume 59, Issue 2](#), 2003, Pages 71-123

Abstract

A major reason for the regeneration of historic city centres in developing countries is the possibility of benefiting from the growing mobility of international tourists. In this competitive global market place, a particular perspective on history and culture is being sold. It is a perspective that celebrates buildings and ignores a history of conflictive social relations. A modern expression of these social relations is the conflict which exists between planners and street traders, whose presence is seen to be inimical to tourism development. This paper investigates the relations between planners and street traders in Quito, in the context of the history of the city as a contested space and where the physical and socio-economic structures are related to cultural conflicts which are deeply embedded. The paper argues that these conflicts can only be resolved, and international tourism can only be successfully developed, if planners recognise the role of the history of their ideas in the process. After providing a brief discussion of the historical context for modern planning in Quito, it explores the recent proposals for the revitalisation of the historic centre of Quito by examining the physical structure of the city centre and the place of informal traders within it; the social, economic and organisational structure of informal trade; and the cultural relations which act as a barrier to the resolution of differences over the future of tourism and street trading. Finally, some proposals for the modernisation of planner-trader relations are discussed.