PART THREE

POLITICS OF HERITAGE TOURISM
The Strategic Plan for Tourism of the Metropolitan Tourist Corporation of Quito proposes that Quito should present itself as a city that has history and that evolves and knows how to combine the past, the present and the future, like the majority of the world’s most important tourist cities. Consequently, its future in international tourism is highly dependent on what happens in the historical centre of Quito (HCQ), for this is the central element in the attractiveness of Quito, perhaps the icon of its international image (Corporación Metropolitana de Turismo de Quito 2002). The Plan argues that Quito’s position as a Cultural Heritage Site of Humanity ought to be its central product and the basic element in its promotion. In studies of what tourists value most about Quito, its ‘friendly people’ come at the top of the list. The vision for 2010 is of a lively historical centre, exemplified by its cultural dynamism and the friendliness of its people. By promoting the physical, cultural and human elements of the city, Quito is thought to have the potential to be recognized internationally as the ‘cultural capital of the Andes’.

The development of heritage tourism in Quito, however, has depended on the removal of some of Quito’s people from the streets, opening access to colonial and republican buildings, and reducing indigenous culture to colourful representations and processions that confirm the ‘otherness’ of people who are integrated into society at the bottom of the social structure. In the competition for global tourism, the physical attributes of the city’s history have been given pride of place in the tourist literature. The grand houses, churches, cathedral, museums and public spaces express the dominant Spanish culture in a city that was created by extracting surpluses from the country’s rural areas. As is the case with other colonial centres in Latin America (Dias Velarde 2001), the HCQ is testimony to the historical concentration of power and wealth in Ecuadorean society. The beauty of Quito is a