The project **Under Construction** in Quito, Ecuador is about a form of “social economy” and its implications for people and the physical environment they inhabit. Despite contemporary global urbanization and its attendant economy, there are still rural areas today where barter is the main mode of exchange. The project draws on this tradition and proposes bartering as a practice in an urban context for the refurbishment of the historical center of the city – a process carried out by people without sufficient monetary means. Here, bartering replaces typical capital investment with a direct form of exchange between two parties. For example: the owner of an abandoned house in need of restoration and tenants without monetary means but willing to exchange their labor as a form of rent.

The jury noted that **Under Construction** is one of few entries in the competition that suggests a method rather than espousing a specific design proposal. The recommended approach encompasses the use of a near-extinct form of trade to rescue threatened historical centers. Additionally, the strategy involves the reuse and recycling of existing material stocks. Materials that cannot be directly reprocessed are re-inserted into new use-cycles: wood for making furniture, stones for making foundations and construction debris for making gardens. All in all, the design promotes not only a promising economic model, but most importantly one put to work to literally mine cities rather than nature.

**Image 1**: “It is assumed that one of the objectives of the economy is to pursue the welfare of humanity; however, it is increasingly common to wonder if that objective means only to accumulate money.” – Fabian Rojas, Economic specialist and collaborator on the project.

**Image 2**: “To understand the problems of this Quito heritage site, it is essential to discuss and define access policies and management that are sustainable and inclusive. All citizens should have equal participation access, not only experts and not only on merely technical requirements. Point of views, mandates and thoughts of other actors need to be considered, as well as the demanding duties which cannot be delegated to the state.” – Jaime Erazo, PhD Urban Studies and collaborator on the project.
Image 3: Quito heritage sites usually refer to the buildings and squares, hardly ever to the inhabitants.

Image 4: Negative consequences of prioritizing tourism over local inhabitants.

Image 5: This phenomenon is typical in Quito heritage sites.

Image 6: The project design is not focused on the result, but on the process.

Image 7: Uncomfortable heights turned into lightened spaces.

Image 8: Materials that can't be reused for the same purpose enter a new life cycle.

Image 9: The project is designed based on existing resources.

Image 10: The project office will be complemented by four spaces rehabilitated for accessible housing in the next stages.

More at www.holcimawards.org/projects/under-construction