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Decrease in the heritage wealth and cultural experience of Guayaquil, Ecuador.
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   Abstract— The decrease in cultural wealth and experience in Guayaquil, Ecuador, is a concerning issue that has led to the loss of essential elements of the city's identity and deeply rooted traditions. Throughout the years, Guayaquil has been an emblem of cultural diversity and heritage richness. Still, lately, a shadow of concern hovers over the city due to the decline of its cultural legacy. The article emphasizes the importance of preserving and revitalizing Guayaquil's cultural heritage to enrich social life and community cohesion and boost the city's tourist appeal. There is a recognized need to connect the existing cultural nodes in Guayaquil, such as museums, theaters, and iconic public spaces, to create an integrated and accessible artistic experience for residents and visitors. The methodology applied in the article includes an analysis of the city's cultural and urban context, along with an urban approach based on Jan Gehl's "Six Steps to Transform Public Space." Based on this methodology, strategies are proposed to counteract this cultural decline. Among these strategies is creating a cultural route that connects and promotes Guayaquil's cultural nodes, revitalizing urban spaces and encouraging citizen participation. Additionally, the installation of urban furniture and green areas is suggested. Through these actions, the goal is to ensure that Guayaquil's cultural legacy endures over time and enriches the lives of both Guayaquileños and visitors.

Keywords: Culture, experience, connection, heritage, nodes, analysis.

I.   INTRODUCTION

G uayaquil a city of charm and historical splendor; nestled on the banks of the Guayas River, Guayaquil has been for centuries an emblem of rich heritage and cultural diversity in the heart of Ecuador. This city, with its impressive history and deep-rooted traditions, it has captivated locals and foreigners alike with its characteristic charm and its vast architectural and artistic legacy. However, in recent times, a persistent lament has echoed among its cobbled streets and lively squares. A shadow of concern hangs over Guayaquil as its cultural heritage seems to fade in the face of the onslaught of time and change. The diminishing heritage wealth and cultural experience of Guayaquil is an issue of great importance.

   Guayaquil is more than a city in constant transformation; It is a melting pot of identities, a living testimony of the cultural richness that has enriched the Ecuadorian nation. In this quest to understand the causes and consequences of the decline of its heritage and cultural experience, we aspire to contribute to the debate on how to protect and promote the soul of this city and ensure that its legacy endures through the ages. The cultural nodes located in the city provide Guayaquil residents and visitors with history, beauty, and art. The essential components of a networked cultural structure are mainly composed of two categories of entities: individuals and human actors who participate in various ways in the network. In addition, the connections
are part of this type of network; These are created between entities in both groups or even between entities in the same group, which is also feasible. [1]

   The city from culture and culture from the city are intrinsically interconnected and influence each other in many ways. The city becomes a vital stage for the development and expression of culture, while culture enriches the identity and experience of the city and its inhabitants. Culture, in the form of artistic expressions, traditions, customs, and social practices, shapes a city's collective identity and sense of belonging. Culture and creativity are key drivers for economic growth and attracting talent to cities. [2]
In addition, the city is also a catalyst for cultural diversity by attracting people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, and traditions, becoming places of encounter and cultural and intercultural dialogue. [3]

In the case of Guayaquil, the city has a wide variety of cultural nodes, such as museums, cultural centers, theaters, and emblematic public spaces. However, the lack of an efficient and coherent connection between these nodes limits their potential to create an integrated and accessible cultural experience for residents and visitors.

In this article, we will analyze the location, characteristics, and cultural offerings of the existing nodes in Guayaquil. In addition, to proposes strategies that promote interest in these nodes, considering aspects such as urban infrastructure, accessibility, the design of public spaces, and citizen participation. It will seek to highlight the importance of strategic urban and cultural planning. Through this analysis, it is expected to raise awareness about the importance of heritage richness and cultural experience in Guayaquil and provide a solid basis for future actions and projects that promote the cultural and urban development of the city.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

a. Background

The study uses two methodological approaches: a qualitative one, descriptive and propositional, based on participant observation of the problem, and another based on the analysis of variables related to the use of public spaces, using a simplified method that establishes correlations between the variables. The objective is to develop a proposal of results that focuses on urban strategies that will be produced by elaborating a diagnosis and cultural mapping of the urban context of the areas. An exhaustive inventory of the cultural resources present in the urban area, such as architectural heritage, historical sites, artistic manifestations, and cultural traditions; through this diagnosis, the cultural elements to be preserved and enhanced in the urban planning process are identified.

The methodology based on Jan Gehl's "Six Steps to Transform Public Space" focuses on improving the quality and functionality of urban public spaces. These steps, proposed by Gehl in his book "Cities for People," provide a practical guide for the transformation of public spaces into more friendly, inclusive, and attractive environments for people and also the identification of possible routes or connections, which allow the integration of the connection of cultural spaces into urban planning and city design. Promoting active urban living and social interaction. In this book, Gehl explores the importance of designing public spaces that focus on people's needs and experiences, promoting active urban living and social interaction. The "Six Steps to Transforming Public Space" proposed by Gehl include observing and analyzing the existing space, involving the community in the design process, proposing small-scale interventions, implementing pilot changes, evaluating and adjusting interventions, and finally, making permanent changes based on the results obtained. [4]

b. Analysis of the Cultural Context of the Study Sector.

Cultural context analysis is a vital tool for understanding the influence of culture on various aspects of a community's social, economic, and political life. It allows us to examine the values, beliefs, practices, traditions, and cultural expressions of a group or society in a given environment.

This analysis collects qualitative and quantitative data, such as interviews, observations, document analysis, and case studies. This data provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between culture and the physical, social, and economic environment. [5]

The city provides the context and resources necessary for cultural creation and dissemination. Cultural spaces such as museums, theaters, art galleries, and community centers play a critical role in promoting and preserving culture; cultural life in the city thrives on diversity and interaction between artists, creatives, and the community at large. To understand the environment in which activities associated with culture are carried out and provide critical information that helps in informed decision-making and the design of effective strategies for connecting cultural nodes.[6]

c. Identification of existing cultural nodes

The identification of cultural nodes is fundamental to understanding the structure and dynamics of the cultural life of a community or a city. These nodes represent places or spaces where cultural and artistic activity is concentrated, such as museums, theaters, art galleries, and community centers, among others. By conducting a study that identifies and analyzes these cultural nodes, several benefits can be obtained, such as:[7]

- Cultural Activity Mapping: Identifying cultural nodes makes it possible to map the artistic activity of a community or city, providing a clear view of available cultural resources. This helps to understand the diversity and breadth of the cultural offer, as well as to identify areas with needs or shortcomings in terms of cultural infrastructure.

- Cultural Planning and Management: Identifying cultural nodes is essential for effective cultural planning and proper management of cultural resources. It allows informed decisions to be made about the location of new cultural projects, the allocation of resources, and the implementation of cultural policies that promote equitable access to culture. [8]

- For the identification of existing cultural nodes, such as cultural facilities (museums, libraries, theatres, community centers, etc.), heritage sites, murals, and cultural spaces (squares, parks, pedestrian streets, etc.), A mapping of Guayaquil and documentary research will be carried out to provide valuable information about cultural history, critical cultural landmarks, and recognized places.

- Architecture can play a unifying and central role in creating a cultural node within a city. Through the design and construction of meaningful architectural spaces, iconic places can be generated that represent a community's identity and history, facilitate social interaction, and promote the preservation of local culture. Architecture thus becomes a powerful tool for strengthening the cultural fabric.

III. METHODOLOGY

Cultural enrichment and promoting a city's heritage are fundamental for its development and projection. In this sense, various strategies have been proposed to preserve cultural wealth and improve the cultural experience in Guayaquil through the connection and enhancement of its cultural equipment, heritage nodes, and cultural spaces, as well as the valorization of its murals. The main objective of these initiatives is to preserve, disseminate, and promote the cultural wealth of Guayaquil both locally and internationally, generating an enriching experience for citizens and tourists.

IV. RESULTS

a. Design of cultural node connections.

In the field of cultural development of a city, establishing meaningful connections between cultural nodes is of vital importance to enhance the cultural offer and promote an enriching experience for residents and visitors. According to Vargas and López (2021), these connections make it possible to create a dynamic cultural network, where the synergy between the different cultural and heritage spaces generates a multiplier effect in attracting the public and disseminating local cultural identity. [9]

In the parish of Sangolquí, in the canton of Rumiñahui, it offers valuable perspectives on the design of connections of cultural nodes for tourism development. Its focus is on creating a heritage-cultural route that seeks to highlight and value the cultural and heritage elements of the region. A similar approach is intended to be applied in Guayaquil, to establish meaningful connections between the city's various cultural facilities, heritage sites, and cultural spaces. To achieve this, the implementation of different strategies is contemplated. First, the creation of pedestrian routes and bike lanes that allow visitors to move safely and comfortably between the different cultural nodes will be proposed. These connecting routes will help to promote sustainable mobility and reduce dependence on motorized transport. [7][10]

Based on the theoretical and research analysis, it is intended to develop a series of strategies to generate a cultural network that counteracts the problem. This includes strategies such as creating pedestrian routes, bike lanes, or tourist buses that connect the different sites, as well as the installation of cultural signage, the improvement of accessibility, and the creation of intermediate public spaces such as squares or rest areas, which encourage interaction between the local community and visitors. These spaces will serve as meeting points, promoting the exchange of experiences and citizen participation in cultural activities that encourage interaction and cultural exchange.

b. Planning of a Cultural Route for the Projection of Guayaquil's Cultural Wealth.

Develop a cultural route that promotes the preservation, dissemination, and encouragement of the cultural wealth of Guayaquil, both for its citizens and tourists, to project it locally and internationally. To ensure the optimal route along the cultural route, urban regeneration strategies will be implemented in the selected streets. This can include renewing sidewalks, artistic signage, and adapting crosswalks for safety. In addition, tactical urbanism interventions, such as the creation of temporary pedestrian squares or the installation of urban art, will be implemented to bring spaces to life and attract visitors.
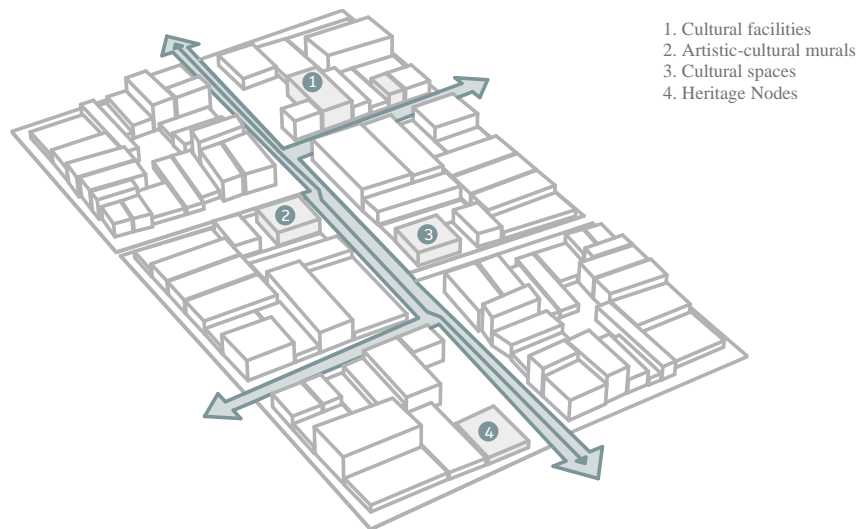
1. Cultural facilities
2. Artistic-cultural murals
3. Cultural spaces
4. Heritage Nodes

Fig. 1 Cultural route of spaces. Note: Illustrator processing by authors.

c.   Improvement of the Urban Landscape through the Implementation of Furniture and Vegetation Elements.

Providing comfort and well-being to citizens and tourists during the tour, implementing urban furniture is proposed at strategic points of the cultural route. Benches, rest areas, drinking fountains, and cultural information points will be some of the elements that will be considered. Likewise, the inclusion of vegetation and green areas on the route will provide a pleasant and stimulating environment for visitors.
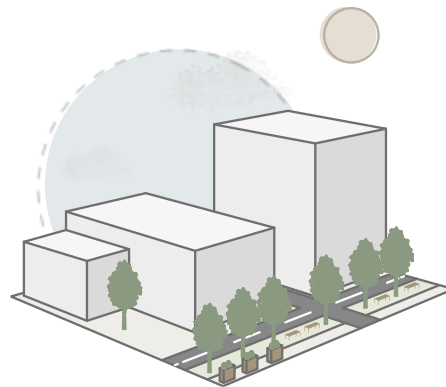
Fig 2: Improvement of urban landscape. Note: Illustrator processing by authors.

d.   Propose a revitalization of Calle 9 de Octubre, as a Pedestrian and Cultural space.

Redesigning Calle 9 de Octubre to create an attractive and safe pedestrian zone. Consider including spaces for cultural events and recreational activities that enrich visitors' experience. Through an exhaustive diagnosis of the current situation of Calle 9 de Octubre and its surroundings. Including analysis of vehicular flow, study of the feasibility of the proposed underground detour, and identifying relevant cultural and commercial spaces along the road.
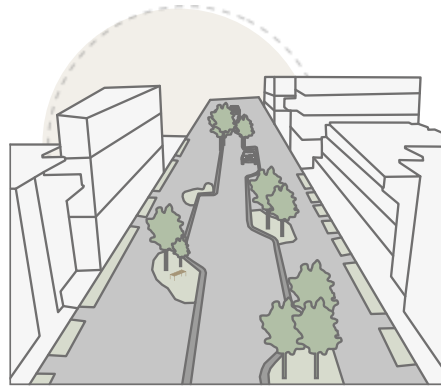
Fig 3: Revitalization of streets. Note: Illustrator processing by authors.

   e.   Propose a cultural transport network to improve the connection and quality of life in Guayaquil.

They are establishing specific routes that efficiently connect the different cultural spaces and defining strategic stops close to each of these places, ensuring that the community can access them directly through a comprehensive mapping of cultural spaces in downtown Guayaquil, including museums, art galleries, theaters, cultural centers, and other places of interest. These spaces will be the basis for establishing cultural public transport routes.
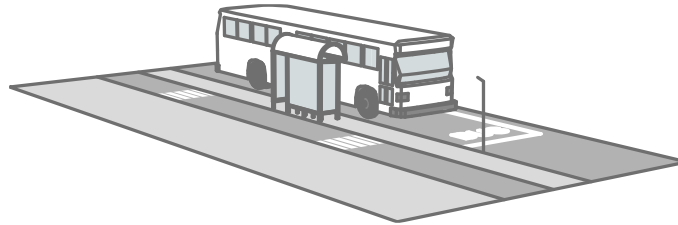

Fig 2: Transport network. Note: Illustrator processing by authors.

V.   DISCUSSION

This article invites us to reflect on a crucial issue: the decline of cultural richness and cultural experience in Guayaquil, Ecuador. This city has long been an emblem of cultural diversity, heritage, and history. The city has been admired by locals and visitors alike for centuries. However, recently, we have witnessed a decline in its cultural heritage, which has raised concerns for the city.

Culture and the city are intrinsically connected. The city is a vital stage for the expression and development of culture, while culture enriches the identity and experience of the city and its inhabitants. Losing part of your cultural heritage, how does this affect the daily lives of Guayaquileños? What impact does it have on visitors' perception of the city? What is being lost regarding artistic expressions, traditions, and customs that have shaped the city's identity?

One of the article highlights how the city and culture are intrinsically intersected and influence each other in numerous ways. Culture is central to a city's collective identity and sense of belonging. In addition, culture and creativity are critical drivers for economic growth and attracting talent to cities. In this sense, preserving and promoting the cultural wealth of Guayaquil will not only enrich social life and community cohesion but will also contribute to the economic and tourist development of the city.

Analyzing the cultural nodes present in Guayaquil is an essential step to understanding the cultural and artistic offer of the city. Identifying these nodes makes it possible to map cultural activity and strategically plan the management of cultural resources. It is critical to create meaningful connections between these nodes to enhance the cultural experience for residents and visitors. By establishing pedestrian routes, bike lanes, or tourist buses that connect the different sites, sustainable mobility will be encouraged, and cultural tourism in the city will be promoted. In addition, the creation of intermediate public spaces, such as squares or rest areas, will be essential to revitalize the cultural life of the city. These spaces will serve as meeting points where various cultural activities will take place, which will strengthen the identity and sense of belonging of the community.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the decline of cultural richness and cultural experience in Guayaquil is a troubling issue that requires urgent attention. The city, which has long been an emblem of rich heritage and cultural diversity, is losing essential elements of its identity and deep-rooted traditions. It is necessary to preserve and revitalize Guayaquil's cultural heritage to enrich social life, promote community cohesion, and increase the tourist attraction of the city. Connecting existing cultural nodes is crucial to creating an integrated and accessible cultural experience. The methodology proposed by Jan Gehl provides a practical guide to improving the quality and functionality of urban public spaces. Implementing changes based on this methodology will make it possible to transform Guayaquil's public spaces into friendlier, more inclusive, and more attractive environments for people.

There is a need to establish meaningful connections between different cultural nodes, whether through pedestrian routes, cycle paths, or other sustainable means of transport. Improving the accessibility of cultural nodes and installing artistic signage will make it easier for residents and visitors to visit these places.

Ultimately, strategic urban and cultural planning that values and protects Guayaquil's cultural heritage is critical. This will ensure that his legacy endures over time and enriches the lives of Guayaquil residents and visitors. Developing an integrated and accessible cultural network will promote citizen participation, foster cultural exchange, and consolidate Guayaquil as a culturally vibrant and attractive destination.

VII. REFERENCES

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