Reclaim a future with intergenerational bio-cultural memories

Co-Learning for Action: Nurturing Environmental Justice in Bogotá

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Key messages

- Systematic-territorio violence characterizes the way the historical centre of Bogota is being gentrified by real estate interest, university expansion, and state action. This is manifested in degraded living conditions, bio-social segregation and the erosion of collective actions of traditional residents.
- Bio-cultural memories rooted in residents' connections to water, mountains, public spaces, and social relations activate resistance and resilience.
- Grassroots education and indigenous conceptualization are key to help residents reconnect with territorio and to counteract the prevalent ecological alienation.
- Making visible how systematic-territorio violence works is important for mobilizing collective actions. This can develop stronger information infrastructure led by and for the communities, supported by universities and other stakeholders striving for the right to the city.

Introduction

Globally, historical centres focus on revitalization through conservation of historical buildings and the creation of competitive commercial hubs that attract investment, prestigious institutions and upper-middle residents (De Cesari and Dimova, 2019; de Sousa Leite, 2023). The neoliberal agenda prioritizes profit, promoting privatization and displacing residents whose cultural identities, livelihood and collective life are tied to *territorio* (Muñoz and Fleischer, 2022; Rodriguez Castro, 2023). This gentrification process turns historical centres into museums of power that only benefit a few. Bogotá's historical centre is experiencing the same story with neighbourhoods like Belén and *Egipto*, under threat from pervasive and aggressive gentrification caused by development projects driven by *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorio* (UN Habitat, 2018; Coulom et al., 2019), aimed at achieving a regionally and internationally competitive territory. However, local actions such as grassroots education initiatives, offer hope by re-signifying their *territorio* as a lived centre for all lives to flourish through their lived experience and bio-cultural memories. In the face of the ongoing challenges and emerging opportunities, the policy brief proposes building a restorative and regenerative lived centre for all forms of life rather than a static monument of power. It aims to support grassroot organizations in diagnosing problems and identifying areas of interventions, facilitating mobilization and actions based on synthesized narratives and social capitals. This brief identifies three forms of systematic-*territorio* violence, including the ecological alienation, displacement and the privatization of the communal spaces, affecting at least 270 households who struggle to live a socially and culturally dignified life in the historical centre (Gómez and Smith, 2013). Inaction towards these struggles will lead to deteriorated living conditions for all forms of life and jeopardize bio-cultural identities. To tackle with the systematic-*territorio* violence, we propose interventions grounded in the ongoing grassroot initiatives and stakeholders' interests, including establishing information infrastructure that visualize the mechanism systematic-*territorio* violence, centering grassroots education, activating bio-cultural memories and cultivating roadside politics.

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1. Key definition

1.1. Territorio

Territorio is more than a mere geographical domain; It compasses the historical, cultural, social and economic dimensions that define the relationships between humans and environment (Escobar and Escobar Giraldo, 2023). It is a space where people form relationships with other beings, such as neighbors and even non-human beings like rivers and mountains. In this space, people create memories, build social bonds, cultivate cultural identities, and develop the capacity for livelihood and collective actions.

1.2. Systematic violence

Systematic violence refers to the harm stemming from overall social structure, being reproduced and maintained by institutions (Springer, 2012; Nixon, 2011). It harms people's wellbeing in the way that deprives them of the rights to live a dignified life in society. For example, the forced eviction of residents due to land grabbing by the state. Systematic violence intersecting with territorio, indicates the violence imposed by social institutions that erase relationships, memories, cultural identities and social capacity of people.

1.3. Bio-cultural memory

Bio-cultural memory is a concept that integrate both biological and cultural aspects to describe individual or collective memories developed through the interaction between human and non-human beings (Berkes, 2008). It highlights the memories and knowledge that are deeply tied to the territorio from which they emerge.

1.4. Intergenerational resistance

Intergenerational resistance indicates the actions, strategies and the understanding of common struggles in the historical centre that are passed down through generations to combat with the systematic-territorio violence and to improve socio-political conditions for life. It focuses on how the oppressed groups educate and empower each other across generations to resist systematic-territorio violence (Freire, 2000).

2. Methodology

Delving into the context of the historical centre of Bogota, this case study is aimed at providing insights into the challenges that could be also faced by other gentrifying cultural historical centres in Latin America (Betancur, 2014), and the potential coping strategies.

Our research, with the support from local initiatives *Casa B* and *Guardian de Agua*, seeks to understand the complex issues of the historical centre and how broader local initiatives have acted together in the face of the challenges. We began the research through desk review from January to March 2024, then conducted fieldwork from April to May, which allowed us to collect primary data from the centre in Bogota.

We conducted the fieldwork in ten days, consisting of 1 transect walk, 2 focus groups with 23 participants, 28 semi-structured interviews, participant observation during community march and panel discussions at universities.

In the transect walk, we collaborated with local partners to map the displaced blocks, community initiatives, indigenous organizations and water bodies. This helps us understand the challenges and the opportunities spatially. In the two focus groups, we facilitated residents, NGO activists and community leaders to map individual and collective memories. They also engaged in collective discussion about the challenges in the historical centre and potential solutions.

Throughout the fieldwork, we talked to community leaders from local neighbourhoods, residents, university students, social activists and a local anthropologist. Their insights enhanced our understanding of the historical centre's challenges through different perspectives.

3. Case Study: the historical center of Bogota

3.1. Geographical Context

The historical centre of Bogotá is situated in the South-eastern region of the city, serving as a hub for political, cultural and academic institutions. Despite its significance, the boundary of the historical center is not clearly stated by government institutions. While *La Candelaria* locality is commonly recognized as the historical centre of Bogotá due to its rich cultural heritage, it only represents one administrative unit within the broader historical center. Residents, however, often perceive the historical center to encompass a larger area that extends beyond La Candelaria.

According to insights gathered from focus groups and interviews, the historical centre embraces the Eastern Hills (Cerros Orientales) and extends into neighboring localities in the north and west, such as *Santa Fe*, *Puenta Aranda* and *Los Martiresi*. It could also be defined by watershed area through indigenous perspective. This fluid nature of the boundary of the historical centre allows for an exploration of territorio beyond the institutional definitions.
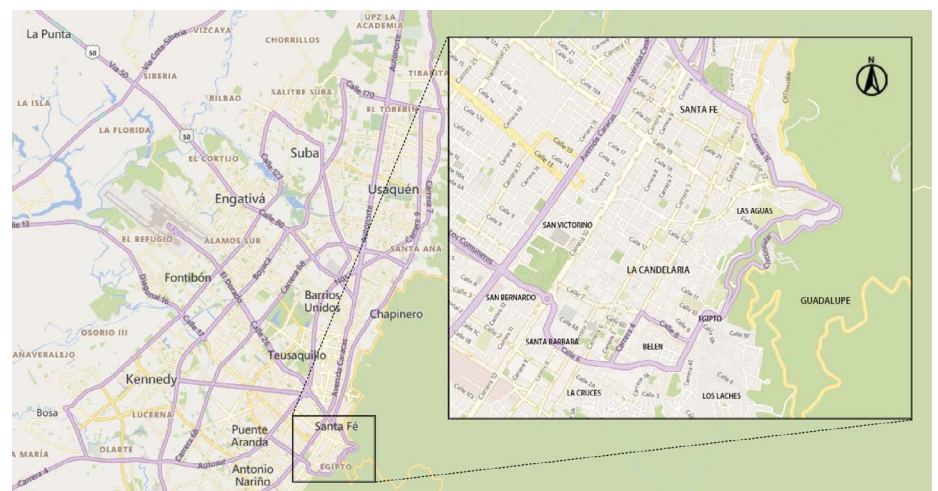

Image 01
The geographic location of the historical centre in Bogota; source: the authors.

3.2. Historical development of the centre

Gómez and Smith's research (2013) *"Gentrificación de La Candelaria: reconfiguraciones de lugar de residencia y consumo de grupos de altos ingresos. Cuadernos de Geografía: Revista colombiana de geografía"* understands the evolvement of the historical center through the following complex social processes over the centuries.

During the 16th century, the Spanish colonial regime built the first houses in the region to function as Spanish civil and religious administration, displacing indigenous population. From then until the mid-19th century, the area became the hub of administrative, religious and academic activities of the city, serving as a hotspot for prominent families, military figures, cultural elites and political leaders. Meanwhile, low-income populations settled in the area which are now *barrio Egipto*, *Belén*, *La Concordia* and *Las Aguas*, on the periphery of the centre.

The centre experienced a significant population influx during the 1876 war and subsequent security concerns in neighboring areas, leading to a four to fivefold increase due to migrations of peasants from *Boyaca* and *Cundinamarca*. This demographic shift caused many affluent residents to relocate to northern areas such as *Teusaquillo* and *Chapinero* between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By the 1920s, socio-spatial polarization was evident, with high and middle-income populations predominantly residing in the north, while lower-income residents occupied the southern areas.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, informal economies flourished, characterized by a lot of cottages and warehouses, although lacking planning or support

Image 02
Nueva Santa Fe real estate project in barrio Belén; source: the authors.
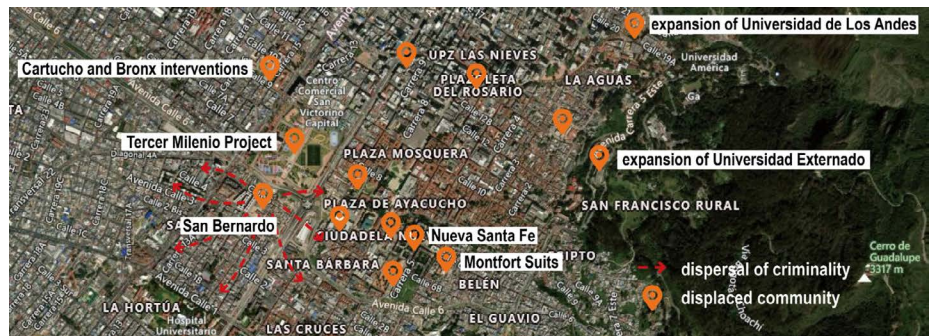
Image 03
Displacement hotspots closely linked with real estate projects; source: the authors.

from local authorities. This period witnessed extensive physical infrastructure deterioration in the centre, alongside a high concentration of tenements in barrios like *Belén*, *Santa Barbara*, *La Catedral*, and *Centro Administrativo*.

In the 1970s, against this backdrop in the historical centre, urban renewal projects aimed to attract wealthier residents back to the historical centre, marking the onset of gentrification of the historical centre. Initiatives such as Decree 7 in 1979 and the establishment of *La Candelaria* Corporation laid the institutional foundation for these efforts, which spurred a surge in real estate activities. Institutions such as *Banco Central Hipotecario* acquired significant land for new developments. Notable projects such the *Comuneros Avenue*, *Eje Ambiental de la Avenida Jimenez* and the *Nueva Santa Fe* in 1986, collectively resulted in the demolition of more than a hundred traditional houses and the displacement of nearly three hundred households to make way for middle-upper-class housing. Barrios like Santa Barbara and *Belén* were spatially divided by the construction projects (Sandoval González, 2015. López, 2015).

The process of resident displacement continued into the post-1990s, facilitated by national legislation and ongoing construction projects under Territorial Development Law of 1997. This urban renewal strategy often relocated traditional residents to the outskirts of Bogotá, contributing to a 37% decline in the city's population between 1973 and 2007. Struggles of gentrification persist today with expansions of universities, real estate projects and construction of cable car stations. In response, grassroots initiatives such as *Casa B* and *Guardian de Agua* have actively organized campaigns to reclaim residents' rights to remain in the city.

4. Problem diagnosis and the emerging initiatives

4.1. Displacement

One of the pressing issues in the historical centre is the displacement of traditional residents resulting from land grabbing driven by real estates, university expansion and state actions. This process actively or passively disconnects residents from their ancestral lands and social bonds, profoundly disrupting the local communities' social fabric and perpetuating social segregation. Long-standing residents with lower purchasing power are being displaced by wealthier individuals, altering the area's socioeconomic makeup. As a resident remarked during our transect walk, "a few local communities remain in this fabric."

In our transect walk, a community leader helped map gentrification hotspots, which showed the link between the spots and real estate projects in *barrio Belén*, *Santa Barbara*, *La Concordia* and *Egipto*. They described these developments as "negative interventions in territory", highlighting how land designed for the mayor's *"proyecto colonial de recuperación"* was instead handed over to real estate companies.

The privatization of land and real estate interests have played a pivotal role in displacement since the 1970s. According to a community leader, the notable real estate project *Nueva Santa Fe* in *Belén*, initiated since 1980s for the middle, caused a great loss of traditional houses and residents as "50 percent of the land here was populated by people who did not own

the land". 85% of the inhabitants were tenants and landlords according to the leader. Residents began to leave because they could not withstand the high rent and excessive cost repairing faulty infrastructure placed on them. Approximately thirty-six traditional households were forced to relocate to the city outskirts like Usme and Suba, with the last traditional household leaving the area four years ago. This process has fractured long-standing communities and eroding social cohesion, (Guardián del Agua, 2024; Walter, 2020).

In addition to giving land directly to real estate companies, tactics that lowered the land buy-in price were adopted by the state and companies. During our focus group discussion, the residents mentioned that in *San Bernardo*, the state and real estate companies allegedly collaborated to induce criminality, deliberately devaluing land and allowing real estate agencies like *Las Galias* to purchase properties cheaply and sell them at high rates. Such practice, on one hand created an environment of insecurity for residents, on the other hand, drove down property values, giving more negotiation power to real estate companies in land grabbing. Urban renewal projects intended for public safety, such as the *Cartucho* and *Bronx* interventions in the *barrio*, paradoxically displaced residents and dispersed criminal activities rather than resolving them. (Borde and Hernández-Álvarez, 2022). Illegal activities, seemingly displaced from the San Bernardo, spread to the neighboring barrios. The unfulfilled San Bernardo Tercer Milenio project adds to residents' sense of insecurity, creating a constant threat of eviction. This state of limbo, described as "slow death" and "slow violence," leads to a decline in mental and physical health (Borde and Hernández-Álvarez, 2022).

The displacement continues with the state's desire to develop tourism in the recent decade. More vacant land was acquitted by real estates, exemplifying the ongoing displacement. Take Montfort Suits project for example, vacant land was given to Maria Padres Costeanos company by the state, leading to construction of "small studio apartments sizing 28 to 30 square meters" by real estates for tourists, which are now rented by Airbnb. This project, though did not evict any local families as the above scenarios, also prevents residents from living on the land considering their lower purchasing power to afford the houses. Similarly, universities such as Universidad de Los Andes, Universidad Externado have also become the main driving forces for displacement, claiming for more land to expand their campuses. A resident from barrio La Concordia made comments to describe the impact the universities, "these are gentrifying universities", "they are only interested in profits by charging high tuition fees and occupying space while not offering scholarships for locals."

The prospect of constructing cable car infrastructure stations has sparked concerns about further displacement and ecosystem damage, prompting protests against gentrification. In the face of the constant displacement, residents have realized the need to cooperate across localities. *7 barrios* have formed an association across localities, registered under the chamber of commerce, as an effort to defend their *territorio*. It manifests in various protests against gentrification as the one on 1 May 2024 and various negotiations between real estate interventions and affected *barrio*.

4.2. Alienation of principal ecological structure

The urban renovation in Bogotá's historical centre has reinforced disruption upon its ecosystem, jeopardizing indigenous biodiversity and eroding cultural identities tied to the principal ecological structure. These interruptions, extending from the eastern hills, are the consequence of colonial development schemes in the past and neoliberal policies in recent decades. It highlights a pattern of neglecting the well-being of non-human life in the historical centre, which is essential for sustaining a healthy ecosystem.

According to a community leader, *Guadalupe* in the eastern hills remains a sacred watershed for traditional residents. Before colonial times, the eastern mountains and paramos as well as biodiverse moorland hosted a large number of endemic species. In the 16th century, colonial forces exploited these areas for resources, using nature merely as a source of firewood. At the same time, the indigenous residents were forced to transport wood from woodlands 30 kilometers away from a valley behind the eastern hills (Molina, 2022). This legacy of treating nature solely as a resource pool continues its impacts upon the historical center today.

The consolidation of Bogotá's capitalist economy and its rapid urbanization since the late 19th century created high demands for trees like Eucalyptus and Canadian pines, which grow quickly and were used to provide raw materials and green the city (Molina, 2022). "Eucalyptus sucks a lot of water and produces drought", a community leader explained, adding that they are "not good to the topsoil and species in Andean forests". He described these trees as "a ticking time bomb" for the local ecosystem.

Juxtaposed with the interruption on indigenous ecosystem, residents of the eastern hills, who consider themselves as "custodian of the hills", were evicted through the artificial change of land's status from protected areas to an urban land. According to *decree* 77 of 1977, the area is considered as "indigenous sanctuary" and the location of ancient Muisca trade routes. During our walk in Guadalupe, a community leader recounted how, about 15 years ago, fires burned down all the bushes, which he considered an artificial disaster. He explained, "the neighbours of Calderon Forest caught people pouring gasoline in the mountains; they were 'real estate mafias'." The burned land was later acquired by real estate companies and sold to vulnerable populations in the city who looked for housing solutions. These companies then built sidewalks and took advantage of this fact to claim the rural reserve in eastern hills as urban space, further evicting residents through selling "urbanized land" at higher price. This process of land transformation, coupled with urbanization, also resulted in neighbourhoods growing informally into the mountains. Localities like *Santa Fe*, *Candelaria* and *San Cristóbal* have expanded into mountains, resulting in environmental damage, such as

Image 04
Canadian pines in Guadalupe; source: the authors.

"sinkhole" or "dirty water" in *barrio Laches*, which lack proper drainage systems.

Further, the changes in the principal ecological structure cause a loss of cultural identities and memories associated with it. Take water bodies for example, under Decree 10 of 1915, the waters of *Rio San Francisco* and *San Agustín* were channelled to modernize Bogotá (Archivo Bogota, 2018). Ever since then, the waters gradually disappear in decades. A resident from *La Concordia* shared that the upstream of *Rio San Francisco*, once a place for family gatherings and bathing about 50 years ago, have now been replaced by an avenue. These changes are contrary to the cultural beliefs of the indigenous people, who regard water as sacred and central to their cultural festivities (Vaca, 2022), the canalized water in the historical centre has become a dump site and a "hidden danger".

The challenges continue as more universities encroach into mountains, such as *Universidad de Los Andes, Universidad Externado de Colombia and Universidad Distrital*, further disrupting the ecosystem along western edge of the eastern hills. To address the ecological challenges, women have played a leading role in restoring the ecosystem in the centre through indigenous seed banking and urban agriculture and grassroots education that revive indigenous language and wisdom. These initiatives help reconnect residents with the ecosystem and the issues deteriorating it.

4.3. Erosion of communal space

In the historical centre, there are very few public spaces such as parks, plazas and playgrounds. This scarcity is largely due to private sector and state-led actions that have appropriated communal areas, spaces that traditionally support people's daily life and collective culture. This erosion of communal space has not only affected people's everyday life (Sultana, 2021), but also erased their socio-cultural identities, further weakening intergenerational resistance to the encroachment on their *territorio*. During our transect walk in *barrio Belén*, community leaders highlighted that the construction of the middle-upper class and tourists' apartment, such as *Montfort Suits*, led to the closure of a local school

named Redes. The area where T*eatro Santa Bárbara* once stood, a former cultural zone, has been converted into a parking lot. This observation echoed with comments from focus group participants, who also recalled the closure of public theatres and schools, such *La Midia Toiota* Concert Hall, due to political or commercial interests. Additionally, near an official laundry site built by the local government, two roads were intentionally built close together for the security of government property, with only 3-block gap instead of the required 6 blocks. As explained by a community leader, the construction of the two roads has reduced communal space and made pedestrians worried about intensive traffic when crossing roads daily.

Beyond affecting everyday life, residents have also lost the *territorio*, a space where they develop traditional livelihoods and socio-cultural identities. During our transect walk, we observed that public square at *Nuestra Señora* Church in *Belén* has been turned into a commercial parking lot. However, according to a community leader, it used to be a small traditional marketplace where neighbours would meet. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

A cultural anthropologist we interviewed noted that the erasure of traditional marketplaces is widespread geographically throughout the historical centre. For instance, in *La Concordia* in the north, where traditional residents had maintained traditional markets since the early 1900s, these markets have been replaced by a modern market with cafes and homogenous business sectors catering for tourists. "It killed the soul (of local markets)," the anthropologist said, adding that traditional markets were "fluid" and "a positive space" where people built their social and cultural identities. In *barrio La Cruces* in the south, many local workshops of shoemakers, photographers and barbers, active since the 19th century, were stigmatized as "black markets" and demolished for the construction of *Avenida de los Comuneros* highway in 1980s, despite being maintained for generations. Today, La Cruces has become "a black hole" plagued by criminality and illegal activities.

This dissociation of their cultural practices from their *territorio* has led to a cultural and intergenerational identity crisis, as traditional residents are "melting" into urban Bogota

Image 05
Nuestra Señora Church square converted into parking lot; source: the authors.

while hiding their cultural practices to avoid discrimination. For younger generations, cultural practices are not being passed down, as parents desire "a better future" for their children. In the face of the challenges, grassroot collective initiatives have shown a potential to reclaim communal space and their cultural identities tied to it. Residents in *La Cruces* have formed an informal collective to engage young people, children and women in showcasing their cultural practices. This initiative has also engaged immigrants from Venezuela to learn about their culture and neighbourhood. The practices have helped them strengthen their socio-cultural identities and reclaim their communal space in *barrio* as "a productive, cultural and social neighbourhood" rather than a haven for criminals. Additionally, the march on 1 May demonstrated that residents across different neighbourhoods and different ages have strong willingness to occupy streets to defend their *territorio*, which transform roads for cars into space for political voices.

Overall, the three forms of systematic-*territorio* violence are inherently interconnected, driven by neoliberal urban development that prioritizes privatization as a growth strategy. This approach reinforces the displacement of traditional residents, as the rising cost of land makes it unaffordable for them. Consequently, residents not only lose their homes but also the space, which is associated with collective memories and closely tied to nature. This leads to an alienation from their natural environment and the social collectives they once interacted with. With fewer people living near nature and communal spaces, the land becomes more susceptible to real estate exploitation and state appropriation for economic gain, leading to further displacement across the *territorio*. The erosion of communities weakens the

foundation for grassroots movements and hampers the transmission of intergenerational memories that are essential for resisting gentrification.

5. Recommenda- tions

We produce recommendations through analysis of social capitals actively addressing various forms of systematic-*territorio* violence locally. Intervention areas are strategically identified through ongoing initiatives that involve diverse stakeholders, including community leaders, residents, activists and university scholars. These strategies presented in this section were discussed with residents through focus groups and were consolidated with the feedback from residents. Although these interventions can hardly shake the gentrifying neoliberal policies, they aim to enhance the counterforce to resist them.

5.1. Scaling up the visualization of systematic-territorio violence

Community-led visualization of systemic territorial violence is crucial for diagnosing issues and raising awareness among residents in the historical centre. This approach empowers communities to shape their understanding on gentrification and address the complex issues surrounding it. Currently, *barrio Belén* and social organizations employ multiple innovative techniques to visualize violence and resistance. Such practices could be scaled up through engaging interested researchers from universities.

Techniques such as photo storytelling and memory museum are employed by communities. Photo stories help depict socio-environmental changes in relation to people's sentiments about *territorio*, community, and intergenerational connection (Spiegel, 2020). In *Belén*, residents shared visual stories that convey place histories and ideas about *territorio*, identity and governance, making challenges regarding gentrification more relatable for a wider audience, including those from other barrios.

Through collecting and displaying personal stories and objects from youth lost to violence, memory museum has recorded personal, preserved collective memories and helped build a sense of belonging within neighbourhoods (Rassool, 2007; Zouwer, 2020). It creates a tangible link to the past and serves as both educational resources and sites of intergenerational story telling. Moreover, it helps to surface the 'difficult pasts' and provide a space for narrative building that helps people recover from harms and heal the collective wounds from violence (Briceño-Florez & Eccles, 2022) In addition, universities like *Universidad de Los Andes* have shown interest in facilitating information infrastructure, such as community archives, to serve the resistance needs of local communities. UCL has also collaborated with residents and grassroot organizations in the territorio for knowledge co-production with the consideration of advancing community activism (Patel and Mitlin, 2010; Walsh & et al., 2023). It centered collective understanding regarding the environmental challenges during community mapping, through practices like memory and displacement mapping. We recommend to further leverage the impact of universities to serve community-led visualization initiatives to promote local campaigns.

5.2. Centering grassroots education for re-connecting human and principal ecological structure

In Latin America, grassroots education remains important for emancipation and the decolonization movement (Motta et al., 2020). In the historical centre, it transforms residents understanding about their *territorio*, as seen in the efforts of *Consejo Regional* I*ndígena del Cauca* (CRIC) and other social organisations. It helps to re-signify principal ecological structure as a "teacher" and "mother", and helps to reclaim the connections between human and non-human beings. We recommend leveraging the efforts of these local organizations to form joint initiatives for intergenerational education, that convey ancestral wisdom and ongoing struggles and fights. This can strengthen the current educational initiatives that tend to be isolated from each other given their different interests and focus.

Grassroot education programmes are characterized by dynamic diversity and commitments to land, sovereignty, and indigenous perspectives (Smith, et al., 2019). Specific programmes, such as CRIC's curriculums on management of *territorio* and the eco-tour of *Guardian de Agua*, have facilitated the revival of indigenous culture, languages and cosmology devalued under the colonial regime and neoliberal ideology. Embracing the core of "each life has its purpose". they challenge the conventional power dynamics in teaching and learning through centering learners' real-world experiences and ecological beings. Knowledge has also gone beyond its conventional forms and embrace diversity, such as learning through drawings and songs. In this way, grassroot education is possible in the context of the existing oppression, such as young people lacking access to formal education, displacement of indigenous land (Casas-Cortés, et al., 2008).

Moreover, there is a possibility of delivering grassroots education collectively through organizing community events which bring together elders, women, young people, LGBTQ groups, children, and animals. This illustrates how grassroots education can activate space, emotion and lived experience to provide a chance for residents, especially young generations, to participate in dialogues (Gearin et al.,2023) within their *territorio* and learn about the nuances between human and non-human beings. Women, in particular, can play a leading role in grassroots education through their leadership in local food production projects, such as urban agriculture, community kitchens, and seed banking.

5.3. Engaging bio- cultural memory as an activator for resistance and sense of belonging

Displacement and gentrification disrupt the social fabric and cultural identities of communities, causing loss of identity and belonging (Marcuse, 1985) and destroy one's emotional ecosystem (Fullilove, 2004). To overcome these challenges, bio-cultural memory emerges from grassroot as a powerful narrative for fostering resistance, resilience, and a profound sense of belonging among residents facing systematic-*territorio* violence. It is deeply rooted in different layers of

Image 06
Reclaim communal spaces through community activities.

territorio, encompassing experience tied with principal ecological structures, public spaces, social organizations, livelihoods, social relations, and everyday life through ancestry and personal life trajectories.

Bio-cultural memories associated with water, mountains, neighbourhoods, and resistance are to some extent engaged in local campaigns. It helps maintain traditional ecological knowledge intertwined with cultural practices and memories, which helps communities adapt to environmental changes and resist external pressures (Alessa et al., 2008). For example, *Convite Tamuiswa*, a grassroot organization, promotes ecological restoration through urban agriculture, forming a resilient network for unity and collective action across localities. *Corporación Cultural Hatuey* engages memories of culture and violence in their advocacy for peace through art projects and museums, which actively interest young people to join actions. These organizations have shown the potential of harness bio-cultural memory as an activator to mobilize in *territorio* for their resistance. However, we have also found huge potential to engage bio-cultural memories more in mobilization through further unpacking those memories. For instance, exploring and recovering the route of Muisca people in the historical centre that resist colonial regime upon their nature reserve and life, which could not only help residents understand indigenous struggles and fights, but also provide a symbolically significant route for local resistances. Another instance is the successful resistance of traditional community in La Cruces when facing displacement, as it also provides practical strategies to claim *territorio* through cultural memories and practices. It is also notable that residents of Bogotá display their bio-cultural memories through murals that depict historical events, cultural symbols, and significant

narratives, fostering pride and unity. To pass on bio-cultural memories to young generations, who usually have less attachment with *territorio* due to increased mobility and environmental changes which occurred a long time ago, we suggest thematic eco-tourism activities and intergenerational mentorship programmes. They could be a powerful but easy way to engage young people in localities to understand bio-cultural identities and struggles. Additionally, establishing mentorship programs pairing youth with elders or cultural leaders can further deepen their understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage. Such efforts could promote intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge (Hall and Kearsley, 2001).

5.4. Cultivating cultural practices and roadside politics to reclaim communal space

The public space is the soil for collective actions to grow and to form a healthy ecosystem for transformative change. With limited availability of communal spaces, residents cultivate the commons through cultural practices in neighbourhood and marching on the streets.

Cultural practices of residents can be leveraged by local communities to tackle with their struggles tied to *territorio* and resist external pressures (Escobar, 2008). *La Cruces* has established strong ownership upon their neighbourhood through constant cultural practices and integration of community members in the practices. This supports residents in re-claiming the meaning of neighbourhood space and enhancing the solidarity of community when facing displacement. It provides precious experience for other barrios to harness the potential of their own cultural practices for its political claims. Similarly, in *Belén*, traditional games and songs were integrated in community gathering, which helped residents build a sense of belonging and their ownership toward *territorio* against gentrification (Campos, 2021).

Additionally, we found it worthwhile to leverage the historical legacy of the Muisca people, who demonstrated their resistance against state displacement by walking around Bogota city, stopping and singing at *Plaza de*

Bolívar and spaces in front of different churches. This resistance legacy can be renewed through community marches, which help to connect community organizations and transform roads for cars into pavements for struggling residents to voice their needs.

These collective marching or gatherings can be innovative through grassroot practices such as drumming, dancing and gaming, on top of considerations on formal demonstration procedures. Similarly, community festivals that combine playful activities and education have proven successful in strengthening grassroot education and people's sense of belonging to their *territorio* (Müller, 2017; Campos, 2021). These activities make resistance accessible and engaging among residents across generations and localities. Further, such practices provide opportunities for the formation of horizontally organized networks to promote dialogues regarding common rights to water, housing and labour rights, thus improving the visibility of collective claims.

6. Conclusions

Building a restorative and regenerative lived centre for all forms of life requires recognizing and addressing the systemic-*territorio* violence that perpetuates ecological and social injustices. It implies seeing the unseen and reclaiming residents' connections with nature, culture and neighborhoods. By strengthening networks for collective action, activating biocultural memories, promoting grassroots education, and developing community-led visualization tools, residents of Bogotá's historical centre could reclaim their future, creating a vibrant and inclusive space that honours their rich lived experience and memories, and supports the well-being of all its inhabitants.

If time allows, the policy brief could explore more on the perspectives of youth, informal settlement residents, government representatives and university stakeholders to better understand the challenges and potential for changes in the centre. Particularly, it is valuable to understand how young generations perceive the historical centre, how they build memory and relationship with the centre and how they see the opportunities available for them. The exploration could help to pave a way of the historical centre into a regenerative future.

Acknowledgement

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