

Planning histories and the new progressive planning agenda in Colombia

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Abstract

This chapter examines the recent planning histories of Colombia, with a particular focus on the development and implementation of a progressive planning agenda of the current administration, which has been in power since 2022. It investigates how progressive narratives and policies address historical legacies of colonialism, exploitation, and conflict and to what extent the proposed reforms and programmes fulfil this purpose. The current Colombian government is suggesting innovative pathways to what has been defined as a new generation of progressive governments in Latin America. It has successfully linked local struggles against inequality, conflict and environmental exploitation with global issues of climate catastrophe, social exclusion and racism, and economic disparity. These are articulated in a narrative of 'total peace' and 'Colombia as a world power of life', effectively showing strides towards transformative change. This chapter argues that enhancing accountability, monitoring, and strengthening public institutions for long-term strategies can help uphold social and environmental justice goals and overcome complex structural and institutional barriers even during political shifts. The case study of Colombian progressive planning is contextualised with colonial, post-independence, modern neoliberal development, and the 'Pink Tide' planning histories in Latin America.

Introduction

Latin America is a rich ground for research on the evolution of planning and how colonial histories shaped planning practice. Historically, profound socio-economic and political changes have modelled the way settlements evolved, the interactions between social actors, and the formation of a mixed and diverse identity shared among most of the countries in the region. The precolonial and colonial periods and the encounter of Western societies with the 'new world' are frequently a starting point of most narratives when discussing the 'planning' history of current cities, towns and settlements. This transit marked a distinctive moment that redefined power structures, values and attitudes towards nature, and how societies developed (Burkholder and Johnson 2004; Romero 1976). Colonialism promoted a spatial fragmentation and socio-economic division that still marks its uneven development (Palacios and Safford 2002), which has been accentuated in the late twentieth century by neoliberal economies (Portes and Martinez 2019). However, the recent shift toward progressive governments in some countries has opened opportunities for rethinking these legacies. In particular, social

movements, marginalised actors, and excluded sectors have worked to advance a progressive agenda aimed at addressing the spatial and socio-economic inequalities rooted in the colonial past, striving for more socially and environmentally just societies.

This chapter examines recent planning histories and progressive political narratives in Latin America, with a focus on Colombia. For long periods, both before and after gaining political independence in the 1800s, Latin American countries have struggled with asserting their interests and gaining control over their ways of life—in essence, seeking autonomy. Chase-Dunn, Morosin and Alvarez (2015) point out that Latin America has been an historical battleground for competing interests that include anticolonial struggles, conflicts over land, tensions between authoritarianism and democracy, and commodification of natural resources – all giving origin to a new rise of progressive governments in the region (Chase-Dunn et al. 2015). Since the 90s and 2000s, progressive politics have advocated for sovereignty, economic independence, and the right to self-determination. Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia were among the early adopters of this agenda, notably through reshaping international relations and addressing entrenched structural inequalities. However, this initial ‘Pink Tide’ encountered significant challenges, such as navigating global economic pressures, negotiating with national elites, and overcoming economic interests that have impeded deep social and economic change.

The recent elections in Colombia of 2022 offered an opportunity for marginalised and excluded sectors of society to finally gain political power and propose reforms on crucial topics for economic and social justice, climate change adaptation and social inclusion. This chapter examines how the reforms in the progressive agenda aim to foster a more equitable, inclusive, and environmentally resilient society, assessing their progress and impact. It argues that while Colombia’s progressive government has provided a platform to envision alternatives to neoliberalism, challenges remain in adjusting operational frameworks and relationships to address historic economic disparities and meet the material needs of the most disadvantaged. The chapter is structured in three sections: a brief overview of Latin America and Colombia’s socio-economic and political history, a discussion on the definition and role of progressive politics in driving social and economic change, and an analysis of how new progressive narratives have influenced planning reforms in Colombia, with a particular focus on housing, participation, culture, and environment.

Latin American history and background for progressive politics

The emergence of a progressive planning agenda in Latin America has its roots in historical legacies arising from the precolonial and colonial periods, industrialisation, and the subsequent consolidation of a neoliberal urbanisation. Until the fifteenth century, indigenous populations in America had developed their own culture and established local forms of living. The conquest led by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns to these lands marked a breaking point in history, disrupting previously developed relationships and structured but also encapsulated in various forms of dispossession and colonialism (Lockhart and Schwartz 1983; Quijano and Ennis 2000). The Indian Law implemented since the 1519 aimed to exploit local resources while decimating the local indigenous communities, as Romero (1976) succinctly puts it, “the takeover of the territory was total, both legally and theologically” (Romero 1976). Colonial cities were built as forts to protect the occupation and defend the land from indigenous surroundings (Corburn 2021; Morse 1962). A common pattern was to build the new settlements on top of former religious and sacred places to manifest spatial and cultural domination. In other cases, as enclaves for mineral and natural resources’ extraction. In all cases, the aim was to consolidate the presence of the crown over the colonial territories, which enabled conquer, control and indoctrinate surrounding populations (Portes and Walton 1976; Romero 1976). This land takeover, cultural repression and natural exploitation significantly shaped the spatial, cultural and functional conception of this region onwards as has been key in defining its tensions, as well as its dynamics of governance, social arrangements and political economy.

In Colombia, the logic of colonialism was carried through the following two centuries with distancing, and often contradicting, aspirations between central elites in cities and local people in rural areas. Aprile-Gnisset (1992) accounts how in the early nineteenth century while peasants and *mestizos*¹ were working on crop productions and establishing settlements for their own subsistence, economic and political elites in the main cities continued reproducing colonial patterns, intensifying the class and regional division between the rulers and those producing goods (Aprile-Gnisset 1992; Palacios and Safford 2002). This regional division intensified with internal migrations to form new ‘colonial’ settlements in regional peripheries, including merchants and economic elites expanding their business in agriculture and selling land to small settlers for profit. In the region of Antioquia, while this expansion has been categorised as the movement of spontaneous settlers into frontier land, it was in fact a process of dispossession of areas previously occupied by indigenous communities, afro-descendant and other rural settlers (Christie 1978). This movement and occupation is considered one of the defining causes of the internal conflict that many Colombians faced in the decades that followed (González 2004).

¹ Originally, a person of mixed Spanish and Indian blood in Latin America—the product of *mestizaje*, “racial mixing.” (Oxford English Dictionary 2024)

In major cities, pre-industrial and industrial classes consolidated power, forming economic elites that were closely linked to governance (Portes and Walton 1976). The central government of the Colombian state played a crucial role in urban development through national institutions responsible for infrastructure, including public housing agencies, as well as the early establishment of planning offices. Modern ideas from Europe and the United States influenced local development management, with planning offices frequently relying on the expertise of international specialists to address issues such as housing deficits and urban development challenges. For instance, Almandoz (2010) highlights the influence of Karl Brunner's *Manual de Urbanismo* (Manual of Urbanism) on city development in Bogotá (Almandoz 2010) while Tarchópolus (2020) signals the visits of world-known architects like Le Corbusier to help shape the city vision and support local training (Tarchópolus 2022). Political tensions in the early twentieth century, along with historical events such as 'El Bogotazo' in 1948—where the assassination of a political leader triggered riots and widespread destruction of central areas—opened discussions on how these modern ideas could aid in rebuilding the capital city.

The late 1970s and 1980s, however, were periods of drastic change in both public funding and management of public institutions. During this time, right-wing authoritarian regimes consolidated power in many countries, greatly enabled by the US strategic financial interests in the region (Walton and Seddon 1994). These regimes directed the disinvestment of Local production and public services while simultaneously incentivising the introduction of international corporations and extractive industries. Neoliberal banking policies accelerated the privatisation of social services and public goods, leading many workers in the formal sector to lose their jobs and be forced into the informal economy or emigration (Chase-Dunn et al. 2015). Roberts and Portes (2006) argue that it was precisely this neoliberal model the one that left many in precarious conditions while also influencing the popular collective mobilisations in the region (Roberts and Portes 2006).

In the 1990s and 2000s, social leaders representing excluded sectors organised social movements and parties that eventuated in 'Pink Tide' presidencies (Chase-Dunn et al. 2015). This first wave of progressive and left-leaning governments such as Venezuela and Brazil, employed their solvent capacity for reshaping political and economic international relations to look inwards and question the historical extractivism and colonialism still entrenched in their societies. Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Uruguay followed similar pathways in the first decades of the 2000s with progressive approaches broadly centred on benefiting excluded communities, local management of natural resources and consolidating Latin American cooperation (Weyland et al. 2010). This also meant investing in local and national infrastructures, including road systems, public education, and social services provision. For

these progressive governments, the key question has always been about how to forge new pathways toward economic and social justice that address entrenched imbalances inherited from the colonial past. While some political sectors still pursue a neoliberal agenda in which a free market will help solve developmental issues, for the progressive governments the discussion involves wider societal problems of historically excluded sectors and societies, including race and ethnicity, clearly intertwined in the colonial legacy and post-colonial futures.

The emergence of a progressive planning agenda in Colombia

It took almost two decades for Colombian progressive movements to consolidate a coalition strong enough to win national elections. After a socially successful local government in Bogota between 2012 - 2016, the political leader Gustavo Petro joined forces with the environmental leader Francia Marquez to campaign and reach the presidency in 2022. The two of them were precursors and helped the formation of the political alliance *Pacto Histórico* (Historic Pact), which also brought other regional social leaders, including indigenous, black communities and unionists. Their political manifesto drew heavily on current global debates on climate change adaptation, social inclusion, and equity (Petro and Márquez 2022). It was also a key moment to deal with post-COVID19 social demonstrations and support a process that aimed to finally bring peace to a decades-long conflict. This achievement was crucial for many sectors that aimed for gender equality, build up an economy for life – from extractive industries to sustainable and socially inclusive economies – and pursue social justice and social rights (Petro and Márquez 2022). A departure narrative that unravelled in the progressive planning agenda to cross-section multiple aspects of territorial development and policy.

For Petro, the national election signified the consolidation of a long trajectory in progressive politics. For Marquez, though, this achievement was crucial in her long struggle for social and environmental justice that she and other black and indigenous communities have faced in the southern and other regions of the country (Vidal López et al. 2023). Marquez' speeches highlight the intersectionality between racism and extractivism, intertwining histories of modern development with the colonial project of white supremacy. The emergence of a new progressive planning agenda pursues to overcome the inseparably long legacies of extractivist capitalism, displacement, slavery, violence and environmental destruction that are still visible today (Hernández Vidal and Gualdrón Ramírez 2023).

The National Development Plan 'Colombia: Potencia Mundial de la Vida' (Colombia: World Power of Life), formulated in 2023, is an ambitious plan that seeks to consolidate the country as a global leader in sustainability, implement the peace accords initiated with left wing guerrillas, achieve environmental justice with energy transition, universal access to healthcare, and a

National Integral System of care work (National Development Department 2023a). These aspirations, carefully signalled in the document, are the cornerstone for addressing the historical legacies identified by social leaders and social movements. The key aspects for implementation, though, raises numerous challenges that are largely dependent on the government's ability to navigate opposition, secure funding, build capacity in regional and local governments, and develop alliances with local communities as strategic partners. Four key aspects are assessed in this chapter: the housing project in the face of neoliberalism, participatory mechanisms and investment in underdeveloped areas, changing narratives in heritage conservation, and sustainable economies beyond extractivism.

Reframing housing in the face of neoliberalism

In the Colombian progressive planning agenda, housing provision plays a crucial role to improving living conditions for poor and vulnerable populations. The expansion of neoliberal policies during the '80s and '90s reshaped the way housing was delivered, notably from a social right to a commodity. Most of the state institutions that once promoted social housing development from the '40s, '50s and until the early '80s were largely dismantled and replaced by a private-led scheme with little regulation by the government (Gilbert 2014). Central to this neoliberal model was the introduction of capital subsidies, which allowed private developers to lead housing provision, with a portion of development costs subsidised by the national government and the remainder transferred to beneficiaries via credit (Gilbert 2004). However, as previous research has shown, housing supply declined both in coverage and quality (Cuervo and Jaramillo 2009; Escallón and Rodríguez 2010; Yunda et al. 2022), poor families struggled to meet the financial requirements of these loans (Gilbert 2014), leading to widespread of housing insecurity and raising questions about the effectiveness of neoliberal policies in addressing these basic needs.

The new planning agenda proposes a multifaceted response to these challenges, involving regulatory adjustments and new mechanisms for attention and classification for the subsidy scheme. The key policy emphasises in the regulatory role of the state to enable more families to receive the subsidy, with a particular focus on marginalised regions and populations. The government has restructured the programme *Mi Casa Ya* (My Home Now) to incorporate SISBEN IV—a model previously used for healthcare resource allocation—for a more granular approach to subsidy eligibility. SISBEN IV assesses households' economic and social conditions more precisely, classifying them into categories such as extreme poverty, moderate poverty, and vulnerable families. While this method is not novel, its integration into housing policy signals an commitment to improve targeting and broaden subsidy coverage to reflect real socioeconomic conditions (Velasco 2024). Other strategies, such as negotiations with regional

authorities, have introduced additional financial support for eligible households, potentially allowing more families to meet subsidy criteria (Uribe 2024). However, risks remain in the reliance on co-financing as a strategy to reach excluded households, who may struggle to meet even reduced financial thresholds. In sum, while these adjustments expand the program's geographic reach and target vulnerable populations, addressing structural barriers are still some of its main challenges to ensure equitable housing access in the long term.

Beyond supplying new housing, habitat problems in Colombia are also present in the precarious living conditions that many Colombians face, with limited access to basic services, such as potable water and electricity (Velasco 2024). The situation can be particularly acute in regions such as La Guajira, where climate change impacts and extractive industries has led to water scarcity for years (Ponce 2024; Ulloa et al. 2020). The progressive government has proposed the programme *Cambia Mi Casa* (Change My Home) and the *Ruta ComuniAgua* (Route for Common Water) as initiatives that prioritise investments in housing-related services, focusing on improving sanitation, kitchen facilities, and expanding access to clean water. This approach signals a more substantial departure from previous governments by allocating a portion of the housing budget into improvements which directly benefits communities and local organisations. Previous initiatives in the city of Bogota led by the *Caja de Vivienda Popular* (Popular Housing Agency) during Petro's progressive administration (2012 and 2016) evidenced a significant improvement in central areas and peripheral informal settlements. In the current scenario, though, the progressive programmes also empower local groups to manage public funds and implement actions. Recent data (August 2024) indicates that out of 124,139 ongoing housing improvements, 31,888 (approximately 25%) are being implemented by 149 community organisations, demonstrating the effectiveness of this decentralized approach (Ministry of Housing 2024). In a neoliberal housing structure where most funding is centralised to capital subsidies, having this nuanced and more direct provision to improving habitat conditions represents a crucial step forward into more equitable society in marginal and poor areas.

Both leading schemes of new housing and housing improvements are showing adjustments to instruments for a more comprehensive housing enhancement than the one provided in the last few decades. The increased role of community organisations in housing and water management is a positive development that brings other actors in the habitat delivery, providing opportunities for socio-economic growth. The accountability and capacity of such organisations needs to be assessed more carefully, and here the progressive government has a major challenge for monitoring implementation. However, the continued reliance on credit-based subsidies raises questions about long-term sustainability, especially given the financial precarity many households face to reach the economic thresholds imposed by banks. Further and more radical approaches might be needed to reassemble the public agencies and capacity

that once was present in the first half of the twentieth century and make the Colombian state a genuine provider rather than a mere facilitator with little control.

Planning with vulnerable and excluded communities

Latin American progressive governments have long declared their intentions to pursue social equity, justice and solidarity. At the core of these interests, there is a strong belief that an egalitarian transformation through deliberate political action is attainable, and the state is the principal instrument for reshaping current social and economic imbalances (Weyland et al. 2010). Prior to the election of the current government in 2022, Colombia experienced one of the most significant social crisis and demonstrations in the recent years – also referred to as *Estallido Social*. The social movements in the *Estallido Social* claimed for actions seeking social and environmental justice, particularly in the most vulnerable sectors of society. These movements were not in isolation, but also embedded in the long-standing internal conflict that the country faced for seven decades. The *Estallido Social* enabled historically underrepresented social actors to consolidate their influence, eventually leading to representation in the executive and legislative branches under the progressive government. Yet, how can Colombia achieve 'total peace' in a society deeply marked by historical conflict and heal the wounds of entrenched colonialism, exploitation, and dispossession that many Colombians continue to experience?

The progressive government proposes two responses to this challenge. Firstly, it continues efforts initiated in the 2015 peace accords and the Special Peace Jurisdiction, implementing mechanisms for land restitution and participatory planning in former conflict-affected areas. Land has long been a central factor in the country's territorial conflict, and, for years, peasants and local communities have been displaced and dispossessed from their territories. In various regions, the current government has successfully reclaimed areas previously occupied by paramilitaries and designated new Peasant Reserve Zones, empowering local peasant communities to develop their own economic agenda, supporting their autonomy (Ministry of Agriculture 1994). Additionally, it has sustained the implementation of PDETs (Territorially Focused Development Plans), which aim to prioritise local attention in areas previously affected by the conflict, including, reaching agreements between palm oil multinationals, extractive industries, and local community actors. This approach marks an essential step toward equality—not only by advancing the peace agreements but by establishing the material and legal conditions necessary for victims. However, as recent research indicates, challenges remain in addressing the power struggles between actors with presence in these territories to ensure that plans and strategies truly benefit those that have been most affected (Pinkeviciute 2022).

Secondly, programmes for attention to young population are showing tangible results at the local levels. The programme *Jovenes en Paz* (Youth in Peace) is an initiative that support caring services, environmental improvements for spaces for children and youngsters, and human rights in marginal territories. This programme provides a monthly income of about \$250 to young people (between 14-28 years), in exchange of engaging in formal education, developing a business idea and support environmental enhancement in their neighbourhoods and towns (National Development Department 2023b). A recent campaign in the city of Buenaventura – one of the most affected areas by the armed conflict – shows how a group of beneficiaries is actively engaged in cleaning streets and painting facades and clearing public spaces as part of their social work (Ministry of Equality and Equity 2024). While these actions are not structurally changing the presence of illegal business in these areas, they are increasing the State presence and minimising the exposure of young people to conflict.

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes in other Latin American contexts such as Mexico have shown that conditional payments have improved the chances of children attending school (Brau and Hoddinott 2011). Other assessments by the World Bank indicate that CCTs have effectively redistributed income to low-income populations. However, these programs alone cannot meet all the requirements of a complete social protection system and they need to be combined with other interventions such as employment programmes and pension schemes (Schady et al. 2009). Monitoring and active social work with local actors helps scrutinise activities and beneficiaries rather than only providing a state subsidy. Recent recommendations by the PARES Foundation (2024) also highlight the need for institutional arrangements to combine this programme with other social services to make it more effective (PARES Fundacion Paz & Reconciliacion 2024).

From colonial preservation to multiple forms of heritage

In line with seeking a more inclusive society, the progressive government in Colombia are looking for ways to recognise the multiple heritages representative of their pluri-ethnic societies. Current national constitutions of 1991, and 1990 respectively, recognised the country's diversity of ethnicities; however, in practice, legal instruments for conservation and management continued highlighting a few key moments of the nations' history: colonialism and republicanism. Current efforts are taking a step forward towards the recognition of multiple types of heritage beyond the colonial past (Ministry of Culture 2024a). This assumes a diversity of cultural expressions, items, and manifestations valuable for a wider spectrum of communities, particularly those previously excluded by policy or state attention. The Ministry of Culture pays attention to singing practices, productive practices, and other cultural manifestations in towns and historic centres. It emphasises on a bottom-up approach, that

begins with recognition and extends to reframing strategies for management. For instance, a recent policy recognises the artisanal fishing over the Magdalena River as intangible cultural heritage, linking environmental conservation – small scale, low impact and traditional knowledge-based activity – with cultural practices of singing, poetry and storytelling (Ministry of Culture 2024b). Another initiative to list as cultural heritage the monument for the resistance in the *Estallido Social* acknowledges the role of young people of the city of Cali in the demonstrations of national discontent (RTVC 2024). It also follows the questions over colonial and the emergence of ‘other’ monuments experienced during the Black Lives Matter. However, while listing and recognising practices and monuments can support local appropriation, more work will be required to put such recognition in action plans that promote social and economic development for the wider society.

While the new progressive agenda advances in a plural and decolonial intangible heritage, visions for urban development seem to have stagnated in the past. There has not been much progress in the territorial vision framed by the PEMP (Special Management Plans for Conservation Areas), which, among others, keep on emphasising on the physical assessment of listed buildings but less in the processes that enable a more dynamic and inclusive territorial development (Martinez Delgado and Salge Ferro, 2023). Urban conservation debates around the world are increasingly becoming intersectional, emphasising on the interlinks between heritage conservation, placemaking, and social and economic values (Garrow 2021; Larkham et al. 2024) in the face of climate change adaptation and resource scarcity (Labadi et al. 2021). Strategies for retrofitting (Buda et al. 2021), recycling and regenerating urban environments through collaborative approaches with local actors (rather than displacing them) are on top of the agenda in many contexts. Yet, crucial debates in Bogotá about whether to demolish the central tower of the former main public hospital – a significant piece of modern architecture with high social and public value for local communities and society in general – seem to follow a different direction (Reynoso 2024).

Similarly, the case of *El Bronx*, a neighbourhood once known for its marginalised communities and informal economy, has been intervened to regenerate the area. Although redevelopment plans are ongoing, the focus seems to be on creating upscale spaces rather than fostering an inclusive transformation incorporating local community voices and needs (RenoBo – Urban Development and Renovation Agency of Bogota 2024). In this case, a progressive approach urgently requires visions that reinforce social histories and highlight the cultural diversity of local people rather than erasing them. In both cases, an evident clash between a progressive national government and a more neoliberal local agenda in Bogotá are determining the discussions and future decisions of urban development.

Changing narratives in climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation

In climate change adaptation and nature conservation the current progressive government is taking more decisive steps. Svampa (2023) highlights that Colombia, as part of a new generation of progressive governments, is making significant advances in addressing the climate crisis by effectively linking the impact of extractive industries to the defence of human rights (Svampa 2023). In their inauguration speeches, both Petro and Márquez emphasised on reframing our relationship with nature, reducing fossil fuels consumption, and carbon emissions that are destroying the planet. Márquez, who previously led community resistance to mining before becoming Vice President, has advocated for the ideas of *buen vivir* (living well) and *vivir sabroso*, which translate to “living without fear, living with dignity, and living with the guarantee of rights” (Maihold 2022). These concepts, rooted in Andean indigenous worldviews and Afro-descendant traditions, offer an alternative to growth-driven societal models (Gudynas 2011). They reflect Colombia's progressive aspirations for a society that perceives itself as part of nature – enjoying life to its fullest while embracing communal and cooperative values (Márquez 2022).

Two main approaches are translating these aspirations into practice. First, Colombia plays a key role in the conservation of the Amazon forest, which has been subject to deforestation for many decades due to cattle ranching, commercial agriculture, logging and mining. While previous progressive governments in Bolivia (under Evo Morales) and Ecuador (under Rafael Correa) legally recognised the rights of nature and reformed their constitutions to reflect the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* (Berros 2021), they were criticised for continuing extractive practices that negatively impacted indigenous and ethnic communities (Gudynas 2011; Hernández Vidal and Gualdrón Ramírez 2023). The progressive government of Colombia is attempting to distance itself from these early approaches by placing climate justice, socio-economic equality and people-centred decision making at the heart of its agenda. For instance, it has proposed a Deforestation Containment Plan, which includes incentives for communities that commit to protecting forests. Approximately 2000 families have subscribed to the programme, which has already contributed to a 35% reduction of deforestation by 2023 (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development 2024). Additionally, President Petro issued a decree granting indigenous peoples new powers to protect, manage and conserve biodiversity in their territories (President of the Republic of Colombia 2024). This commitment was further strengthened during COP16 in Cali, where the Colombian government officially recognised indigenous communities as custodians of biodiversity, leading to their formal integration into the UN biodiversity process's decision-making structures (National Development Department 2024).

Second, the current progressive government is committed to transition Colombia away from its reliance on fossil fuel. At the COP 27 UN climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, President Petro argued that the climate crisis cannot be solved through market mechanisms and called on governments to “put politics in charge to create a global plan to disconnect hydrocarbons immediately” (Petro as quoted by Echeverria 2022). To cut fossil fuel supply, the progressive government has implemented a moratorium on all new oil, gas and coal exploration and exploitation licenses. In 2023, Colombia became the largest economy to sign the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, signalling a commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuel. This transition presents significant challenges. Fossil fuel exports still generate nearly half of Colombia's revenue, amounting to \$24.7 billion in 2023, a figure that tourism and agriculture, generating \$17.5 billion, cannot yet replace (Daniels 2024). Petro's administration has also reformed regulatory frameworks to attract renewable energy investments, leveraging Colombia's potential for solar, wind and geothermal energy. Nevertheless, the energy transition remains financially demanding and requires substantial external funding. Petro has advocated for foreign debt cancellation and the introduction of taxes on international financial transactions to fund a just energy transition, aligning with the Bridgetown Initiative's vision for financial reforms to support climate action (Chavez and Peñaranda 2024). Achieving this transition requires not only political will within Colombia but also from the broader international community.

Finally, the National Development Plan highlights Colombia's biodiversity not only as a critical conservation resource but also as a source for clean economic growth through ecotourism (National Development Department 2023a). According to the plan, Colombia's biodiversity and native forests remain underutilised. Nature-based tourism, led by local communities, offers a promising opportunity for clean and socially just development (National Development Department 2023a). Tourism industry, in principle, shows a different pathway from previous industries pursued by progressive governments in Ecuador and Bolivia. However, the potential consequences of incentivising tourism might still be overlooked, as while it can support income generation, it can also adversely impact local communities and regions at large. In fact, in many areas worldwide, tourism is still a form of exploitation that negatively affects both culture and nature (Büscher and Fletcher 2017). Therefore, the intentions and projections of this initiative require a nuanced assessment considering the overall progressive policies that this government aims to achieve.

Conclusions

In examining, Colombia's planning histories and its recent turn towards a progressive agenda, this chapter highlights both achievements and challenges faced by the current administration.

The progressive government is marking a distinctive pathway in comparison with its predecessors by addressing both historical legacies of colonialism, segregation and conflict while also articulating with global priorities of climate emergency, social and environmental justice. In this way, the political responses and reforms proposed have acknowledged structural problems that have marked the Colombian society for centuries, and that are so entrenched in its *modus operandi* that are often difficult to identify. At the same time, the government has committed to international treaties and accords, particularly in the conservation of nature and fossil fuels emissions, that if transferred in multiple levels of the planning agenda, can make a significant difference to Colombian society. The overall narrative of the progressive government can be summarised as follows: we must address the colonial legacies of exploitation, racism and displacement if we truly want to pursue a society of peace that acknowledges the diversity of its people and nature and embraces justice and reconciliation while dealing with its conflictive past.

The evidence suggests that progressive planning reforms in housing, social inclusion, cultural and environmental management have begun to reshape Colombia's developmental trajectory, thus offering opportunities to imagine alternative futures. However, their success highly depends on the governments' ability to navigate complex structural and institutional barriers that enable their implementation. Porter (2005) pointed that planning in the face of colonial legacies is a challenging task, not only because planning is a "vital operation and function to colonial power" but also because it requires attention to the systems of knowledge, as well as to the political praxis (Porter 2023). The current progressive efforts reflect a commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive society, fostering inclusive planning mechanisms that empower excluded communities to actively participate in shaping their future. Programmes for social attention, such as *Jovenes en Paz* and *Ruta ComuniAgua*, are showing steps toward including marginalised voices at the centre of the political practice. Similarly, giving powers to indigenous communities for biodiversity conservation is a crucial step towards attending to urgent issues, including decreasing the deforestation of the Amazon forest. Their effectiveness, however, is highly dependent on funding limitations, managing opposition from entrenched interests, and the need for regional and local capacity-building.

Looking forward, this chapter calls to enhance accountability and embrace the progressive agenda further in multiple levels of planning practice. Housing policies are gradually showing substantial progress in including local communities as managers, but more actions are required to devise alternatives to the neoliberal capital subsidies currently implemented. Similarly, while more inclusive debates have allowed other forms of heritage to emerge, some even questioning the colonial past, it is crucial to delve deeper into the processes and frameworks to allow the progressive and decolonial agenda to permeate other levels, including the debates

around our built heritage conservation. Policymakers must prioritise long-term strategies and strengthen public institutions that can uphold the goals of social and environmental justice even during political shifts. Colombia is already receiving attention and acknowledgement for its decisive positions and actions regarding global urgencies. Other countries, such as Chile and Brazil are exploring similar pathways with mixed results. Further and continuous analysis will be required to assess the progressive planning in the Latin American region to grasp the extent to which it contributes to the pursuit of social equity and sustainable development.

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