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Women's participation in the construction and re-signification of industrial mining heritage: memories, practice and power La participación de las mujeres en la construcción y resignificación del patrimonio industrial minero: memorias, prácticas y poder

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ABSTRACT Industrial heritage has traditionally been associated with male productive activities, a linkage that has rendered women's participation invisible both in its social construction and in the processes of re-signification that followed deindustrialization. During the industrial boom in company towns, women played a fundamental role in sustaining the social fabric and everyday life, and more recently they have assumed a key position in the preservation of collective memory, the reappropriation of industrial vestiges, and the creation of new forms of heritage-making from community-based perspectives. At present, a substantive shift in their role can be observed: from historically marginalized actors within official narratives, they have become central agents in the conservation of industrial memory and in the transformation of former infrastructures into spaces for encounter, care, and cultural action. These practices democratize heritage processes and foster new ways of inhabiting rooted in feminine, community-oriented approaches.

RESUMEN El patrimonio industrial ha estado tradicionalmente vinculado a actividades productivas masculinas, lo que ha invisibilizado la participación de las mujeres tanto en su construcción social como en los procesos de resignificación posteriores a la desindustrialización. Durante el auge industrial en los *company towns*, las mujeres fueron fundamentales en el sostenimiento del tejido social y de la vida cotidiana, y más recientemente han asumido un rol clave en la preservación de la memoria colectiva, la reapropiación de vestigios industriales y la creación de nuevas formas de patrimonialización desde perspectivas comunitarias. Hoy se observa un cambio sustantivo en su rol: de actores históricamente invisibilizados en las narrativas oficiales, se han transformado en agentes centrales en la conservación de la memoria industrial y en la ocupación de antiguas infraestructuras como espacios de encuentro, cuidado y acción cultural. Estas prácticas democratizan los procesos patrimoniales y generan nuevas formas de habitar desde enfoques comunitarios femeninos.

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PALABRAS CLAVE patrimonio industrial, resignificación, género, memoria colectiva, comunidades

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1. Introduction

Research on industrial heritage has gained increasing relevance in Latin America over recent decades (Hoyos Giraldo, 2020; Pérez et al., 2019; Rivera Pabón, 2021), although significant gaps remain regarding the representation of historically marginalized actors. Among them, women have occupied a marginal place in institutional narratives (Whittington, 2021) despite their fundamental role both in shaping everyday life during the boom of extractive industries and in the processes of re-signification following deindustrialization. In this context, the present research aims to analyze the role of women in the construction, preservation, and reinterpretation of industrial heritage in the city of Lota, Chile, emphasizing their community, productive, and care-related practices as forms of heritage action. It seeks to examine how, through collective initiatives and everyday actions, these practices challenge official narratives centered on monumentality and the male figure of the miner, intervening in the redefinition of the meanings of the past in a scenario marked by the productive crisis and the partial failure of restructuring policies. From this perspective, heritage is not understood as a static set of material assets, but as a contested social process in which memories, identities, and power relations are articulated, thereby broadening the criteria for cultural valuation to include affective, domestic, and relational dimensions that have historically been underestimated.

The city of Lota, the epicenter of coal mining in Chile for over a century, constitutes a paradigmatic case for addressing this issue. Its historical trajectory, marked by industrial paternalism, subsequent deindustrialization, and the emergence of community initiatives for symbolic and material recovery, allows us to examine how practices led by women reconfigure the meanings of industrial heritage, challenging 'authorized heritage' and opening up possibilities for a situated, critical, and gender-focused reading of the mining legacy.

1.1. Industrial heritage, power, and silences

In critical studies, heritage is understood as a social and political process in constant dispute, in which different actors negotiate meanings, memories, and values (Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006). Within this framework, industrial heritage occupies a particular place, as its study reveals the productive landscapes and ways of life that shaped working-class territories during industrialization (Lorca, 2018). On the other hand, traditional approaches have tended to prioritize masculine narratives associated with mining production and the industry's monumental landmarks, relegating everyday social and cultural practices to a secondary position (Graham et al., 2016).

The construction of historical and heritage narratives is shaped by power dynamics that have prioritized the voices of political, economic, and cultural elites, relegating workers, women, children, and marginalized communities to invisibility. This exclusion can be understood as a process of silencing, which, as Trouillot (2017) points out, demonstrates that power determines not only what is remembered but also what is forgotten. Along the same lines, authors such as Foucault (1972) and De Certau (1975) emphasize that knowledge and history must be understood as fields of symbolic dispute, in which what is legitimized as truth or memory involves processes of selection and exclusion. Spivak (1998) calls this phenomenon 'epistemic violence,' highlighting how power operates in the realm of language and representation, systematically rendering subaltern subjects invisible.

Feminist criticism has demonstrated that processes of heritage designation reproduce androcentric biases by rendering female participation in social and historical life invisible (Levy, 2013). In response to this, there is a need to broaden the categories of cultural valuation to include care practices, trades passed down across generations, and community narratives that sustain collective memory (Smith, 2006). Recent studies highlight how women, through social organization, act as custodians of memory in the face of deindustrialization, building community networks that defend both the spaces and the experiences linked to them (Brito-Peña, 2024).

These practices fall within what Gentry and Smith (2019) term' critical heritage': a cultural practice in constant dispute that challenges 'authorized heritage,' based on Western and monumental criteria, which privileges certain assets at the expense of local and community memories.

1.2. Critical heritage and feminism

This research is situated within the field of critical heritage studies, exploring subaltern discourses that challenge the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) promoted by experts and official institutions (Harrison, 2013; Winter, 2013). Although industrial heritage has historically been considered a subaltern legacy, being linked to the world of work rather than to elites (Casanells i Rahóla, 2001; Lorca, 2018), dominant and marginal narratives are also reproduced within this field. In Chile, the most widespread interpretation has been that of the miners, associating industrial heritage with a specific period in the past (Barrientos and Valdebenito, 2019; Venegas and Morales, 2014).

However, women played a key role in community life during the mining boom and, following the mine's closure, in preserving memory and reinterpreting industrial remains. Soto (2013) contributes to this debate by pointing out that spatial practices should not be understood solely as a reproduction of traditional roles, but also as forms of social and territorial innovation, in which both ruptures and continuities occur. From this perspective, daily movements, the appropriation of community spaces, and acts of care constitute significant practices that shape the urban imagination and redefine post-industrial territories.

In the Chilean context, Morales and Bustos (2015) have highlighted the role of coal-mining women in the Gulf of Arauco as political and cultural actors, whose actions have been central to the preservation of local heritage. Their testimonies show that heritage preservation is not a neutral process, but a field of contention in which women have taken a leading role by resisting marginalization and envisioning new ways of living. Heritage preservation in post-industrial contexts is not without tensions. As Reyes and Guerrero (2020) warn, there is no heritage without conflict and without community, and Lota is no exception. Women's collectives often operate on the margins of institutional narratives, putting forward situated and affective proposals that challenge hegemonic discourses.

The concept of attachment to place is central to understanding these practices. López-Meza and Brito-Peña (2020) highlight that the loss of access to meaningful spaces weakens emotional ties and a sense of belonging, not only because places disappear physically, but also because it becomes impossible to reproduce everyday social practices within them. In this sense, the re-significations led by women can be read as forms of territorial resistance in the face of material and symbolic dispossession. Although the literature acknowledges women's role as custodians of memory and promoters of community initiatives (Brito-Peña, 2024; Novoa, 2022), gaps remain in analyzing how these experiences transform former industrial spaces into places of gathering, cultural action, and care practices. Hence, the importance of delving deeper into a situated perspective that allows us to highlight the multiple ways in which women sustain, reframe, and politicize the industrial mining heritage in Lota.

1.3. Lota: a mining and heritage town

The city of Lota, located in the Bio Bio Region, Chile (Figure 1), was founded in the mid-19th century and quickly established itself as one of the country's main industrial hubs following the formal commencement of coal mining in 1852 (Astorquiza, 1929). The mining company promoted the construction of a *company town* in Lota Alto, providing workers with housing, healthcare, education, and leisure facilities in a strategic location close to the mining sites. By the mid-20th century, Lota boasted significant improvements, including paved streets, street lighting, sewerage, and heating. However, these benefits stood in stark contrast to the overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and harsh working conditions faced by workers who did not live in Lota Alto (Godoy, 2015).

The energy crisis of the second half of the 20th century reduced demand for coal, and in 1997 the mine closed permanently, with a severe impact on local employment. Government-led labor retraining schemes failed to reverse the precarious situation or to generate sustainable opportunities (Aravena and Betancur, 1995; Rodríguez and Medina, 2011). Until 2010, heritage recovery initiatives were limited and incorporated into these plans, with little scope (Ganchala and López-Meza, 2023).

Despite the precarious conditions and lack of opportunities, Lota has gained significant prominence in the heritage sphere in recent decades. The designation of twelve Historic Monuments and a Traditional Area (Figure 2) has established it as a cultural and heritage hub in the Biobío Region. Against this backdrop, various women-led organizations have developed forms of heritage preservation grounded in networks of care, affection, and memory that go beyond material conservation. These groups promote cultural activities, heritage trails, community archives, and meeting spaces in former mining facilities, reimagining ruins and industrial infrastructure as extensions of care economies and as pillars of social bonds, identity-based resistance, and neighborhood autonomy. These practices challenge official approaches by emphasizing the experiential, emotional, and social dimensions of heritage, conceiving it as a space for community memory and grassroots political agency.

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2. Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, grounded in a critical epistemological perspective drawing on gender studies and industrial heritage studies, to understand the practices of re-signifying industrial heritage in the city of Lota. To this end, three complementary methodological strategies were employed: bibliographic analysis, semi-structured interviews, and cartographic mapping of properties. These techniques enabled the articulation of fieldwork with the theoretical-conceptual framework, facilitating a situated interpretation of heritage processes and the gender dynamics that underpin them.

The bibliographic analysis comprised a critical review of specialist literature on industrial heritage, gender, and social memory, at both international and national levels. This review enabled the identification of key conceptual frameworks—such as authorized and critical heritage (Smith, 2006), epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988), and place attachment (López-Meza and Brito-Peña, 2020)—as well as recent studies on community-led practices by women in post-industrial contexts (Brito-Peña, 2024; Novoa, 2021, 2022).

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders and participants from women-led community organizations in Lota involved in heritage management and advocacy. In particular, two groups of great local significance were included: the Citizens' Heritage Committee and the Lota Association for Cultural and Heritage Management, both with a long history of actively promoting and protecting mining and industrial heritage, and characterized by established female leadership.

Furthermore, two representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the traditional district were interviewed; their work plans include revitalizing Lota's industrial heritage, with a central role for women's participation. These are the Casa de la Mujer, a space for social and cultural engagement with a strong female presence, and the Pabellón 83 Cultural Center, dedicated to promoting mining and industrial heritage from a community perspective (Table 1). The interviews enabled us to explore motivations, memories, forms of organization, and strategies for using industrial spaces.



Figure 1: Map showing the location of the municipality of Lota. (2025)

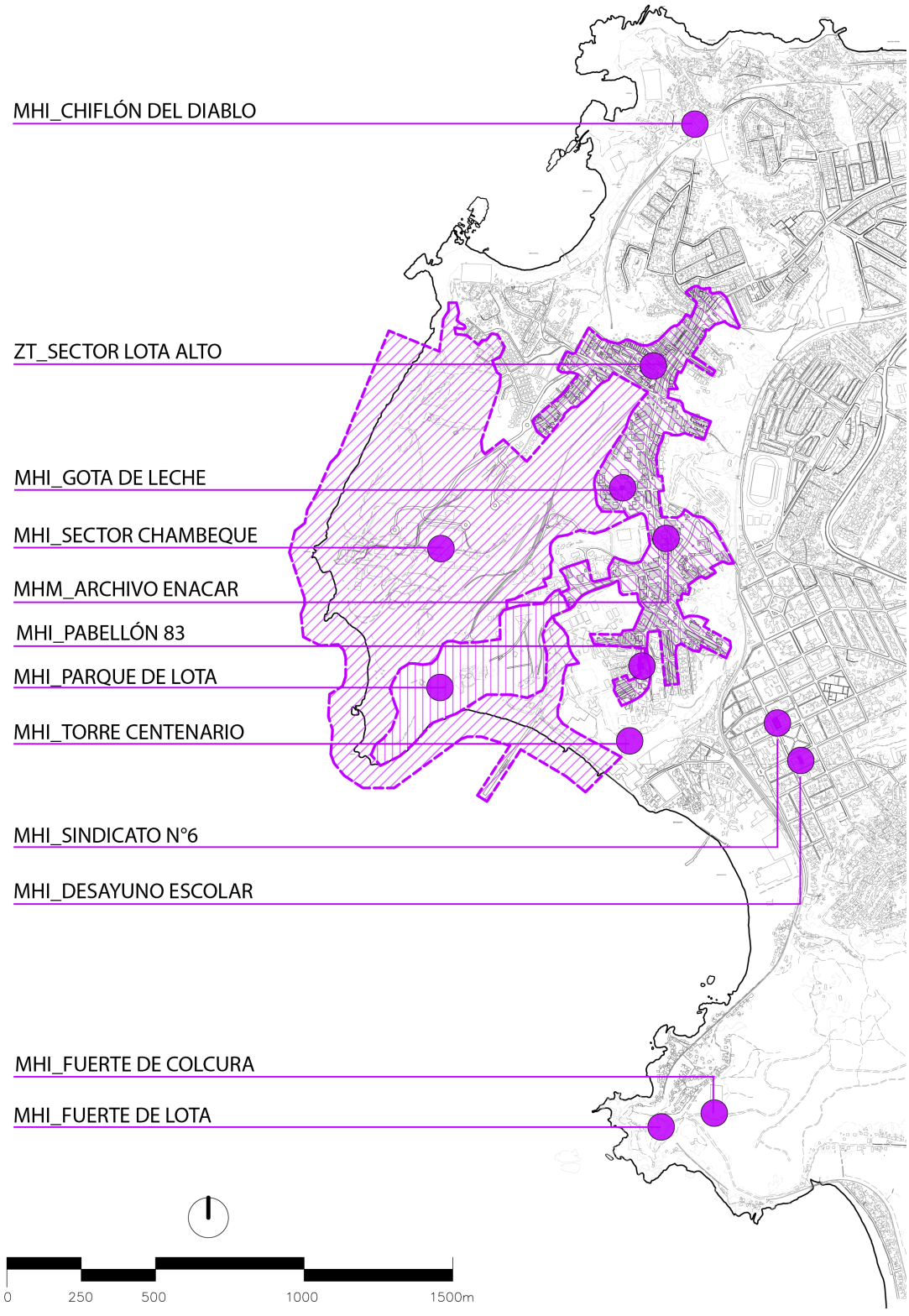


Figure 2: Map of National Monuments in the Lota District. (2025)

Code	Role	Type of organisation	Rank Budget
E01	Chair	Community organisation	50–60
E02	Culture Coordinator	NGO	30–40
E03	Volunteer	NGO	Over 60
E04	Secretary	Community organisation	Over 60
E05	Head	Educational	50–60

Table 1: Coding of interviews with women. (2025)

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for greater depth in exploring life stories and collective experiences, ensuring the incorporation of diverse, situated voices into the analysis. As a complement, a mapping exercise was carried out of the main buildings and industrial spaces repurposed by women in Lota, based on fieldwork, interviews conducted in september 2025, and a review of the literature. This exercise not only recorded their location but also highlighted the new uses and meanings attributed to these spaces, establishing links between territory, memory, and community practices. The triangulation of interviews, field observation, and documentary analysis enabled the articulation of theory and practice, oral memory and spatiality, offering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. All research methods were approved by the relevant ethics committees and have the necessary authorizations for conducting the research.

3. Results

3.1. The traditional role of women in the mining era

The interviews and the literature review agree that during the coal mining boom in Lota, women played a central role in reproducing daily life and sustaining the social fabric. Although they did not participate directly in mining, their work at home, in childcare, in managing the family economy, and in organizing neighborhood networks was indispensable to the stability of mining communities. These tasks, historically overlooked by official accounts, now constitute a starting point for understanding the continuity of women's memories in the processes of heritage reinterpretation.

In this context, women were largely confined to the private sphere, and for many years their contribution to mining life and work remained unseen. It was considered bad luck for them to go down into the mine, and their activities were traditionally associated with childcare, laundry, and other domestic chores (Argo Chávez and Brito Peña, 2021). However, these domestic tasks were not confined solely to the family sphere, but extended to community settings: the wash houses, ovens, and corridors of the mining quarters became spaces for daily gatherings, where women shared experiences, sorrows, and joys, strengthening social bonds and sustaining practices of collective care (Figure 3).

Furthermore, childcare fell entirely to the women, who bore this responsibility exclusively, particularly in large families: "For 150 years, women here were completely invisible... We were raised to procreate and run a household, to please our husbands. And that was all; studying was unthinkable" (personal communication, september 2025, E03).

Although the company provided housing for workers and their families, this could be withdrawn in the event of the worker's death or incapacity, which increased the vulnerability of women and children. In this context, children were involved in the mining industry from an early age: during the first decades of operation (1850–1900), child labor was common practice, and although welfare policies gradually restricted it, it was common for older children aged 12 and above to begin performing support tasks in the mine to supplement the family income. In this way, the early entry of children into the workforce not only supported the household economy but also prevented eviction from the company-provided accommodation in the event of the father's death. Although there is no detailed characterization of the Lotina population in the second half of the 20th century, studies agree that boys from the age of 14 and even earlier were almost exclusively employed in mining or related work, whilst women were confined to domestic and caregiving tasks. "It was the woman who had to learn to manage the few resources available in the home and the large number of children... The man only thought about going down the shaft" (personal communication, september 2025, E05). Thus, the gender division of labor shaped a social order deeply marked by industry, where the masculine was linked to production and the feminine to reproduction, thereby reproducing hierarchies that still resonate in how Lota's mining history is remembered and preserved.

When the mines in the town of Lota permanently closed, the community was plunged into a deep depression, as its main source of employment suddenly disappeared. Although not the entire population worked directly in the mines, a large part of the local economy depended on mining: suppliers of materials, transporters, small traders,



Figure 3: Women washing clothes in communal wash houses in Lota Alto. UBB Architecture Archive (2015, 15 June). b) AeroLota (2018, 28 June). Women washing clothes in the street, Lota (1950)

and related services. Consequently, the closure not only affected the miners who worked underground, but also had a widespread impact on all the city's productive and service sectors.

3.2. Contemporary community practices and territorial re-signification

With the failure of labor retraining and the high unemployment that followed the mines' closure, women began to take on a central role in supporting the household. Many men, accustomed for decades to hard, specialized work in the mines, failed to reinvent themselves professionally and ceased to fulfill their role as providers. Faced with this crisis, women were forced to educate themselves, gain skills, and deploy new subsistence strategies to support their families. As one interviewee recalls: "We had always been at home. So, now with the husband at home, stuck there every day, something was bound to happen. Consequently, the women would need support... The first thing they asked for was education, because many could not read or write" (personal communication, september 2025, E01). In this way, the domestic sphere ceased to be a closed environment and became the starting point for a process of collective empowerment. Literacy, vocational training, and the creation of community organizations marked a turning point in local history: not only did they enable many women to enter the workforce, but they also established them as community leaders and key agents in the transmission of memory and the promotion of the city's heritage.

Against this backdrop, various organizations emerged, some linked to established foundations and others formed as fledgling community groups. All shared the aim of promoting initiatives to develop the district, combining heritage revitalization with improvements in the social and cultural conditions of its inhabitants (Figure 4).

The Center for the Promotion and Development of Women, now known as the Women's Center, was established in 1997 following the closure of the mines, based on the Genesis Pilot Project, which included surveys and assessments of women's local situations. In 2002, it became a registered organization to apply for projects and funding. Later, following the 2010 earthquake, the Citizens' Committee for Heritage, Culture and Tourism was formed in 2011, comprising 35 local organizations—neighborhood associations, sports clubs, and cultural groups—which meet in the former ENACAR Administration building (now CFT Lota Arauco), reinforcing the symbolic link between mining heritage and community initiatives. A year later, in 2012, Creando Comunidad

emerged, carrying out its activities in the Gota de Leche building, which had been restored after years of neglect and was now converted into a cultural center offering workshops, guided tours, and artistic activities. Its history is emblematic: in the past, it provided child nutrition and healthcare in a context of high mortality, responding to industry's interest in preserving the workforce; today, redefined by the community, it operates as a living heritage and a cultural space. As one interviewee notes: "It has gone through many stages, but I believe that today, as we are engaged in heritage preservation and the revitalization of spaces, this is what La Gota de Leche is today as a cultural center" (personal communication, september 2025, E01).

Another key example is the CEPAS Foundation, which, from the Pabellón 83 Historic Monument, promotes initiatives in community education, citizen participation, and cultural promotion, transforming the space into a hub for coordination between organizations, authorities, and the community (Figure 5).

The cartographic mapping (Figure 6) enabled the identification of multiple industrial spaces repurposed by women-led community groups: cultural centers, meeting places, and hubs of identity-based resistance. These practices of re-signification reinforce attachment to the place and consolidate new forms of territorial belonging. However, a tension persists with institutional narratives of heritage preservation, which prioritize 'authorized heritage' based on monumental criteria. The interviewees highlighted the lack of official recognition of their practices, revealing gaps in heritage policies and, at the same time, the democratising potential of community actions (Table 2).

Regarding the limited male participation in heritage-building processes, the interviewees noted that men were initially present but that a rift quickly developed. In their view, accustomed to receiving a monthly salary and serving as economic providers within the household, many became frustrated at not receiving immediate material recognition within the new community initiatives. This lack of tangible results led them to withdraw gradually.

In contrast, the women took on a sustained leadership role, focused not on short-term economic gains but on deeper and more lasting transformations. They understood that real change required time, education, and training, and that it was only through these processes that they could mobilize the community and open new horizons for development. In this way, they turned the crisis into an opportunity, establishing themselves as agents of social, cultural, and heritage change in a region marked by deindustrialization and state neglect. As one interviewee put it: "since the mine closed, women have found a little more strength in their voices, starting to come out and establish themselves as social leaders" (personal communication, september 2025, E02).

At the same time, sociocultural practices inherited from the industrial era persist, embedded within the heritage infrastructure. Notable examples include the baking of 'miner's bread' in communal ovens—spaces for neighborhood socializing and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge—and the creation of burlap tapestries by women, carried out both at the Women's Center and other community venues. These textile practices, of a commemorative nature, recount the work, daily life, and transformations of the post-industrial territory.



Figure 4: Timeline of the creation of NGOs and community organisations. (2025)

Women-led heritage organisations			
Name	**Type of organisation**	**Mission**	**Infrastructure**
Citizens' Committee for Heritage, Culture and Tourism	Social organisation Comprises 25 organisations Board composed of women	To contribute to the preservation and promotion of Lota's cultural and natural heritage through the participation, committed and responsible participation, with the aim of offering the country a sustainable tourist destination based on its diverse historical, heritage and cultural riches.	ENACAR administration building – now CFT Within the Traditional District
Cultural, heritage and tourism management group	Social organisation 16 women 22 in total	To safeguard, restore and promote local historical heritage, celebrating its culture throughguided educational cultural tours, cultural initiatives and the development of projects that bring together and benefit organisations and the wider community.	Gota de Leche National Monument Within the Traditional Area
Women's Development and Promotion Corporation	NGO 5 women	To be a force serving women. A multidisciplinary team fostering citizenship, personal growth and gender leadership with the aim of building interpersonal relationships, organisations and networks that empower women and give them a leading role in economic, social, political and cultural spheres.	Women's Centre Within the traditional quarter
Cepas Foundation – Pavilion 83	NGOs 4 women 5 men Female Director	To create and promote equitable and inclusive socio-cultural and educational spaces that empower civil society from early childhood, with an emphasis on encouraging reading, civic participation, the preservation of identities, memories and heritage, and the creation and dissemination of cultural assets.	Pavilion 83 National Monument Within the Historic District
Centenary School Museum	Female Headteacher	Centenary School Museum located in Lota Alto, a listed heritage site, whose teaching is based on recognising and valuing the legacy of the ancestors of the Lota community	In Lota Alto, outside the historic district

Table 2: Heritage organisations led by women. (2025)



Figure 5: Heritage infrastructure used by organisations. a) Exterior of Gota de Leche, (MN) b) Interior of the Gota de Leche museum space, c) Former ENACAR Administration Building, now the Lota Arauco Technical Training Centre, d) Casa de la Mujer, Pabellón 83 Cultural Centre (MN) e) Women's Centre, Pabellón 83 Cultural Centre (MN). (2025)

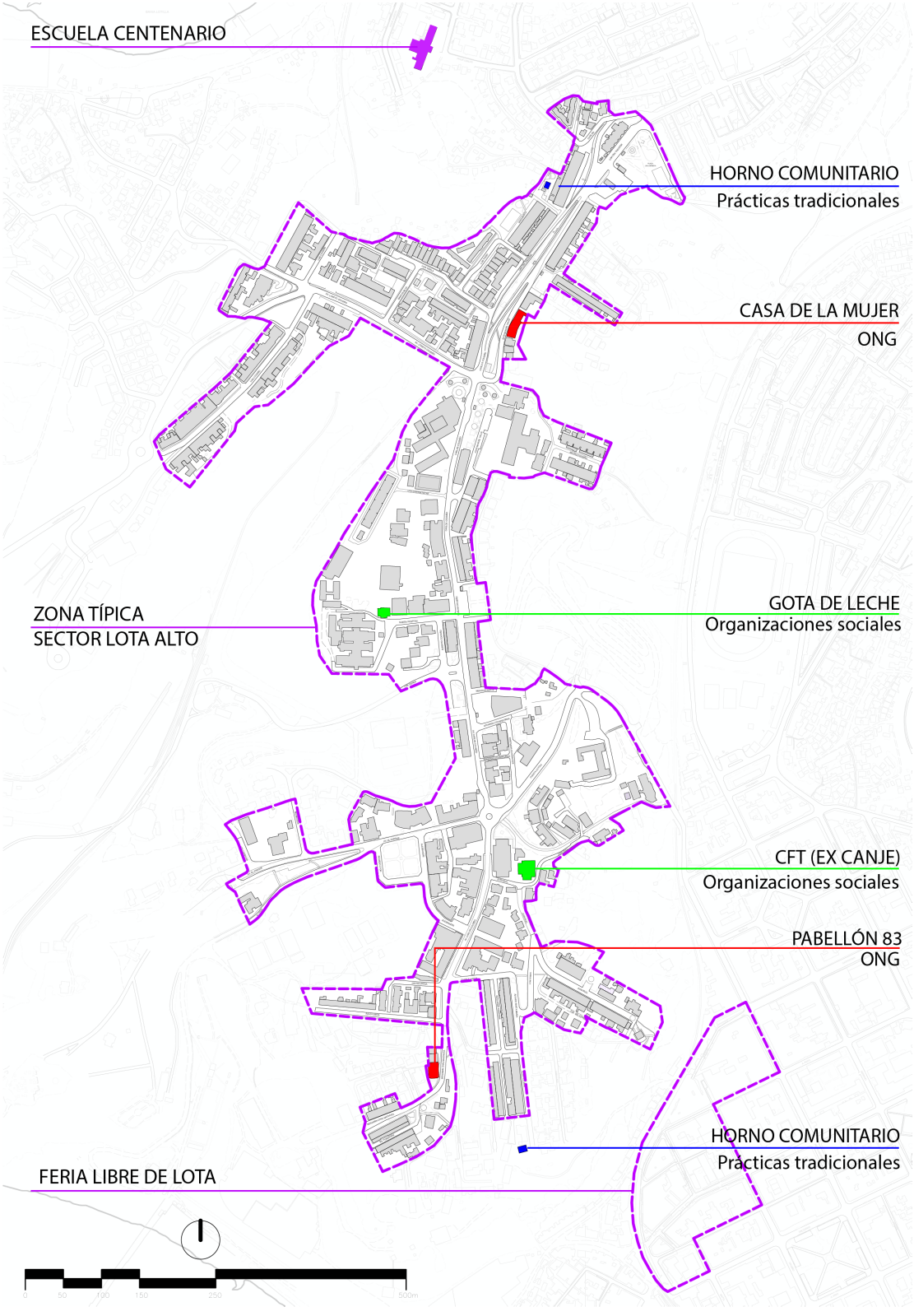


Figure 6: Map showing the location of infrastructure used by women-led organisations in the Zona Típica and surrounding areas. (2025)



Figure 7: Women's activities that have persisted since the industrial era. (2025)

Beyond the traditional area, women also drive economic activities that support their households, reflecting their ability to simultaneously provide for their families and preserve traditions of heritage value. These accounts resonate with the findings of Medina and Varas (2013), who analyze the Lota open-air market as the epicenter of a 'feminization of the city.' Whilst the mine was, for over a century, the setting for hegemonic masculinity, after 1997 the market transformed into a key venue for women, who took on roles as economic providers, traders, and social organizers. There, they are in the majority; they run the stalls, serve customers, and pass on intergenerational collaborative practices: daughters inherit their mothers' businesses, and support networks are woven between relatives and neighbors.

The bread ovens, found both within and outside the traditional district, are another emblematic example. Beyond their role in providing food, they function as spaces for community gathering and symbols of cultural continuity, where domestic work, collective memory, and resilience in the face of the commune's socio-economic transformations intertwine (Figure 7).

A large proportion of the burlap craftswomen participate simultaneously in the Women's Center and the Heritage and Tourism Committee, demonstrating female leadership in community governance. These practices, in their dual tangible (infrastructure, objects) and intangible (knowledge, crafts, memory) dimensions, strengthen the sense of belonging, activate grassroots heritage-building processes, and diversify the neighborhood's cultural economy. Together, they constitute mechanisms of resistance against urban homogenization and spatial appropriation that re-actualize the mining legacy in the present.

4. Discussion

The study's findings show that the women of Lota have played a central role in constructing new forms of heritage-making, challenging 'authorized heritage' (Smith, 2006) and broadening traditional categories of cultural valuation. Whilst institutional frameworks prioritize monumental materiality, women's practices demonstrate that heritage is also embedded in everyday gestures, intergenerational care, and trades passed down through collective memory. This broadening of the concept of heritage resonates with Spivak's (1988) arguments regarding the visibility of subaltern subjects and with the notion of 'critical heritage' as a contested social practice.

The case of Lota demonstrates that heritage designation is not a neutral process, but rather a field of conflict and resistance. The tensions between community practices and institutional discourses reflect power dynamics that seek to impose meanings of the past from above, in contrast to women's efforts to reconfigure them from below. In this sense, heritage emerges as a space for political negotiation, where the actions of women's collectives constitute acts of resistance against oblivion, marginalization, and dispossession.

An analysis of community practices such as bread ovens, arpillera craft, or the management of spaces like La Gota de Leche and Pabellón 83 reveals that the reinterpretation of heritage is not limited to the material reuse of industrial buildings. Rather, it involves processes of social restoration, where traditional and contemporary practices become hubs of sociability, care, and neighborhood cohesion. These initiatives redefine industrial heritage as a foundation for cultural and affective economies, generating forms of attachment to the place (López-Meza and Brito-Peña, 2020) that strengthen identity and a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, the study reveals that female leadership is not restricted to formal leaders, but includes women who, through domestic or productive activities, uphold heritage practices of high symbolic value. This invites us to rethink the category of 'woman' from an intersectional perspective (Soto, 2013), taking into account differences in age, class, and cultural background. Recognizing this heterogeneity is essential to moving towards a heritage justice that does not homogenize women's experiences.

In contrast, whilst men have been recognized as visible protagonists of the mining past due to their extractive labor, their participation in contemporary heritage processes appears more limited. The centrality of labor and trade unionism in the past contrasts with the growing prominence of women in post-industrial social and cultural organization, highlighting a reconfiguration of roles in the post-deindustrialization landscape.

5. Conclusions

The study confirms that the women of Lota have been and continue to be key agents in the preservation and reinterpretation of industrial heritage. Their actions unfold on multiple scales, ranging from the intergenerational transmission of trades to the cultural management of repurposed buildings, shaping a living heritage in constant transformation.

The evidence shows that their leadership has helped mitigate the effects of deindustrialization and the failure of restructuring policies, turning the crisis into an opportunity. The heritage-building processes driven by women are not merely practices of remembrance, but also strategies for survival, social innovation, and the construction of possible futures.

Women's practices shift traditional valuation criteria by incorporating dimensions of care, affection, and everyday life that have historically been rendered invisible. In a region marked by the loss of its productive base, these initiatives have restored social ties, revitalized cultural economies, and strengthened a sense of community belonging.

Finally, the case of Lota contributes to the international debate on gender and industrial heritage by demonstrating that heritage designation is a social and political process shaped by power struggles. It also provides valuable insights for the design of public policies that recognize and strengthen community practices, incorporating women as central actors in the management of cultural heritage.

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