

THE PROTECTION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE THROUGH A COMMUNITY MUSEUM

11. Open Themes

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Paper description

The El Sauce y La Luz industrial complex generated electricity for the port city of Valparaíso from 1906 until 1997. The hydropower plant and its reservoir are today a living testimony of a local culture that has been retrieved mainly by the Placilla Historical Museum. For more than 13 years now, our community museum collects oral histories and co-creates knowledge, highlighting the voices of former inhabitants and workers, in addition to archival research and photographic recording. Collaborations with academia, international comparative research and experts' visits have complemented the argumentation of the site's heritage values.

However, as of today, none of its elements is officially listed, while the people of Placilla seek its legal protection. This desire increased as a result of the Social Revolts in October 2019, when a more critical perception of heritage arose, evidenced by multiple social mobilizations and performative interventions on monuments, statues and historic buildings. In Chile, we are still governed by the National Monuments Law No. 17,288 from 1970 that has a strong republican and colonialist base and does not consider industrial heritage. Sites like ours are therefore a real challenge, forcing the citizens themselves to become experts in accommodating current legislations to their protection needs.

Our paper shows how museums can become agents of social change; their link with academia and communities; why museums should be at the service of society; and how the affections in museum spaces promote actions of heritage co-creation and co-management.

