

## Community perceptions about the cultural heritage of the city of San Luis, Argentina

### Percepciones comunitarias sobre el patrimonio cultural de la ciudad de San Luis, Argentina

María Vanesa Giacomasso\* 

**Abstract:** This article presents a study on the perceptions, uses and evaluations of cultural heritage by the inhabitants of the city of San Luis, province of San Luis (Argentina). The objective of this research was to identify the community's vision regarding local cultural assets and expressions, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the sociocultural sustainability of heritage that can be useful for decision-making in public management. For this purpose, an online questionnaire was carried out with 300 San Luis residents, which was distributed using the "snowball" sampling technique from various agents linked to the heritage of San Luis. This work, complementary to a previous study, emphasizes the age variable and how it operates in the ways of perceiving and linking with cultural heritage. The results show, in general, a lack of recognition, identification and heritage participation by the youngest age group and, at the same time, a low level of mobilization in its defense across all age groups. It concludes on the importance of educating about heritage to strengthen appropriation and activation processes from youth and promote participatory instances that involve local communities.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage; sociocultural sustainability; community; age groups, cultural policies.

**Resumen:** En este artículo se presenta un estudio sobre las percepciones, usos y valoraciones del patrimonio cultural por parte de los y las habitantes de la ciudad de San Luis, provincia de San Luis (Argentina). El objetivo de esta investigación consistió en identificar la visión de la comunidad en torno a los bienes y expresiones culturales locales, con el fin de identificar fortalezas y debilidades en la sustentabilidad sociocultural del patrimonio, que puedan ser de utilidad para la toma de decisiones en las políticas públicas de gestión patrimonial. Para ello, se realizó un cuestionario *on line* a 300 habitantes sanluseños; este fue distribuido mediante la técnica de muestreo «bola de nieve», a partir de diversos agentes vinculados con el patrimonio de San Luis. Este trabajo, complementario a un estudio anterior, enfatiza en la dimensión etaria y cómo esta opera en las formas de percibir y vincularse con el patrimonio cultural. Los resultados muestran, en general, una falta de reconocimiento, identificación y participación patrimonial por parte del grupo etario más joven y, al mismo tiempo, una baja movilización en su defensa en todas las franjas etarias. Se concluye sobre la importancia de educar en patrimonio para fortalecer procesos de apropiación y activación desde las juventudes, y así también promover instancias participativas que involucren a las comunidades locales.

**Palabras clave:** patrimonio cultural; sustentabilidad sociocultural; comunidad; grupos etarios, políticas culturales.

Research article /Artículo de investigación

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## Introduction

The concept of cultural heritage has been progressively transformed and made more complex. It was coined definitively in the 19th century as a government agenda built based on Eurocentric and Western values in the modern context of the emergence and consolidation of national states. In this framework, it was considered a set of material goods —such as buildings, monuments, and works of art, with stable meanings set by political elites— that served to build national identity and culture to generate feelings of belonging to the territory, as well as social unity and cohesion (Anderson, 1996; Prats, 2007; Endere, 2009; Hobsbawm and Ranger 2014).

However, as discussions and studies on heritage intensified in the social sciences and on the political scene, the concept of heritage began to be progressively redefined and expanded. Without intending to explain the different moments of this process, it is interesting to note that there is currently a certain consensus in defining cultural heritage as a dynamic social production that includes not only material goods but also intangible ones —such as uses, expressions, knowledge and techniques— that certain groups recognize, value and decide to safeguard as an integral part of their cultural heritage (Prats, 2007; García Canclini, 1999; Rosas Mantecón, 2005; Criado-Boado and Barreiro, 2013; Querol, 2020; UNESCO, 2003). In this sense, it is understood as a social praxis resulting from the action of agents who, within a framework of power relations, seek to activate cultural assets considered to have heritage value in an incessant process that is renewed according to society's transformations. Therefore, it is essential to analyze how, in each particular context, different groups identify and use said assets, appropriate them, use patterns of perception and understanding to relate to them, and encounter difficulties in this relationship in everyday life. Due to its social nature, heritage is revalued as a source of diversity and identity and as a practice and knowledge of those who carry it (Bonfil Batalla, 2004; Barreiro, 2015).

Another issue to be addressed in the redefinition of heritage is its connection with the concept of sustainability, which has become increasingly important in recent decades. This link is made because heritage is considered significant for sustainable development, as it can strengthen the quality of life and well-being of individuals and communities (UNESCO, 2014). Precisely,

the concept of sustainability, beyond its criticism and different interpretations (Gudynas, 2004), is understood with some agreement as a process that allows people and communities to generate more balanced relationships with their social and environmental surroundings in order to guarantee the long-term prosperity of the population (Tran, 2016). Likewise, sustainability is considered to be comprised of different dimensions, such as its ecological, economic, political, and sociocultural aspects, the latter being fundamental for the maintenance of the system of values, practices, and symbols of identity that allow the reproduction of the social fabric and guarantee integration throughout history (García and Priotto, 2008).

Following the above, the heritage/sustainability binomial has been a matter of interest for both the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which has been reflected in different scientific events and the production of documents of international nature (Cantar *et al.*, 2021). Thus, for example, UNESCO has worked to include culture and heritage in the 2030 Agenda, whose Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aim to "Redouble efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage" (Goal 11.4). From this approach, culture, in general, and heritage, in particular, are essential for communities' urban and territorial well-being, promoting them as inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable spaces (UNESCO, 2018).

ICOMOS, on its part, developed an action plan for cultural heritage in 2017, and guidelines were established to achieve them in 2019 (ICOMOS, 2019). ICOMOS Argentina recently organized the First Ibero-American Congress on Heritage and Sustainable Development as a parallel event to the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022. This conference produced a Final Declaration that recognizes culture as a global public good with intrinsic value and outlines a future agenda to strengthen public policies in this area (UNESCO, 2022). These documents, as well as related events, emphasize an aspect that has taken on particular relevance in recent years and focuses on communities's participation in cultural management and, specifically, in the processes of identification, recognition, transmission, and safeguarding of heritage (UNESCO, 2014; ICCROM, 2015; Toirac Suarez, 2017; Sánchez Carretero *et al.*, 2019).

From this perspective, making the relationships between heritage elements and the various sectors intelligible is crucial, considering what they mean to those who currently use, see, or evoke them. This task requires involving local communities in the planning, developing, and preserving of assets, collaborating in defining cultural elements and expressions, and making decisions regarding the political management of their heritage. Along these lines, various works have addressed studies of social perception in the international context (Castillo *et al.*, 2016; Fernández Poncela, 2020; Fontal *et al.*, 2020; Waterton, 2015), from a perspective that recognizes the importance of highlighting citizen's opinions and assessments as a management strategy adapted to different areas and needs. In this regard, some authors have exposed this growing relevance by referring to interests implicated in cultural heritage, both from its economic and touristic, as well as social and educational dimensions (Garnelo-Diez *et al.*, 2019). At the national level, various studies that focus on the vision of civil society and the uses of heritage and identity appropriation by communities —critical participants in heritage activation and management processes— are also recognized. Likewise, it is worth highlighting that these works include various theoretical and methodological approaches from geography, archaeology, anthropology, and social communication, among others (Degele *et al.*, 2018; Endere *et al.*, 2021a; Conforti, 2019; Suden, 2022).

For all the reasons stated above, this exploratory work identifies the perceptions and social uses of heritage by the inhabitants of a particular context, the city of San Luis (Argentina), to access information on the community's vision, which is of utmost importance for the development of sustainable plans and projects on the area's cultural heritage.

## Materials and methods

### Field of study: Research background

The topic of cultural heritage has been studied in the province of San Luis by this work's author and some

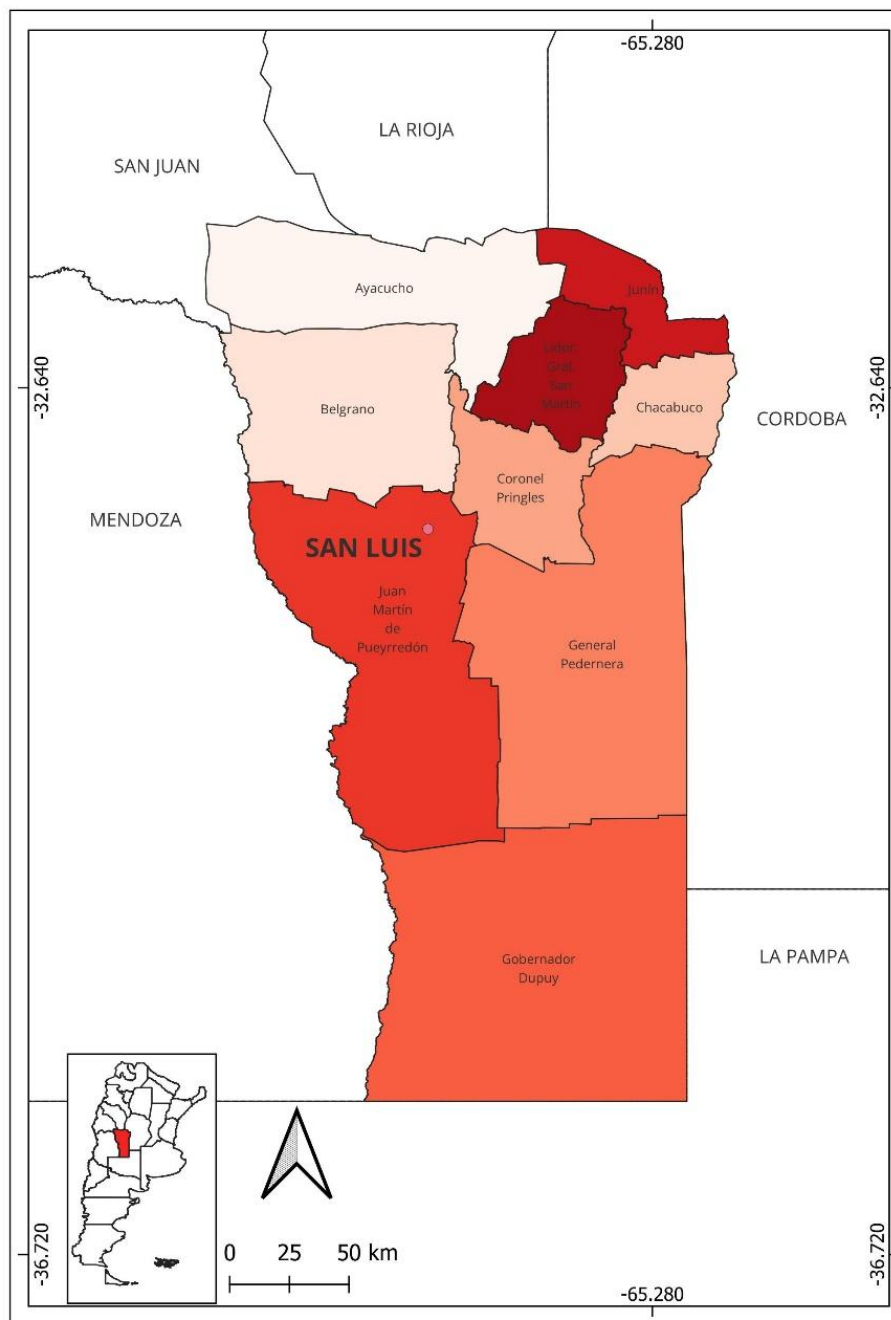
members of her research team, based on research that sought to know and understand processes of heritagization and valorization of places, assets, and provincial cultural manifestations. Such is the study on Pueblo Ranquel, a space built east of the province's center for a group of Indigenous Rankülches descendants, within the framework of vindication policies towards the territory's original communities (Giacomasso, 2016; Giacomasso and Curtoni, 2017; Giacomasso, 2017; Giacomasso and Zulaica, 2021). Analyses of the legislation of San Luis regarding cultural heritage (Giacomasso and Endere, 2015; Giacomasso and Endere, 2019) and work on the archaeological site of the Intihuasi Grotto —in the town of La Carolina— were carried out based on analysis of the assessments of the interest groups involved (Endere *et al.*, 2021a), and development of guidelines for a comprehensive management plan for the site (Endere *et al.*, 2021b). This sustained work in the area allowed for generating a set of contacts with various actors linked to San Luis' heritage, such as governmental and non-governmental representatives, academics or specialists from different disciplines, and the community at large, among others, which permitted to gradually map stakeholders in the heritage field, many of which are located in the city of San Luis, the provincial capital.

In this context, the possibility arose of moving forward with a project that focuses the analysis on this locality based on information about the community's vision of San Luis' cultural assets and expressions. Before describing the methodological strategies, it is necessary to refer to some of the city's characteristics.

### The city of San Luis

San Luis is the capital of the province of the same name. It is located in the north-central part of the province and is the capital of the Juan Martín de Pueyrredón department (Map 1). San Luis has an area of 13,120 square kilometers and a population of 201,245 (INDEC, 2022).

**Map 1.**  
*Map of the study area*



Source: own elaboration

Note: The figure shows the province of San Luis and the location of the city of San Luis within the Department of Juan Martín de Pueyrredón.

Regarding its foundation, it has been widely believed that it was Luis Jufre de Loayza, lieutenant mayor of Cuyo, who founded the city in 1594 (Villegas, 2011). However, in contradiction, Menéndez (2017) maintains that this event was a failed attempt because no inhabitants settled in its urban layout at that time. According to this author,

it was the Governor of Chile, Tomás Marín de Poveda, appointed by the King of Spain, Carlos II, who intervened in the definitive establishment of San Luis between 1691 and 1696, with its layout, plot distribution, and settlement enforcement for the formation of a population center. The traditional urban design of

Spanish cities was adopted, based on a checkerboard plan with a reticular scheme and a central square, currently known as Plaza Independencia, from which a square of five blocks or "cuadras" was outlined from north to south and from east to west. This form of the urban center is essential because many of the spaces most recognized by San Luis' inhabitants are within this area.

Today, the city has a diverse cultural heritage that includes real estate, such as architectural heritage; movable assets housed in the city's two museums, the San Luis History Museum (MUHSAL) and the Dora Ochoa de Masramón Museum; intangible assets, which are especially evident in oral traditions and expressions, rituals and festive events, and ancestral techniques, among others; and parks and squares that function as green spaces with historical and cultural value. Regarding architectural heritage, there are historic buildings in San Luis, such as the Convent of Santo Domingo (1838), the old Train Station (1882) that connected the cities of Buenos Aires and Mendoza (Villegas, 2011), the Cathedral Church (1897), and other buildings from the beginning of the 20th century such as the Municipality building —formerly the Banco Nación (1910)—, the Palace of Justice —formerly the Government House (1917)— and the School No. 1 "Juan C. Lafinur" —former National School—, among many others.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Movable heritage includes mostly works by local artists, archives and photographs, items related to the city's founding and significant personalities in its history, symbolic assets representing the patriotic feat, and archaeological pieces linked to the territory's original populations. In addition, San Luis has characteristic festivities and commemorations —for example, the procession of the patron saint of San Luis, the devotion to Cristo de la Quebrada, the anniversary celebration, and the commemoration of Colonel Juan P. Pringles— which can be understood as part of its intangible heritage and involve a set of proposals, mobilizations, and activities aimed at the community. Finally, in addition to Plaza Independencia, there are more than 15 other plazas distributed throughout the city, as well as parks —like Parque de los Niños and Parque de las Naciones— that

become green lungs, with ample spaces for recreation and family enjoyment.

### Methodological strategies

As mentioned above, this exploratory study with a qualitative approach aimed to collect the perceptions of residents of the city of San Luis about local cultural assets to identify and preliminarily access helpful information on which to delve into aspects that are key to developing heritage enhancement actions. Based on this objective, and in a context still crossed by Social, Preventive, and Mandatory Isolation (ASPO) as a consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic, an anonymous online questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was used as a collection instrument and applied to residents during a six-month period in 2021; it was distributed through reference agents contacted in prior investigations.

It is worth mentioning that this study design, not being probabilistic, did not require much "representativeness" since, more than the possibility of generalizing the results, the interest was to obtain information from a particular social group —the inhabitants of the urban area of the city of San Luis— on which to collect and analyze information in a first approximation to the local community. For this task, a subjective sampling by reasoned decision was adopted (Corbetta, 2007), from which key actors were selected for their interest or particular knowledge about the city's heritage —for example, cultural managers, teachers, tourist guides, and neighbors members of heritage associations, among others— who approached other people who could complete the questionnaire and they, in turn, approached additional people, in order to generate a wealth of information in a type of chain or network sample, also called "snowball" (Hernández Sampieri *et al.*, 2014). The inclusion criteria for the sample were that participants were over 18 years old and had lived in San Luis for at least five years. This condition was considered so that the questions could be answered by residents who had lived and experienced the city for a considerable amount of time. The platform used was Google Forms, which was accessible to participants through its link and helpful in receiving and monitoring responses in real time.

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<sup>1</sup> Several of these buildings have been declared historical sites, monuments, or heritage assets of cultural interest by National Law and Provincial Law (see Giacomasso and Endere, 2019).

<sup>2</sup>The online questionnaire can be accessed through the following link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15GU6XV8dH8GFdCmgAPO4I337hnPUq0uXyC0HG5VXsyU/edit?usp=sharing>



It is essential to clarify that the questionnaire was prepared based on a model used in a framework of doctoral research (Cantar *et al.*, 2021); it included questions about the four heritage categories identified in the urban area of the city of San Luis: architectural heritage, movable heritage, intangible heritage, and parks and squares. Archaeological heritage was not considered because no sites or deposits have been registered inside the town, unlike other cities or areas of the province. The open and closed questions comprising the questionnaire were aimed at collecting information for evaluating four aspects that constitute the sociocultural sustainability of heritage and arise from a selection and adaptation of the indicators proposed by Cantar *et al.* (2021). In sociocultural terms, said sustainability is linked, among other things, to the ability of citizens to recognize heritage assets in their environment; the identification of said assets as part of the community's history and identity; participation in events, sites or places linked to heritage and mobilization for its defense, considering that the protection and safeguarding of heritage is part of one of the crucial SDGs to achieve community sustainability.

Accordingly, the four analysis axes were: a) heritage recognition, b) identification with heritage, c) heritage participation, and d) mobilization for heritage.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the first axis, respondents were asked to identify between 0 and 3 or more assets corresponding to each heritage category, filling in the names of the recognized assets in the blank spaces provided. The form allowed them to move on to the next question if they did not identify any assets. Respondents were also asked to mark with a cross, within a predetermined list for each type of heritage, those assets that they recognized as such. It should be noted that this questionnaire was prepared in collaboration with agents linked to San Luis' heritage — such as members of the Pircas Association— who provided useful information on the spaces in the city to be referenced.

Regarding the second axis, b) identification with heritage, respondents were asked to indicate the degree of connection with each type of asset. In this case, the

purpose was to observe how these participants identify themselves regarding collective/common identity and as part of a community with different local assets. For the third axis analyzed, c) social participation, respondents were asked about the frequency with which citizens participate in activities or visit spaces related to each heritage category. For movable heritage, respondents were asked about visits to local museums; in the case of intangible heritage, respondents were asked about participation in popular festivals, shows, or cultural lectures; and respondents were also asked about visits or attendance at architectural works, squares, and parks. Finally, concerning the fourth axis, d) social mobilization, questions were asked about the degree of mobilization with which participants demonstrated —physically, through petitions, or media and other networks— their defense of the different types of heritage.

Regarding the questionnaire, it is worth noting that the people who collaborated, both in its preparation and its distribution, were aware of the study's proposal from the beginning and participated with their prior, voluntary, and informed consent following the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It is also worth mentioning that the link to the questionnaire was distributed with an informative text that explained the objective of the work so that the people who completed it could learn about the interest and use of the information extracted and would agree to contribute to the research.

### Population and sample

The responses obtained were 300. Of this total, 199 were women (65.4%), 99 men (32.9%), and 5 from "other" genders (1.7%). Four age groups were differentiated: 18 to 31 years old (19.6%), 32 to 45 (37%), 46 to 59 (24.6%), and 60 and older (18.6%). Finally, concerning educational level, most of the participants have graduate studies (33.2%), followed by postgraduate studies holders (27.9%), those with tertiary studies (17.9%), and those who have completed secondary school (19.9%), and primary school (1%).

It should be noted that some of this questionnaire's results were previously analyzed based on the

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<sup>3</sup>In previous work on sustainability indicators (Giacomasso and Cantar, 2024), other questions and analytical axes, such as "asset

information," were included, but they are excluded from the present analysis, given the few responses obtained and the difficulty in cross-referencing the data with the age variable.

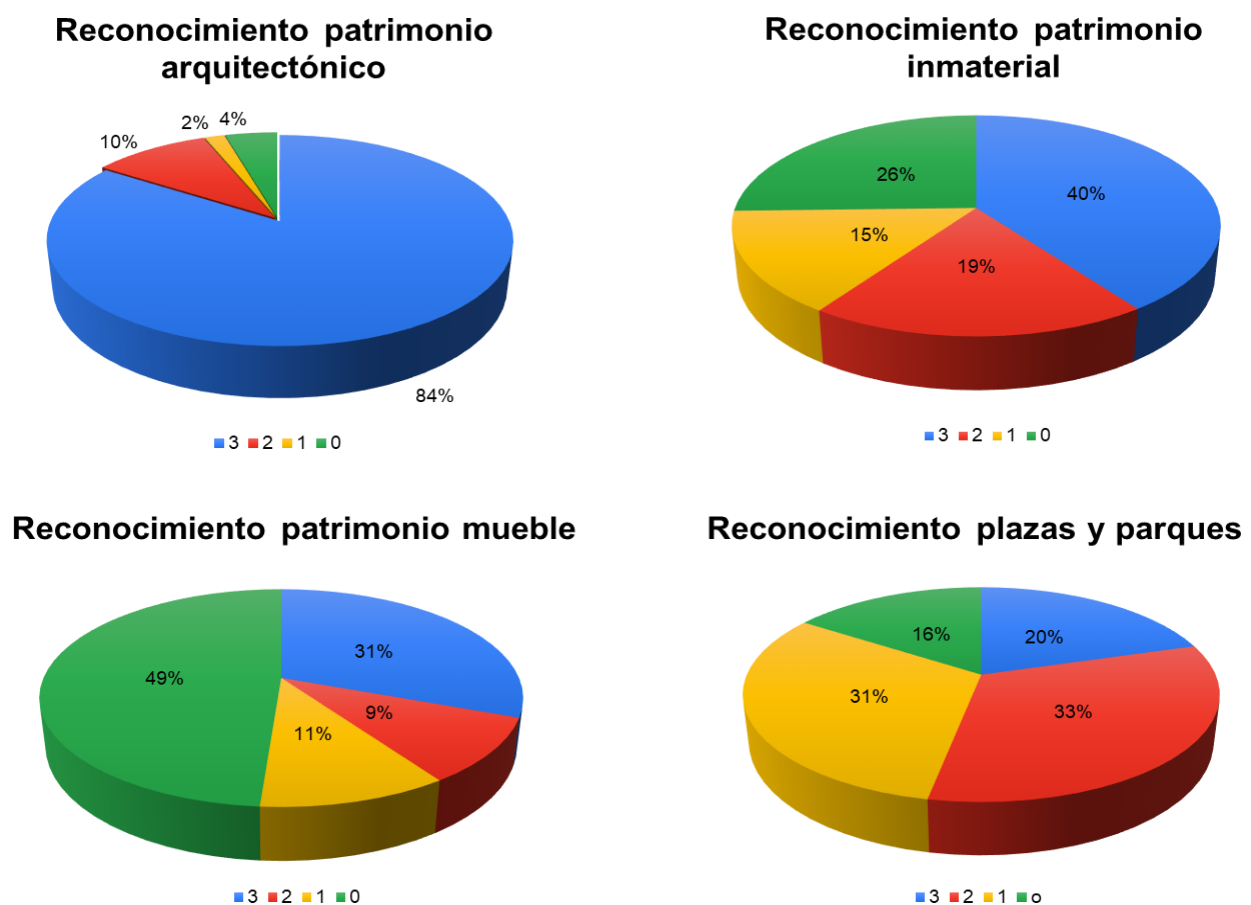
construction of a sociocultural sustainability index of San Luis's heritage (Giacomasso and Cantar, 2024). However, in addition to presenting results related to said index, the specific crossing with the age variable was established in this work to identify and understand differences or similarities between age groups regarding ways of connecting with cultural heritage.

## Results

Regarding point a) heritage recognition (Figure 1), it is noteworthy that architectural heritage had the most significant recognition. When participants were asked to fill in blank boxes with the names of local assets they could recognize, 84% recognized three or more assets of this type, and only 4% could not recognize any. The main

assets mentioned were the Cathedral Church, the Santo Domingo Convent, the José la Vía Cultural Center — formerly a train station— and the City Hall Building, among others. In the case of intangible heritage, 40% were able to mention three assets, and 19% mentioned two. Although the recognition is lower than for architectural assets, more than 50% recognized at least two intangible assets linked to the community. The most frequently mentioned were the Procession of Cristo de la Quebrada, the city's anniversary celebration, and the commemoration of Colonel Juan P. Pringles, a soldier from San Luis recognized for his participation in the War of Independence and other civil wars in the country. In the case of parks and squares, the majority could identify two squares (33%), and almost a third could identify one (31%), including the Plaza Independencia and the Plaza Pringles, and only 16% could not identify any.

**Figure 1.**  
*Recognition of heritage*



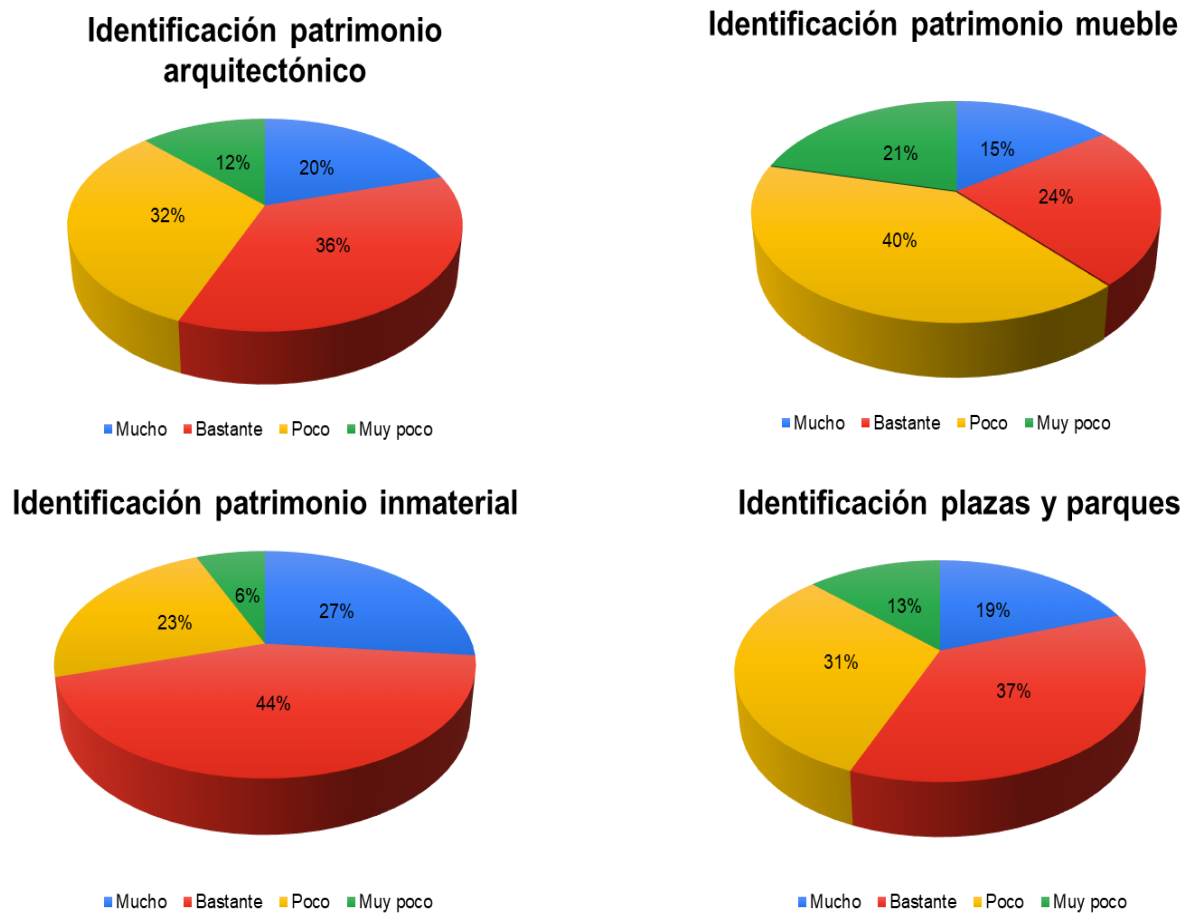
*Note:* Figure 1 shows the recognition percentages for each heritage category.

*Source:* own elaboration

At this point, the most critical situation was that of movable heritage since almost half of the participants (49%) could not mention any such property, despite the city having two important museums housing items related to the town's most ancient and recent past. However, in the questionnaire's next item, which consisted of checking off a predetermined list of assets recognized as heritage, several could identify more than three assets of movable heritage. The most recognized were the Flag of the Battle of Chacabuco, donated by General San Martín to the province, currently kept by the Dora Ochoa Museum; arrowheads and bolas —tools used by the native communities of the territory—; and the José La Vía Photographic Archive, which contains different photographs of places, events and personalities of San Luis taken by the photographer La Vía from the beginning of the 20th century until approximately the 1970s.

Regarding point b) Heritage identification (Figure 2), the majority of participants claim to identify "quite a bit" with intangible heritage (44%), followed by parks and squares (37%) and architectural heritage (36%), and "not much" with movable heritage (40%). In this sense, it can be seen again how movable heritage is at a disadvantage compared to other heritage categories with which people identify "quite a bit." The graphs also show that the highest percentage of people identifying "a lot" with heritage (27%) answered regarding intangible heritage. There was also a considerable percentage with "little" identification (31%) regarding parks and squares, a number close to those who say they identify "quite a bit," which can be related to the idea that parks and squares are usually understood as green, natural spaces, and not always identified as heritage that includes cultural aspects, from their historical, aesthetic and social value.

**Figure 2.**  
*Identification of heritage*



*Note:* Figure 2 shows the identification percentages for each heritage category.

*Source:* own elaboration

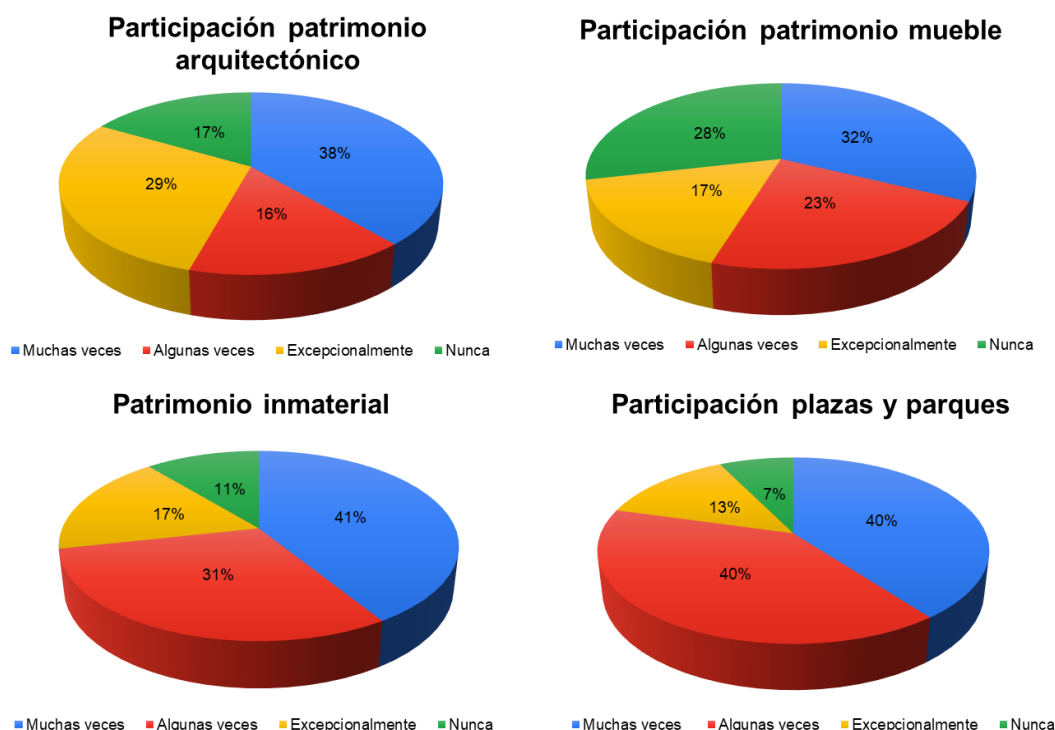


Regarding point c) *Heritage participation*, the frequency with which people participate in events, cultural events, and popular festivals, as well as visiting sites or places of local heritage, such as architectural works and museums, was considered. It is worth mentioning that the frequency of participation was specified for each category,<sup>4</sup> despite using the same assessment scales for the evaluation (often, sometimes, exceptionally, never).

In this axis, the results show a high participation for all heritage categories (Figure 3). In the case of architectural heritage, the highest percentage on the assessment scale (38%) indicates that the inhabitants of San Luis participated "often" in visits to architectural works in the city or talks on the subject, and 16% indicate that they did so "sometimes." In another measure, 29% say they participate "exceptionally," and only 17% say they have "never" participated. Concerning movable heritage, it is

also observed that the highest percentage on the scale, 32%, has participated "often" and 23% "sometimes" in visits or talks at the San Luis History Museum or at the Dora Ochoa de Masramón Museum, where local movable assets are located, preserved and communicated. However, a percentage close to the previous one (28%) stated that they had "never" participated, indicating a smaller difference between those who participated "a lot" in activities related to this type of heritage and those who did not. Regarding intangible heritage, 41% of the inhabitants indicated that they had participated "often" and 31% "sometimes" in popular festivals, theatre shows, or dances, as well as in concerts, talks, or cultural lectures. Both results show a participation rate exceeding 70%. Finally, concerning parks and squares, there is an equal percentage (40%) of responses indicating that the inhabitants visit the green spaces of the city "often" and "sometimes," which adds up to a total participation rate of 80%.

**Figure 3.**  
*Heritage participation*



*Note:* The figure shows the participation percentages for each heritage category.

<sup>4</sup> Architectural heritage: three or more times a year (often), twice a year (sometimes), once a year (exceptionally), never (never); movable heritage: once a year (often), once every three years (sometimes), once every six years (exceptionally), never (never); intangible heritage:

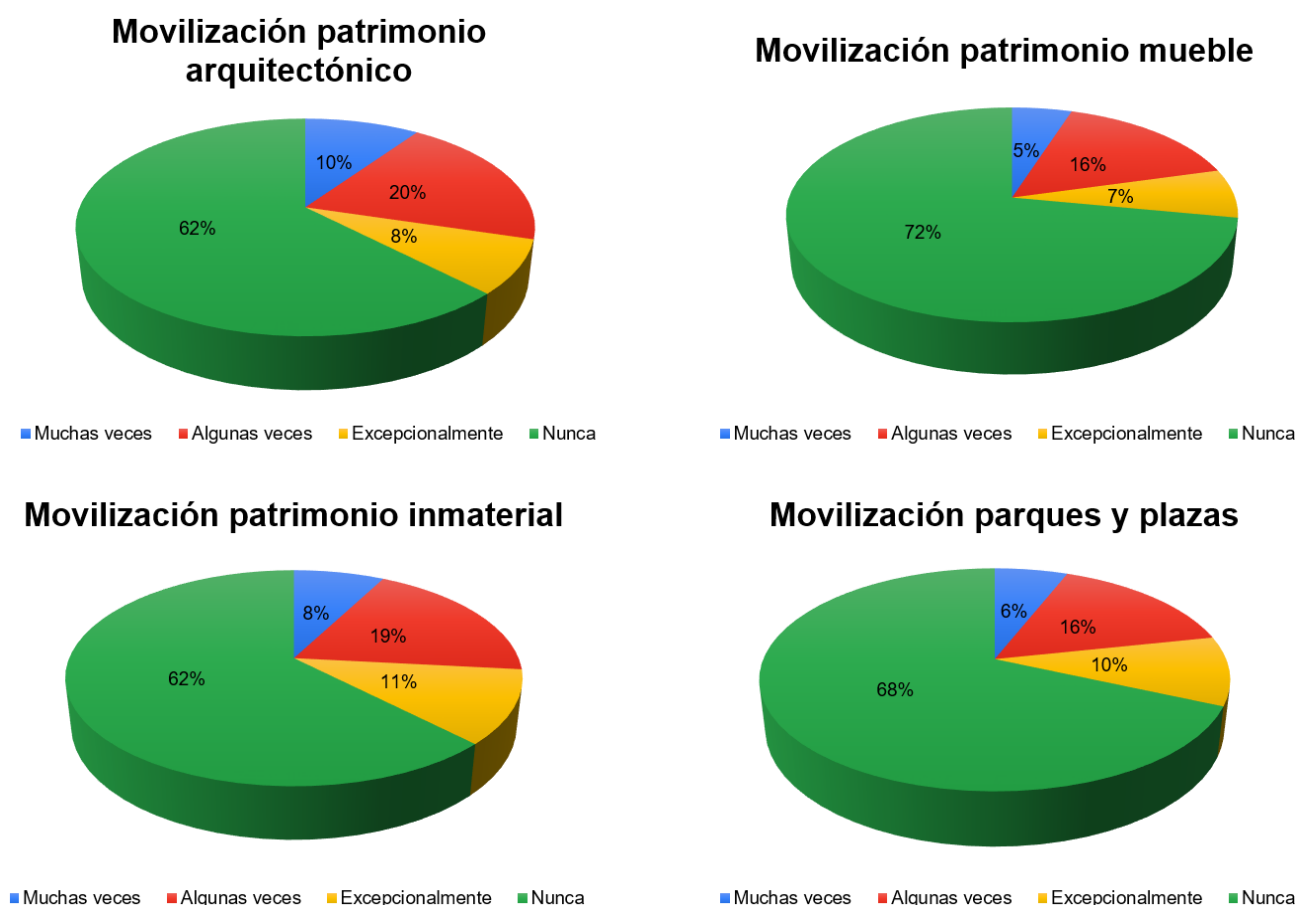
once every three months (often); once every six months (sometimes); once a year (exceptionally); never (never); parks and squares: once a week (often), once a month (sometimes), once every six months (exceptionally), less than once every six months (never).

Source: own elaboration

Finally, concerning point d) Mobilization for heritage (Figure 4), the frequency with which people mobilized to demonstrate in defense of San Luis's heritage in situations in which it was affected or violated was taken into account. In the city, some events that have come to light publicly show the destruction of buildings of heritage value<sup>5</sup> and the necessity of generating policies for the restoration and conservation of deteriorated assets, both

material and intangible;<sup>6</sup> often activated thanks to civil society's demand and drive. However, the questionnaire results show low community participation since most people say they "never" mobilized in favor of safeguarding heritage. This passive majority exceeds 50% in each category: 62% for architectural heritage, 72% for movable heritage, 62% for intangible heritage, and 68% for parks and squares.

**Figure 4.**  
*Patrimonial mobilization*



Note: The figure shows the mobilization percentages for each heritage category.

Source: own elaboration

<sup>5</sup> Some examples are the demolition of La Vieja Estación and the Municipal Market, the fire at the Social Club, which was not restored, and more recently, the modification of the "Solar de los Pringles" (Kram, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> One example is the Traditional Songbook of San Luis, "Dora Ochoa de Masmaron," containing songs, legends, and local customs written by the writer and teacher Dora Ochoa and recovered from old notebooks thanks to the intervention of community organizations such as the Pirkas Association of San Luis.

## The age variable in the uses and perceptions of heritage

As mentioned above, this report decided to consider the age variable to identify differences or similarities in how groups of different ages (from youngest to oldest) perceive and relate to cultural heritage. This generational issue is not a minor aspect if heritage is understood as a vehicle for transmitting values, experiences, and knowledge between generations, from which it will be necessary to successively promote heritage safeguarding if the sociocultural sustainability of communities is expected to be achieved.

To this end, the results for the four axes of analysis and each wealth category were distinguished according to the

different age ranges: 18 to 31 years old, 32 to 45, 46 to 59, and 60 and over. In the following analysis, these ranges will be mentioned as the first group, second group, third group, and fourth group, from youngest to oldest, to avoid referring to the ages included in each case.

Regarding *heritage recognition* (see Table 1), architectural heritage obtains the highest number of recognitions in all age groups: 58% in the first, 85% in the second, 91% in the third, and 93% in the fourth. This result also shows that the recognition of local architectural assets is greater in older people, from 46 years onwards, and even more after 60.

**Table 1.**  
*Recognition and identification by age*

Axis	Ranges	Scale	Architectural		Movable		Intangible		Parks and plazas	
Heritage recognition	18 a 31	3 o +	40	58%	7	12%	15	25%	11	19%
		2	12	20%	8	14%	9	15%	21	36%
		1	1	2%	5	8%	10	17%	14	24%
		0	6	10%	39	66%	25	42%	13	22%
			59	100%	59	100%	59	100%	59	100%
	32 a 45	3 o +	94	85%	33	30%	44	40%	22	20%
		2	12	11%	11	10%	22	20%	36	32%
		1	2	2%	13	12%	18	16%	36	32%
		0	3	3%	54	49%	27	24%	17	15%
			111	100%	111	100%	111	100%	111	100%
	46 a 59	3 o +	67	91%	33	35%	31	42%	14	19%
		2	4	5%	6	8%	16	22%	25	34%
		1	0	0%	9	12%	11	15%	21	28%
		0	3	4%	26	45%	16	22%	14	19%
			74	100%	74	100%	74	100%	74	100%
	60 y > 60	3 o +	52	93%	26	46%	31	55%	14	25%
		2	1	2%	4	7%	11	20%	16	29%
		1	2	4%	5	9%	6	11%	23	41%
		0	1	2%	21	38%	8	14%	3	5%
			56	100%	56	100%	56	100%	56	100%
Heritage identification	18 a 31	A lot	4	7%	2	3%	10	17%	12	20%
		Quite a bit	19	32%	8	14%	17	29%	27	46%
		Little	23	39%	27	46%	21	36%	12	20%
		Very little	13	22%	22	37%	11	19%	8	14%
			59	100%	59	100%	59	100%	59	100%
	32 a 45	A lot	16	14%	12	11%	17	15%	30	27%

		Quite a bit	33	30%	22	20%	36	32%	48	43%
		Little	48	43%	52	47%	40	36%	28	25%
		Very little	14	13%	25	23%	18	16%	5	5%
			111	100%	111	100%	111	100%	111	100%
	46 a 59	A lot	18	24%	14	19%	15	20%	18	24%
		Quite a bit	31	42%	18	24%	31	42%	30	41%
		Little	19	26%	29	39%	20	27%	21	28%
		Very little	6	8%	13	18%	8	11%	5	7%
			74	100%	74	100%	74	100%	74	100%
	60 y > 60	A lot	23	41%	17	30%	16	29%	20	36%
		Quite bit	24	43%	23	41%	26	46%	26	46%
		Little	5	9%	13	23%	11	20%	10	18%
		Very little	4	7%	3	5%	3	5%	0	0%
			56	100%	56	100%	56	100%	56	100%

*Note:* The table shows the results of the Recognition and Identification axes differentiated by age groups. The highest percentages obtained in each case are indicated in green.

*Source:* own elaboration

Regarding movable assets, most age groups (first, second, and third) responded unfavorably to recognizing assets within this category, with 66%, 49%, and 45% saying they could not recognize any assets, respectively. In contrast, the highest recognition percentage was obtained among people identified in the fourth group (60 years and older) when they mentioned three or more assets of this type.

On the other hand, regarding intangible heritage, the majority of the first group (42%) could not recognize any asset, while as age increases, there is a progressive increase in recognition percentages. The percentage was 40% in the second group, 42% in the third, and 55% in the fourth, the latter being the age group that could recognize more than 50% of three or more of the city's characteristic intangible assets. Finally, in the case of parks and squares, the first three age groups recognized these spaces on the same scale (the highest percentage was in recognizing two "parks or squares"), except the fourth group, which could only recognize, in its majority, one "park or square" (41%).

Regarding the heritage identification axis (see Table 1), the results show differences in how the different age groups identify with their cultural heritage. In the case of architectural heritage, most of the first and second

groups identify "a little" (39% and 47%) with this heritage, and the third and fourth groups, "quite a bit" (42% and 43%), which shows an identification that grows with age. It is noteworthy that the fourth group identifies "a lot" in a high percentage (41%), very similar to "quite a bit." On the other hand, movable heritage generates "little" identification in the first (46%), second (47%), and third groups (39%), although this percentage is more favorable in the fourth group in which the majority (41%) identify "quite a bit." In other words, only older people identify most with this heritage.

In the case of intangible heritage, it is observed that most of the first and second age groups (18 to 31 and 32 to 45) identify "not very" with said heritage (both with the same percentage, 36%), while the oldest age groups say they identify "quite a bit," at 42% and 46%, respectively. Finally, in the category "parks and squares," a significant identification with these places is manifested in all age ranges since the highest percentage was with those responding "quite a bit" (more than 40% in all cases).

The third axis of analysis, heritage participation (see Table 2), is related to the frequency with which the San Luis population participates in activities, cultural events, uses, visits, or tours of sites, places, and assets of the local cultural heritage.

**Table 2.**  
*Participation and mobilization by age*

Axis	Ranges	Scale	Architectural		Movable		Immaterial		Parks and plazas	
Heritage participation	18 to 31	Many times	17	29%	6	10%	14	24%	31	53%
		Sometimes	14	24%	11	19%	9	15%	18	31%
		Excepcionaly	18	31%	11	19%	26	44%	5	8%
		Never	10	17%	31	53%	10	17%	5	8%
			59	100%	59	100%	59	100%	59	100%
	32 to 45	Many times	34	31%	31	28%	31	28%	48	43%
		Sometimes	17	15%	25	23%	20	18%	45	41%
		Excepcionaly	36	33%	20	18%	36	32%	14	13%
		Never	23	21%	35	32%	24	22%	4	4%
			111	100%	111	100%	111	100%	111	100%
	46 to 59	Many times	32	43%	30	41%	20	27%	17	23%
		Sometimes	9	12%	19	26%	9	12%	34	46%
		Excepcionaly	23	31%	12	16%	38	51%	17	23%
		Never	10	14%	13	18%	7	9%	6	8%
			74	100%	74	100%	74	100%	74	100%
	60 and > 60	Many times	32	57%	29	52%	21	38%	22	39%
		Sometimes	7	13%	13	23%	13	23%	23	41%
		Excepcionaly	10	18%	9	16%	13	23%	5	9%
		Never	7	13%	5	9%	9	16%	6	11%
			56	100%	56	100%	56	100%	56	100%
	18 to 31	Patrimonial mobilization 18 to 31 Many times	3	5%	3	5%	2	3%	5	8%
		Sometimes	10	17%	5	8%	6	10%	9	15%
		Excepcionaly	1	2%	1	2%	5	8%	3	5%
		Never	45	85%	50	85%	46	78%	42	71%
			59	100%	59	100%	59	100%	59	100%
	32 to 45	Many times	7	6%	4	4%	4	4%	6	5%
		Sometimes	20	18%	11	10%	17	15%	19	17%
		Excepcionaly	7	6%	8	7%	8	7%	12	11%
		Never	77	69%	88	79%	82	74%	74	67%
			111	100%	111	100%	111	100%	111	100%
	46 to 59	Many times	5	7%	4	5%	4	5%	3	4%
		Sometimes	14	19%	12	16%	11	15%	12	16%
		Excepcionaly	10	14%	7	9%	8	11%	10	14%
		Never	45	61%	51	69%	51	69%	49	66%
			74	100%	74	100%	74	100%	74	100%
	60 and > 60	Many times	14	25%	6	11%	8	14%	10	18%
		Sometimes	16	29%	19	34%	13	23%	17	30%
		Excepcionaly	6	11%	6	11%	9	16%	8	14%

	Never	20	36%	25	45%	26	46%	21	38%
		56	100%	56	100%	56	100%	56	100%

*Note:* The table shows the results of the Participation and Mobilization axes differentiated by age groups. The highest percentages obtained in each case are indicated in green.

*Source:* own elaboration

For architectural heritage, the highest frequency of participation, given by visits to buildings, works, or talks related to the topic, is obtained in the fourth age group (57%); that is, in people aged 60 or over, who state that they have participated at least 3 times in activities of these characteristics. The highest participation in the other groups had lower percentages —29% in the first group, 32% in the second, and 43% in the third. In the younger age groups (first and second), the most selected frequency of participation corresponded to visits to these spaces (31% and 33%, respectively).

Participation in the area of movable heritage, which in this case is linked to visiting and touring the main museums in San Luis, is very low in the younger groups. The majority say they have "never" participated: 53% in the first group and 32% in the second. Participation increases in the older groups, as the majority say they have visited museums at least once a year (41% in the third group and 52% in the third).

Regarding intangible heritage, participation in popular festivals, theatre and/or dance performances, demonstrations, talks, or cultural lectures, among other events, is rare in the first three age groups, as they mostly responded that they participate in such events once a year (44%, 32% and 51% respectively). On the contrary, many people aged 60 and over (38%) say they participate every three months in this type of event, showing a more proactive and participative attitude related to intangible heritage.

Finally, in the case of "parks and squares," participation is high in all age groups, although somewhat higher in the younger groups, who mostly say they go to these places at least once a week (53% in the first group and 43% in the second); unlike older people, whose frequency is mostly once a month (46% and 41%, respectively).

Finally, regarding the axis of heritage mobilization (see Table 2), for all heritage categories and all age groups, actions or activities related to the defense of heritage are non-existent or a minority. In this sense, many responded

that they have "never" mobilized for such a cause. For architectural heritage, 76% in the first group, 69% in the second, 61% in the third, and a little less in the fourth group, in which the majority also maintains (36%) that they do not mobilize in this regard, other people in a similar percentage (29%) state that they mobilize "sometimes."

The same is true for movable heritage. In the first group, 85% said they had "never" mobilized for this heritage, 79% in the second, 69% in the third, and 46% in the fourth. Here, too, it can be seen that non-participation decreases with increasing age, with 34% of older adults saying they mobilized "sometimes." For intangible heritage, the highest percentages, which allude to this mobilization in defense of heritage, are higher in the first and second groups and lower in the older age groups: 78%, 74%, 69%, and 46%, respectively. Finally, in the same way, the percentages for "parks and squares" are 71%, 67%, 66%, and 38%, which also show that in older groups, the lack of participation is compensated by a not-so-low percentage (30%) concerning participation "sometimes." That is to say that, in general terms, the percentage difference between those who have not mobilized and those who have is smaller among older adults. The contrary occurs with the younger groups, where this gap in mobilization is very large.

Discussion

Finally, it is worth pointing out how the four axes analyzed for each heritage category allowed us to identify the strengths and weaknesses that make up the sociocultural sustainability of San Luis' heritage. Significantly, these readings are derived from the vision and experience of the population participating in the sample. It is noted that there is a high level of recognition and identification in three of the heritage categories, with architectural heritage in the lead. On the contrary, a critical situation is revealed regarding movable heritage since it is poorly recognized and identified by the community's people. However, by incorporating the age variable, it was possible to observe that, in addition to



movable heritage, the youngest people do not recognize intangible heritage or identify themselves with it or with architectural heritage.

The same is true for participation. While broadly, this is an active community that visits different sites or attends talks on heritage, their responses show no or very low participation by the younger sector concerning movable heritage. Something similar happens with responses related to architectural and intangible heritage, in which such participation occurs sporadically. The difference was notable in the category of parks and squares since higher percentages were obtained in all age groups.

These results allow us to see a different way of perceiving and appropriating heritage depending on the generation. It is possible to observe how the interest and approach to proposals related to heritage occurs in older people, showing an enrichment or strengthening of these aspects with age, contrary to what occurs in younger generations. In this sense, aspects presented as strengths in a global —or macro— framework, in a particular —or micro— context can be read as weaknesses or improvable; if we want to promote policies for the comprehensive safeguarding of local cultural heritage.

As discussed in the first part of this article, heritage is a social construction activated by the appreciation and sense of attachment that groups generate towards certain cultural assets to use, honor, and transmit to new generations for their benefit. In this sense, and under the motto: *We do not value what we ignore* (Criado-Boado and Barreiro, 2013), it is essential to promote this knowledge to new generations so they become participants and protagonists in the processes of appropriation and activation, which will require communication and heritage education. Processes that involve children, adolescents, and young people in formal and non-formal educational spaces, bringing teaching and reflective practices to the sociocultural environment that surrounds them and on those "entities" that allow the recognition of the historical features, cultural identity, and collective memory of the community to which they belong.

However, from a sustainability perspective, this will mean promoting heritage protection through permanent renewal. That is, from an approach that does not only look to the past at the risk of turning heritage into a rigid and

frozen entity but recovers its contemporary social and cultural functions so that they are continually reviewed and updated in the present, relate to current problems, and maintain their meaning and function in the future (UNESCO, 2014). This rethinking is fundamental for young people if these key actors in constructing this future are understood. Therefore, the results showing this group as less engaged or interested in the subject become useful information when deciding to work on heritage with the youth sector. Specifically in Argentina, the Ministry of Education, through the educational portal EDUC.AR combines materials on various topics, including cultural heritage, with educational content, tools, and teaching resources for teachers and materials for students at different training levels. A work of interest in this regard is one aimed at the development of youth projects oriented to two itineraries: "Territories and identities" and "Heritage, cultural productions and practices" (Ministry of Education, 2021).

The data analyzed also show that the mobilization in defense of heritage obtained the lowest results in all age groups, which allows thinking, on the one hand, about low concern and community involvement in these issues and, on the other, about the lack of spaces and a favorable context for community intervention. On this issue in particular, some research (Chaparro and Giacomasso, 2023; Quiroga, 2022; Trocello de Vicens, 2005) have referred to the passive role that San Luis citizens have had in public policy decisions and low participation in general. In this regard, Quiroga (2022) maintains that in San Luis, citizen mobilizations have been sporadic and silenced by the official media, which has led to a disjointed civil society that expresses a citizen culture of disinterest in public issues and an absent social dialogue, with hardly any possibilities for participatory communication processes. This situation is linked to what Trocello de Vicens (2005) proposes about the political regime of the Rodríguez Saá, a family with an extensive political tradition in the province that has been linked to power since 1860, perpetuating institutional devices that led, for several decades, to strengthening a paternalistic system that has limited citizens in their responsibility for participation and collective decision-making.

These issues linked to participation problems have been reflected in other national works related to heritage, showing how state bureaucracies adopt a type of autocratic management and a conservative vision of

heritage (Endere *et al.*, 2021b), creating a distance with those theoretical postulates —updated and inclusive— that refer to permanent interaction with the community and multivocality as essential to generating proposals that respect the diversity of visions (Curtoni, 2015; Gianotti *et al.*, 2015). Another aspect to consider in the face of this problem is the difficulty in bringing people together for discussions on heritage management, which has led some international studies —such as the one on perceptions of world heritage in three Spanish cities (Castillo *et al.*, 2016)— to offer incentives or gifts to motivate the participation of groups, in some cases by attending and inviting people who were walking along the streets. However, in Spain, after several decades of very low citizen involvement, some studies show an emerging phenomenon of local associations (Muñoz, 2016), formed by citizens whose objectives and interests focus on protecting their heritage based on their own concerns and awareness of public administrations's lack of action. In the South American and Argentine context, there are several examples of heritage management —mainly in archaeological sites and museums— where sectors of the community actively participate by contributing their own visions or through specific activities (Benavides, 2001; Endere and Zulaica, 2015; Freire, 2019; Pozzi-Escot and Uceda, 2019; Villanueva Ciales, 2019). However, as suggested in this work and others previously carried out in the province, it is necessary to go deeper into the implementation of theoretical postulates on social participation and multivocality, as well as recovering national and international experiences such as those cited here, to design specific, situated, systematized and appropriate actions for specific objectives, as may arise from this case concerning promoting the appropriation, awareness, sensitization, and safeguarding of cultural heritage for youth groups.

## Conclusions

This study analyzed community perceptions about the city of San Luis's heritage, identifying differences from an age perspective. Although other research on the subject has been carried out in the province, the survey presented here is specifically carried out in the capital city and uses methodological strategies that, at the time, had not been used in the area. The use of an online questionnaire enabled continuity in the research in a context of isolation and access to more information on the subject due to the number of responses collected

from the sample. It is important to highlight that the data and discussion presented above cannot account for the direct causes that generate such results, which shows the tool's limitations. However, it is possible to identify aspects that undermine the sociocultural sustainability of the heritage and then delve deeper —through other methodological instruments— into the reasons or foundations of the difficulties detected. From the point of view of age groups, the data show the low "recognition," "identification," "participation," and "mobilization" of the youngest among the majority of heritage types, which becomes a trigger for the development of future studies and lines of action linked to public communication and heritage education aimed at the youth sector.

Finally, although preliminary, the information gathered in this research is hoped to serve as input for governments, institutions specializing in heritage, and different sectors of the community to promote policies aiming to promote a more comprehensive and situated view of local cultural heritage, which incorporates the interests of the people and groups involved in pursuit of socioculturally sustainable heritage management.

## Author's contributions

María Vanesa Giacomasso: research and article redaction.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

This work presents no conflict of interest. The agents involved did so in the research process with their prior, voluntary, and informed consent.

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