

Heritage on the Move: Conditions and Reasons of Use of Passenger Rail Service in South-Central Chile (Biobío and Araucanía)¹

Patrimonio en Movimiento: Motivos y Condiciones del Uso del Ferrocarril de Pasajeros en el Centro-Sur de Chile (Biobío y Araucanía)

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Abstract

In the framework of railway studies, one of the most relevant aspects at a global level is related to its versatility as a transport device that is a priority in the public agenda and with certain heritage and tourist characteristics. This cultural potential of the railroad is extrapolated to the national reality and transforms it into an object of study in movement with a historical social tradition. Based on a quantitative, exploratory and non-experimental methodological approach (n=346), the present research aims to describe the motivations and conditions of railroad use in the non-metropolitan daily life of the central-south zone, considering the travel practices and railroad culture of users of the Talcahuano-Laja (n=146) and Victoria-Temuco (n=200) passenger services. Among the results, there is a mostly positive evaluation in terms of comfort, efficiency, economy and rootedness in the social memory of the territories, however, there are critical nodes in terms of coverage and demand in small cities and towns in both regions. It is concluded that the railroad transcends its functionality as a means of transportation to become a fundamental element in the local identity of the surveyed areas.

Keywords: Railway transport, Cultural tourism, Regional development, Daily life, Southern Chile.

JEL Codes: R4; Z1; Z3

Resumen

En el marco de los estudios ferroviarios, una de las aristas más relevantes a nivel global dice relación con su versatilidad como un dispositivo de transporte prioritario en la agenda pública y con ciertas características patrimoniales y turísticas. Esta potencialidad cultural del ferrocarril se extrapola a la

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realidad nacional y lo transforma en un objeto de estudio en movimiento con una histórica tradición social. A partir de un enfoque metodológico cuantitativo, exploratorio y no experimental (n=346), la presente investigación tiene por objetivo describir las motivaciones y condiciones de uso del ferrocarril en la vida cotidiana no metropolitana de la zona centro sur, considerando las prácticas de desplazamiento y la cultura ferroviaria de usuarios de los servicios de pasajeros Talcahuano-Laja (n=146) y Victoria-Temuco (n=200). Dentro de los resultados, destaca una evaluación mayoritariamente positiva a nivel de comodidad, eficiencia, economía y arraigo en la memoria social de los territorios, no obstante, existen nodos críticos en cuanto a la cobertura y la demanda de este en las pequeñas ciudades y localidades de ambas regiones. Se concluye que el ferrocarril trasciende su funcionalidad como medio de transporte, para instalarse como un elemento fundamental en la identidad local de las zonas pesquisadas.

Palabras clave: Transporte ferroviario, Turismo cultural, Desarrollo regional, Vida cotidiana, Sur de Chile.

JEL Codes: Z1; Z3

1. INTRODUCTION

The insertion of railroads in Chile dates back to the mid-19th century, at the height of industrial development in Europe and North America (Bogart et al., 2022; Harvey, 2020; Hodgson, 2018), which gradually expanded throughout the Southern Cone of the American continent (Kuntz, 2015; Tartarini et al., 2017), where the national territory was not exempt from the apogee of railroads at the global level. Thus, in 1851 the first stretch of railroad was inaugurated in the north of the country, specifically in the city of Caldera. This service was central to the transportation of minerals, which at that time were the pillar of the nation's economic sustenance. The geography of the territory, long and narrow, became substantial for the railroad to impose itself as a fundamental means of transportation for the transfer of objects and people, as well as in the generation of routes and itineraries (Pizzi & Valenzuela, 2019; Moraga, 2009; Castillo & Mardones, 2021).

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, this device positioned itself as the main means of transportation in Chile, but also added roles to its mobile condition, for example, the creation of human settlements, national surveillance and territorial sovereignty, a process that extended from north to south as the railroad advanced through places that at the time were considered untamed by the authorities of the time.

Considering the above, the research focuses on two railroad services in the Central South zone of Chile, namely, *Tren Laja-Talcahuano* (TLT) and *Tren Victoria-Temuco* (TVT). Both services are subsidized by the Chilean Government, are subsidiaries of *Empresa Ferrocarriles del Estado* (EFE) and are characterized -beyond offering public transportation to the general public- for fulfilling a social role in providing access and connectivity to the inhabitants of small towns in the regions under study. By way of background linked to trips, during 2019 (pre-pandemic) for the TLT service 421,000 trips were made and for the TVT service 455,000 trips were made (EFE, 2019).

The choice of both services is based on two main reasons. The first is due to the relevant role played by this means of transport in the territorial conformation of the study regions (Marín, 1901; Leiva & Díaz, 2020; Master, 2022; Verniory, 2005), encouraging tourism-patrimonial dynamics and territorial planning. The second reason responds to the role of the railroad in shaping the landscape, where geographical, architectural and anthropological elements have given life to multiple activities, trades and ways of life in the Central South zone of Chile (Guerrero, 2017; Riquelme, 2017).

In particular, the research accounts for the railway heritage in movement in close relation to the experiences of daily mobility, memories and territories of the Biobío and Araucanía regions. Railway heritage in movement is understood not only as the movement of objects, technologies, ideas and people in railway devices of historical character and with high relevance but also refers to a heritage influenced both by the historical conditions of the territories where they are inserted, as well as by the memories and experiences of mobility of its users and workers.

In Biobío, the Laja-Talcahuano service has been in operation since 2008, and, as EFE (s/f) points out, in a stretch of 88 kilometers it interconnects Talcahuano, Hualpén, Concepción Chiguayante,

Hualqui, San Rosendo and Laja, as well as stops and localities such as Mercado de Talcahuano, El Arenal and Laja, as well as stops and localities such as Mercado de Talcahuano, El Arenal, Las Higueras, Los Cóndores, UTF Santa María, Lorenzo Arenas, Pedro Medina, Manquimávida, La Leonera, Quilacoya, San Miguel, Unihue, Valle Chanco, Los Acacios, Talcamávida, Gomero and Buenuraqui.

In La Araucanía, as EFE (s/f) points out, the railroad connects the communes of Victoria, Lautaro and Temuco in 65 kilometers and an approximate one-and-a-half-hour trip from end to end, without neglecting the small towns surrounding these three communes. In short, the service links Victoria, Púa, Perquenco, Quillem, Lautaro, Lautaro Centro, Pillanlelbún, Instituto Claret (exclusive service for students of this institution) and Temuco. This service has been in operation since 2006, and its central role is to collaborate in the accessibility of those inhabitants of communes without greater connectivity with the regional capital and smaller intermediate cities. As a hypothesis, it is proposed that railway heritage and cultural tourism are fundamental for social cohesion and the development of local identity in the territories, generating social life from the passenger services available. However, the nostalgic and romantic discourse of the railway is in tension with the current material needs of access and connectivity of the non-metropolitan and rural population of the surveyed territories.

The article is framed in heritage studies. There is a significant academic gap at the local level, with respect to information between the forms and reasons for the use of the railway in current times and the academic responsibility on the subject. In this sense, a research vacuum is generated, leaving adrift important information that can contribute to improving the quality of life of users; develop lines of action and promote the care of railway heritage.

The questions that guide the research are: what are the motivations and conditions of use of the railway in the daily life of users in the south-central area? What are your journeys like and what do you understand about railway culture? The cause-effect hypothesis put forward is as follows: as the railway strengthens in terms of circulation and flow, the greater the link with the territory, the development of sustainable tourism and the strengthening of the historical memory of the territories.

The article is composed of four sections, in addition to the introduction. In the first part, it presents a theoretical discussion on railway heritage and its cultural and social derivations. Secondly, it describes the methodological approach and its ethical and operational procedures. Third, it presents the most significant results of the quantitative study carried out in both regions, as well as their respective discussion. Finally, it provides conclusions to analyze the impact of the railway heritage from the passenger services studied, considering critical nodes, challenges and opportunities.

2. THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Tangible and intangible heritage railway

Within the framework of railway heritage studies, there are two perspectives that have prevailed at the time of researching its epistemological path in the national context. On the one hand, there are studies that, focused on material issues, highlight residual aspects of industrial heritage, embodying what is commonly understood as railway heritage (Gilabert, 2017; Sang, et al., 2022; Romero, et al., 2022; Torres, 2013); Arboit et al., 2025), where elements of railway infrastructure such as stations, trains, railways, among others, are analyzed in relation to the landscape, territorial dynamics and urban and rural planning.

On the other hand, research that emphasizes the experiences and emotions of people who during their life cycle have been strongly influenced by the railroad as an interurban object that transcends the purely transportation related. This perspective delves into the immaterial elements of rail transport, accounting for perceptions, memories and social ties of rail users and workers (Alliende, 2001; Navarrete & Cerda, 2021; Riquelme & Oyarce, 2019). At the same time, mobility is intrinsically linked to the development of the railway in local identity, constituting a novel object of study for conceptual development under the new paradigm of mobility (Urry, 2002), especially because of the social, cultural and economic connotation that this device has in global societies. The study of railway heritage in movement is claimed as an experience that invites to reconsider those social actors that in this XXI century use forms of mobility with high identity charge, allowing to investigate the past, present and future of the cultural, economic and social dynamics of the railway (Riquelme et al.,

2020).

Thus, railway mobilities invite to consider historical elements and human geography, interrelating mobility experiences with the development of the national railway heritage (Castillo & Mardones, 2021; Guajardo, 2014; Vickerman, 2018), as well as the existence of a reconfiguration in territorial and spatial aspects from the operation of the railroad, since it is conceived as a central vector of routes, itineraries and creation of human settlements in the national territory.

According to Guajardo (2008), from 1850 to 1920, railroads in Chile reached their peak and then gradually stagnated because of the consolidation of automotive transport. As milestones, the following stand out: 1. beginning of the first railroad stretches in the north to transport minerals, with a preponderance of private companies, 2. development of railroad transportation in the central zone to connect with the northern zone and project development in the south. At this stage, it is worth highlighting the role of the State as a promoter of the lines through the creation of the *Empresa Ferrocarriles del Estado* (EFE) and 3. the role of the private sector as a leading agent in the economic development of mining in the north, where the State began to play a greater role in the second decade of the 20th century (Guajardo, 2008).

It is worth highlighting that at the end of the 20th century the passenger railroad begins to decline nationally due to factors such as the rise of other means of transportation, the disinterest of the authorities of the time in rail service, the privatization of transportation, the concession of the few existing rail services and the dismantling of the railroad (Alliende, 2001; Guajardo, 2008; Ibarra, 2019; Leiva & Díaz 2020; Larroulet, 2021; Riquelme & Oyarce, 2019).

2.2. Railway situation

The railroad also possesses a socio-spatial interscalar relationship, intermediate cities can be considered promoters of connection between the rural and the urban (Morales & Maturana, 2019), but beyond regional capitals as iconic cases of this type of cities at the national level, it is also interesting to understand how territories blur the classic distinctions between rural and urban based on people's rail travel experiences, which tend to be imbued with highly dynamic spatiotemporal transitions. Likewise, the role of the railroad for the development of small cities, which are a focus of high vacancy at the national level, cannot be ignored (Maturana & Rojas, 2015), and which does not necessarily involve connectivity aspects, but also qualitative issues in relation to the railroad for the development of the social life of its inhabitants (Leiva & Díaz, 2020; Peters, 2024). In recent years, in the national context, railroads have emerged as promoters of access to intermediate cities for the population living in small cities and mostly from precarious socioeconomic strata, often becoming the only transportation device available to carry out their daily activities (Riquelme & Lazo, 2019).

Thus, it is of interest not only to understand how people move by rail, but also why they move, which will make it possible to interrelate the material and immaterial elements of railroads, the historical memory of displacements, the experiences of mobility and the interurban specificities that make up what has been called the railway heritage in movement.

As stated by recent research (Leiva & Díaz, 2020; Riquelme et al., 2020), the railroad constitutes a central element in the conformation of the landscape -which is understood from the historical, natural, geographical and cultural components, which burst into the transformation of the territories in order to generate social and economic development for the benefit of its inhabitants (León, 2020)-, especially because from the late nineteenth century to the present it stood as a propellant of connectivity, trade, state surveillance, tourism and identity construction (Alliende, 2001; Guajardo, 2007; Riquelme et al. 2020).

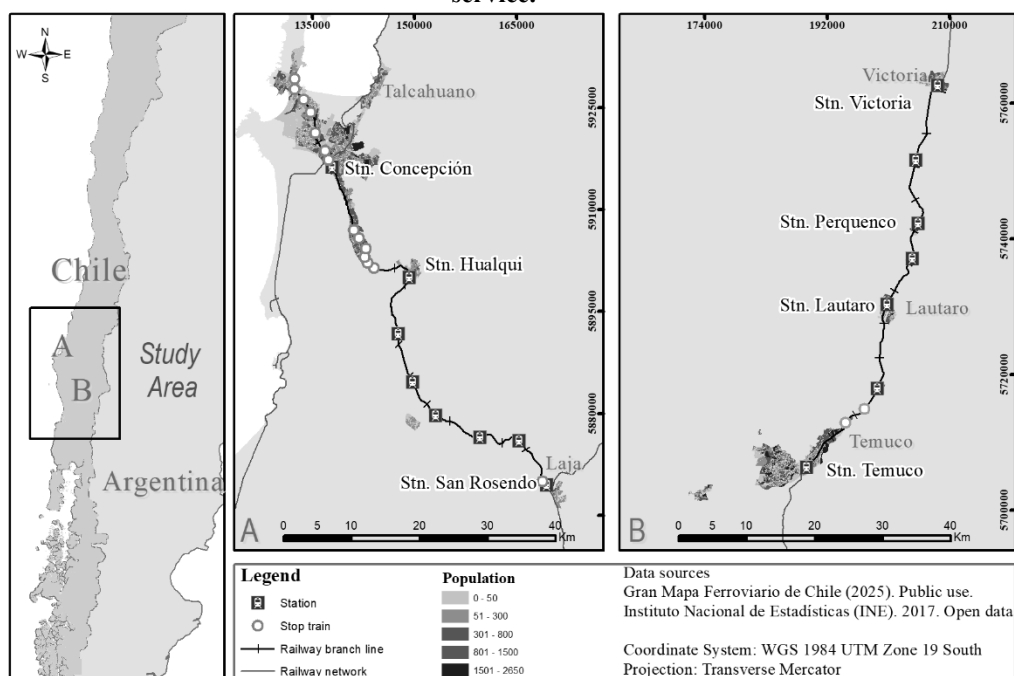
Due to the above, railroads have an immense diversity of theoretical constructions that allow their understanding in different historical moments, which range from the purely patrimonial, political needs and their impact on cultural development, as well as the current mobility needs of the population (Sang et al., 2020; Alliende, 2001, Guajardo, 2007). This versatility positions it as an interurban object highly valued in contemporary scientific and political spheres.

3. METHODOLOGY

Araucanía and Biobío are two regions of south-central Chile. The capitals of both regions are Concepción (Biobío) and Temuco (Araucanía). The Biobío region has Ñuble as its northern limit and Araucanía as its southern limit. The number of inhabitants is 1,556,805 (CENSO, 2017), and the multidimensional poverty level reaches the figure of 14.1% (CASEN, 2022). Regarding La Araucanía, it is bordered to the north by Biobío and to the south by Los Ríos. The number of inhabitants is 957,224 (CENSO, 2017), and its multidimensional poverty is equivalent to 19.8% (CASEN, 2022).

Regarding the spatial location of the railway services, (Figure 1), the GIS environment of ArcGIS Desktop 10.8.2 software was used for cartographic creation. The spatial inputs used were: 1) the database of stations and stops obtained from the *Gran Mapa Ferroviario de Chile* at scale 1:250,000; 2) the railroad tracks from the *Sistema Integrado de Información Territorial* at scale 1:250,000, and 3) the information on blocks and population data obtained from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas* (National Institute of Statistics). For the population mapping, relational processes were employed between the census block cartographic bases and the 2017 census data.

Figure 1: Railway services. On the left Laja-Talcahuano service, and on the right Victoria-Temuco service.



Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of rail routes (Figure 1), there are currently two passenger services in Biobío: Concepción-Coronel and the Laja-Talcahuano train. Similarly, two services operate in the Araucanía, namely the Victoria-Temuco train and the Pitrufquén-Temuco train. All these services are controlled by *Empresa Ferrocarriles del Estado* (EFE).

Using a quantitative methodological approach, a non-experimental and exploratory design (Hernández & Baptista, 2014), the research focused, on the one hand, on the Laja-Talcahuano service, which according to EFE (s.f.) in 2022 made about 500,000 trips and, on the other hand, the Victoria-Temuco service, which in 2022, according to EFE (s.f.) made 476,000 services. Data collection was carried out in the winter and spring of 2024/2025.

Following Hernández (2021), a non-probabilistic purposive sampling method was used. Participants were selected based on criteria related to railway use and their residence in the regions at the time the questionnaire was administered. The age range of the participants was 18–73, and gender was distributed as evenly as possible to promote equity.

A preliminary test was conducted with 30 rail users to refine the instrument. The test revealed no significant deficiencies. This test was carried out on the Laja-Talcahuano service in May 2024. Subsequently, the official questionnaire was administered during the periods of June to August 2024 and from November 2024 to February 2025. The instrument was administered during train journeys,

with prior formal authorization from EFE (Chilean State Railways). The average response time was three minutes per participant.

A travel questionnaire was applied to users of both services, which was carried out while rail users were traveling on one of the routes. The questionnaire, prepared by professionals in the social sciences and urban planning, contained 16 questions that were subdivided into Likert, dichotomous, rank-ordered and short open-ended questions. The questionnaire was validated by expert judgment and previously tested on a group of passengers of the Araucanía railway service. In analytical terms, SPSS software was used to carry out descriptive, correlational and pivot table studies. It should be noted that no specific associative tests (Mann-Whitney or Cronbach's Alpha) were performed; instead, descriptive analyses at the frequency level were prioritized, yielding distributions of central tendency. Frequencies were obtained for selected variables (see results section).

In relation to the sample size, the instrument was applied to 346 users, whose total is broken down into 200 participants in Araucanía and 146 in Biobío. The sociodemographic generalities of the participants are reflected in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Variables sociodemographic	Biobío	Araucanía
Place of residence	Laja 26%	Victoria 37%
	San Rosendo 6%	Perquenco 8%
	Hualqui 18%	Lautaro 22%
	Chiguayante 10%	Pillanlelún 2%
	Concepción 16%	Vilcún 1%
	Coronel 6%	Temuco 26%
	Talcahuano 5%	Padre las Casas 4%
	Los Ángeles 4%	
	San Pedro de la Paz 7%	
	Penco 2%	
Gender	Male 45%	Male 41%
	Female 55%	Female 59%
Age range	18-24 36%	18-24 24%
	25-34 20%	25-34 23%
	35-44 14%	35-44 18%
	45-54 12%	45-54 14%
	55 or older 18%	55 or older 21%
Trade or profession	Student 33%	Student 27%
	Businessman 6%	Businessman 8%
	Public servant 3%	Public servant 5%
	Worker 14%	Worker 24%
	Housewife 13%	Housewife 17%
	Graduate 31%	Graduate 19%
	Old-age pensioner 1%	Old-age pensioner 4%
Civil status	Married 20%	Married 34%
	Single 73%	Single 54%
	Divorced 4%	Divorced 2%
	Widower 2%	Widower 6%

Source: own elaboration.

The instrument was designed to explore the motivations and conditions of railroad use in daily life by surveying users who met certain inclusion requirements, such as residing in one of the two study regions, using the railroad for reasons related to work, study, leisure or care activities, and using the railroad as a fundamental means of transportation for six months or more.

With respect to the dimensions of analysis, two variables were operationalized, namely, 1. Rail travel and services, defined by the economic and social factors that have an impact on mobility by train and from the train. 2. Railway culture: composed of the relationship between the individual and the means of transport in a cultural, social and economic space influenced by the role of the railroad in the development of daily activities. The project has the support of the Ethics Committee of the university

where the lead researcher works. Through document No. CEC 05-24, the Committee approved the application of the survey because: 1. The study does not violate the dignity of the participants involved, ensures their right to anonymity, and guarantees the protection of data confidentiality. 2. The study adheres to the principles of respect for Human Rights, guaranteeing this in the procedures, methodologies, and research processes. 3. The research protocol conforms to ethical standards and is consistent with the precepts contained in the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, as well as the Declaration of Helsinki, and the project complied with the ethical regulations specific to the discipline under study. Finally, within the ethical aspects, it should be noted that there was no economic compensation for participating in the research, and the sample data was treated anonymously.

Table 2 Summary

Design	Non experimental and exploratory
Quantitative sampling	Non probabilistic for convenience
Instrument	Railway survey
Ethical aspects	N SEC 05-24

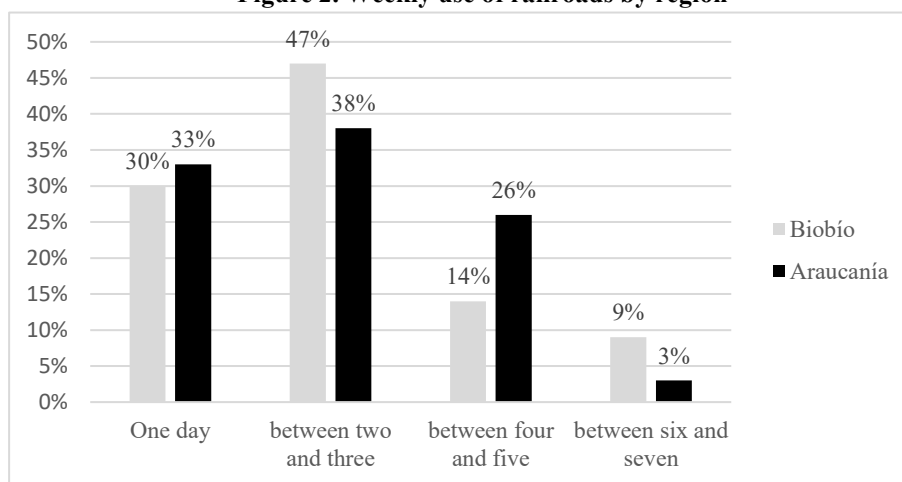
Source: own elaboration.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Commuting and rail services

In order to determine the weekly use made by users of both services, Figure 2 shows the distribution by days of rail use. The results show that, in general, the sample opts for the option "between two and three" days of use. Following this choice, at the regional level, Biobío users show a greater preference for the option "between two and three" days (47%) and "one day" (30%). Users of the Araucanía service also opt for the options "between two and three" (38%) and "one day" (33%). Finally, the option "between six and seven" shows the lowest number of preferences, with 9% for Biobío and 3% for Araucanía.

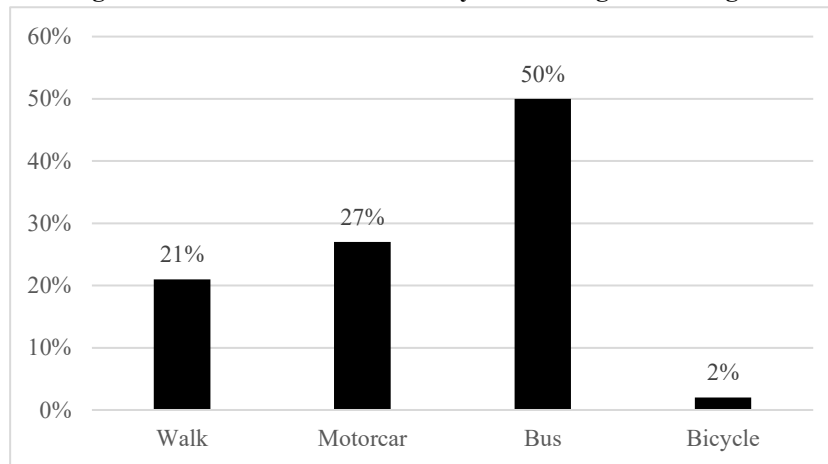
Figure 2. Weekly use of railroads by region



Source: own elaboration

Regarding the amount of weekly use, the choice of intermediate options correlates with time availability factors, which are certainly identified with a low level of passenger service supply by users, since 70% of the total sample would like to have more services available. Similarly, among users who use the service between two and five times a week, 90% of the total in Biobío and 94% in Araucanía consider that the service is comfortable and would be willing to increase the frequency of use if they had a greater offer of services according to their personal schedules.

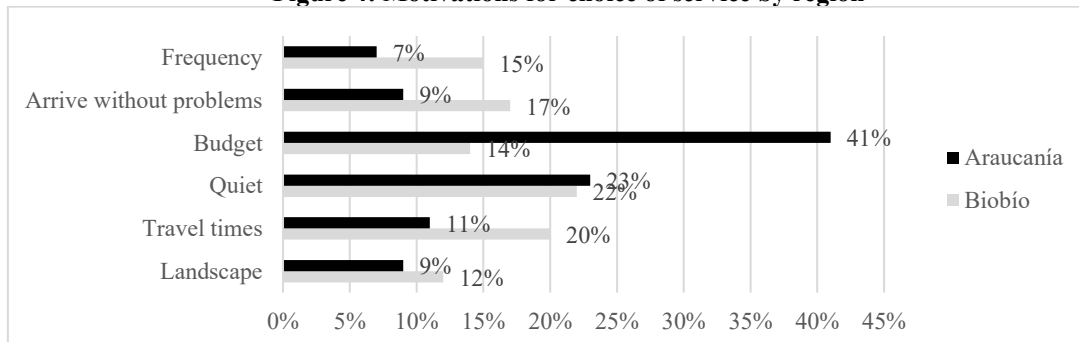
Figure 3. Alternative means of daily commuting in both regions



Source: own elaboration.

Regarding the alternative form of commuting to the railroad, it is observed that both regions coincided in the type of public or private transportation used, with a percentage difference of less than 3% per option. In Figure 3, local and interurban buses stand out (50%) as an intermodal transportation mechanism, as a means of transportation between the place of residence and work or studies. In second place, the "motorcar" (27%) emerges as a device used for personal and family transportation, with daily use associated with all daily activities. In third place, "walk" (21%) mainly involves short-distance trips that involve a connection with a longer-distance transport device such as the railroad. Of the total number of respondents, 92% say that pedestrian travel (or walking) is developed to connect places of work, study and residence with train stops. Finally, the "bicycle" option emerges with 2% of the total.

Figure 4: Motivations for choice of service by region

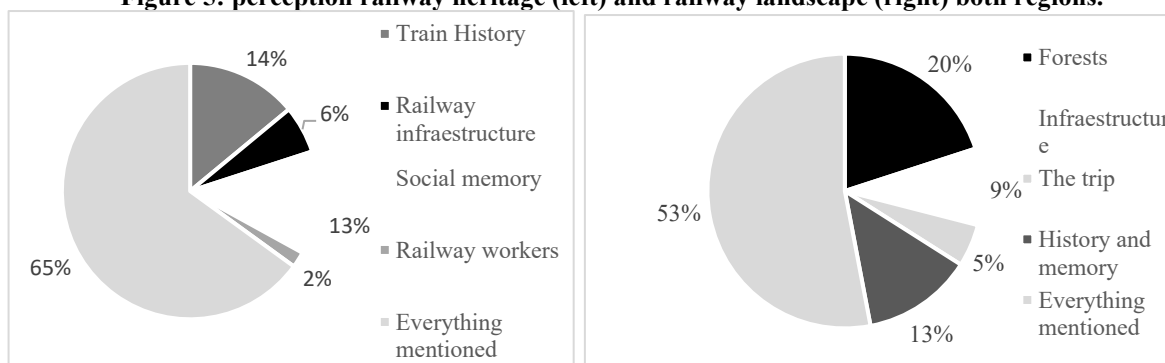


Source: Own elaboration.

In relation to the reason for using the railroad by region, Figure 4 shows six preferences. While Biobío presents a relatively homogeneous dispersion by option (with a higher percentage of preference for the "quiet" option with 22% of the total), La Araucanía concentrates a higher percentage preference for the "budget" option (41%), which is highly valued by users in small towns who see the railroad as an affordable means of transportation and essential in their daily lives because it has stops in the vicinity of their place of residence. It should be noted that 74% of the surveyed users in La Araucanía reside in small or intermediate cities, which have benefited from the public subsidy to the value of the train fare. Regarding the critical nodes, the timetable continues to be an impediment to greater use of the railroad. Of the total number of respondents, 82% indicated that without the train service it would be very difficult to leave their place of residence to other cities.

4.2 Railway Culture

With the objective of knowing how users identify or with what they associate concepts such as railway heritage and landscape, Figure 6 presents variables linked to both concepts.

Figure 5: perception railway heritage (left) and railway landscape (right) both regions.


Source: own elaboration.

In both regions the responses were similar, highlighting the concept of railway heritage variables such as "train history" (14%), "social memory" (13%), "railway infrastructure" (6%) and "railway workers" (2%). Regarding the railway landscape concept, options such as "forests" (20%), "history and memory" (13%), "infrastructure" (9%) and "the trip" (5%), cover the preferred options. However, in both questions the option "everything mentioned" presented an absolute majority. Regarding railway heritage, the response options are in line with the material and immaterial possibility of the railway, as a residue of the industrial heritage. Linked to the railway landscape, there is a perspective centered on the linear observation of the traveler in times of travel, subordinated to the images and sensations of mobility. The level of responses implies considering the railway heritage as the conjunction of elements linked to material (railway infrastructure) and immaterial aspects (railway workers, social memory, traveling by train, forests surrounding the railway line and history).

Table 3. Railway appreciation by region

Araucanía	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On my train rides I have met people and bonded with other passengers.	13%	44%	15%	6%	22%
I feel that the train is very important for the identity and culture of the city where I live.	79%	15%	4%	2%	-
I have friends and relatives who work or have worked on the train.	16%	9%	3%	2%	70%
I think that passenger services should connect more cities in the region.	96%	4%	-	-	-
When I travel by train my memory and family memories are activated.	66%	8%	7%	2%	17%
I think that the train helps small towns to be better connected to the regional capital.	95%	5%			
Biobío	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On my train rides I have met people and bonded with other passengers.	16%	32%	15%	14%	23%
I feel that the train is very important for the identity and culture of the city where I live.	76%	20%	2%	1%	1%
I have friends and family members who work or have worked on the train.	15%	18%	1%	12%	54%
I think that passenger services should connect more cities in the region.	92%	7%	1%	-	-
When I travel by train my memory and family memories are activated.	55%	18%	13%	7%	7%
I think that the train helps small towns to be better connected to the regional capital.	91%	7%	2%	-	-

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the railway appreciation linked to the individual-train relationship in daily life, Table 3 highlights the relevance of the train in connecting intermediate and small cities with Temuco and Concepción respectively (statement 5), the need to connect larger intermediate cities with each other (statement 4) and the relevance of the train for the culture and identity of the cities in the regions (statement 2). From the statements and the responses on a Likert scale, the train is a central element in variables such as identity, human networks, connectivity and social memory. Over 65% of the total sample related the railroad in positive terms with each of the variables mentioned, generating a significant correlation. In terms of differences, in Araucanía there is a greater number of users who have friends or relatives who work or worked at EFE (70%), which implies 14% more than in Biobío. The rest of the values and preferences are relatively homogeneous, with percentage changes that do not exceed 10% per option between regions.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings and by way of a discussion of the results, there are three aspects related to the objective of the research. First, there is a profound need for public transportation in small and medium-sized cities in the study areas. The rail services surveyed connect the urban and the rural, blurring static views of the territories and providing new approaches to landscape and rail travel (Romero et al. 2022; Peters, 2024; Harvey, 2020). The results indicate that the impact of the railroad on the daily lives of users transcends its use (travel itself), evoking intimate aspects of people's social lives such as identity, memories and social ties (see Table 3). Each of these aspects is linked to the role of the railroad as a foundational landmark of some of today's cities, but also as a disseminator of cultural, social and economic relations, which allowed the construction of customs and traditions of the territories. It is not by chance that more than one hundred years after its foundation in both regions, it is still alive and present in the memory of the participants, which in the light of the results persists as a mobile device with wide recognition.

Secondly, the impact of the railroad on the landscape and the memory of the territories is observed. In a relatively young country like Chile, with little more than two hundred years of existence, the train is not only a conventional means of transportation (Riquelme et al., 2020; Leiva & Diaz, 2020), rather it synthesizes urban planning, territorial sovereignty and cultural development. In view of the results, passengers of both services perceive the train as a fundamental device for connectivity (especially in small cities) but also as an object with a high symbolic charge (see Figure 5 and Table 3), which ultimately forms part of the local visual landscape. The railroad is seen as a means of transportation that preserves the history of the territories, but due to the suspension and suppression of passenger services experienced by the railroad transportation network in the eighties and nineties, as collateral damage, the cities experienced stagnation, deterioration and abandonment, that is, as the train stopped its services, the inhabitants lost social links and connection with the rest of the territories. This undoubtedly influenced areas that were not addressed by the research but that do explain the phenomenon of the gradual disappearance of the railroad, such as internal migration, poverty and socio-spatial exclusion, problems that the inhabitants of small cities, which in the near past depended on the railroad as a means of connection with the local and national reality, have constantly experienced. Thirdly, the role of the railroad in the promotion, visibility and socio-spatial inclusion of small and medium-sized cities emerges, as spaces historically lagging in territorial development (Morales & Maturana, 2019).

This reality implies considering the railroad as an object that transcends its role as a promoter of displacement to become a promoter of significant social practices of the history and memory of the territories. The need to connect cities through transportation devices with heritage characteristics implies rethinking traditional modes of transportation, which are currently developed with a hegemony linked to time optimization (Urry, 2002). As can be seen in Table 3, the railroad is a device with a strong social role, sustainable and rooted in the memory of the inhabitants. This particularity typical of the territories of the Central South zone of Chile, becomes a challenge for the governments in office, especially because atypical values of modernity converge in the trains, which are related to local culture over the global era; slow travel rhythms over accelerated metropolitan rhythms, railway travel atmospheres that invite dialogue as opposed to the emergence of non-places (Augé, 2017) or intermodality, where anonymity is central.

It is necessary to link the results of the research with the strengthening of the mobility infrastructure available in both regions. While there is an expanding rail network, Intermodal transport available remains deficient, especially in small towns. When planning interurban mobility, it is relevant to consider the ways of life of the population which in this case respond to a context of high social inequality and multidimensional poverty. The right to mobility implies social equity, and the social role of the railway is central, but it is currently in a state of low coverage in relation to the daily travel needs of its users. Additionally, many users express concern about the lack of transportation options between their homes and the stations, especially women, children, and the elderly, who perceive insecurity and poor road conditions.

While the results do not imply a longitudinal view, the collection of data at a specific moment allows us to capture the perceptions of the sample regarding the relevance of the train in their daily lives, which undoubtedly makes it pertinent to delve deeper in the future through the application of in-depth interviews that allow us to explore how they experience the journey and the importance that the train has in people's social lives.

It is important to highlight that lifestyles in both regions share significant similarities with non-metropolitan lifestyles. In both cases, service users share similar opinions about the railway, so quantitatively there are no major differences in terms of needs, aspirations, and life stories, which, according to the results, converge in the type of response. However, the Victoria-Temuco service involves a journey with fewer stops and less congestion, offering a less urban travel environment.

In summary, the results of exploratory cut granted by the present research become substantial to measure the conditions and motives of use of a means of heritage transport, delivering a wide battery of variables (memory, identity, connectivity, social ties, territoriality, railway history, cultural tourism), which may be of interest to be complemented with future qualitative or mixed research both by the research team of the present project, as well as by other researchers and researchers interested in the becoming of industrial heritage and its railway derivation in the XXI century.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The passenger services analyzed, in general terms, are positively valued by their users, despite the need to increase services, coverage and improve travel times. The positive assessment implies the association of the railroad, as a device rooted in local culture, with territorial connection, identity and social memory. Each of these variables is supported by the construction of the railway heritage as a central axis in the socio-territorial promotion of regional capitals and their small towns, which still, and despite its lethargic reinvention, see the train as a central means of transport linked to the development of the territories. The hypothesis is proven, since the railway is a central element in the promotion of identity, recovery of memory and a vector of mobility for the inhabitants of the regions. In terms of concrete impact on public policy, the railway allows for work in two specific areas. On the one hand, there is the promotion of historical memory, focusing on the railway's role in the creation of cities and how this cultural wealth can be absorbed by educational and scientific fields. On the other hand, in the transportation sector, it would be relevant to advance the potential of the railway as a sustainable transportation mechanism. Undoubtedly, this latter aspect requires significant public investment over the medium term.

In both regions studied, medium and small cities are interrelated by means of passenger train services and are a present example of the relevance of the train not only as a fundamental means of public transportation for the accessibility of the population, but also preserving the railway material heritage tradition, although with an evident state of neglect by the governments in power. The train services surveyed constitute relevant parts of the supply of passenger railroads available at the national level and, in some way, supply in their respective territories the demand for greater access to services and goods. The train can become a promoter of socio-territorial equity, and the results of this research indicate the high appreciation and loyalty of citizens to this means of transportation, which is a relevant indicator to consider public policies related to transportation, tourism and urbanism. Based on this reality, and considering the results, the research hypothesis is proven, since the railroad continues to generate social ties, revitalization of memory and recovery of local identity from the railroad. Likewise, the results allow us to characterize sociodemographic the users of both services as inhabitants of small towns and intermediate cities, without major public transport networks available to go to their

places of frequentation.

As a challenge, the results of the research open a crossroads regarding the need for the train in current times. In Chile, during the last decades, the dismantling of the railroads implied a substantial withdrawal of passenger train services, which had a profound impact on the loss of connectivity, cultural tourism and social development of the territories. Although recent governments have managed to give a second wind to this means of transport through the injection of resources and cultural initiatives, it is still pending to revitalize the railroads as moving heritage and tourist devices. As the results of this research indicate, the train is not just one more means of transportation in the long list of existing conventional means of transportation, but rather it is part of the cultural construction of the territories. This double function of the railroad (transport and heritage and tourist character in movement) implies a particular treatment in its problematization phase and presentation of results, where its users are a key piece in the promotion of this heritage typology, since they are protagonists in the processes of revitalization, recovery and activation of the portentous railway infrastructure, even more, when it is an interurban object that is capable of interpreting the history of the territories.

Finally, it opens the possibility to continue investigating the role of railway heritage in current times, leaving as a challenge both for the research team of this project and for those researchers interested in the subject, aspects such as the role of public policy in the treatment of railway heritage in its various artistic and scientific manifestations; the abandonment of railway infrastructure in non-metropolitan territories; the practices of interurban railway mobility in non-metropolitan contexts or the role of social memory in the revitalization of railway heritage and sustainable tourism, which although they were treated, can be deepened through other techniques, procedures or research approaches. The railroad, along with opening roads in a past Chile, in the country of the present requires to be studied or analyzed through the voice of the various social actors who use it to travel, move and move but also from the reasons for use, which are diverse and specific to each territory.

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