

# The tourist semiosis of lake landscapes through aesthetics and “performativities”

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**Abstract:** We used Semiotics to more closely examine visual representations of lake landscapes and corporeal “performativities”, specifically employing type/token distinction, a remarkable feature of the sign model by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Thus, the core goal was to address the following question from a southern empirical semiotic lab, Mirim Lagoon (Brazil/Uruguay): How do tourists and leisure-seekers encounter lake landscapes and make sense of them in aesthetic and performative terms? We applied a qualitative methodological approach based on visual and textual information, followed by interpretational analysis informed by type/token distinctions and complementarity. Visitors engage with lake landscapes visually, corporeally, and performatively regarding the materiality of these “vacationscapes”. The collective gaze complements and confronts conservative observation at these landscapes, still focused on Romanticism. After providing advances in our current comprehension of these inter-related phenomena, we raise some questions for further examination, together with practical implications.

**Keywords:** Lake landscapes; Peircean Semiotics; Aesthetics; Performance; Mirim Lagoon

## La semiosis turística de los paisajes lacustres a través de la estética y las performatividades

**Resumen:** Movilizamos la Semiótica para un examen más cercano de las representaciones visuales de paisajes lacustres y las performatividades corporales, específicamente empleando la distinción tipo/token, una característica destacada del modelo de signo de Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Por lo tanto, el objetivo principal fue abordar la siguiente pregunta desde un laboratorio empírico semiótico del Sur, la Laguna Merín (Brasil/Uruguay): ¿Cómo encuentran los turistas y buscadores de ocio los paisajes lacustres y les dan sentido en términos estéticos y performativos? Aplicamos un enfoque metodológico cualitativo basado en información visual y textual, seguido de un análisis interpretativo informado por la distinción y la complementariedad tipo/token. Los visitantes se relacionan con los paisajes lacustres visualmente, corporalmente y performativamente en lo que respecta a la materialidad de estos paisajes vacacionales. La mirada colectiva complementa y se enfrenta a la mirada conservadora de estos paisajes, aún centrada en el Romanticismo. Después de avanzar en la comprensión actual de estos fenómenos interrelacionados, planteamos algunas preguntas para un examen más profundo, acompañadas de implicaciones prácticas.

**Palabras clave:** Paisajes lacustres; Semiótica Peirceana; Estética; Performance; Laguna Merín.

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## 1. Introduction

Tourists consume landscapes during their travels (Scarles, 2004). Despite being pivotal, more than landscape appreciation and representation is needed to comprehend tourist attraction and experience. Practices and performativities, in turn, are essential to apprehend the non-representational nature of such experiences.

Touring is fundamentally a semiotic enterprise (Knudsen et al., 2017). By admitting that, one can consider that Semiotics encompasses both representational and more-than-representational aspects of geographical experiences (see Lorimer, 2005), particularly tourist ones. Calling upon Semiotics may mean articulating visual representations of landscapes, bodily practices, and performativities inseparably.

However, present literature in tourism studies, with few exceptions (see Bell & Hyall, 2008), fails to recognize such an interplay, which could lead to progress toward a complete comprehension of visual, bodily, and mobile connections existent in tourist experiences, regardless of the environment of occurrence. Some tourist practices match with specific sceneries, and at the same time, certain landscapes extend their content of experience to bodily engagements with nature and built environments.

Specifically on lake tourism, existing research is devoted to integrated tools to manage lake resources, in which tourism and recreation are part of the natural system (Cooper, 2006; Hall & Härkönen, 2006). The history of emergent occidental tourism mentions how looking at lakes framed early leisure travelers, specifically in the Lake District, UK (Crawshaw & Urry, 1997). Lakes provide environmental services to humanity; we look at tourism and recreational opportunities.

Tourism pertains to constellations of contemporary mobilities practices, representations, and narratives (see Cresswell, 2010). Frequently associated with static images, landscapes are not a frequent topic in mobilities studies (see Merriman et al., 2008). Additionally, just a few studies on mobilities consider Semiotics (see Jensen, 2013/3014).

Researchers may choose diverse semiotic labs for tourism make-meaning analysis, for instance, urban settings concerning identity-building (see Metro-Roland, 2011). Although landscapes in tourism are highly aesthetic, works on such a dimension are still rare in the field (Knudsen et al., 2015). When one mentions aesthetics, one will likely approach it as a visual quality, although multiple senses are involved.

Nowadays, scholars acknowledge that tourism mobilities are also about gazing and performing (Larsen & Urry, 2011). We utilized lakes to address how the tourist gaze frames landscapes (Potočka, 2013). Lake-viewing is focused as a means of tourist and leisure gaze, either romantic or collective (see Urry, 1990). Concerning the location of the cases studied in the tourism literature until now, Canadian-American border lakes and Scandinavian lakes are the most cited (Cooper & Härkönen, 2006; Konu et al., 2010), and these are all located in the northern hemisphere.

If making meaning of the world implies the mandatory use, exchange, and significance of signs, then Semiotics may be used to comprehend in-depth how tourists conceive and disseminate tourist landscapes, practices, and performativities through their particular and (inter)subjective experiences (see Voase, 2021). Meanwhile, research addressing tourist performativities such as Peircean signs in so-called natural landscapes is also rare (see Ness, 2016).

Semiosis is the process of how interpretative effects are produced in an interpreter's mind (Nöth, 1995). Hence, it may be critical to understand tourism as a complex sociocultural phenomenon that would not occur outside the world of signs. Even the bodily performance of tourism is a way of semiosis. Since tourism is deemed a complex system, merging discourse, materiality, and practice, semiosis becomes a means of doing things, going further through demonstration and utterance, then encompassing presencing and performance (Franklin & Crang, 2001).

Although Semiotic accounts of tourism are not an academic novelty among researchers and practitioners (see Culler, 1981; MacCannell, 1999), there are some aspects that still need to be fully addressed. Many studies in tourism studies adopt only reduced versions of Peirce's sign (Metro-Roland & Kunz, 2019), although recent works have adopted interpretant types from Peirce's framework to study place branding in tourism, for instance (see Sang, 2021).

This paper then attempts to answer the question: How do tourists and leisure-seekers encounter lake landscapes and make sense of them in aesthetic and performative terms? In order to do that, three intermediary objectives were pursued, as follows: to briefly describe historically and geographically the sites elected to be studied; to determine the aesthetic categories underlying tourist (visual) appreciation of lake landscapes; to classify and analyze performative aspects mediating corporeal engagement with lacustrine environments.

We utilized the semiotic distinction of types and tokens, coined by the pragmaticist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914, to address the overall tourist semiosis of the sites of encounter studied. Peirce represents a specific matrix of semiotic thought in the world (Metro-Roland, 2009). Among semiotic tourism studies, the type and token distinction is not frequent. However, it allows assessment of the multiplicity of meanings provided by the same referent object, relevant to semiosis since the object determines limits in which interpretation happens (see Metro-Roland, 2009).

A large lagoon on the Brazil and Uruguay border called Mirim was elected to provide evidence and insight and fill theoretical and empirical gaps identified in this section, initially at a local and regional level. That means endowing tourism Semiotics with aesthetics and performativity facets of experience by incorporating inquiry progresses made so far into the scientific context in an attempt to go further. Besides, we intended to find empirical evidence from the Global South that sustains, distinguishes, or problematizes research findings available employing cases studied in developed countries' social reality since studies on the nature of tourist mobility are still centered around North America and Europe (Hall, 2015).

## 2. Conceptual and theoretical definitions

### 2.1. The role of signs in Peirce

Although MacCannell (1999[1976]) has long employed semiotic notions in tourism studies, it is Culler's (1981) formulation that tourists are "an army of amateur semiotics" in search of a signical decoding of the observed and the experienced. Thus, "All over the world, tourists are engaged in semiotic projects, reading cities, landscapes and cultures as sign systems." (Culler, 1981: 127). Semiotics consists of the study of conditions for meaning creation and signification. The concern is not only about what an object means but also how it means such a thing.

Unlike Saussure's theory of sign, based on Linguistic (signifier-signified dyad), Peirce proposed a triad structure comprised of an object (holds the character of sign's referentiality), a sign (at times treated as a representamen), and an interpretant (Metro-Roland, 2009), recognized as a logical refinement of the notion of interpreter, upon representing the action of the sign to the interpreter (Santaella, 2017). For Peirce (1955), the interpretant can be a thought, a word, or an action.

At first glance, the notion of meaning points to the ideas of sense and reference (Nöth, 1995). However, the Pragmaticist epistemological stance, developed by Peirce (1955), emphasizes the study of signs' meaning concerning their users. Meaning is, hence, the significant effect of signs (Nöth, 1995). According to Barthes (1982), there are connotative and denotative meanings based chiefly on Saussure's early papers. In the Peircean sense, the type can be applied to the denotative meaning and the token to the connotative meaning (Nöth, 1995).

Charles Peirce, seeking to distinguish sign and representamen at some point in his career, assumed that the sign was the token, the concrete element of utterance. In contrast, the representamen was the type "to which a coding convention assigns a certain content by means of certain interpretants." (Eco, 1976: 1460).

The notion of replicas then emerges. "The type-token distinction may influence how the text [written, visual] is interpreted [...] we may only be able to 'see' the original [type] in the light of the judgments shapes by copies or versions of we have encountered." (Chandler, 2003: 48).

### 2.3. Landscape aesthetics and tourism

Through description or evaluation, scenes, situations, and landscapes are evaluated (Löfgren, 1999). Aesthetic judgment, in a tourism context, is treated as tourist judgment: travelers expressing that something is beautiful is a form of a subjective statement that compels the agreement of fellow travelers (Knudsen et al., 2015).

Landscape as a geographical concept can be defined as a visual ideology, as a way of seeing (see Wylie, 2007), which often implies distancing, not always a negative aspect (Wylie, 2017), as the aesthetics of nature needs a disinterested interest (Brady, 2003) on the part of the aesthetic subject. Aesthetic categories value landscapes, have diverse sources of pleasure and act as cognitive components of our Western heritages (Brook, 2019).

The sublime and the picturesque date back centuries and were at the root of the Romantic movement. While both are influential as tourist ideology, the focus here is on Romanticism and the picturesque, as expressions of the visual arts impacting nascent tourist practices. Historically, emergent tourist practices parallel new sensibilities of the environment.

Picturesque art taught the early tourists in the 18th century to gaze at vistas by providing a way to select, frame, and represent several views (Löfgren, 1999). The picturesque contributed to sparking mass tourism in early mountain and coastal destinations, which are parallel phenomena (Boyer, 2003).

The picturesque strikes a balance between the sublime – which testes our limits and offers excitement – and the pastoral – which conveys assurance but can be tedious. Then, it picturesque values variety, complexity, the wild, and the decadent (Brook, 2019; Knudsen et al., 2015). The picturesque did not accept what is too perfect, artificial, or distant from nature (Brook, 2019; Knudsen et al., 2015). It has encouraged a taste for nostalgia, the idyllic, and the rural life, related to the melancholic (Löfgren, 1999), a trait shared with the sublime. The picturesque tends to remove the viewer from the landscape. This category is essentially visual, unlike other categories. The picturesque can be considered a survivor: sometimes ridiculed, constantly redefining itself, but still among us (Löfgren, 1999).

The scenic (as well as the romantic) gaze has conditioned the selections and judgments of tourist attractions and landscapes for at least two centuries, a mechanism that is not always conscious (Löfgren, 1999; see also Gastal, 2013). Urry (1990) is well-known for classifying the tourist gaze, unidirectional from the tourist, towards the objects of interest, as either collective – places that make sense of when viewed by a mass of tourists, such as major cities – or romantic – emphasizing, among other features, solitary contemplation.

#### 2.4. Touristscape: from gaze to performativity

After some time, tourism scholars argued that gazing was just a restrictive way of defining tourism and its personal/collective experiences (Knudsen, Soper e Metro-Roland, 2007). Later, Urry (1990) added to the gazing a performative approach to tourism (Larsen & Urry, 2011).

While tourism is also considered among a constellation of mobile practices (see Adey, 2010), practices should have been addressed in landscape studies (Cresswell, 2002). Leisure and tourism practices sometimes merge (Crouch, 1999), amidst mundane mobilities (Edensor, 2007). In this context, practices and performances recursively produce destinations and tourists (Crang, 2009). Performances are embedded in codes and orient the duplication of landscapes in tourism (Edensor, 2007).

Practices, once articulated, become performances (Crouch, 2004), which demands learning a role to be played (Larsen & Urry, 2011b). One primary influence on performance is the Goffmanian tradition (Jensen, 2013). However, here, performativity is preferable over performance since the former is vested in uncertainty, emergence, and openness (Crouch, 2019). Besides, works articulating landscape and performativity remain rare (Crouch, 2019).

Space meaning-construction requires semiotic insights since signs are not only constructed in visual and mental realms but produced bodily, as well. (Crouch et al., 2001: 264). Human performance is a semiosis variant (Jensen, 2013/2014), “as all signs and meanings are materially situated in the worlds and that the moving human body creates particular challenges and complexities to this ‘mobile sense making’”. (Jensen, 2014: 568).

Tourism can be mainly approached as staged mobility (see Jensen 2013/2014). Staged mobilities are “[...] a process of creating lived mobility practices and the material preconditions to these.” (Jensen, 2013: 5). “‘Staging mobilities’ is about how mobilities and places are coded and valued due to their affordances for social interaction and cultural meaning.” (Jensen, 2014: 567).

Through the staging of embodied social interactions, the Semiotics of mobilities unites mobile practices with physical-material space (Jensen, 2013/2014). Mobilities can be enacted by planners and designers and practiced, or not, in that way by subject-users (Jensen, 2014). “The semiotic systems modify and interact with the human body and sensations as the person moves, and thus affords particular motions, directions, speeds, modes and routes.” (Jensen, 2014, p. 569). Semiotics and sign systems create mobile subjectivities (Jensen, 2014). On one hand, staged mobilities are regimes controlled “from above” with a high degree of self-determination, with scripts and scenographies. On the other hand, staging mobilities are mobile engagements and interactions “from below,” usually acts of mundane resistance, more closely resembling the idea of choreography, and are remarkable features in mobilities (Jensen, 2013/2014). From “below” to “above,” “embodied acts of self-choreography that individuals perform as they create ‘mobilities *in situ*’” (Jensen, 2013: 7).

The model of *in situ* mobilities is due to i) configurations of the physical-material environment, ii) social interactions, and iii) embodied practices (Jensen, 2013). As a result, the search for a mobile view of sites and situations they provide seems legitimate and may not correspond to a fixed point in space and in time but is dynamic and procedural instead (see Jensen, 2013).

### 3. Methodological aspects

Despite a fluid and recursive research design (theoretically and methodologically), Figure 1 schematically presents the main procedures performed and the research criteria we adopted. While the research type and procedures stem from the research question and intermediate goals, the nature and characteristics of the available empirical material on Mirim Lagoon were also initially considered for the research.

In order to achieve goal 1 – to briefly describe historically and geographically the sites elected to be studied – we indicated official data needs, followed by a systematic search on regional databases, to obtain both governmental and scientific foundation regarding the empirical object in an interdisciplinary fashion. The following section summarizes the obtained data concerning the field of study unknown to most Tourism scholars.

Goals 2 and 3 proved far more complex in theoretical and subject terms. Due to this feature, we searched multiple sources of evidence and took diverse steps for analysis and interpretation purposes. Further methodological rationale and description are then required.

We chose the qualitative approach because it emphasizes the subject's role in reconstructing social phenomena for research needs. Meanings, representation, contextualization, and social behavior, as critical components of this research, were suitable to be assessed through a qualitative approach (Yin, 2016), not concerned with statistical representativeness.

In the case study protocol, a script for the semi-standardized interview was formed by four different approaches: episodic, confrontational, photo-elicitation, and projective techniques (Flick, 2009; Yin, 2016), in this research combined in a novel manner. We pursued an *inter-view* stance (Jennings, 2005). Under the influence of the phenomenological framework, the subject's appropriateness and perceptiveness mattered over other kinds of sampling (Seamon, 2000). The intentional sampling seemed to be more suited to the research objectives, and as a result, the interviewed subjects were not only informants but were faced as co-researchers to some extent (Seamon, 2000). The interview thus followed a semi-emergent structure (Jennings, 2005). We pursued a delineation of a relatively heterogeneous group of interviewees. All interviewees signed a term of consent.

Instagram photos were considered instead of other social media due to their overwhelming utilization in Brazil and Uruguay. All photos posted on Instagram during the period of data gathering were included (January & February 2020) – 132 pictures depicting the three sites of encounter. They were retrieved on public mode (non-iterative perspective) and found from the insertion of the locale's name. Their ownership technically belongs to the company Meta.

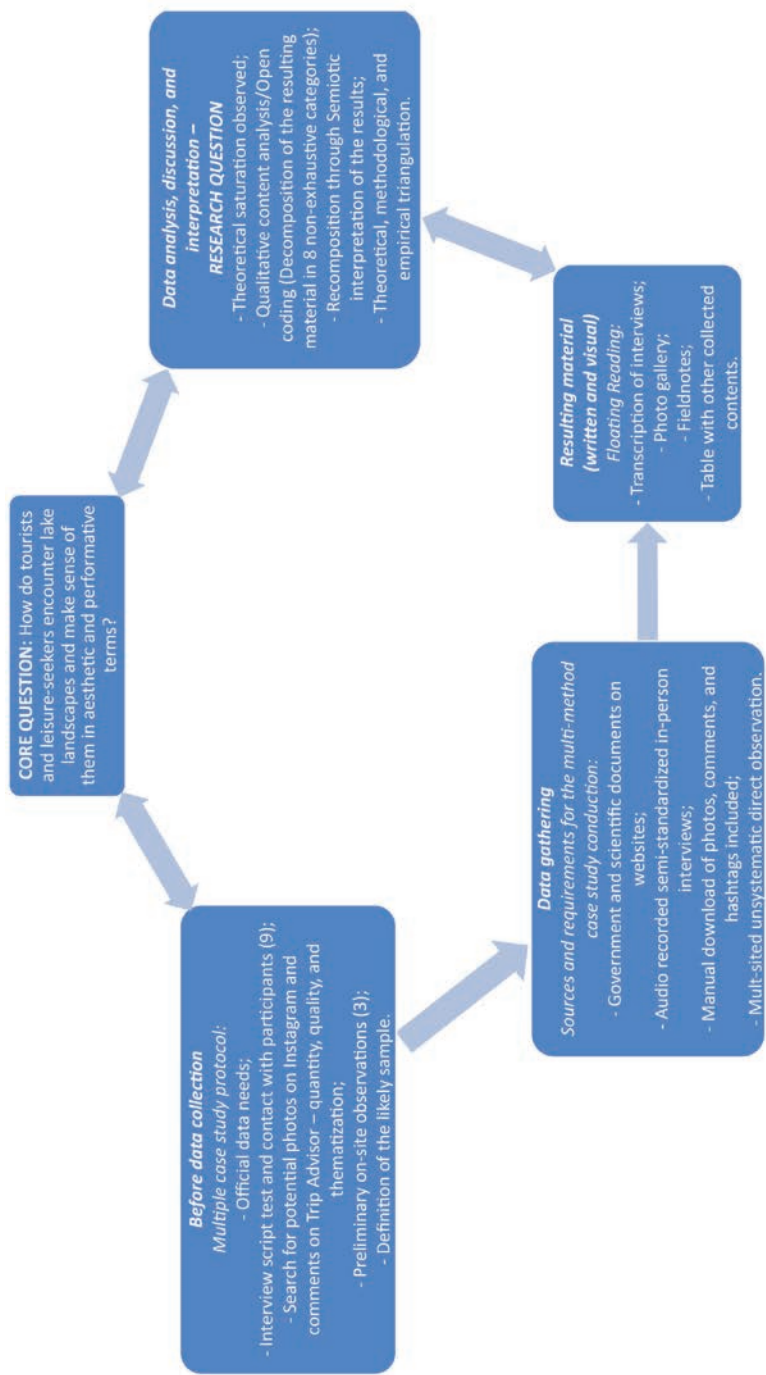
We elected observation since interviews may reveal only the narration of the practice/performance/experience and not their essence and meaning *per se* (Flick, 2009). We employed this technique during the high Summer season in the Southern hemisphere. We did not interview any tourist/leisure-seeker in the field, but their practices and routines were observed instead from predominantly fixed points. Observations ceased as the exhaustion of analytic energy was reached (Yin, 2015) after 15 shifts of fieldwork as a whole. We used a voice recorder to register impressions of the sites and contrast them with theory after the transcription.

The resultant database (phase 3) stems from the initial case study protocol (Yin, 2015). Data registered by transcription constituted a written base for analysis (Jennings, 2005), besides the copied comments on the sites extracted from Trip Advisor: all the textual available on the site (41) – concerning Capilha (BR) e Lago Merin (UY), by the moment of the gathering was included. Hashtags from Instagram, in turn, were analyzed concerning the photo it indicated; thus, the *relais* and anchorage perspective from Barthes (1986) seemed to be appropriate. We compartmentalized photographs under analysis into their constituent objects that made up the landscapes and performativities and the central photographed motifs framed. Saussure's dyadic conception is not the most suitable for analyzing images (Banks, 2009) since it is linguistic-based, unlike the Peircean matrix, conceived in a tryadic manner (see Metro-Roland, 2009).

In qualitative content analysis, promising as a requirement for semiotic analysis (Hall & Vallentin, 2005), a two-step sequence was followed: first and second reduction, according to Flick (2009). The process involved open coding, proceeded by an initial floating reading of the whole material. An interpretational



Figure 1: Synthesis of the design of research conducted vis-à-vis research goals



Source: The authors (2022).

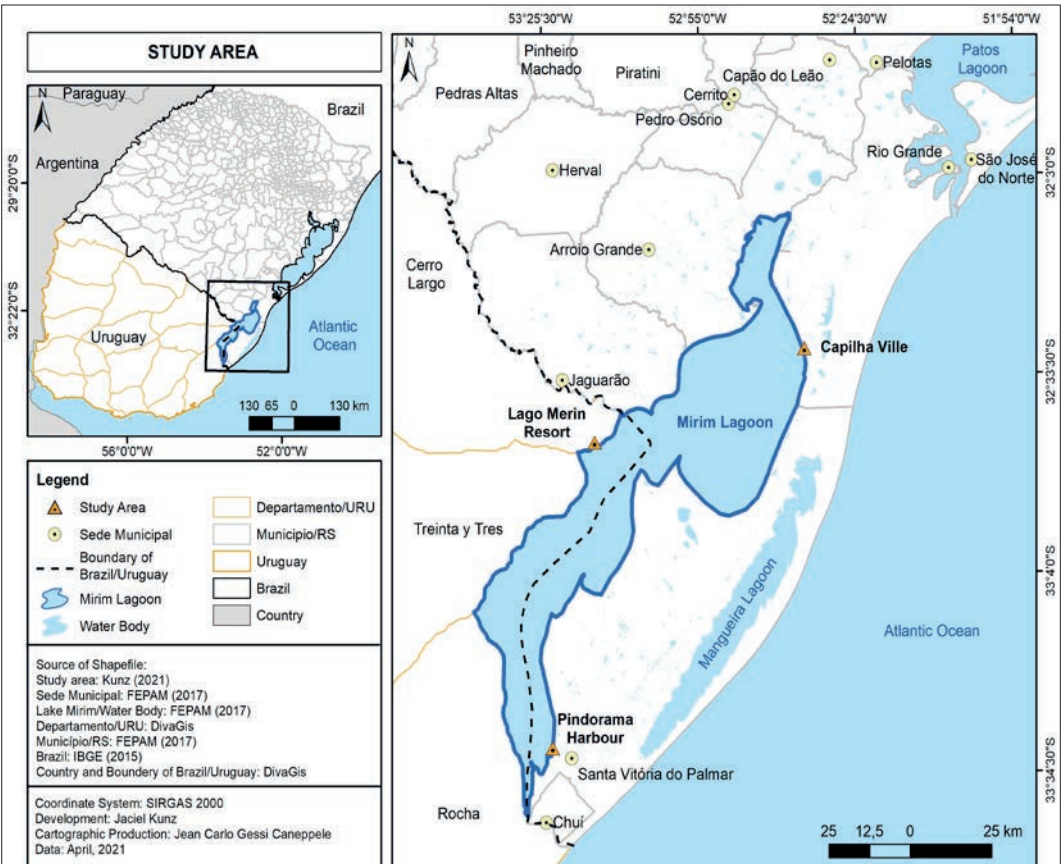
analysis was envisioned (Banks, 2009). The final phase of the research was aimed at the reconstruction of the case (Flick, 2009), a stage in which we approached data as open interpretative possibilities (Seamon, 2000), according to the audience's intentionality. At least three modes of triangulation were operationalized, space-related, subject-related, and technique-related. At this phase, recomposition and interpretation were relevant for a new narrative construction. From a phenomenological-existential perspective, certain groups' and subjects' experiences are bases for theoretical generalization (Seamon, 2000) in the present research. While multiple sources of evidence contributed to validity, we could enhance reliability by intersubjective corroboration.

Upon returning to the research question, we sought not only to access the types and tokens of the landscape and performative signs present but also how they function for the visitor and the destinations, in both aesthetically and bodily terms.

4. Mirim Lagoon as a field of study

Figure 2 shows the location of Mirim Lagoon and the three study sites where this research took place: Vila da Capilha Beach, Pindorama Port, and the Lago Merin Resort.

Figure 2: Location map of Mirim Lagoon and its sites of encounter. Source: Jean Caneppele (2020).



Source: Elaborated by Jean Caneppele (2021).

Vila da Capilha Beach (*Capilla* means chapel in Spanish) was founded during imperial Brazil and visited by the French naturalist Saint-Hilaire. Today, it is a village of artisanal fishermen, whose surroundings are agro-pastoral, and is a rising destination for vacationers and campers. Capilha is located in a buffer zone for environmental impact around the restrictive Taim Ecological Station (Kunz, 2021).

Pindorama (or Porto de Santa Vitória) is a decommissioned port, the only one in Mirim Lagoon. During the first quarter of the last century, lake navigation was intense, and Pindorama Port was the southernmost active terminal in Brazil. With the end of commercial shipping in the 1960s, Pindorama Port fell away. The construction, in the form of a boat, has been revitalized in the last decade. One can see the Uruguayan country to the south from the old pier, which some visitors use as a walkway. The port is a leisure site mainly for residents. Like Capilha, it is a traditional community of artisanal fishermen (Kunz, 2021).

Lago Merín Resort is the only resort built on the extensive shores of Mirim Lagoon. First planned in the 1930s, it was possibly a place for curism, for patients with tuberculosis, due to its favorable winds. Border cities nearby occasionally support visitors, most of them excursionists and vacationers, many of whom possess second homes (Kunz, 2021).

## 5. Results and discussion

Tourist practices at the three sites showed similarities and differences. Also, the observed practices were broader than those in comments, photographs, or interviews. There is a semiotic gap between what local and regional authorities perceive, what travelers propose, and what the visitor does as practice. This intertextuality signals itself as a mechanism for constructing meaning around lake landscapes and tourist practices.

In terms of landscape representation, those interviewed agree that Mirim Lagoon's landscapes are comparable to a painting in that there is a time for being there, that is, the sunset. The encounter duration is one day in Capilha, one season in Lago Merín, and a few minutes or hours in Porto Pindorama. The lack of a dense tourist infrastructure highlighted a dichotomy between the pleasure of the natural environment and the (un)availability of infrastructure for locals and visitors. As for Lago Merín, “the place has good options for snacks but not for demanding trips”; and in Capilha: “you can't even request a stronger service network there, since the charm of the place is, in a way, the feeling of isolation”. Comments align with the literature on Instagrammable experiences of nature, in which aesthetic, sensory, and relational themes occur (see Conti & Lexhagen, 2020).

The lakeside landscape of Lago Merín, in contrast to the other sites, had a predominantly collective feel (see Urry, 1990), constituting an archetypal vacationscape (see Löfgren, 1999). Photographing fishing boats is a remarkable aspect of tourism interactions at Pindorama Port. Small, wooden, and colorful boats appear as picturesque objects in the eyes of the tourists photographing them. Tourism transmutes this backstage into frontstage through visitation, photography, and the tourist gaze by constituting a mobile front staging/back staging process undertaken by mobile subjects (see Jensen, 2013).

The automobile is the primary means of access to the studied sites. Automobilities refers to the simultaneous realization of autonomy and mobility: the car is an avatar of mobility and a symbol of movement in the West (Hannam et al., 2014). The practice of automobility is standard on the Brazilian side, especially in Capilha. Automobility echoes the activity at the oceanside Cassino beach, one hour away, where it is expected. In Capilha, public authorities patrol the sand in the summer to avoid sand jams and make traffic more fluid along the coastline.

Photos posted on Instagram were also analyzed to examine the main tourist performances in the study sites closely. Performances manifest themselves under different degrees of regulation/autonomy. Visitors photographed not only landscapes and themselves but also their involvement with the site and landscape through active or passive practices. Edensor (2001) lists different types of performance present on mobile stages of tourism, admitting overlaps without exhausting them.

Table 1 presents the attributes of Edensor's category and describes a photo to illustrate the occurrence at the research sites. Exhibition of photographs was avoided so as not to run into any issues of copyright and facial identification of the photographed.



Table 1: Main tourist performances observed

Type of tourist performance	Photo description
Identity-oriented	A man wearing a tank top and helmet is looking forward, revolving his motorcycle over the dune's edge. In the background, another motorcycle is parked, a strip of sand, undergrowth vegetation, lagoon water, and a cloudy sky.
Nonconformist	A young man with a bracelet in the foreground and the center, his hand holding an illustrated hardcover holy bible. In the background, grass, sand, water, and sun with clouds.
Cynic	In the center, a tanned young man wearing pale pants, a green shirt, and white sneakers looks through his sunglasses at his cell phone in a simulated way. He is sitting on an iron bench above the concrete pier, which has a guardrail and what is suggested is a light pole. At the bottom, the calm waters of the Lagoon.
Improvised	A straw hat with writing that alludes to beach motifs is centered at the bottom of the photograph, where the sand meets the clear waters of the Lagoon that seem to touch it gently. The hat apparently left there, is on the edge where the sun's ray reflects off the water.
Involuntary	Below, the Lagoon's calm waters receive the sun's rays in the middle of the day. To the left, the shadow of a fisherman standing, looking straight ahead, legs apart, arms presumably crossed. Beside him the shadow of a bent fishing rod. On the right, a young man is on his side, wearing beach shorts and holding his fishing rod in the middle. Behind them and above is the sunny sky.
Contestant	Two skinny white men have the same height and wear a short. Both have black hair; one of them curly. Both men are shirtless. One is hugged by the other at chest and shoulder heights. One looks forward and plays with a smile; the other, upwards, looks happy but with a tight mouth. At the bottom, strips of sand alternate with the water from the Lagoon and, finally, the bright sky.
Post-tourist	In the foreground is a white dune, with grass spreading across it, and to the left, branches and green leaves from top to bottom. In the center, at least six tents are right next to each other. One of them is shaded by a gazebo. Their predominant shade is blue. Calm water "canals" with two people in front of them invade the sand of the beach in the background, where, in one "island", there are at least three cars, a gazebo, and five people – finally, the endless water of the Lagoon and a blue sky.

Source: Direct research, utilizing Edensor's (2001) tipology.

On Instagram photos from each of the three study sites, nearly all the categories suggested by Edensor (2001) empirically occur. Performativity activates the tourist sites in cyclical and intermittent ways. Tourists construct their increasingly visual travel narratives, co-participating in elaborating (auto)biographies in which increasingly provisional identifications are manifested (a camper, a sailor, a canoeist). Photography participates in everyday life and the extraordinary, virtually or not, namely the need to see and be seen. Photography permeates the tourist experience as a whole, as it is possible to engage with it by acting, posing, or playing (see Larsen, 2006).

The final part of this research looked at the semiotic analysis of the three sites, by focusing on the sign type of the geographic object Mirim Lagoon and its replication in numerous tokens expressed through landscape representations and tourist performances. The studied sites of encounter make up the whole so that the visitor accesses the entire Mirim Lagoon through the landscape and localized practices (parts of it).

Table 2 shows the token/types for the three sites. The semiosis of lake landscapes is both perceptual and representational (figurative-imagery), as well as more-than-representational, in that the meaning of these landscapes for the visitor comes from projective thoughts and feelings, in mind or while there, as well as the actions embodied by tourist practices and performativities, turning places into tourist sites – through tourist encounters, contingent and unique to each interpreter (visitor), and in each encounter, as well.

Table 2: Types and tokens in the semiosis of landscape and practices of Mirim Lagoon

Type (Geographical object with a single landscape)	Mirim Lagoon		A water body in a coastal plain, formed by marine advance and retreat, is located in a sizeable lacustrine complex and shared between Brazil and Uruguay.
Tokens (Geographical object with a multiple landscape)	Sites of encounter	Capilha (Brazil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pristine, nostalgic, bucolic</li><li>- Tourism chronopolitics (Norum &amp; Mostafanezhad, 2016)</li><li>- Tourism chronopolitics</li><li>- Nature/Heritage untouched</li><li>- Picturesque, melancholic</li><li>- Poetics of the sunset</li><li>- Disputing performances</li><li>- Land of adventure</li><li>- Automobilities</li><li>- Staging Mobilities</li></ul>
		Lago Merín (Uruguay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Collective gaze</li><li>- Border complementarity</li><li>- Conformist performances</li><li>- Vacationscape, vacation season</li></ul>
		Pindorama Port (Brazil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Staged Mobilities</li><li>- Pristine</li><li>- Picturesque, melancholic</li><li>- Work and leisure</li><li>- Backstage/frontstage mobilities</li><li>- Sunset timing</li></ul>

Source: Direct research (2020).

Concerning the existing physical space, social interactions, and observed embodied practices, staging mobilities predominated over staged mobilities. This is because the tourism and leisure offered and experienced at these sites are still not yet predetermined or curated by the tourism industry or extensively co-produced by specialized workers in the sector. Upon arriving at Capilha and Pindorama Port, some subjects “do not know what to do” probably because the staging mobilities are still predominant, guaranteeing room for inventiveness.

Capilha is usually portrayed and recognized as a land of adventures. The tokens are more numerous and complex there, simplified in Pindorama Port, while Lago Merín occupies an intermediate position. In Lago Merín, precisely, the resort has been planned for temporary stays (staged mobilities), although the focus on curism has been shifting towards leisure during the high season (staging mobilities). In short, staged mobilities are verified in attractions and destinations built for it, where courses of action and interaction occur as initially conceived by specific agents and imaged by most tourists.

In Mirim Lagoon, tourism and leisure manifest themselves concretely in a way different from the classic theoretical models from Geography or Tourism studies, in which tourism is spatially studied, primarily through the distribution of infrastructure. Although not prominent in terms of infrastructure delimiting tourism activity, there is a regional demand for tourism and leisure, demarcating a cyclical phenomenon yet to be thoroughly studied. Most visitors to Capilha come from the municipality of Rio Grande itself. There is also intertextuality when considering the different tourist encounters in places along the same body of water formed by nature. Overall results reinforce previous propositions in which “Meaning may be far less prefigured than is often suggested in tourism literature [or social media]” (Crouch et al., 2001: 266).

6. Conclusion

Tourism practices and performances are continually renewed, (re)negotiated, and contested. Gazing at the landscape, although relevant, does not exhaust the content and meaning of experiences for the tourist subjects. Feel the wind, the sun’s heat, the water’s temperature, and the grains of sand can re-signify and bring the tourist subjects closer to lake landscapes.

Mirim Lagoon, although little known by tourist scholars and practitioners, proved to be a promising empirical object. This social and semiotic laboratory went beyond the mere idea of scenery, becoming

the very stage(-ing). Semiotics continues to be a valuable tool for the complex, multifaceted, intertextual understanding of meanings and practices articulated and challenged by performativity, i.e., tourist agency and social structures that mutually feed on each other. Here, Semiotics goes beyond image and representation and copes with mobile practices and bodily performativities, that is, how meanings put objects in motion, just as they are themselves motion.

This research demonstrates how theoretical models and conceptualizations developed in the so-called Anglo-Saxon world can be adapted to the intellectual and empirical contexts of regions of the Global South, including South America. More specifically, the “new mobilities paradigm” can be utilized by reaching tourist contexts underrepresented in the literature.

Lake landscapes are made visible to tourists and leisure visitors through one or more aesthetic categories. Although temporally distant, painted canvases are still evoked, amidst practices that are differentiated, and the performativities, divergent. Lake landscape are not only what is meant to be a waterscape, but rather a set, a composite in which nature plays out its role, also interacting with other elements. The practices observed fall mainly under the category of staging mobilities, which suggests that the marketing and planning initiatives for these sites, or Mirim Lagoon as a whole, must offer comprehensive services and activities for the visitor. Tourism and leisure here are intertwined phenomena that sometimes appear more spontaneous than orderly, raising questions about the sites’ branding and commercialization. From a destination management perspective, the ambiguity of tourist aesthetics and their functioning can negatively impact the destination image.

New avenues for studying tourist and leisure landscapes are thus created, as well as nature-based sites, not only based on their underlying aesthetics but also anchored in performance practices, adding new layers of meaning to the landscapes. Tourist practices and performativities (in loco and cyberspace) update the meaning of lake landscapes as objects of geographic inquiry. As for limitations, there are possibly different textualities about the perception and representation of lake landscapes or leisure practices if the focus is shifted from the visitor (outsider) to the host community (insider), a field that requires further research. Photographs from social media other than Instagram offer another area for additional research.

Therefore, as suggestions for further research, the following questions may be fully addressed: How do the aesthetic categories triggered by the subjects in such conditions differ? How do tourist practices shape up and interact with those practices and mobilities that are not precisely touristic in nature but occur in a leisure context? Are we talking about nuances of the same phenomenon spectrum? How do we manage tourist encounter sites where divergent and contingent performativities occur? Why some scenic views are not valued as of tourist importance? Conversely, why does an increasing number of visitors seek certain places despite negative evaluations of their landscape and tourism services? Besides the tourism economic market, which social demands of leisure must be attended to?

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