

Geocultural identities and the sense of place

Juan Manuel Montoro
Universidad de Lausana, Suiza

Sebastián Moreno
Universidad ORT Uruguay

Abstract

This paper presents the concept of “geocultural identities” that we propose within a sociocultural semiotic framework to make sense of place-based collective identities. Rather than treating identities as stable properties of populations or territories, we approach them as configurations of meaning produced through historically sedimented processes of signification. A geocultural identity is a configuration of discourse anchored in a specific geographical materiality or fact and used to articulate a collective belonging. The concept allows us to bring together phenomena usually studied separately, such as national, regional, European, Latin American, Mediterranean and other place-based identities. Building on our previous work, we refine a semiotic square relating four types of geocultural identity (national, supranational, subnational and transnational) through the semantic opposition between the nation-state and transnational contexts, while stressing that these are analytical positions rather than mutually exclusive empirical boxes. We discuss boundaries, semiospheres, textualization, forms of life and multimodal discourse as processes through which places acquire identity value. Concrete examples from Latin America, Europe, the Mediterranean and Amazonia show how geographical materiality becomes culturally meaningful through recurrent figures, practices, narratives, stereotypes and axiologies. We argue that the analytical advantage of geocultural identity lies in shifting the question from whether a place “has” an identity to how belonging is produced, stabilized, contested and transformed through signification.

1. Introduction: from identity to the sense of place

The relationship between identity and place appears deceptively simple. People identify with countries, regions, cities, continents, borderlands and other spatial formations; political institutions organize populations territorially; cultural practices are often described as belonging to particular places; and ordinary language routinely turns geographical names into shorthand for collective qualities. Yet this apparent obviousness obscures the semiotic work through which a geographical entity becomes a meaningful object of collective identification. Uruguay, Andalusia, Latin America, Europe, the Mediterranean or Amazonia are not merely portions of the earth’s surface. They are also culturally available configurations of meaning, populated by narratives, figures, stereotypes, memories, values, practices and expectations.

Our proposal of the category “geocultural identities” emerged from this problem. Across several publications, we have attempted to develop a sociocultural semiotic approach capable of studying collective identities whose construction is anchored in some geographical materiality or fact (Montoro & Moreno, 2021a, 2021b, 2022, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). The concept is

intended as an analytical category rather than as a claim that territories possess an essential cultural identity. Its purpose is to provide a metalanguage for describing how collective belonging is constructed in discourse through the association between people and places.

The central proposition of this paper is therefore simple: geocultural identities are not properties of territories but configurations of meaning in which a geographical referent is made culturally significant as a basis for collective belonging. They are accessible to analysis because they become manifest in texts in the broad semiotic sense: verbal discourse, images, maps, monuments, rituals, objects, food, transport, tourist campaigns, political narratives, institutional classifications and forms of life. The geographical dimension matters, but it does not determine the meaning of the identity. Rather, materiality supplies a referential and experiential anchor that is culturally segmented, named, narrated, axiologized and represented.

This approach also helps us avoid an implicit methodological nationalism. National identity is perhaps the most institutionalized form of geocultural identity, and the nation-state has historically become a dominant device for segmenting the world into recognizable political units. But there is no reason to assume that the national scale exhausts the semiotic organization of collective belonging. People can identify with regions inside states, with spaces that cross state borders, and with macro-regions that encompass several national populations. Our typology consequently distinguishes national, subnational, transnational and supranational identities.

The paper has four aims. First, it revisits the theoretical foundations of geocultural identity from a sociocultural semiotic perspective. Second, it develops the semiotic logic underlying the four-part typology. Third, it connects the typology to questions of boundaries, semiospheres and the semiotic production of place. Fourth, it illustrates the argument with examples from our previous research, including Latin American transport and culinary practices, European peripheries and borders, Mediterranean forms of life, and representations of Amazonia. The purpose is not to offer four exhaustive case studies, but to demonstrate the analytical reach of the concept and, above all, to show how a sense of place is produced through signification.

2. Sociocultural semiotics and collective identities

The theoretical starting point is sociocultural semiotics: a strand of semiotic inquiry concerned not only with formal sign systems but with the processes through which cultures produce, circulate, negotiate and transform meaning. Such an approach treats social reality as inseparable from processes of signification while refusing the reduction of social life to language alone. Signs, texts, objects, practices, interactions, strategies and forms of life can all become relevant insofar as they participate in the production of meaning.

This orientation is particularly useful for the study of collective identities because identities are neither simply psychological possessions nor purely institutional categories. They operate through a complex articulation between material conditions, cultural memory, social categorization, affective investment and discourse. Tajfel's (1982) social identity theory is important because it foregrounds the cognitive and evaluative dimensions of group membership, while Berger and Luckmann's (1966) account of the social construction of reality reminds us that

socially shared realities acquire objectivity through processes of institutionalization and legitimation. From a semiotic perspective, however, the crucial question is how such processes become observable in signifying practices.

We therefore distinguish between identity as a category of practice and identity as an analytical category. Brubaker (2004, 2015) has repeatedly warned against treating “identity” as an internally homogeneous and ontologically given thing. This warning is compatible with our proposal. When we speak of a “geocultural identity,” we are not asserting that a population is naturally homogeneous or that a territory contains an intrinsic cultural essence. We are identifying a recurrent cultural configuration in which a geographical space is associated with a collective subject and a set of differential meanings.

This is why discourse is central. Following Verón (1987, 1988), we understand discourse as socially situated production of meaning. The analyst does not begin with a fully formed collective identity and then look for its representations. Rather, the analytical procedure is reversed: we identify recurring signifying configurations and reconstruct the collective entity that they presuppose, construct or stabilize. The “identity” is thus an effect of a historically sedimented semiotic process.

This constructivist position should not be mistaken for a denial of materiality. A place is not reducible to discourse. Mountains, rivers, borders, coastlines, infrastructures, climates, cities and administrative territories exist independently of any particular representation. What semiotics studies is what happens when these material facts become culturally meaningful. The same river can be represented as a boundary, a connector, a sacred object, an economic resource or the center of a regional identity. Materiality constrains and enables semiosis, but it does not by itself determine the meanings attached to it.

This is the point at which the notion of the sense of place becomes useful. “Place” is not simply space endowed with coordinates. It is space experienced, named, narrated, remembered, represented and valued. Geocultural identities are one way in which such a sense of place becomes collective. They establish correspondences between spatial configurations and cultural contents: a place becomes associated with particular people, practices, histories, values, ways of life and forms of alterity.

Our approach is compatible with cultural geography while remaining specifically semiotic. Paasi (2003) has shown how regions are institutionalized through processes involving territorial shaping, symbolic shaping and institutionalization. Such processes are close to what a semiotic approach seeks to describe: the production of recognizable spatial units through recurring forms of representation and practice. Anderson’s (1983) notion of imagined communities is useful because it reminds us that collective belonging can extend beyond direct interpersonal experience. Yet geocultural identity is broader than national imagined community. It provides an analytical category for any spatially anchored collective identity that becomes culturally intelligible and socially operative.

3. Defining geocultural identity

We define a geocultural identity as a configuration of meaning, produced in discourse, anchored in a specific geographical materiality or fact and used to articulate a collective belonging. This definition contains four components.

First, it is a configuration of meaning. The object is not a demographic population or a territory as such but a culturally articulated relation between a collective subject and a spatial referent. Second, it is produced in discourse. Geocultural identities become recognizable through recurring signs, texts, narratives, practices and other semiotic manifestations. Third, it is geographically anchored. The anchor can be a state, a region, a city, a river basin, a continent, a historical territory, a sea or a transborder area. Fourth, the configuration articulates collective belonging: it allows people, institutions or observers to construct a “we” associated with the place.

This definition explains why geocultural identities can be both highly institutionalized and relatively diffuse. Uruguay offers a national example: state territory, national symbols, institutional narratives, historical memories, sporting practices and everyday cultural references contribute to a relatively strongly regimented identity. By contrast, the Mediterranean is not a state or a single political institution, and its boundaries are contested and variable. Yet “Mediterraneanness” can be culturally recognizable through a constellation of food practices, landscapes, climate, sociality, hospitality, leisure, music and representations of a particular way of life. The latter is precisely the kind of case for which the category is useful.

The concept permits us to distinguish between the geographical anchor and the extension of the collective subject. These do not always coincide with administrative boundaries. A subnational identity is anchored in a space inside a state; a supranational identity encompasses several states; a transnational identity can cut across state boundaries without necessarily encompassing the populations of the states it traverses. These distinctions correspond to different semiotic operations for segmenting the cultural continuum.

A geocultural identity is consequently an operation of selection and differentiation. No territory can be represented in its totality. To construct “Andalusian,” “European,” “Mediterranean” or “Amazonian” identity, discourse selects certain features and makes them salient while leaving others outside the configuration. This is an operation of pertinence. The geographical referent functions as a semiotic nucleus around which heterogeneous expressions can be organized.

The concept also accounts for internal heterogeneity. A geocultural identity does not require that every inhabitant of a territory share the same attributes. Indeed, the category is valuable precisely because it allows us to study the discrepancy between the empirical diversity of populations and the cultural coherence projected by discourse. The Mediterranean includes very different languages, religions, histories and political systems. Nevertheless, particular discourses can stabilize a recognizable Mediterranean form of life. Likewise, Latin America contains enormous cultural and historical diversity, yet “Latin American” can function as a powerful supranational identity when particular commonalities are selected and articulated.

The distinction between analytical category and category of practice is crucial. People may speak of being Uruguayan, Latin American, European, Andalusian, Mediterranean or Amazonian. The analyst introduces “geocultural identity” as a higher-order concept that allows these heterogeneous phenomena to be compared without presupposing their equivalence. The term thus performs methodological work: it places different place-based identities within a common semiotic framework.

4. The semiotic square

Our first typology was developed in 2021 through the semiotic square. The starting point was the historical centrality of the nation-state as the dominant political-juridical unit through which the contemporary world is segmented. We formulated the underlying semantic category as [nation-state : transnational contexts], and used its relations to distinguish four positions: national, subnational, supranational and transnational geocultural identities (Montoro & Moreno, 2021a).

The square should not be understood as a classificatory chart in which every empirical case fits one and only one box. Rather, it is a generative model for thinking about relations of continuity and discontinuity between spatial scales. It helps us ask what kind of geographical segmentation a discourse performs and how that segmentation relates to the state.

The national position corresponds to identities anchored in the nation-state as a culturally and politically regimented spatial unit. Uruguay, France or Japan are paradigmatic examples. Here the geographical referent is strongly codified through sovereignty, borders, citizenship, institutions, national symbols and international recognition. National identity is therefore relatively “grammaticalized”: the rules for identifying the relevant space are institutionally stabilized.

The subnational position refers to identities anchored in spatial units located within a state. These can be administrative regions, historical regions, provinces, cities or culturally salient areas. Andalusia, Catalonia, Galicia, Bavaria, Transylvania or Montevideo can be approached in this way. Subnational identities may coexist with national identity, compete with it, or become the basis for alternative national projects. The semiotic relation between the subnational and national is therefore variable and dynamic.

The supranational position refers to identities that encompass several nation-states within a broader macro-spatial configuration. “Europe,” “Latin America” and “South America” can function in this way. These identities are not simply larger national identities. They involve a different logic of segmentation: several national units are rearticulated as components of a wider cultural space. The supranational identity thus depends on producing commonality across difference.

The transnational position is different again. It refers to identities that traverse national borders without encompassing the totality of the populations or territories of the states involved. The Mediterranean is a paradigmatic case: it connects selected portions of many national territories, but “Mediterranean” does not coincide with the total national territories of those

states. Other examples include the Rio de la Plata region or historical borderlands such as Silesia and Tyrol.

The distinction between supranational and transnational is particularly important. Both exceed national borders, but they do so differently. A supranational identity tends to construct several national territories as components of a larger whole. A transnational identity constructs continuity across selected portions of different national territories. In the first case, the nation-state is encompassed; in the second, the nation-state is crossed.

The four positions can therefore be summarized as follows: national (identity anchored in the state as primary territorial unit); subnational (identity anchored in a spatial unit within a state); supranational (identity encompassing multiple nation-states as components of a larger spatial-cultural whole); transnational (identity connecting selected spaces across national borders without encompassing national territories in their entirety). The square is useful because it turns the question of scale into a question of signification. It allows us to investigate not only “where” an identity is located but how a discourse draws its boundaries and establishes relations of inclusion, exclusion, continuity and discontinuity.

5. Boundaries, semiospheres and the production of place

The problem of boundaries is central because every identity requires a distinction between an inside and an outside. Lotman’s cultural semiotics provides powerful resources for conceptualizing this operation. The notion of semiosphere describes the semiotic space within which signification becomes possible; it is characterized by internal heterogeneity, asymmetry, center-periphery relations and boundaries (Lotman, 1990, 2005). A geocultural identity can be approached as a culturally organized semiotic space whose boundaries determine what is treated as belonging, marginal, external or foreign.

In our 2023 study of geographical boundaries, we proposed three Lotmanian ideas as especially relevant: the semiosphere as a space of collective meaning-making; the dynamism of culture in negotiating boundaries; and the distinction between more grammaticalized and more textualized cultural formations (Montoro & Moreno, 2023). These concepts help explain why some geocultural identities have sharply codified limits while others remain fuzzy and contestable.

The national identity is generally more grammaticalized because its territorial boundaries are institutionally sanctioned. A national border can be represented on a map, regulated by law and reproduced through administrative procedures. This does not mean that national identity is semantically fixed, but its spatial reference is strongly codified.

By contrast, historical and transnational identities often have more textualized boundaries. Silesia or Tyrol are intelligible as cultural spaces because historical narratives, linguistic practices, memories, material heritage and symbolic references sustain them despite political fragmentation. The Mediterranean is even more open-ended: its limits shift depending on whether discourse privileges physical geography, history, cuisine, climate, tourism, migration or geopolitics.

Lotman's center-periphery model is also useful. A semiosphere is not homogeneous. Some elements become central and normative; others remain peripheral, marginal or translated from outside. In our analysis of European identity, we argued that peripheral territories and borders can paradoxically become part of the symbolic core of European narratives (Montoro & Moreno, 2022). The Camino de Santiago and Santiago de Compostela can be represented as peripheral in geographical terms while simultaneously serving as powerful figures of European cultural identity. Similarly, debates about the geographical center of Europe demonstrate that "Europe" is produced through struggles over spatial centrality.

This suggests that the sense of place is not merely a matter of proximity. Places can become symbolically central despite being geographically peripheral. Conversely, territories physically located at the center of a region can be semantically marginal. Geocultural identities are relational constructions in which spatial position and semiotic position do not necessarily coincide.

The boundary also has a productive function. It does not simply separate a pre-existing inside from a pre-existing outside. It generates distinctions through which the inside becomes intelligible. The Mediterranean becomes meaningful in relation to northern Europe, but also to the Atlantic, the Middle East, the Balkans or Europe as a broader identity. Latin America is partly constituted through contrasts with Anglo-America, Europe and other geopolitical imaginaries. Amazonia can be constructed through the opposition between nature and culture, civilization and wilderness, garden and hell. In each case, alterity contributes to the definition of the identity.

6. Texts, practices and forms of life

If geocultural identities are configurations of meaning, the analyst must identify their material manifestations. Our methodological proposition is therefore textual in a broad sense. We study texts not because identities are reducible to verbal language, but because texts provide observable traces of the semiotic operations through which identity is constructed.

This approach draws on the principle that the plane of expression offers access to configurations located on the plane of content. A national identity can be studied through flags, speeches, monuments, maps, schoolbooks, sporting rituals, advertising, music and political discourse. These are heterogeneous expressions, but they may participate in the same underlying cultural configuration.

Fontanille's (2008, 2015) levels of pertinence are useful because they allow us to move from signs and texts to objects, practices, strategies and forms of life. Our work on Latin American culinary practices explicitly adopted this perspective. A dish can be treated as an object; its ingredients can function as signs; the act of preparing and sharing it can constitute a practice; recurring conventions can form strategies; and a broader organization of everyday life can be approached as a form of life (Montoro & Moreno, 2024a). The advantage is that the analyst does not isolate individual symbols from the broader cultural configurations that give them meaning.

The same principle applies to transport. In our study of Latin American transport systems, we argued that infrastructure and mobility practices can become markers of a supranational identity (Montoro & Moreno, 2021b). Roads, buses, railway systems and patterns of circulation are not merely functional. They can become part of an imaginary about Latin American modernity, inequality, connectivity, improvisation, urbanity or regional specificity. Material infrastructure thus becomes semiotized and participates in the construction of collective belonging.

The multimodality of geocultural identity is particularly important because place is experienced through multiple sensory channels. Landscapes provide visual figures; food engages taste and smell; music produces sonic associations; architecture and monuments provide spatial and tactile forms; language and accent index geographical belonging; maps stabilize spatial segmentation. A geocultural identity is therefore best understood as an assemblage of heterogeneous signifying resources rather than a list of symbolic emblems.

This also explains why stereotypes are powerful. A stereotype compresses complex social reality into a limited set of recurring features that become recognizable as representative. From a semiotic perspective, stereotypization is a process of selecting, repeating and axiologizing figures. A place becomes “sunny,” “passionate,” “chaotic,” “hospitable,” “dangerous,” “authentic,” “modern,” “backward” or “creative” through recurrent articulations of spatial reference and cultural value.

Such axiologization can be euphoric or dysphoric. Our analysis of Mediterranean identity illustrates this clearly. Institutional discourses such as UNESCO’s representation of Mediterranean diet foreground values such as hospitality, dialogue, diversity, sociality and continuity. Other representations, especially from northern European perspectives, may construct southern Europe through stereotypes of disorder, unreliability, excessive leisure or lack of discipline. The same geographical space can thus be articulated through competing axiological regimes. Geocultural identity is not necessarily consensus; it can be a field of struggle over the meaning of place.

7. Four examples

The theoretical model becomes clearer when applied to concrete cases. We briefly revisit four examples from our previous research, each foregrounding a different operation in the production of geocultural identity.

7.1 Latin America and transport

Our study of Latin American transport systems was conceived as preparatory work for a semiotics of geocultural identities (Montoro & Moreno, 2021b). The central idea was that transport systems can both reflect and construct imaginaries of Latin American identity. The relevant object is not simply the infrastructure itself but the way material systems of mobility become culturally associated with a regional identity. Latin America is a supranational geocultural identity because it encompasses multiple national spaces within a broader historical-

cultural configuration. Yet the identity is not simply the sum of national identities. It is produced by selecting commonalities across them. Transport can participate in this operation because mobility networks expose similarities and differences in modernization, infrastructure, inequality, urban form and everyday practices. The bus, the highway, the crowded city, informal transport and long-distance circulation can become figures through which a regional experience is narrated. Infrastructure can therefore become an expressive resource.

7.2 Europe, peripheries and borders

Our work on European identity provides a different example. Europe is a supranational identity, but its sense of unity depends heavily on boundaries and peripheral spaces (Montoro & Moreno, 2022). The Camino de Santiago and Santiago de Compostela illustrate the paradox. Geographically located at the western edge of Europe, Galicia can be represented as peripheral, yet the pilgrimage route can be narrated as a foundational cultural connector of Europe. The second example concerns disputes over the geographical center of Europe. Countries and regions at the eastern and northeastern edges of the European space have periodically sought to locate or symbolize the “center” of Europe. These claims are semiotically significant because the center is not merely a coordinate. It is a cultural position of legitimacy. To be represented as central is to be represented as properly European. Periphery can therefore become center.

7.3 The Mediterranean as transnational form of life

The Mediterranean is perhaps the clearest illustration of the transnational position. It is not a state, nor does it encompass the totality of the populations of the countries associated with it. Rather, it connects selected portions of multiple national territories. Its cultural coherence is produced through recurring discursive associations. In our analysis of Estrella Damm’s “Mediterráneamente” campaign, we examined how advertising transforms this diffuse identity into a highly stylized form of life (Montoro & Moreno, 2024b). Beaches, sunlight, food, friendship, sailing, music, romance and leisure are articulated as components of a coherent Mediterranean way of life. The neologism “Mediterráneamente” is itself a semiotic operation: it transforms a geographical adjective into an adverb describing a way of doing things. The campaign does not attempt to define the Mediterranean cartographically. It constructs it phenomenologically and axiologically. The Mediterranean becomes a way of living, and the product becomes an entry point into that lifestyle. The identity is produced through the convergence of geography, practice, affect and consumption.

7.4 Amazonia: identity from outside

Our study of Amazonia adds another dimension because it emphasizes exogenous construction (Montoro & Moreno, 2024c). We examined representations of Amazonia “from outside,” focusing on the opposition between the Garden of Eden and the Green Hell. The case demonstrates how a geocultural identity can be constructed through external discourse and become culturally available as a repertoire of meanings. The Amazonian space is materially real, but its identity is not contained in that materiality. It is narrativized through figures such as

wilderness, abundance, danger, exoticism, nature, primitiveness and ecological salvation. These figures organize a cultural relation between observer and place. The case also shows why the distinction between in-group and out-group discourse matters. Geocultural identities may be produced from within, from outside, or through an interaction between both.

8. Geocultural identity, politics and the sense of place

The concept has implications beyond semiotic theory because geographical identities are politically consequential. Spatial categories organize belonging, citizenship, recognition and exclusion. They can support democratic pluralism, but they can also naturalize hierarchies and stereotypes. The semiotic study of geocultural identity is therefore relevant to political theory, cultural geography and collective action.

The political importance of national identity is obvious, but the other three positions of the square also have political implications. Subnational identities can support regional autonomy, decentralization or separatism. Supranational identities can support projects of integration and solidarity across states, as in European identity. Transnational identities can articulate communities whose cultural continuity does not map neatly onto state borders, as in border regions or diasporic spaces.

This makes the square useful for analyzing movements between identity positions. A subnational identity can become national; a national identity can be reframed within a supranational project; a transnational region can be institutionalized; a supranational identity can be contested through renewed nationalization. The categories are therefore positions in a dynamic semiotic field rather than fixed sociological types.

This dynamic quality is especially important in globalization and mediatization. Contemporary communication enables geographical imaginaries to circulate far beyond their places of origin. A local practice can become a global sign of a region; a national stereotype can be reproduced transnationally; a borderland can become a tourist brand; a city can become a global lifestyle. Digital media intensify these processes by multiplying the circulation and recombination of spatial signs.

The sense of place is thus increasingly produced across scales. A person may simultaneously identify as Montevidean, Uruguayan, Latin American, European and Mediterranean depending on context. These affiliations need not be logically contradictory because they operate at different positions and levels of the geocultural continuum. The semiotic square provides a way to conceptualize this plurality without reducing it to an inventory of nested identities.

At the same time, coexistence can generate tensions. Different spatial identities may impose competing boundaries or axiologies. A regional identity may challenge national narratives; a supranational project may be opposed through national imaginaries; a transnational identity may unsettle administrative classifications. The semiotic study of geocultural identity can therefore illuminate how political conflicts become conflicts over the meaning of space.

From this perspective, the sense of place is not simply a feeling of attachment. It is a cultural achievement. It depends on the availability of signs, narratives, practices and forms of life through which a place can be recognized as “ours,” “theirs,” “ours too,” “not quite ours,” “between,” or “beyond.” These distinctions have political effects because they shape the imagined geography of belonging.

9. Conclusion

The concept of geocultural identities was developed to address a simple but theoretically consequential observation: collective identities are frequently organized around geographical anchors, yet the relationship between place and belonging is too often treated as self-evident. Our proposal is to make the semiotic work of that relationship the object of analysis.

A geocultural identity is a configuration of meaning anchored in a geographical materiality or fact and used to articulate collective belonging. It is neither an essence contained in territory nor merely an arbitrary discourse detached from materiality. It emerges from the interaction between spatial experience, historical sedimentation and processes of signification. It is therefore simultaneously material and symbolic, spatial and discursive, stable enough to be recognizable yet dynamic enough to be contested and transformed.

The semiotic square offers a useful starting point for organizing the diversity of these identities. National, subnational, supranational and transnational identities represent four analytical positions produced in relation to the nation-state and transnational contexts. The national position is institutionally regimented; the subnational is internally differentiated; the supranational encompasses several national units within a broader spatial-cultural configuration; and the transnational establishes continuity across selected parts of different national territories. The four positions are not mutually exclusive empirical containers but relational positions within a dynamic cultural continuum.

Our examples show that geocultural identity can be expressed through heterogeneous materials. Transport infrastructure can become a marker of Latin American identity. Peripheral territories can become central to European narratives. A sea can become the basis for a transnational lifestyle. Amazonia can become an object of competing external imaginaries. In all these cases, the analytical question is not whether the place possesses a true identity. It is how specific semiotic operations make certain relations between people, places and cultural meanings recognizable.

The contribution of sociocultural semiotics is precisely to make these operations visible. It allows us to study segmentation, boundary-making, actorialization, axiologization, stereotyping, narrative organization, multimodality and forms of life. It also enables comparison across scales without presupposing that national identity is the only or natural form of territorial belonging.

Ultimately, the concept of geocultural identities is a way of approaching the sense of place as a process of signification. Places become collective places when they are named, narrated, pictured, remembered, inhabited, performed and valued. A geography becomes a

cultural geography when it enters semiosis. And a sense of place becomes a collective identity when those semiotic constructions organize a recognizable relation between a space and a “we.”

References

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities*. Verso.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. Doubleday.
- Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker, R. (2015). *Grounds for Difference*. Harvard University Press.
- Fontanille, J. (2008). *Pratiques sémiotiques*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Fontanille, J. (2015). *Formes de vie*. Presses Universitaires de Liège.
- Lotman, J. M. (1990). *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Indiana University Press.
- Lotman, J. M. (2005). On the semiosphere. *Sign Systems Studies*, 33(1), 205–229.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2021a). Towards a social semiotics of geo-cultural identities: theoretical foundations and an initial semiotic square. *Estudos Semióticos*, 17(2), 121–142.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2021b). Identidad latinoamericana y sistemas de transporte. Notas para una semiótica de las identidades geo-culturales. *deSignis*, 34, 67–82.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2022). La identidad geocultural europea en sus periferias y fronteras. Un abordaje desde la semiótica de la cultura de Yuri Lotman. *deSignis*, Hors Serie 2, 173–184.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2023). Semiosferas y límites geográficos. El aporte de la semiótica de la cultura de Yuri Lotman al estudio de las identidades geoculturales. *Signa*, 32, 437–454.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2024a). Identidad latinoamericana y prácticas culinarias. *deSignis*, Hors Serie 3, 129–143.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2024b). Mediterráneamente: la identidad geocultural mediterránea como forma de vida estilizada. *deSignis*, 40, 53–65.
- Montoro, J. M., & Moreno, S. (2024c). La Amazonía desde fuera, entre jardín edénico e infierno verde. Una aproximación desde la semiótica a las construcciones discursivas de la identidad geocultural amazónica. *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, 32(64), e005.
- Paasi, A. (2003). Region and place: regional identity in question. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(4), 475–485.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 1–39.
- Verón, E. (1987). La palabra adversativa. Observaciones sobre la enunciación política. In E. Verón et al., *El discurso político. Lenguajes y acontecimientos* (pp. 11–26). Hachette.
- Verón, E. (1988). *La semiosis social*. Gedisa.