

# Hunting and fishing non-human natures: new frontiers, luxury, and tourism

## A la caza y pesca de las naturalezas no humanas: nuevas fronteras, lujo y turismo

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### Abstract

The study analyses academic production focused on the analysis of hunting tourism and sport fishing as a way to explore possible mechanisms for converting non-human nature into commodities. Using a bibliographic review strategy, scientific works produced up to 2023, focusing on international contexts and Argentina, are analyzed. Furthermore, based on the information provided by the companies, hunting reserves and fishing lodges located in two Argentine provinces are described. The hypothesis suggests that recreational hunting and fishing configure specific forms of consumption of non-human nature that express a process of advancing the boundaries of capital, transforming it into tourism products. The results highlight the need to include a broader range of categories for analysis, especially in the Global South.

Keywords: hunting tourism, sport fishing, luxury, commodification, non-human nature.

### Resumen

El estudio indaga la producción académica centrada en el análisis del turismo cinegético y la pesca deportiva, como vía para explorar posibles mecanismos de conversión de las naturalezas no humanas en mercancías. Mediante la estrategia de revisión bibliográfica se recuperan y analizan trabajos científicos producidos hasta 2023, enfocados en contextos internacionales y en Argentina. Además, con base en la información que las empresas brindan de sí, se describen cotos de caza y lodges de pesca situados en dos provincias argentinas. El supuesto del trabajo señala que la caza y pesca recreativas configuran formas específicas de consumo de las naturalezas no humanas que expresan un proceso de avance de las fronteras del capital,

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que las transforma en productos turísticos. Los resultados destacan la necesidad de incluir un espectro más amplio de categorías para su análisis, especialmente en el sur global.

Palabras clave: turismo cinegético, pesca deportiva, lujo, mercantilización, naturalezas no humanas.

## Introduction

The processes of appropriation and conversion of nature into commodities by capital have been studied from a political economy perspective since the mid-19th century. Analyzed by Marx in the *Grundrisse* (1856), they are a recurring theme in Marxism, both in the analysis of commodity production—exchange values—and in the accumulation of capital as an overall process. Reflections on the role of the conspicuous consumption of the most powerful class in the process of accumulation, and on the place occupied by the peripheries, began early on. Luxemburg (1968) introduced the notion of *territories of accumulation*, peripheral spaces where capital expands to extract resources and place its commodities. In the late 20th century, critical approaches to geography, political ecology and ecological and political economics analyzed the commodification of specific natural commons and nature itself. Capitalist commodification turns things and beings into objects of exchange and uproots them from their lifeworlds (Tsing, 2015). In the analysis of these issues, approaches based on Marxism and productions from the global North that analyze cases from the global South have predominated (Smessaert et al., 2020).

Starting from this theoretical framework, this study aims to explore the intersections between the mechanisms of commodification of non-human nature and the circuits dedicated to hunting tourism and sport fishing. To this end, it reviews the international scientific literature, specifically that related to Argentina, to identify the characteristics of these practices in the provinces of Mendoza and Santa Cruz. The specific objectives are to 1) characterize both activities at different levels of analysis (international, national and provincial); 2) describe the sociodemographic profile of consumers and the particularities of the destinations and experiences offered; and finally, 3) analyze the conflicts generated by these nature consumption circuits.

The initial assumption is that recreational hunting and fishing constitute specific forms of conspicuous consumption that express a process of expanding the frontiers of capital, whereby capitalism reaches out and encompasses non-human nature and transforms it into tourist products. Simultaneously, they create attractive wilderness areas for consumers in frontier areas by introducing non-native species.

The importance of analyzing these intersections stems from various imbalances and contrasts. Recently, research on rural tourism, ecotourism and nature-based tourism, as well as on the sustainable aspects of tourism, has increased. Fewer studies examine how nature and tourism co-produce, even in contexts where capital has made significant inroads into nature (Castree, 2008). Meanwhile, in spite of the tensions associated with the use and control of nature based on certain goods (water, landscape, among others) have been explored, wildlife occupies a lesser place. This situation occurs even though fishing and hunting tourism has increased (Martín-Delgado et al., 2022) and is reshaping power relations in the territories it reaches (Øian, 2013). At the same time, although luxury tourism has grown faster than mass tourism in recent

years and its new forms involve a strong connection with nature, the relation between tourism, luxury and conspicuous consumption has been little explored. Finally, while academic production from the global north on Africa, North America and Europe stands out in the field of hunting and fishing tourism (Komppula & Gartner, 2013), production on Latin America is lower, even though it is an emerging destination (Lovelock, 2008).

This introduction is followed by a description of the materials and methods, and then by a discussion of the links between tourism, luxury and nature, which serves as an analytical framework. The subsequent sections present the results covering hunting and fishing, hunting tourism and sport fishing at the international level, in Argentina, and in the provinces of Mendoza and Santa Cruz. Finally, the results are discussed and the conclusions are presented.

## Materials and methods

From a methodological perspective, the study uses a bibliographic review to analyze the scientific literature published up to 2023 (Martinovich, 2022). While the study proposes a brief bibliometric approach, it prioritizes the qualitative analysis of the articles. It explores a set of categories of analysis derived from theoretical tools, which include: the characteristics of hunting tourism and sport fishing, consumer profiles, the particularities that are valued in the destinations and experiences on offer, the conflicts that arise in the world of hunters and fishers, and the tensions that both activities pose for conservation.

The collection process was carried out between December 2023 and March 2024 using Scopus, which was then available through the Electronic Library of the Argentine Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mincyt, Spanish acronym for Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación). The search terms used in the title field were “hunting AND tourism” and “fishing AND tourism”. From an initial universe of 50 papers on hunting tourism and 81 on fishing, a general informative reading of the abstracts was conducted (Sautu, 2003). Based on this analysis, 18 and 10 documents were selected and analyzed, respectively. Research containing these words in the title but not addressing the issue as a subject of study, research on sea fishing and book chapters requiring payment of fees were excluded. The snowball technique applied to this set then enabled the incorporation of other research on the subject, and some that investigated capital-non-human nature tensions.

For the analysis in Argentina, the Mincyt Electronic Library was used, but the search for the terms “hunting tourism”, “fishing tourism” and “Argentina” in the title and keyword fields returned no results. For this reason, but especially because the discontinuation of access to Scopus made it impossible to adjust and redesign the searches, Google Scholar was used as an alternative. “Argentina”, “Mendoza” and “Santa Cruz” were associated with “hunting tourism” and “hunting reserve”.<sup>1</sup> From an initial set of 354 articles, a review of titles and abstracts allowed exclusion of those referring to other countries and those that only mentioned the terms as part of the available offerings. Thirteen papers were obtained for Argentina, none for Mendoza or Santa Cruz.

<sup>1</sup> A hunting reserve is an area—public or private—designated for hunting, regulated by law.

For fishing, “sport fishing tourism” and “fishing lodge”<sup>2</sup> were associated with “Argentina” and “fishing lodge” with “Mendoza” and “Santa Cruz”. The first association yielded 24 papers, but excluding those referring to other countries and the marine environment left only one for selection. The combination of “fishing lodge” and “Argentina” gave an initial result of 52 papers, but reading the abstracts reduced the selection to three. The associations ‘Mendoza’ and “Santa Cruz” with “fishing lodge” did not yield any results.

Finally, to analyze the characteristics of hunting tourism and sport fishing in Mendoza and Santa Cruz, hunting reserves and fishing lodges located in those provinces were used as units of observation. The businesses were identified through previous studies, key informants and online documentary research, and are described based on the information they provide on their websites. The categories of analysis were: the products and territories that constitute their offerings and the target audience.

## Tourism, luxury and nature

Critics have pointed out that tourism is a highly versatile activity, capable of incorporating a wide variety of spaces, goods and people into global market circuits (López Santillán & Marín Guardado, 2010). As a capitalist practice supported by nature, it perpetuates the conditions of structural violence that are inherent to it (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017) and offers an apparent solution to the “second contradiction” of capitalism (O’Connor, 2001) by transforming the environmental crises it has created into new commodities and sources of accumulation (Duffy, 2013).

Although the link between tourism and nature is not new, under the influence of neoliberalism it has become more complex and expanded. Tourism approaches nature to contemplate it, and now also to save it, while separating and conserving fragments that are then destined for consumption. This renewed approach, even though not entirely new, is primarily aimed at the conspicuous consumption of the upper classes, reviving neocolonial practices, reworking the pioneering ideology and promoting the opening of new frontiers (Moore, 2020).

Since these practices are aimed at the upper classes, luxury is part of the analytical scene in which these phenomena are inscribed. Characterized as a multidimensional, relative, subjective and contextual concept (Kauppinen-Räsänen et al., 2019), whose scope and content have changed over time, in recent years luxury has shifted from indicating the glamorous, classic or elegant to encompassing a wider range of goods, products and services. Thus, a small number of luxury items are now joined by intangible goods such as time, tranquility, nature and security. In the *travel and leisure* sector, luxury has become more discreet, exclusive and difficult to imitate (Eckhardt et al., 2015), focusing on unique and authentic experiences.

Hunting tourism fits into this category. Insofar as it eschews mass-market products in favor of high-end ones, it acts as a means of social communication and a marker

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<sup>2</sup> The word lodge originated in connection with hunting in Africa to refer to a refuge for outdoor enthusiasts. Today, it refers to a type of accommodation nestled in the countryside, blending in with the surroundings, offering personalized, high-quality services.

of class caught in an upward spiral of refinement (Gissibl, 2016), pushing the boundaries of commodification onto exotic goods available to only a select few (Bolling et al., 2023; Tomazos, 2020). The experiences it constructs, however, are a social product and conceal unfair production relations that affect both human and non-human lives, as well as certain territories from which surplus value is extracted. This expropriation characterizes conspicuous consumption, as it is consumed by a particular class exploiting others.

## From reproduction to ostentation: hunting and fishing

The bibliography consulted shows that hunting and fishing are ancestral practices closely associated with the social reproduction of people. As recreational activities linked to leisure and recreation, they have their origins in ancient Egypt (Osborn & Osbornova, 1998, cited in Loveridge et al., 2007). In Europe, they spread throughout the Middle Ages and the Modern Age (López Ontiveros, 1986) and were associated with the practices of the nobility (Bauer & Herr, 2004), where they played a role in the formation and strengthening of the elite (Szabó, 2023). Trophy hunting, meanwhile, has its roots in Greece and the Roman Empire (Molleda Herrán, 2022), while in Africa and Asia it dates back to the colonial era (Tomazos, 2020), where it emerged as a luxurious and ostentatious pastime of the upper classes, associated with the incursions of adventurers and travelers, especially English ones (Bauer & Herr, 2004). Fly fishing dates back to 200 AD, with records even among the Romans (Preston-Whyte, 2008).

As a luxury practice, hunting began to be commercialized in Europe in the first decade of the 19th century, peaked between 1930 and 1950, and declined a decade later, defeated by more contemplative and sustainable activities (Gissibl, 2016). In North America, sport hunting was already a source of tension between local and sport hunters by the end of the 19th century (Boulé & Mason, 2019), while in Africa, trophy hunting reinforced white domination and racial hierarchies, displacing indigenous hunters. It has also been pointed out that it is a deeply rooted colonial practice, sometimes an expression of masculinity, whiteness and authority (Green, 2021); an expression of class and conspicuous consumption (Gissibl, 2016). In fishing, conflicts recur, both over fishing rights (Stensland, 2010) and between commercial marine fishing and recreational river fishing (Salmi & Salmi, 2010).

In Latin America, hunting and fishing for leisure and recreation by privileged groups can be traced back to ancient Peru (Millones & Schaedel, 1980) and encompasses colonial and republican contexts. The chronicles of some travelers who toured the interior of Argentina between the early and mid-19th century are illustrative. For example, in the early 19th century, Haigh commented, “to amuse ourselves and kill time, we agreed to take turns with the shotgun and go out in search of guanacos...” (Sironi et al., 2013, p. 209).

The available literature also highlights that, in many cases, these practices were linked to land control, wildlife management and nature conservation. In some African countries, for example, wildlife management or eradication was a central pillar of colonial control of the territory (Kalvelage et al., 2023), while in the British colonies and the United States, hunters promoted the creation of hunting grounds, national

parks and reserves between the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a way to guarantee sufficient resources for the activity (Adams, 2004, cited in Loveridge et al., 2007). Even throughout the 19th century, in some countries in Europe and Latin America, recreational hunting led to the breeding, introduction and artificial propagation of huntable species (Szabó, 2023).

Nevertheless, in recent years, tourism's ability to turn capitalist crises into business opportunities has come under a new test. Sport fishing, hunting and trophy tourism are being revitalized in response to consumer demand from middle- and upper-class consumers, especially urban dwellers, in the United States and Europe (Lovelock, 2008). The driving forces behind this resurgence are diverse: the predominance of urban lifestyles and people's distancing from nature (Andersson Cederholm & Sjöholm, 2023); improvements in transportation, income and increased leisure time (Oltean & Gabor, 2021); changes in legal frameworks related to wildlife management (Kalvelage et al., 2023); and the reconversion of economic activities in rural areas (Martín-Delgado et al., 2022). Finally, while ethical controversies remain, hunting and sport fishing have achieved a certain repositioning as tools for conservation and rural development, and are striving to achieve equivalence with sustainable and philanthropic practices.

Both are part of a well-established niche in wildlife tourism. In both cases, movement is a hallmark of tourist activities. People travel to other countries and remote areas or to less distant areas, animals or their parts are moved before, during and after the trips (López López et al., 2023), the circulation of money, people and images connects continents, and the frontiers of capital advance on nature. Furthermore, these practices can take consumptive and non-consumptive forms, and therefore express different links between human and non-human animals. Consumptive practices encompass various forms of observation and interaction with non-human animals; non-consumptive practices involve killing, hunting or fishing.

As consumptive practices, hunting tourism and sport fishing share some similarities: the way they have evolved, their association with sustainable practices, the high level of specialization they require, their elitist nature and the hyper-regulation they entail, both nationally and internationally, regarding species and the sport itself. They differ, however, in key aspects, such as freedom and use of space (Barnes & Novelli, 2007). In fishing, the animal enjoys some freedom to bite or not, and its space is not in competition with other uses. In hunting, meanwhile, the animal can only escape, and it occurs in areas where it poses a threat to other activities, such as ecotourism.

Both hunting tourism and sport fishing are among the least researched forms of tourism (Żywiołek et al., 2023); hence, the importance of not only furthering their study but also of recovering the knowledge already gained. In this regard, the analysis of the 28 papers retrieved from Scopus reveals some peculiarities. On the one hand, there is a high concentration of authorship in countries geopolitically located in the global north, with only three from the global south (Mexico, Brazil, South Africa). The majority of articles on fishing are authored in Northern Europe, and those on hunting in Eastern Europe, with some authors from the us, Canada, China, Spain and New Zealand, among others. In a few cases, the works are co-authored by researchers from the global North and South, although in all cases the leading role falls to the North. Except for

two papers published in Portuguese, the remaining 26 are in English. The predominant disciplinary fields revolve around tourism, the environment and sustainability, a distribution that probably corresponds to current debates on the sustainability of the activity. The rest are scattered across journals on rural sociology, geography, sports and economics. Finally, in many cases, access to the research requires membership fees, a luxury that not all institutions in the South can afford.

### *Hunting tourism: international background in qualitative terms*

The review shows that hunting tourism is difficult to categorize. It includes both commercial and non-commercial activities, imbued with personal, informal and friendly relationships (Andersson Cederholm & Sjöholm, 2023). It involves an integrated set of products, services and values designed to meet the demand of consumer-hunters. The eligibility of destinations is determined by natural characteristics and the abundance and quality of prey, but also legal frameworks and regulatory regimes, the quality of services, hunting logistics and infrastructure, costs and accessibility to destinations, the professionalism and technical and social skills of guides and the possibility of experiencing adventures and new experiences, either alone or in interaction with other hunters (Martín-Delgado et al., 2022; Matejević et al., 2023; Żywiołek et al., 2023).

As for the profile of hunters, middle-aged men stand out, with sufficient time and money to devote to leisure and hunting. The presence of women, even though increasing, is still in the minority (Lovell, 2008). The values at stake are also diverse. While hunting motivates travel, other factors such as contact with nature and silence, socializing with friends, social recognition, emotions, the value of traditions and self-fulfillment are also important (Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Oltean & Gabor, 2021). For its part, although nature is always present, its value increases the wilder, more distant and more remote it is, and the more pristine its characteristics are (Green, 2021). These attributes have traditionally been associated with the notion of frontiers as a reversal of the pioneering ideology that many hunters reproduce.

The presence of different types of hunters within the same system explains conflicts, especially between local hunters and tourists. While for the former, hunting is a “noble art”, a traditional practice and an opportunity to connect with nature (Florido del Corral & Palenzuela, 2017; Nygård & Uthardt, 2011; Sánchez Garrido, 2006), the latter are associated with the recreational killing of animals. When money becomes involved, and hunting becomes artificial and anonymous (Sánchez Garrido, 2006), hunting tourists—foreigners and wealthy individuals—bring class conflicts to the fore and emerge as hedonistic individuals and transients in a landscape of consumption (Florido del Corral & Palenzuela, 2017; Øian, 2013; Øian & Skogen, 2016). Furthermore, because they lack the attachment to place that underpins the ethics of care, they may travel through areas of high ethical risk (Keiper & Wilner, 2025; Tickle & Von Essen, 2020).

The sustainability of hunting tourism is also controversial (Mbaiwa, 2018). Those who claim it is sustainable say that, when done at a pace that does not lead to declines in hunting species and that helps with pest control, it contributes to

wildlife conservation. In addition to having a spillover effect on the territory (Martín-Delgado et al., 2022), it encourages the management, protection and reintroduction of species (Naidoo et al., 2016), multiplies jobs, promotes productive diversification and fosters local traditions and identities (Florido del Corral & Palenzuela, 2017) and intergenerational and interpersonal relationships (Rengifo Gallego, 2008). For others, the picture is less clear. Despite it generates income, jobs and infrastructure, it deepens power relations and unequal distribution (Thomsen et al., 2022), increases competition for natural resources between locals and outsiders (Nygård & Uthardt, 2011; Øian & Skogen, 2016), and protects the species it commercializes but leaves others unprotected, while the selective killing of certain individuals has effects at the population level (Deere, 2011; Rashid et al., 2020).

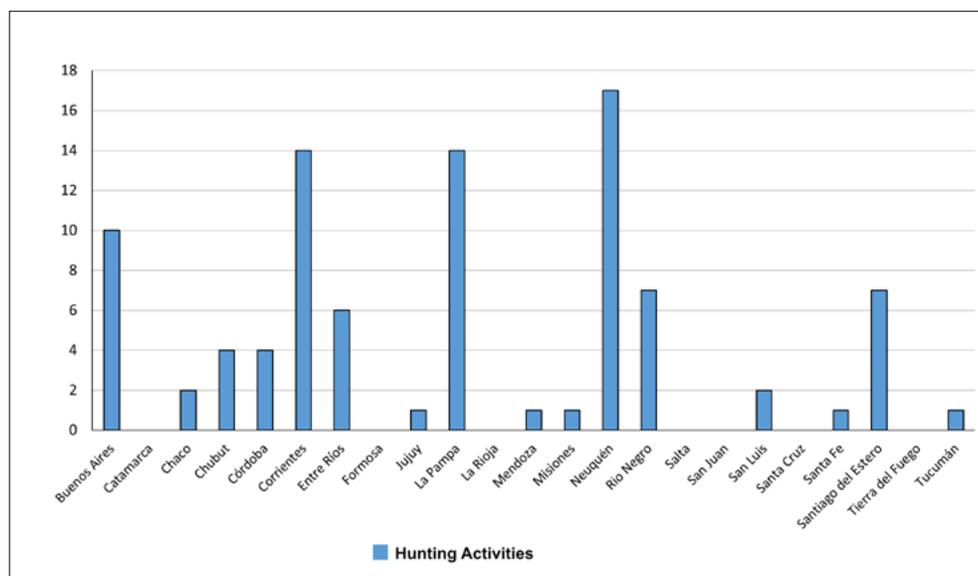
Finally, although hunting is associated with the leisure and recreational practices of the upper classes, its link to luxury consumption has only recently been addressed in the global north (Gissibl, 2016) and indirectly in the global south (Torres et al., 2018). There, it is highlighted that it offers opportunities for adventure and “unique experiences” in “authentic” contexts, but these are confined to a bubble of first-class rusticity within fortified, secure spaces.

### *Hunting tourism in Argentina*

In Argentina, rural and nature tourism has been growing since the beginning of the 21st century, associated with the devaluation of the Argentine currency, the decline in agricultural activity (Vaquero et al., 1998), the deterioration of more traditional domestic destinations, and the increase in international demand for specific forms of tourism (Gordziejczuk & Mikkelsen, 2023b). In 2018, there were 1 411 agricultural holdings in the country that included rural tourism activities, 91 of which offered hunting (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2021), distributed across different provinces (see Figure 1). As for establishments that receive visitors, which in both hunting and fishing tend to be lodges, they show an increase between 2016 and 2023, with fishing/hunting/winery lodges increasing from 15 to 46 establishments, and from 127 rooms and 343 beds to 443 rooms and 1 285 beds in total (Sistema de Información Turística de la Argentina, 2024).

An analysis of existing research on hunting tourism in Argentina reveals a limited number of studies, which are practically invisible in Scopus. However, most associate the activity with international and high-income tourism, luxury is only addressed indirectly (Torres et al., 2018). Of the results obtained in Google Scholar, only one study investigates trends at the national level (Gordziejczuk & Mikkelsen, 2023b), while the rest are case studies addressing specific situations in different provinces, notably Buenos Aires (Caruso et al., 2023; Gordziejczuk & Mikkelsen, 2023a; Vaquero et al., 1998), La Pampa (Alfageme, 2008; Comerci, 2016, 2018; Schulz, 2020), Córdoba (Andruvetto, 2009; Bucher et al., 2006; Chaldari Caballero & Suau, 2018; Coria, 2007), and Santa Fe (Casella & Fermanelli, 2022). In disciplinary terms, research from the field of tourism predominates, focusing on hunting or rural tourism, with fewer from geography and even fewer from ecology.

**Figure 1. Agricultural and livestock farms offering tourism and recreational activities, including hunting, by province. Argentina, 2018**



Source: created by the authors based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (2021)

The predominant topics of study focus on Argentina's potential to attract this type of visitor. It is noted that the country has areas of high ecological and cultural value to support this specific form of tourism, while also having less restrictive laws and broader hunting quotas than Europe and the United States, as well as fluctuating exchange rates that can favor international tourism (Andruveto, 2009). In some cases, the growth of hunting tourism and hunting grounds is explained by the low price of land and the advance of capital frontiers by foreign groups (Comerci, 2016, 2018).

The largest volume of tourists comes from the United States, Canada and Europe. Within Europe, most come from Spain (Coria, 2007), although many also come from France, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands (Chaldari Caballero & Suau, 2018). In general, they are men aged 40 or older with high purchasing power who travel in groups or alone (Caruso et al., 2023; Coria, 2007). Domestic tourists come from large urban centers; they are also middle-aged men with incomes that allow them to afford the activity (vehicles, weapons and free time). International hunters depend on companies—domestic or foreign—connected to a vast network that offers the service. Sometimes, with representatives in Europe, they offer package deals that include airfare, transportation and accommodation in enclaves (Comerci, 2018; Schulz, 2020) and, in some cases, arrivals are made at their own airfields on private flights (Chaldari Caballero & Suau, 2018).

Without greater certainty about the income generated by this activity,<sup>3</sup> its socio-ecological externalities are extensive. These include lead pollution associated with hunters' shots, the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, and almost no coordination with surrounding territories (Andruveto, 2009; Bucher et al., 2006).

Specifically, hunting tourism is not identified in the province of Santa Cruz, as the activity is not authorized. In Mendoza, the Observatory for Sustainable Tourism, which is part of the Mendoza Tourism Agency (Emetur, Spanish acronym for Ente Mendoza Turismo), estimates that between 2019 and 2025, tourists who engaged in hunting and fishing activities increased from 0.06% to 0.17% of the total, which to date would represent about 6 000 tourists per year. Although there are no data on the actual distribution of hunting tourists in the province or their preferred hunting sites, in 2018, Mendoza had one hunting reserve, and in 2025, it had two, both promoting deer and wild boar hunting. While the presence of wild boar is due to introduction and dispersal processes that began in the early 20th century, the presence of deer is much more recent and is due to the introduction of specimens into both reserves, neither of which was established more than 10 years ago.

In short, these are reserves aimed at an international audience that introduced invasive exotic species to shape the non-human natural environment, which would later become a trophy for tourists from the global north. Both offer hunting experiences and outdoor activities in vast fields and luxurious lodges. They also provide professional guides, nature experiences, weapons, ammunition and trophy preparation. One adds gourmet food derived from hunting and its own airstrip. In both, references to pristine nature are recurrent; one invites tourists to venture into the Andes, the other to immerse themselves in a captivating native forest. Although the hunting species are the same, the experiences are constructed differently. On a website available only in English, one uses English calligraphy and an anonymous, refined style, with images of mountain landscapes, with and without free-roaming animals—the second appeals to pioneer nostalgia and a more direct style. On a website available in Spanish and English, there are abundant images of animals as trophy prey and of hunters in camouflage clothing. In 2019, journalistic sources estimated the approximate cost of hunting at USD 650 per day, in addition to the trophy price (between USD 200 and USD 20 000 depending on its weight, size and quality).

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<sup>3</sup> The economic impact of an activity is measured through registered employment. With regard to tourism, this can be seen in employment in accommodation. According to official statistics, accommodation services in Argentina are covered by 62 824 jobs, 6 051 companies, and 7 117 establishments. In Mendoza, these involve 4 685 jobs, distributed across 301 companies and 348 establishments, while in Santa Cruz there are 1 873 jobs in 180 companies and 217 establishments (Ministerio de Economía & Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2022). Unfortunately, it is not possible to access more detailed data that would reveal the number of jobs linked to fishing and hunting tourism accommodation. Another drawback is the difficulty in classifying lodges. The categories used in official statistics often only consider star-rated hotels and parahotels (Sistema de Información Turística de la Argentina, 2024), sometimes adding apart-hotels and boutique hotels (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2025).

### *Sport fishing tourism: international background in qualitative terms*

Fishing also evolved from a subsistence activity to a sport associated with leisure and free time. It is currently defined as a recreational activity that involves a trip of at least 24 hours away from the fisher's residence in search of a fishing experience (Komppula et al., 2022).

In its early days, fishing tourism was influenced by the preferences of the British Empire (Borch et al., 2008). The first recorded fishing tournament dates back to the late 19th century and is associated with tuna fishing in the United States. Advances in transportation and communication, the distribution of vacations throughout the year, and the growing demand to remain active during that period were key aspects in its expansion. In turn, the crisis in the fishing industry promoted product diversification and favored recreational fishing in marine environments and large rivers.

The environments, types, and classifications of the activity have multiplied and become more complex, both in practice and in study. Freshwater sport fishing differs from saltwater fishing (Lovelock, 2008), and there are different types of tourists: those who see it as just another form of entertainment at their destination and those who plan their trip around it. The latter group, which specializes in recreational fishing (Bryan, 1977), has distinct equipment, skills and preferences (Braudes-Araújo et al., 2016). Among the elements used are bait—live or dead—and lures, with fly fishing among the main ones. Currently, fly fishing is one of the most attractive and important sports worldwide. As a specialized form of fishing, it increases the complexity of classification. Once the animal is removed from the water, it can be released or killed. Some authors debate whether catch-and-release constitutes a consumptive activity, since the specimen is consumed only for the short time it remains out of the water (Lovelock, 2008). Nonetheless, the injuries and physical exhaustion suffered during the struggle with the fisher can lead to their death and consumption.

Even though freshwater sport fishing is more widespread than saltwater fishing (Lovelock, 2008), scientific research has focused more on the latter. Freshwater fishing is approached from the perspective of rural tourism, nature-based tourism, ecotourism or recreational fishing. Even though not abundant, studies that analyze recreational fishing from a tourism perspective (Borch et al., 2008) address salmon fishing in the Nordic countries, the motivations of fishers and the economic impact of the activity. Recurring themes include satisfaction, preferences and the value of experiences (Arlinghaus & Mehner, 2005; Lankia et al., 2022). “High-threshold” anglers, mostly middle-aged white men, mainly Americans, are willing to invest large sums of money to catch a huge fish (Golden et al., 2019). These consumers, eager to catch fish and experience the exotic (Komppula et al., 2022), seek specific experiences of tranquility, solitude and natural beauty.

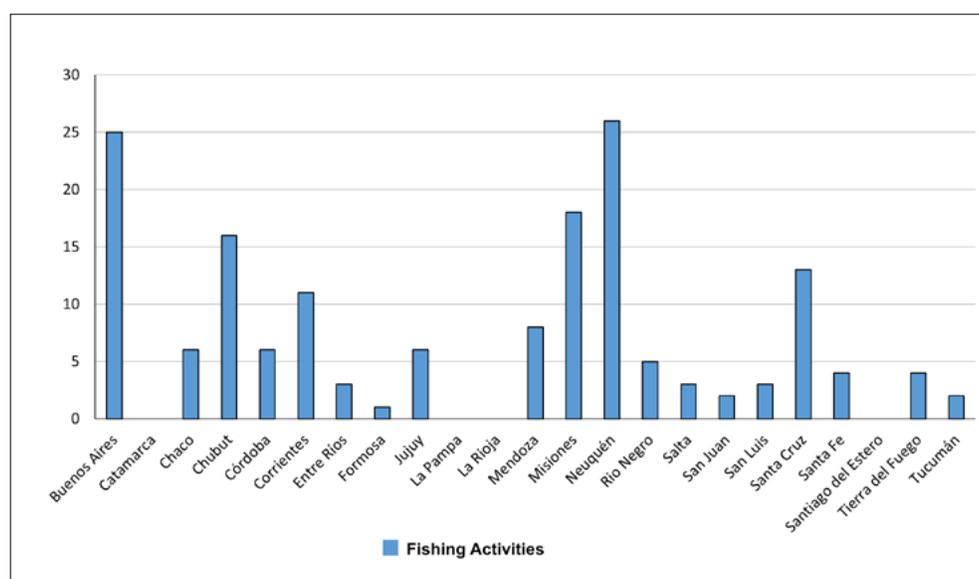
Another line of research focuses on types of fishing and tourism based on specific public policies (Violin & Alves, 2017), as well as measuring the impact of sport fishing and the establishment of lodges on the regional economy (Butler et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2003; Kauppila & Karjalainen, 2012). The link between fishing and mobility has also been explored based on the establishment of second homes (Seppänen & Toivonen, 2010), the promotional activities of tourist agencies (Lovelock, 2009), and catch-and-release fishing as a form of recreational ecotourism (Zwirn et al., 2005). From a more political perspective, conflicts between commercial marine fishing and

recreational river salmon fishing have been considered (Salmi & Salmi, 2010), as well as those surrounding the fishing rights of riparian owners (Stensland, 2010).

### *Fishing tourism in Argentina*

In 2018, there were 162 tourist and recreational agricultural operations in Argentina that included fishing activities, distributed across different provinces (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2021; see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Agricultural and livestock farms offering tourism and recreational activities, including fishing, by province. Argentina, 2018**



Source: created by the authors based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (2021)

The establishments that receive this type of visitor go beyond the lodge typology, particularly in Patagonia, where sport fishing is linked to livestock farms known as *estancias*. Considering this type of establishment, the available data indicate a slight increase at the national level between 2016 and 2023, from 18 establishments with 142 rooms and 318 beds to 19 with 145 rooms and 326 beds, respectively (Sistema de Información Turística de la Argentina, 2024).

Research on sport fishing tourism, and particularly fishing lodges, is scarce in Argentina. Sport fishing is predominantly treated tangentially, as part of tourism offerings and marketing strategies aimed at positioning a destination. Only two theses (Contreras, 2019; Mezzalira, 2013) and one article on Neuquén (Suárez, 2012) were identified, as well as one thesis on Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and the South Atlantic Islands (Bonsangue, 2019). One study examines the impact of social media on significant sport-fishing experiences and identifies the area between Tierra del Fuego

and the central Andes as a favorite destination for international fly fishers (Mezzalira, 2013). In this case, the luxury of a lodge is measured by its location and the services it provides.

From a critical perspective, one study examines the post-tourism landscape of Junín de los Andes, a popular fly fishing destination (Contreras, 2019). Historically recognized as an elitist activity, it is now practiced on riverside ranches and attracts foreign tourists and those from large cities, resulting in a movement “from the airport to the countryside and from the countryside to the airport” (Contreras, 2019, p. 52). Ranches converted into lodges do not generate benefits for surrounding communities and, in many cases, fishing is linked to irregular land subdivisions that do not comply with current legislation. Another study examines fishing within the rural tourism activities on offer in Aluminé, Neuquén (Suárez, 2012), where the introduction of sporting activities is linked to the gradual conversion of Patagonian ranches to rural tourism, a strategy that “recreates aristocratic leisure practices” (Suárez, 2012, p. 91). It reaffirms the speculative use of a territory that is functional according to external logics.

Finally, the changes in tourism resulting from neoliberal decentralization in the 1990s have been analyzed (Bonsangue, 2019). In Río Grande, a town known as the international capital of trout fishing, where salmonids have been fished since 1935, lodges were built to provide exclusive services. The costs of accessing these exclusive accommodations, which range from USD 5 000 to USD 6 000 per week, show that this is elite tourism, consuming high-end recreational activities.

In several cases, the research focuses on provinces in Argentine Patagonia. This area offers features prized by elite tourism, such as the possibility of finding solitude for hundreds of kilometers and access to large lakes and small, crystal-clear streams teeming with wildlife. Many of the existing lodges are the result of conversion processes. In some, fishing complements livestock farming, while in others, the properties are rented to specialized companies that offer sporting activities.

In Santa Cruz, online documentary research identified 12 lodges dedicated to salmon fishing that offer accommodation, food, transportation and guides. Several are located on the Santa Cruz plateau and in the Andean region, showcasing the Patagonian steppe and forest. Although most are national providers, the digital platforms are in English and even adapt place names to international usage (for example, Lago Strobel to Jurassic Lake). Providers emphasize their unique location in a remote area and the quality of their services, such as professional chefs and Argentine gourmet products. Some have their own airstrips. In addition, the transparency of the waters, the various fishing programs, and the unforgettable experience of hunting “fine wild specimens” in an isolated but accessible environment are presented as advantages.

As with hunting, there is also a clear link between the growth of recreational and commercial fishing and the stocking of species in bodies of water and waterways. Around 1904, rainbow trout from the United States, Denmark and Germany were introduced (Riva Rosssi et al., 2004), and until 1913, a fish farm operated in Santa Cruz to supply the region (Baigun, 2001). Other species of interest arrived without direct intervention, such as Chinook salmon, which arrived in the 1980s from Chilean salmon farms (Becker et al., 2007). Nevertheless, few studies have analyzed this type of consequence for native species (Pascual et al., 2002).

The management of invasive alien species poses contradictions, especially in national parks. On the one hand, efforts are underway to halt the spread of introduced

salmonids in Perito Moreno National Park, one of the few areas with river basins free of this species (Ponzi, 2024). On the other hand, high-end international tourism and catch-and-release sport fishing for an introduced salmonid are encouraged at a facility in Los Glaciares National Park. Prices for this experience range from USD 4 990 for half a week to USD 8 890 for a full week.

There are no lodges in Mendoza dedicated entirely to sport fishing; however, local providers offer transportation, permits, fishing equipment, specialized bilingual guides and meals. Depending on the time of year, fishing takes place in reservoirs, rivers and mountain streams, sometimes within larger developments, including those dedicated to rural and hunting tourism, which offer accommodation. As in the case of Santa Cruz, their websites have English versions. The experiences offered combine access to the wildest places and the clearest waters of Mendoza, with Argentine barbecue and select wines to round off the day.

## Discussion and conclusions

Aiming to explore possible mechanisms for incorporating non-human nature into the market, this study examined academic research focused on the analysis of hunting tourism and sport fishing. Subsequently, it reviewed scientific literature on Argentina and, finally, described some of the characteristics these practices acquire in Mendoza and Santa Cruz.

Among the main findings, the high concentration of available studies in research teams and journals in the global north stands out, as does a relative concentration of case studies in countries with a long tradition of both hunting and fishing. Some of the main topics of analysis coincide with traditional topics in tourism studies, such as the characterization of supply and demand, debates over sustainability and the economic and social impacts of the activity. To a lesser extent, the cultural and heritage dimensions of hunting in some regions are sometimes addressed. From a critical perspective, the lines of inquiry recover the notion of boundaries in both the short- and medium-term, focusing on conflicts, especially between local and foreign hunters or fishers, and emphasizing the problematic aspects of both conservation and local populations. Despite in many cases hunting tourism and sport fishing are considered activities aimed at satisfying the demands of the upper classes, the link to luxury or conspicuous consumption does not constitute a significant analytical axis.

Although Scopus rarely captures Argentine production, the trend is repeated with some nuances. Several studies focus on characterizing supply and demand and confirm the country's greatest attractions for hunting and fishing tourists. Others investigate—and raise objections to—the link between tourism and sustainability, especially given the impact that these activities have on other non-human forms of nature. As for the tourism ventures on offer nationally, several studies find enclave dynamics, while others point to recurring violations of current legislation and control mechanisms as paradoxical attractions of the destination. Links with local territories, although investigated in some cases, are not among the main concerns, nor are links to ostentatious consumption by the international upper classes.

Even in this context, existing academic research, both national and international, and a detailed look at the processes unfolding in two Argentine provinces, reveal that

both hunting tourism and sport fishing are causing profound changes in non-human nature. The conversion of some animals into central components of these destinations' attractions places them in a paradoxical position: as part of nature, they enter the market not directly but as central parts of the experiences tourism makes available to consumers. In this way, non-human animals are torn from their natural habitats and transformed into commodities such as hunting quotas and trophies. A manifestation of class domination and the subjugation of one species over another, trophies are a symbol of victory and power, a fetish of a sporting practice, and an expression of war. Trophies have relational, symbolic, and monetary value, determined by the size of the specimen or its parts. This transformation expresses two central issues: capitalism's enormous generative, creative and flexible capacity; and its inability to produce the human and non-human natures on which it inexorably depends (Tsing, 2015).

At the same time, it is a movement that pushes the boundaries of commodification (Moore, 2020), not only of the animals that become prey, but also of the territories that contain them, due to the position they gain as areas that supply cheap resources. In this new capitalist era, where luxury and the contradictions of capital are becoming more pronounced, both hunters and fishers are becoming travelers and conquerors who exploit certain territorial advantages in disadvantaged areas. The case of Argentina is quite telling in this regard. It is positioning itself as an emerging destination because it has "remote" and "wild" areas, a large number of hunting species, tourist infrastructure and services, but also more extensive hunting and fishing permits, less strict regulations and more lax controls. It is an isolated but accessible destination, rustic but exclusive, a frontier with vague ethical and spatial boundaries.

Furthermore, these are previously conditioned territories. If nature is considered one of the conditions for the development of hunting and fishing tourism (O'Connor, 2001), a preliminary step is to evaluate its receptivity and adapt destinations to consumer preferences. In Argentina, this process began in the early 20th century with the introduction of the first exotic hunting species and continued with the stocking of fish in southern rivers and lakes. In this respect, wildlife tourism, but particularly hunting and fishing, could represent a series of links in the accumulation circuit as "backward" links, as preparation/conversion of the country into a huge supplier of natural resources for the wider expansion of capital. In short, it would be a territory of accumulation (Luxemburg, 1968) that capital incorporates into the circuits as suppliers of resources and markets for its products, conditioned by the state, ready for consumption by the upper classes of the global north, and a condition for the expanded reproduction of a particular fraction of financial capital, the real estate sector and international tourism.

It is also clear that hunting and fishing tourism avoids traditional products and synthesizes high-end characteristics. It puts people first, makes room for "adventures" and provides "unique" experiences in "wild" contexts. Hunting and fishing tourists also claim to play a role in conservation and local development, enabling them to avoid ethical sanctions while maintaining personalized experiences, comfortable accommodations and first-class services. In their relentless pursuit of authenticity, tourists flee an increasingly commercialized world and, even though they know they are entering a simulacrum, their dream of accessing fragments of a vanished reality finds its apotheosis in the authenticity of wild nature. What could be wilder, after all, than those untamed animals that even pose a risk to spectators?

Nevertheless, it is not only wild animals that are behind these forms of tourism; it is the Western charisma some of them possess (Gissibl, 2016), the reaffirmation of masculinities, and a class practice articulated, disarticulated and rearticulated with tourism, sometimes reduced to nothing more than adrenaline. In other words, if the search for authenticity in tourism is an illusion that disappears the moment you arrive at your destination or experience (Tomazos, 2020), this nature tourism breaks the rules every time death materializes. Even so, there is a behind-the-scenes reality that escapes notice: co-production practices carried out by operators and environmental imbalances that remain hidden and undermine the illusions of sustainability and ethical behavior that keep many hunters safe (Tickle & Von Essen, 2020).

Similarly, the expansion of luxury tourism to exotic, authentic and wild destinations reveals the central role that spatial dimensions play in these forms of tourism. It accesses and uses nature, landscape and culture. The activity is based on closed spaces, such as lodges, ranches and resorts, sometimes fortified, always exclusive, with a secure interior that—paradoxically—exalts the natural wildness of the outside. These ventures also bring to life the notion of *terras nulis*. They are located in frontier territories, separated from the more established tourist routes, in natural environments that are portrayed as majestic and empty, spaces to be conquered within reach of the pioneers.

Finally, death is part of the appeal, a death that derives from a life rooted and co-produced in the place. Furthermore, in hunting and fishing, nature plays an ambivalent role. The same nature that attracts people with its grandeur, beauty and diversity is the one that holds the creatures captured and sacrificed. The nature that acts as a catapult for adventures and experiences is the one that protects itself, and that protection that saves is the same that strips hunters and fishers of sin and puts them “in common union” with wildlife.

Although this study was intended as an initial approach to hunting and fishing tourism in Argentina, it highlights the need to further investigate the links between tourism and luxury in the context of consumption, as well as in dialogue with production and distribution. This will make it possible not only to focus on the high-income tourists who make up the target audience, but also to reveal the mechanisms involved in the generation of income for such consumption, in the goods that become commodities, in the selective power that capital exerts over destinations, in the creators of enclaves, the states that build infrastructure and legal frameworks attractive to capital, the workers and local populations influenced by the ventures and the multifaceted effects they have on non-human nature. In short, it is necessary to consider luxury tourism as a space of production, distribution and consumption, tied to the territory and connecting territories, nature and capital, both in Argentina and in other Latin American countries.

Finally, it is necessary to point out some limitations of this work. The main restriction was the inability to access the full range of existing academic publications. Even if this is usually due to the mediation of opaque technology (Martinovich, 2022), in Argentina there are other factors, probably shared with other countries in the global south. Access to international research, especially to that published in journals in the global north, is restricted by the inability to afford subscription costs. While the causes of these imbalances are beyond the scope of this study, it is important to ensure that knowledge exchange does not become, as with hunting and fishing, a luxury activity available only to scientists in the global north.

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