

The Amazon and the art of income in the environmental crisis

La Amazonía y el arte del ingreso en la crisis ambiental

A Amazônia e a arte da renda na crise ambiental



Jodival Maurício da Costa¹
Federal University of Amapá, Brazil

Edilene Lira da Silva²
University of São Paulo, Brazil

Abstract

Two objectives are integrated in this work. The first objective is to discuss the diffusion of values regarding social-environmental responsibility in the current public sphere and how they confer comparative advantages in obtaining differentiated income by companies. The second objective is to apply this discussion to the Amazon by exemplifying the relationship that Natura company develops with traditional Pan-Amazon communities, as well as the notion of sustainability and how the Amazon can be a strategic region when it comes to environmental crises. The methodology used was based on scientific articles, magazine publications directly linked to the environmental balance of the companies and reports of the Natura company that were published in their website. We concluded that the way to produce market singularities is increasingly due to the combination of production and value diffusion in the public sphere, including the symbolic appropriation of the strategic spaces of production.

Keywords: Amazon; Environmental crisis; Art of income; Environmental and market

- 1 Geographer. PhD in Environmental Science (University of São Paulo - USP). Professor at the Federal University of Amapá. Posgraduate Program in Border Studies and the Posgraduate Program in Geography. Email: jodival.costa@gmail.com.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4365-367X>
- 2 Architect and urban planner. Master in Urban and Regional Planning. PhD student in Architecture and Urbanism in the Posgraduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism at the University of São Paulo. Email: edilene.lira@usp.br.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3859-1371>

Resumen

Dos objetivos se integran en este trabajo. El primero es discutir la difusión de valores sobre responsabilidad socioambiental en la esfera pública actual y cómo estos confieren ventajas comparativas en la obtención de ingresos diferenciados por parte de las empresas. El segundo es aplicar esta discusión a la Amazonía ejemplificando la relación que la empresa Natura desarrolla con las comunidades tradicionales panamazónicas, así como la noción de sustentabilidad y cómo la Amazonía puede ser una región estratégica frente a crisis ambientales. La metodología utilizada se basó en artículos científicos, publicaciones en revistas directamente vinculadas al balance ambiental de las empresas e informes de la empresa Natura que fueron publicados en su sitio web. Concluimos que la forma de producir singularidades de mercado se debe cada vez más a la combinación de producción y difusión de valor en la esfera pública, incluyendo la apropiación simbólica de los espacios estratégicos de producción.

Palabras clave: Amazonía; Crisis ambiental; Arte del ingreso; ambiental y de mercado

Resumo

Dois objetivos estão integrados neste trabalho. A primeira é discutir a difusão de valores sobre responsabilidade socioambiental na esfera pública atual e como estes conferem vantagens comparativas na obtenção de receitas diferenciadas pelas empresas. A segunda é aplicar essa discussão à Amazônia, exemplificando a relação que a empresa Natura desenvolve com as comunidades tradicionais da Pan-Amazônia, bem como a noção de sustentabilidade e como a Amazônia pode ser uma região estratégica diante de crises ambientais. A metodologia utilizada foi baseada em artigos científicos, publicações em revistas diretamente ligados ao balanço ambiental das empresas e relatórios da empresa Natura publicados em seu site. Concluímos que o modo de produzir singularidades de mercado se deve cada vez mais à combinação de produção e difusão de valor na esfera pública, incluindo a apropriação simbólica de espaços estratégicos de produção.

Palavras-chave: Amazônia; Arte de renda, meio ambiente e mercado; Crise ambiental.

Introduction

The art of income represents a mark of the capitalist mode of production. It is the differential that allows to extract income outside the considered standard in historical period. For a long time, mainly from the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the art of income was represented by the extraction of monopolist income, which implied control over a business branch or a specific commodity. In this work, we defend the thesis that, although the art of income still resorts to price control strategies to obtain profit advantages, the period marked by the crisis of reflexive modernity (Beck, 2011), second modernity (Giddens, 1991) or liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001), very close versions presented by the three authors, are distinguished by the fact that the art of income is sought by the insertion of values cultivated in the public sphere of the productive process.

This work has two objectives that are integrated. The first is to discuss the approximation of companies with values cultivated in the current public sphere – environmental and social responsibilities –, and how they can present comparative advantages in obtaining differentiated income. The second objective is to apply this discussion regarding the Amazon, from which we use as an example the relationship that the Natura cosmetics company develops with the traditional communities of the Pan-Amazonia, the notion of sustainability explored by the company and the Amazon region itself as a strategic place in environmental crisis

We inform that this work does not address the legal framework of the relationship between business and traditional communities, nor regarding the use of Amazonian biodiversity. Our interest is exclusively in raising questions about entrepreneurial behavior and capitalism itself in order to adapt to the environmental crisis and to extract income as a characteristic of our time, which we call the crisis period, since the crisis is no longer cyclical and it becomes chronic, besides presenting itself in a plural form.

The art of income during the crisis period

We start from the conception that, in the current period, even with greater vehicles of manifestation regarding the freedom of producers and consumers of goods, which is made possible by the expansion of the mobility field of ideas, products, services and people, the market still allows the extraction of privileged income.

At this point, the text highlights the discourses about culture, nature and strategic regions – considered inseparably – in the Amazon as components of market reserve extraction, also used in this work as income exclusivity, in scenarios of global competitiveness.

One of the marks of appreciation of local cultures today is how the process of globalization relates to certain localities and their symbolic content. And, from this, how this relation produces income advantages in the association between culture and market, where the evidence of the first becomes referential for a product, a value differential with impact on the consumers choice. To better expose our idea of privileged income, we will introduce monopoly income, precisely to establish a parameter of differentiation.

In general, it is considered that monopoly rents are shaped by the exclusive control that certain actors exert in the market, allowing to increase

their income flow for a long time, and that is characterized by its crucial aspect of singularity and particularity, unique and irreversible. [Harvey \(2005\)](#) argues about two situations in which such phenomenon is more recurrent. The first corresponds to the frame in which a given actor has the control of natural resources of a certain locality and thus can link the actions of those who need to use such resources or use such locality to the interests of their controller. Harvey gives the example of a vineyard that associates the quality of the product with the region in which it is produced, referring to the quality of the land for the cultivation of a specific grape, to lend a singularity and particularity to the merchandise. In this situation, income is a consequence of the monopoly price.

Yet a localized version of such extraction are the centralities. The real estate market, for example, draws heavily on the artifice of amenities such as green areas, ease of transportation – such as subway stations – to obtain such advantages. In this sense, indirect cases of monopoly income are constituted, since the land, the natural resource or the place of singular quality are not traded, but the merchandise or service produced through its use. In the first case, it is considered a situation of direct use, because one takes advantage directly of the land or resource.

The notion of monopoly income carries, in [Harvey \(2005\)](#) sense, two contradictions. The first concerns the fact that, while recognizing that singularity and particularity are important factors in lending special qualities to a given product, the requirement for marketability implies that no product can be so unique as to escape a monetary calculation as the main means of allocating market. In this respect, the more tradable these items are, the more they lose the ability to generate monopoly income. Thus, in order for this type of income to materialize, it is necessary to find ways to keep goods and values unique.

The second contradiction is related to neoliberalism, because it is argued that due to the great competition that was established in this model, monopoly income could no longer materialize – because monopolies would not be tolerated. In other words, what stands out most in this contradiction is the prerogative that competition would nullify any form of monopoly, since it would be the free competition to maintain the rules of the game.

[Harvey \(2005\)](#) argues, contrary to this maxim, that greater free market and formation of income exclusivity would be incompatible. Using the

concepts of Karl Marx, the author writes that every form of competition tends towards monopoly or oligopoly. Among other factors that add to this situation is the fact that capitalism always cultivates some kind of market advantage with the potential to generate monopoly income. From this point of view, it is argued that the market always tends to cultivate strategic spaces of exclusivity or expansion of the reach of a product, conclaiming its peculiar characteristics. The current period would not be an exclusivity compared with the process of accumulation of the past, although it should not be denied that the conditions of accumulation are very different, with new strategies of companies and states.

That said, we infer that in some cases one can only play with some advantages that a given historical period offers for the extraction of privileged income, not necessarily monopolistic, since the objective is not to generate exclusivity, but only to impute values that increase the advantages of the company in the marketing of a product. Here we discuss the impact of major events on market behavior - with emphasis on the environmental crisis - and the local developments of this great event, such as impacts on the culture and regions directly or indirectly linked to it.

In the 1970s, Foucault (2008) argued that the advent of neoliberalism produced changes in the social framework ordering from the exercise of power over the population. He emphasizes that classical liberalism was anchored in a market strategy that sought a free space in an already given political society, whose ordering began to gain range with the implantation of governmentality of the eighteenth century. But “the problem of neoliberalism is, on the contrary, how the global exercise of political power can be regulated on the basis of the principles of a market economy” (Foucault, 2008, p. 181).

Therefore, we observe that the challenge of neoliberalism is another: it is to act in a process of regulation in a period of constant crisis, which implies to the market itself a greater need of skills and strategies so that the conception of a product or merchandise can have a time longer than the period of stability. And in this respect, globalization produces spaces of action in what can be considered as a monopoly in the context of classical liberalism and, perhaps, until the first half of the twentieth century, when it undergoes transformation in the context of neoliberalism to continue offering commercial advantage.

The current period deals with two types of crisis which, although inseparable, can be differentiated. The crisis that appears periodically in some country or region of the globe and which, due to the systemic nature of financial relations today, reverberates in the global space, with greater or lesser impacts. The other is of civilizational nature, more specifically of modern court civilization, considered the environmental crisis. In the last three decades, through the strategy of incorporating this environmental crisis, capitalism finds new bases of accumulation by the symbolic use of environment, nature and its associations regarding goods, in an exercise of extraction of privileged income.

The price of a commodity is associated with the values it carries, which establishes itself in the relation between production and the public sphere. [Marx \(2009\)](#) points out that income is relative, that is, there is no ready register, because for such a record to have a practical value it is necessary for it to remain in the conditions of the present society, not subject to the changes of the different historical periods. In this sense, one of the ways to continue generating market reserve, even in the current scenario of globalization, is to seek what new values capitalism can incorporate to continue generating a type of imbalance between the same or similar products, which can guarantee competitive advantages. It is, as [Lefebvre \(2002\)](#) argues, the very survival of capitalism, which always takes a chameleonic form to introduce new value arrangements and guarantee high rates of profit. Our understanding points out that the competitive factor, as well as the “progress” brought by globalization in the field of transportation and communication, directly interfere in the past forms of obtaining monopoly income - especially those derived from location advantages, due to privileges in the circulation of products, but did not eliminate the mechanisms that allow the insertion of income privileges in the competition system.

Nevertheless, [Marx \(2009\)](#) argument, regarding the contextualization of both capitalism and its mechanisms of accumulation, is valid so we can think of new forms of obtaining privileged income that materialize in the current period. In this sense, this privileged income should not be sought exclusively in cases in which economic actors have a market exclusivity, that is, a sale reserve of their products because of the singularities it possesses with factors such as quality of a soil, as in the case of the monopoly income obtained by a wine-producing region such as Bordeaux, France ([Harvey, 2005](#)).

A situation in which the mechanism of income obtaining still develops is through the valuation of the culture, the environment and the strategic regions. The current environmental crisis, for example, reverberates in traditional cultures to lend differentiated value to the product, gaining singularity and particularity in a space-time marked by the market's capacity to deal with this crisis. Cultural practices, which carry a status that is consistent with this crisis period, gain a privileged social license which, from the 1990s onwards, have achieved greater effect as an ideal type of consumption and consumers and, therefore, as an ideal type of merchandise.

This meets the neoliberal economic maxim that it is necessary to intervene in the market conditions and not in its mechanism. In other words, it is a matter of maintaining the genesis of capitalism, but also transfiguring according to the conditions of the period. In this sense, Foucault (2008) argues that one of the fundamental actions of modernity, among which, in terms of commodity, can best be observed in the neoliberalism period - the so-called ordering actions - is not to act directly on market mechanisms, acting on prices for example, but it is about acting in the frame - in the population. From this, acting in the population means acquiring knowledge of the population content to produce adherence between the interests of the public, the State and the producers of goods. We add, in this case, the interests of accumulation.

In this new scenario, the income privilege is not a dictatorship of prices, but a position of market advantage because of the associative value of cultural, environmental and regional products. In this sense, this form of income should not be thought of on the same basis as traditional monopoly or oligopoly, but as a privileged materialization of income, a form of market reserve acquired by a broader semantic field about the marketed product. In this context, we highlight three points that constitute the privileges in the extraction of income in the current period: a) the reference to a collective symbolic capital associated with the traditional Amazonian population; b) the power of symbolic capital embodied in the product from an environmentally sustainable basis; and, c) the link to a strategic location for the current global interests, such as the Amazon to combat climate change.

Some consumers feel satisfied when consuming products that carry the status of “environmentally correct” and “socially responsible”. There are many groups engaged in the discourse of this type of merchandise

- with emphasis on NGOs, consumer associations, artists, etc. We consider these attitudes to be a two-way street: if, on the one hand, they draw attention to the importance of the environmental issue, the need to change consumption habits and the origin of what is consumed, on the other, they act as a device for formation of a type of consumer pattern, which also simultaneously works in the formation of an ideal type of product - a capital discursive item in the extraction of privileged income.

Without entering directly into the debate on the strategy for accumulation, or of the intentionality of such discourse in the appropriation of the environmental crisis by capitalism, a necessary debate brought by [Leff \(2006\)](#) and [Porto-Gonçalves \(2006\)](#), among others, here we focus on the result that the environmental crises produces in product trade when associated to social clamor issues and the repercussions as a basis for differentiated income accumulation. The current period plays with two forces that have an impact on society - the historical social exclusion, fiercer in capitalism and which, in the last three decades, has become one of the flagships in corporate discourse along with the second, the “recent” environmental crisis.

In this process, state action remains important as an enabler of new strategies, mainly because the state itself, through environmental policy legislation, orders from a strategy on the environment, while it also prints a way of thinking the environment and nature, an environmental governmentality ([Moura, 2017](#)). By establishing legal means to act, according to such environmental norms, state action privileges ways of thinking and being in the environment and on production behaviors. This action, more than serving a general interest, is immersed in the state’s own strategy of control, as is the case in Brazil, for example. Given this, we don’t consider that the state, in legally ordering the environmental issue, is telling people how they should behave towards the environment, except in matters where the law is applied directly. Considering the production of value in the public sphere, state action contributes to the ordering of behaviors because it finds adherence to the public clamor for “taking good care” of the environment – and it produces meaning in the public sphere.

The environmental crisis has opened a new market path of action that does not appear directly as a comparative advantage, but begins to make a difference between consumers who, whether due to environmental

preservation or a concern for health, adhere to the so-called “sustainable consumption”. Green business, which is not an issue of free enterprise, is not confined to the individual or to an institution, but rather to a scale of the totality-world in which individuals, institutions, or places are incorporated, to a greater or lesser extent.

Thus, as an order that produces effects of action, we do not necessarily have an economic government, but a government of society. What should constitute the entity who orders in this case is not the exchange of goods, nor the mechanism of competition, but a kind of ordering process that produces a symbolic field and its re-appropriation in the scale of individuals, institutions and ideal type to be achieved (Foucault, 2008). It is also an economic order of society, centered not on the forces of production, but mainly on a semiotics of the relations of production. The Natura cosmetics company (Nature & Co.), in its annual report for 2017, describes a new type of consumer, which we understand to be the result of the greater force of the environmental crisis in the public sphere:

The brands of Natura & Co, through their trajectory and ambition, connect with a new profile of consumers: the aspirational consumers, defined basically by the taste for purchases linked to responsible consumption and brands with social and environmental concern. For them, knowing the benefits of products and services is not enough. They want to know everything that companies do - and how they do it. According to a study conducted in 2016 by GlobeScan and BBMG, with 22,000 people in 22 countries, aspirational consumers represent about 40% of the global market and are relevant not only for their considerable number, but also for balancing high frequency of shopping, sustainability and social values in their consumption patterns. In addition, they seek to create their own look, in terms of fashion and style, and are able to influence cultural norms and other social groups. The survey heard people with ages from 18-54, divided between millennials (born between 1982 and 1998) and Generation X (born between 1962 and 1981). In emerging countries, such as China, India and South Korea, aspirations represent half of the population - in Brazil, the group represents 42% of the market. Another trend pointed out is that in developed nations there are more aspirational consumers between Generation X (34% vs. 26% millennials in the UK, for example). In Brazil, 55% of aspirational consumers belong to the generation of millennials. Immersed in a crisis scenario and uncertainty, where capitalism is questioned

in the face of inequality and the damage to the ecosystem that it can cause, brands need to show that they are a further force for positive transformation. Natura, Aesop and The Body Shop have, since their origin, the genuine desire to offer their consumers products and services capable of transforming people, relationships and the planet. Now, together at Natura & Co, they will join forces to strengthen ties and expand opportunities with aspirants (Natura & Co., 2017, p. 33).

Modernity carries this structure based on the population frame. The very history of accumulation in this period is related to the ordering of social relations. Thus we return to the claim that what is at issue is the very survival of capitalism itself, and proactive firms have already absorbed this crisis period as a strategy of accumulation. And in this respect, its structuring transformations must be thought of within this process of adequation and, even, incorporation of contradictions as a mechanism of survival, maintaining the genesis of guaranteeing profit. This suggests that the strategies of association between entrepreneurial proactivity as a consequence of the environmental crisis find a response in a portion of society, a differentiation of consumption.

The product that is “social and environmentally correct” cultivates a loyal type of consumer, while it is not an exclusivity of them, since it is available in the market. But it is neither the state nor the market, which tells people directly what they should consume or how they should proceed; this is done only in a general sense, by the production of meaning in the public sphere. The institutional apparatus, through social ordering, produces this type of mechanism. However, see previous comment, who generates that is the mechanics of power. According to the interventions that are requested to make in each period, by the conditions that the period presents regarding the emergency of these changes, the institutional frame produces new devices of organization of the society, which includes new planning in the model of market relations.

The Amazon triad and the art of income

We argue that the art of income is still a strategy of advantages in the present period of capitalism, and actors do so by traditional means, as well as new tactics in dealing with values directly related to a planetary interest. To this end, companies use, with greater recurrence, two

means. The first is to link production directly to strategic values, such as environmental and social responsibility; the second is the insertion of this productive responsibility in the public sphere, through the dissemination of information in the sustainability reports. The investment in advertisements, which includes improving the dissemination of environmental and social information in the reports, made available to clients and the general public, it means informing the public sphere of a way to be consistent with the current period needs.

This creates an image for the actors who make up their productive chains, for the public sphere in general and for the company itself, since it is about producing a culture that identifies it. By the marketing hand, tool that grows in this informational period, companies expose their business policies and their positioning in the world – it is their invisible hand. There is a tendency that companies that achieve greater success among the public - counting on the acceptance of their products and the profit they can accumulate - will be those that cultivate socio-environmental values. To some extent, this is already a reality.

Even though this work is not a case study, we chose to use the example of the Natura cosmetics company, because it is one of the most active companies in the Amazon for the purpose of incorporating monetary value into the product through the association of production with social and environmental responsibility with the Amazon and the planet. It is not our purpose to discuss the company's conduct before the traditional communities, nor if its environmental conduct constitutes legitimate environmental concerns. Nor is it our purpose to make an analysis of the factors that provided the growth of the company. We reserve the right to use it exclusively as an example of cultivating the art of income through the discourse of environmental and socially correct and business ethics, associated with its production. We assume that, through the current competition, these values within the corporate brand confer advantages because of the echo that these issues have acquired in the public sphere. In the face of environmental problems and the valuation of work, the idea of some kind of positive singularity in the face of these dilemmas has an impact on the mercantile system.

Natura currently operates in nine countries - Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the United States, France, Mexico and Peru - and has more than 1.7 million consultants in Latin America. Considering the incorporation

of the Australian Aesop in 2013 and the British network The Body Shop in September 2017, the three companies started to compose NATURA & Co from February 2018, ensuring presence in 72 countries, with more than 3,200 thousand physical stores (Natura & Co., 2017). Through the campaigns published in the media and in the annual reports published by Natura, we see a company that has as a brand an image of socio-environmental responsibility of its production (Natura & Co, 2017; Natura & Co., 2018; Natura & Co., 2019; Natura & Co., 2020). Among the values published as their beliefs are the union between people as a way of building a more solidary society, business ethics, sustainable development and social responsibility. In the presentation of the 2017 annual report, the first published after the merger of The Body Shop and Aesop with Natura, the highlights in the presentation are:

Natura, Aesop and The Body Shop are pioneering companies, committed to the generation of positive economic, social and environmental impact, moved by similar values from the beginning. While we are complementary in our market strengths, channels and product categories, we share the same fundamentals in our business behavior. Our portfolios have products of natural origin, we value traceability and sustainability in obtaining ingredients, and thereby preserving biodiversity, fair trade with suppliers, eliminating animal testing, measuring production impacts (which includes neutralization and the pursuit of reducing carbon emissions) and support for education (Natura & Co., 2017, p. 4).

In the case of activities in the Amazon, the company's strategy has a direct production dimension, since it is a matter of producing from regional biodiversity raw materials along with partnerships with Amazonian communities; it is also a symbolic dimension, since it explores in its production values such as the preservation of the Amazon, use of standing forest, reduction of carbon emissions, work ethics regarding regional communities, etc. In this aspect, we believe that there is a triad that currently has more relevance in the evaluation that other companies and consumers tend to make when it comes to a company with relevant activities in the Amazon: a) the Amazon as a strategic location in the environmental crisis, it is a matter of evaluating how the company behaves in relation to one of the most evident problems in the world – deforestation – and how it contributes to the generation of income from forest products that do not come from deforestation;

b) the valuation of culture of local communities, through the partnerships to generate income and the discourse of their valorization; c) the discourse of environmentally correct practice, with the insertion of values listed by organizations such as the United Nations (UN) as objectives and challenges for sustainable development. Natura is the company that, since the 2000s, has entered the region and started to adopt this discourse by making a strong appeal to the business developed with regional communities in its information channels, such as the annual report.

In 2011, Natura established a partnership with the Banco do Brasil Foundation and launched the Amazon Program, part of one of the company's missions in a document entitled "Vision of Sustainability 2050" (Natura & Co., 2019). The program, which until 2018 had already made direct investments in 4.300 families, 146 million reais invested in the purchase of raw material from biodiversity in 2017, and handled a capital of 1.2 billion reais, covers the territory of Pan-Amazon: Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Suriname and the Guianas (Natura & Co., 2018, p. 2). The Program has three pillars, all in adherence to sectors currently valued in the dimension of development and social and environmental responsibility, being: 1 - science, technology and innovation; 2 - productive chains of socio-biodiversity; and 3 - institutional strengthening.

The first pillar of the Amazon Program brings together scientific production initiatives that value the richness of the region, which corresponds to the coordination of a research network focused on the construction of knowledge on biodiversity, sustainable management and agriculture and eco-design of the International Amazon. The center of this pillar is the Amazon Innovation Center (Nina), located in Benevides, a municipality in the metropolitan region of Belém. It has several partners such as: The Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), the National Institute of Amazon Researches (INPA), the State of Amazonas Research Foundation (FAPEAM) and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) (Natura & Co., 2018).

The second part of the Program deals with the structuring, improvement and expansion of productive chains known as sustainable – mainly those working with non-timber forest products – with capacity building, productive efficiency and technology inputs. The Ecoparque, an industrial park also located in the municipality of Benevides and inaugurated in 2014, is the primordial element of this pillar (Natura & Co., 2018).

Institutional strengthening, the third pillar of the Program, addresses the “empowerment” of local institutions and the establishment of partnerships for the development of a standing forest economy. The main themes are: forest education, entrepreneurship promotion, digital inclusion, among others.

Although created by Natura, currently this program has countless partners such as national and international companies, research institutions and non-governmental organizations. Since the beginning of the Amazon Program, we have worked with 25 native species and contributed to the conservation of more than 257 thousand hectares of standing forest. By the end of 2017, we had already exceeded by 22% the goal of generating R\$ 1 billion in turnover between 2010 and 2020 in the region. The accumulated value reached more than R\$ 1.2 billion (Natura & Co., 2017, p. 44).

Natura’s main trademark in the Amazon is the Natura Ekos line (Natura & Co., 2018), which inaugurates the company’s entry in the region and stands as a reference that “best materializes the purpose of promoting a lively forest economy. Launched in 2000, this line involves research on the benefits generated by Brazilian biodiversity and presents the function of each bioactive, promoting a real connection of those who use it with nature” (Natura & Co., 2018, p. 4).

Beyond environmental altruism and pro-activism, these initiatives express the relationship between the search for a type of market and consumers that appeared with the impact of the environmental crisis on capitalism. In part, we can infer that it is a fold over the model of a crisis caused by it, in the direction of the idea of reflective modernity pointed out by Beck (2011). The performance of companies in the Amazonian region with this socioenvironmental bias is a strategy to achieve competitive advantage in this phase of globalization, in which the quality of a product incorporates other values besides its performance in the function for which it was produced. Thus, because of the importance of the Amazon in this scenario, both in Brazil and abroad, the market already considers the conditions under which the products from which they are made are produced.

So, if we can consider such importance today, what about prospects for future markets? The tendency for the demands of environmental conditions to become an increasingly significant point in choosing which product to buy in the future is growing. And in this case, Natura has cultivated

as much as possible the social and environmental responsibility discourse of its actions in the region, not only for the products that came from it, but as a brand of the company throughout the production chain. At this point, it is also worth mentioning:

a) the discourse on ethics at work and social responsibility with regional communities. In the Amazon, the company begins its activities through a partnership with the traditional River Sustainable Development Reserve in the state of Amapá, a State Conservation Unit created by Law 392 of December 11, 1997. ([Governo do Estado do Amapá, 1997](#))

Natura's relationship with the traditional communities of the Pan-Amazon region is given by the Amazon Program, in the pillar regarding productive chains of socio-biodiversity, as already mentioned. In 2017, the company ended the year with a total of 34 communities supplying forest inputs, two times more than in 2016. In all, 4.296 families were involved. One of these communities is the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve, in Acre, from where the *patauá* is collected, a palm whose fruit provides input to the Natura Ekos line. The main states of the Brazilian Amazon where Natura maintains cooperation with traditional communities are Acre, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia and Amapá. According to [Natura & Co. \(2017\)](#), the payments made to the communities is according to the parameters of the policy of sharing of benefits ([Natura & Co., 2017, p. 43](#)), as can be seen in the Table 1 below.

b) The sustainability discourse, explored by the company on three fronts: valuing the culture of traditional communities, local development with the “standing forest” and the preservation of Amazonian biodiversity. For Natura, these three fronts are considered the pillars of the company's sustainability policy on the Amazon.

c) The Amazon itself, which is on the global agenda and international public opinion as strategic for the planet's environmental interests, has become the main investment locus for Natura's business. In the business sector, the company stands out as the one who most explores the use of non-timber forest products, fundamental for the maintenance of the forest, since it generates income for local communities, with emphasis on investment in research and innovation applied to inputs available in the Amazonian biodiversity. Since 80% of Natura's product inputs come from the Amazon region, one of the strengths of the company's annual report,

which is developed following the standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), is the business maintained in the region.

d) In 2018, Natura was elected by Corporate Knights, a company specialized in financial information (as well as media and research), which explores the relationship between business and social and ecological benefits, the 14th most sustainable company in the world, rising six positions in compared to 2017. The ranking is based on the public disclosure of the company's data, whose higher importance is for positive contributions regarding carbon emission, energy consumption, garbage production and air quality (Staff, 2018). Natura had the greatest positive impact on the business developed in the Amazon.

Table 1. Business relationship between Natura and traditional communities in the Pan-Amazon region - 2015 to 2017

Relationship type	2015	2016	2017
GRI 203-2. Communities and families benefited in the Pan-Amazon	1.529	2.119	4.294
GRI 203-2. Communities and families benefited			
Communities with which Natura relates	30	33	34
Families benefited in the community	2.251	2.841	5.296
GRI 203-2. Resources allocated per family (R\$ thousands)			
Direct features	2	3,1	3,2
Supply	1	2,0	2,9
GRI 203-1. Investments in communities (R\$ thousands)			
Supply	2.837	5.771	9.213
Sharing of benefits	2.411	3.070	6.075
Support for local development projects and infrastructure	443	669	763
Image usage	14	36	5
Capacity Building	245	77	70
Technical Services	139	255	337
Carbon Credits	-	-	1.478
Study	490	245	0
Total allocated in communities	6.579	10.123	17.942

Source: [Natura & Co., 2017.](#)

The company also meets the academic discussions on the development and conservation of the Amazon. The company's main motto, "forest standing and not on the ground", has long been problematized by researchers such as [Becker, Costa & Costa \(2009\)](#), academic references concerning the region. This discourse values the idea of conservation of the Amazonian biodiversity, and through the Natura Ekos website the company

provides not only its direct actions of sustainable development, but also makes use of the image of the traditional people (Natura & Co., 2014; Natura & Co., 2017; Natura & Co., 2019).

This strengthens the information conveyed in the annual reports (2014, 2017) that the progress that the company has experienced in the last decades, especially since the beginning of this century, is due to the policy of dealing with communities where it operates, as well as the sustainable development of its production in the Amazon, with the traditional knowledge and environmental conservation of one of the most strategic regions in this environmental crisis period. Both the Amazon region and the Amazonian communities have a symbolic load of great impact on market relations, precisely because they have achieved prominence in the public sphere in the environmental theme.

The Amazon and the art of income from production of value in the public sphere

On the Corporate Knights' post regarding the "green report" (Staff, 2018), Forbes Brasil Magazine highlights how sustainability, considered in several areas of the productive sector, is capable of "putting a company on a unique level" (Strauss, 2018). Also, on the report, the first place in the ranking – the French Dassault Systèmes – of the software industry for the engineering sector, focuses on: the innovation in digital technologies for the development of renewable energy; the direct incentive for sustainable mobility; the commitment to the creation of smarter cities and a strong female representation in the civil service area. (Staff, 2018). According to Corporate Knights itself, the gender issue was what made the company at the top of the list (Staff, 2018).

The commitment of these companies, which includes Natura, to produce adherence to production relations with values cultivated in the public sphere, indicates that the issue is systemic, not restricted to the individual views of some entrepreneurs, because it identifies a market that increasingly incorporates its own crises as comparative advantages. The growth of companies and international organizations engaged in the development of an international standard for the dissemination of information on business performance, such as the GRI, aims at shortening the distance between the company and the public. The standardization of disclosure presents an

ideal type of company, at least in the public sphere, in addition to producing a credible seal on the reports.

In a world marked by fierce competition, producing distinct marks and accumulation of symbolic capital is an ongoing search; what changes are the ways of use. Natura can - and has thus proceeded - claim singularity and particularity of its products, for the treatment it has given to the use of the intellectual heritage of the traditional Amazonian communities - valuing of these communities - and environmental conservation.

Another relevant factor in the relationship between the market and the environmental crisis is product certification, which acts as a quality certificate in the production and consumption relationship of the certified product. To certify is: a) a means of ordering market relations, because it attributes to the product a quality that is not only the result of its production, but of a set of external rules and norms, to which the productive process is adequate; b) a way of inserting the values cultivated in the public sphere in the productive process, whose benefit to the company is the alignment of the product to a productive chain and a consumer market. The environmental rules and norms of standardized certification direct an ordering in production and consumption.

Thereby, we do not defend the thesis that people consume certain goods because it is certified. Consumers are not mere receptacles of goods, non-thinking and manipulated. People consume products because they identify some utility for themselves, from the most basic to the most superfluous, but always a convergence of interests. The success of some companies among people engaged in environmental and social causes should not always be explained by domination and alienation, but also by this commodity-consumer adherence, which has much to do with the production of meaning in the public sphere. These companies experience a “social and environmental license” from their consumers.

Therefore, the importance of cultural and environmental value is not only in the product, but also in the people. It is not only about producing “social and environmentally-friendly” products, but also the development of social ordering devices that cultivate these values. In this aspect, culture and the environment become, at great strides, increasingly significant values in social relations. The discursive effects that are at stake are varied

and have importance in the meaning that that specific product can obtain and guarantee in some type of income exclusivity.

Capitalism, precisely because it is not to be reduced to the economic sphere, will always seek to develop social ordering mechanisms that allow the creation of ways to guarantee, in a complex relationship, competition and the generation of singularities and particularities that lead to income. And in this case, our arguments that the association with traditional communities and the discourse of environmental conservation can generate comparative advantages for companies, lie in the importance that these items have been occupying in public relations. Regarding the environmental conservation issue, because of the importance that the traditional Amazonian communities have, used here as an example of the art of income, is due, in this arrangement, in part to the type of relationship they cultivate with nature. The same can be applied to the Amazon region as a strategic region in the environmental crisis.

If currently this relationship between income and socio-environmental values, cultivated in the public sphere, is still exclusive to some companies, which generates competitive advantages, the tendency is that this current exclusivity becomes the norm of tomorrow, in order to produce exclusions to those who do not adapt to it.

Conclusions

Regarding the use of traditional communities as added value to the Natura products, there is a production of symbolic resources because the Amazonian cultural form, conveyed in the company's products, especially the Natura Ekos line, does not exist for these communities - it is an invention for the social imaginary. Local communities exist for themselves in their simplicity - or complexity - but as a symbolic representation in the public sphere, they can only exist for others. However, this does not invalidate the positive impact that partnerships produce for these communities, since there is income generation and an adherence to their interests, as well as transferring to them the decision on what is best for themselves.

On the use of the idea of nature, conveyed in the annual reports and the publicity pieces, we also infer that there is no representation of nature itself, but only the appropriation and representation of an idea of nature produced in the public sphere. What we conclude is that there is a new

aspect of the idea of nature produced in modernity. This new aspect, which maintains the Cartesian principles of nature, at the same time produces environmental adaptations, which positively impact local environmental problems, such as the promotion of the use of the standing Amazon rainforest and not the deforestation activity.

The tendency is that large companies will increasingly seek to produce with environmental and social adaptations. We use environmental and social adaptation rather than environmentally correct because we consider the former to be a more appropriate expression of the process, since this is in fact the case: an adaptation to the environmental problems and to the norms and environmental claims cultivated in the public sphere.

Finally, in the current context of crisis, capitalism finds in factors such as environment, society and strategic places of differentiation, an imminent tendency. Something different in this new way of producing uniqueness and particularity of products is that these qualities are found not only in the resource that the actor holds as some form of property, but in the junction between production and symbolic appropriation, both symbolism of loci spaces of production and of those produced in the public sphere.

References

- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Modernidade Líquida*. Zahar.
- Becker, B., Costa, F. A. y Costa, W. M. (2009). *Um projeto para a Amazônia*. CGEE.
- Beck, U. (2011). *Sociedade de Risco: rumo a uma outra modernidade*. Editora 34.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *Nascimento da Biopolítica*. Martins Fontes.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *As consequências da Modernidade*. Editora Unesp.
- Governo do Estado do Amapá. (1997). LEI Nº 392, de 11/12/1997 *Dispõe sobre a criação da Reserva de Desenvolvimento Sustentável - RDS do Rio Iratapuru, nos Municípios de Laranjal do Jari, Mazagão e Amapari, no Estado do Amapá*. Available in: <http://oads.org.br/leis/3435.pdf>
- Harvey, D. (2005). A arte da renda: a globalização e a transformação da cultura em como dities. In: Harvey, D. (author). *A produção capitalista do espaço* pp. 219-239. Annablume.

- Lefebvre, H. (2002). *La Survie du Capitalisme: La reproduction des rapports de production*. 3.ed. Economica.
- Leff, E. (2006). *Racionalidade Ambiental: a reapropriação social da natureza*. Bertrand Brasil.
- Marx, K. (2009). A metafísica da economia política. In: Marx, K. (author). *Miséria da Filosofia: resposta à Filosofia da miséria do Sr. Proudhon*, pp. 119-192. Expressão Popular.
- Moura, G. G. (2017). Manejo de mundos e gerenciamento costeiro na Amazônia: reflexões a partir de um diálogo entre etnooceanografia e etnodesenvolvimento. In: Costa, J. M (org). *Amazônia: olhares sobre o território e a região*. pp. 257-295. Autografia/Editora da Unifap.
- Natura & Co. (2014). *Relatório Anual*. Available in: <https://ri.naturaeco.com/resultados-e-apresentacoes/central-de-resultados/>
- Natura & Co. (2017). *Relatório Anual*. Available in: <https://ri.naturaeco.com/resultados-e-apresentacoes/central-de-resultados/>
- Natura & Co. (2018). *Relatório Anual*. Available in: <https://ri.naturaeco.com/resultados-e-apresentacoes/central-de-resultados/>
- Natura & Co. (2019). *Relatório Anual*. Available in: https://static.rede.natura.net/html/home/2020/br_09/relatorio-anual-2019/natura_annual_report_2019.pdf
- Natura & Co. (2020). *Relatório Anual*. Available in: https://static.rede.natura.net/html/sitecf/br/11_2021/relatorio_anual/Annual_Report_Natura_GRI_2020.pdf
- Porto-Gonçalves, C. W. (2006). *A globalização da natureza e a natureza da globalização*. Civilização Brasileira.
- Staff, C.K. 2018. 2018 Global 100: Most Sustainable Corporations outperform and outlive. Corporate Knights: The Company for Clean Capitalism. Available in: https://www.corporateknights.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Media-Release_2018_G100_Final.pdf
- Strauss, K. (2018). Natura é a 14ª empresa mais sustentável do mundo. Forbes Brasil. Available in: <https://forbes.com.br/listas/2018/01/natura-e-a-14a-empresa-mais-sustentavel-do-mundo/>

