A R T I G O

A conversão semiótica da ilha do Combu: representações e ressignificações estéticas da Amazônia no Instagram

The semiotic conversion of Combu Island: Representations and aesthetic resignifications of Amazon on Instagram

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Resumo: *Neste artigo, analisamos a ressignificação ou recriação dos signos na compreensão da ilha do Combu, localizada na região metropolitana de Belém. Tomamos como visada teórica e metodológica a conversão semiótica do pesquisador Paes Loureiro (2007) que se configura em um movimento de passagem pelo qual as funções se reordenam e se exprimem numa outra situação cultural. Nosso corpus de análise são as imagens fotográficas de 2019, período pré-pandêmico, postadas nas hashtags #ilhadocombu e #combu no aplicativo Instagram. Observamos que os indivíduos que visitam ou experienciam esse espaço amazônico convertem a ilha de rio num outro de si mesmo, num ambiente em que a natureza é incorporada como imaginário. Os novos sentidos são dados conforme os indivíduos cenarizam o espaço e suas vidas, em que a tecnologia passa a ressignificar os signos culturais.*

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Palavras-chave: *Amazônia; conversão semiótica; ilha do Combu; Instagram; imaginário.*

Abstract: *In this article, we have analyzed the resignification or recreation of signs in the comprehension of Combu Island, located in metropolitan region of Belém. We have taken as a theoretical and methodological vision the Semiotics Conversion of the researcher Paes Loureiro, 2007, which is configured as a transitioning movement in which the functions are rearranged and expressed in another cultural situation. By analysis corpus is the photographic images from 2019, posted under the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu in the application Instagram. We have observed that the individuals that visit or experience this space in the Amazon convert the river island into another one of itself, in an environment which nature is incorporated as imaginary. The new senses are given according to how the individuals scenarize the space and its lives, which the technology starts resignifying cultural signs.*

Keywords: *Amazon; Semiotics Conversion; Combu Island; Instagram; Imaginary.*

Amazonian imaginings: initial considerations

The semantic, polysemic, and symbolic charge of the word Amazon constitutes a form of powerful sociability, for it enables possible imaginings of all kinds, ranging from a vision of a "wild Amazon" to the market brand that adds aesthetic values, which has its origins, according to Amaral Filho (2016, p. 71), "in components of the imagination that came from the forest," transferred from a vision on the physical territory, and that expand themselves to "an image immobilized by tradition, which transformed the region in an avatar for a new Eden, an El Dorado, a heaven on Earth." (AMARAL FILHO, 2016, p. 15). The imagination on the Amazon also constitutes an open concept over which different types of discourses are manufactured, especially pictorial ones, in which, today, individuals with their cell phones stage narratives about themselves and the places that incorporate them, giving the impression that the fiction about the territory exceeds the reality experienced by its inhabitants.

Here, we consider the Amazon conceptually in a macro construction and a specific perspective among the Paraense,[5] the legal, and the continental. This perspective is coherent with the Amazon's diversity and its imaginary construction but also, as Márcio Souza (2019, p. 17) shows us, with the idea that in it "lives some ethnicities descendent of the original peoples, witnesses of the presence of rich civilizations prior to the Spanish and Portuguese colonization, which operated from the previous of Discoveries."

Hence, in this article, we propose to take the island of Combu, or the Belém of rivers, as an object of investigation and an expressive Amazonian space for the natural characteristics that compose its physical territory. Our aim is to understand how people appropriate this space in their aesthetic representations on Instagram. These representations intermediate the dialogue among production, perception, and reception and the need to establish a dialogical relation. We adopt this relational and interpretive perspective because, according to Paes Loureiro,

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5   The Paraense Amazon corresponds to the State of Pará, which holds the second place in terms of territorial extension in Brazil, about 1,247,950.003 km², and a population of 7,581,051 inhabitants distributed in 143 municipalities.

it is hard to define what Amazonian and Amazonicity are since "it is something to be perceived and felt rather than rationalized and explained." (LOUREIRO, 2014, p. 34).

The starting point of our investigation questions how image representations activate the imagination and configure an aesthetic between individuals and the Amazon, as well as semiotically convert the linguistic and cultural signs of this representation. We base ourselves on the understanding of the use that people make of social media, especially Instagram, and the construction of a type of community of belonging or social group that privileges the image and its identification in relationships with places. In these forms of sociability, individuals re-signify their relationships with people, objects, and places. We take as the *corpus* of analysis photographic images produced in 2019, during a pre-pandemic period, and posted under the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu on Instagram, having as methodological procedures Paes Loureiro's (2007) semiotic conversion, which configures the movement through which functions reorder and express themselves in another cultural situation, and the qualitative research, including interviews with subjects that live in the island's universe.

Island of Combu

Combu is one of the 42 river islands that form the insular region of the capital of Pará. Currently, the island is one of the most referenced and visited in Belém, both by the local population and by tourists. Considering its territorial space, Combu is the fourth largest island in the municipality of Belém, located 1.5 km to the south of the city. The banks of the Guamá River are to its north. Furo São Benedito is to its south. Furo da Paciência is to the east. And, to the west, it is bathed by the Guajará Bay and intercut by tributaries. Even though this island belongs to the municipality of Belém, it maintains characteristics and aspects of traditional communities, such as the form of social organization, occupation, and use of the territory for subsistence.

The island's more than 15 thousand kilometers are known as a special protection area as per the State Law n. 6,083 of November 13, 1997[6], promulgated to restore and protect its floodplain ecosystem and forest. Because of its valuable genetic resources, biodiversity, and endangered species, the island is one of the favorite spots in the state for the scientific community. On the other hand, entertainment attractions installed on the island's shores have been seducing photographers, tourists, and visitors in general on a daily basis.

The eighteen hundred inhabitants[7] that compose the local community, distributed among the riparian communities of Igarapé do Combu, Igarapé do Piriquitaquara, Furo da Paciência, Furo do São Benedito and Beira do rio Guamá, depend basically on açai extraction, cacao seed for chocolate production, other forest resources, and fishing in the island's waterways, such as the rivers Bijogó, Guamá, and Acará, the channel Furo da Paciência, and the tributaries of Combu and Piriquitaquara.

According to the Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020 (BELEMTUR, 2019), the island of Combu does not have a drinking water supply system (the riparian inhabitants use water captured directly from the river) nor a sewage treatment system. The island has electricity, garbage collection service, communication services rendered by three operators, a family health clinic, and a municipal elementary school.

To access basic services, many riparian people need to go to the capital's mainland because the island does not offer the necessary infrastructure to its residents. Houses are built in wood, with elevated floors and clay roof tiles, near the riverbanks. Some of them have a small pier or bridge giving access to the river (see Image 1). Both residents and tourists commute in small boats[8]. The City Hall of Belém has 54 watercrafts of the motorboat type, organized in two cooperatives[9], but the

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6   Available at: https://www.semas.pa.gov.br/1997/11/13/9776/. Accessed in March 2020.
7   Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020. Available at: http://www.belem.pa.gov.br/belemtur/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IOT-BEL%C3%89M-2019-FINAL.pdf. Accessed in May 2020.
8   Boats for visitors leave at 9 a.m. every day from the Princesa Isabel square in the Condor neighborhood. On average, the journey lasts 10 to 15 minutes and costs R$ 7 to R$ 10 per person. During the weekends, there is also a flow of private motorboats and Jet Skis.
9   The cooperatives Coopmic (Cooperativa Mista da Ilha do Combu) and Coopertrans (Cooperativa Mista de Transporte de Passageiros e Cargas do Estado do Pará) integrate the

boatmen[10] increase the offer to 70 by providing "*rabetas*" – canoes with a small propulsion engine attached to the back, conducted manually with the help of a stick to determine the direction –, which leave from various points in the shore, assisting the island's residents.

Image 1 – A riparian house on the banks of Combu

Source: Roma News[11]/October 2019.

In July 2019, during the state's high summer season, the island of Combu received about 10 thousand visitors[12], which reflects the opening of bars and restaurants by its shores (see Image 2). According to the City Hall of Belém[13], there are 31 establishments operating on the island, made of wood, which have around 300 employees to assist visitors.

CADASTUR of the Ministry of Tourism.

10   According to data obtained through interviews with two boatmen, Mizael Rocha and Rosivaldo Oliveira Quaresma, in May 2020.
11   Roma News, October 17, 2019: https://www.romanews.com.br/cidade/pontos-turisticos-do-para-podem-ser-entregues-para-a-iniciativa/57387/. Accessed on December 4, 2021.
12   Data from the Communications Advisory of the City Hall of Belém (May/2020).
13   Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020. Available at: http://www.belem.pa.gov.br/belemtur/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IOT-BEL%C3%89M-2019-FINAL.pdf.   Accessed in May 2020.

This flow of people transforms vision, or the cultural sign of interpretation, or the understanding of the island since the smartphone is the indispensable luggage that creates other narratives of this Amazonian space. Aubert and Haroche (2013, p. 14) explain that "the individual begins, thus, to be considered, appreciated, judged by the number of signs, texts, and images they produce, incited to exhibit them incessantly.". Bakhtin (2000) reflects on a tongue's practical reality through language, presenting it not as a descriptive normative set but as enunciations whose meanings are in their uses and in the practice of dialogues. In this line of thought, Sodré (2006, p. 92) emphasizes that places reflect "the topological configuration in the fabric of relations of meaning in which the interpretation takes place.".

Image 2 – Restaurants in the island of Combu.

Source: Agência Belém and Rede Pará.

In the weaving of the present writing, our analysis focuses on 1,230 posts on Instagram in July and October[14] 2019 with the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu, which total more than 21,000 images on that social media, prioritizing a specific aesthetic in which the island appears as a setting and part of a visibility strategy that guarantees interaction through followers' likes.

The choice of this social networking app is related to the fact that it enabled the camera-network "hybridization" in the digital world since searching for a specific audience interested in and knowledgeable about photography, identified when cell phones started to become recording platforms as the first model with a photographic camera attached was launched in 2000.

From theoretical references, we resort to the semiotic conversion of João de Jesus Paes Loureiro[15], a researcher of Amazonian culture who considers reality stimulates and activates the symbolizing process "through which reality itself is also changed, apprehended, understood, and integrated into the communicational system." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 13). In this symbolizing process, the author highlights vision, considering it the most acute of our senses. In the author's terms, we reshape the things we see of the world through our symbolizing faculty as we see them in relation to each other (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 14). Human beings construct symbolic relations among what they know, what is in memory, and what they feed with their experience. For Loureiro, vision is individual and social because it produces symbols that connect to knowledge.

In short, Paes Loureiro thought of the semiotic conversion, firstly, from his experience as a riparian inhabitant, then, more profoundly, as a researcher, in the process of change in the quality and function of myths

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14 We chose July and October because the first month is the vacation and high summer season in Belém, while the second marks one of the biggest religious and cultural manifestations of the state of Pará, the Círio de Nazaré (the Taper of Our Lady of Nazareth).

15 João de Jesus Paes Loureiro is a Paraense poet, essayist, researcher, and professor of Aesthetic and Arts. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology of Culture from Sorbonne, Paris. The universality of his poetic work is built from signs of the Amazonian world – culture, history, imagination.

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and their poetic dominance in Amazonian imagination and culture, applying the concept for any other situation or culture.

Looking to understand the concept of the other of oneself[16], we also interviewed[17] two researchers, Adriano Quaresma from the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) and Ágila Flaviana Alves Chaves Rodrigues from the Center for Advanced Amazonian Studies at the Federal University of Pará (NAEA/UFPA), two boatmen, Mizael Rocha and Rosivaldo Quaresma, and seven bar owners, Luis Sabóia de Oliveira, Raimundo Pureza da Costa, Edivaldo Silva do Espírito Santo, Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto, Wagner Roberto da Silva, Jarina da Silva de Souza, and Mônica Reis de Souza.

The other of oneself: the reconversion of the island of Combu

Our analysis intercepts people's interpretation of Combu, having the island as an enunciated setting through an image and technological language, in the comprehension of this scenery's configuration as a linguistic and image form that reveals a kind of scenographic environment in which the story unfolds as concentrated polyphonic narrative. In that context, every sentence (here, images) composes with one another the "scenographic architecture that makes action present. Its poetic meaning is in that the spectacular character happens in the virtual sphere of the expressive language of human feeling." (LOUREIRO, 2009, p. 155-156).

In this sense, the semiotic conversion derives from this state of symbolic thought; it is a vehicle for the reception of reality from meanings that result from the reception of objects and their transformation into forms understandable to human thought. Loureiro explains that:

16   "*outro de si mesmo*" (trans.)
17   We carried out the interviews on different dates and times, during April and May 2020, over cell phone calls, given the social distancing measures in place since March 2020 due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

> This human capacity to elaborate and re-elaborate symbols from the reality of the world allows something symbolically perceived under a determined function to be received in another way and through a new stimulus that makes "technology" evident as another function if its cultural insertion is modified, given that functions are qualities perceived/attributed to objects. Its reception under another, culturally legitimized, symbolic configuration converts the object into the other of oneself. (LOUREIRO, 2009, p. 156, our emphasis)

According to Paes Loureiro, people reshape life with meanings, making new senses emerge in the world in a continuous process of creation and rearrangement of symbols: "Man creates, renovates, interferes, transforms, reformulates, summarizes, or expands their understanding of things, their ideas, through which gives meaning to their existence." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 11). The author reminds us of the real and symbolic dynamics of our relationships with reality, which demands adjusting objects to new fruition needs. According to him,

> Semiotic conversion leads to a mode of comprehending reality in a way that is dynamic and pertinent to its procedural system of changes. Initially, it is a form of comprehending reception, and only later does it transform itself into an explicative condition. [Semiotic conversion] is intrinsically attached to the transformative experiential praxis of man and its reality. (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 16)

In this perspective, we observe the relationship established by people with technology, appropriating its resources with the purpose to give cultural sense to their sociability, creating a re-hierarchization of its symbolic meaning, modifying the dominant position. This way, technology gains another status for individuals and exceeds the reductionism of cultural objects seen only in their apparent form or content. As a metaphor for Paes Loureiro, the material work is the sensitive support of the aesthetic object, its external symbol. The aesthetic object is the object converted into a new sign. Here, we interpret technology and nature and the new meaning given to them by people in their relationships.

Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 17) reiterates that humans create symbols wherever they are and, in so doing, renew and enrich relationships with reality. But no human symbolizes only to himself nor only from himself. Humans symbolize or create supported by a local and universal cultural inheritance. Likewise, the author expresses: "there is no material change without there being a symbolic change" (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 12) in individuals' relationships in society.

We identify this perspective in the discourse of researcher and islander Adriano Quaresma when he states, in his interview[18], that the transformation of Combu, which is not necessarily physical but perceptual, began shyly in the 1980s as an entertainment option, in line with data in Table 1. The big boost for the island's visibility came in the 2000s when the local chocolate production attracted the attention of Paraense chefs and became a reference. In fact, as Quaresma recalls, news stories about the chocolate production circulated for some time in in-flight magazines of airlines such as TAP Portugal, TAM, and GOL.

Table 1 – Number of bars/restaurants per year of opening – Combu (Belém/PA)

CATEGORIES/ YEAR	1980-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010	2011-2019	DID NOT INFORM
HOTEL			01		
RESTAURANT	01	01	02	20	05

Source: Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém, 2020[19].

Initially, this change in the island bothered residents that do not earn economic profits from the flow of visitors. On the other hand, explains Flaviana[20], this kind of visitor does not get into contact with the insular

18 Interview granted to researchers in April 2020.
19 The information is available under Category B - Tourist Services and Equipment, which shows 28 restaurants registered. Our research includes two additional restaurants, following information provided by the owner of Açaí do Combu and Sabor da Ilha, who dissolved a partnership and opened another establishment called Mururé in 2018, increasing the number of restaurants to 30.
20 Interview granted to researchers in April 2020.

reality, even if some local economic and cultural activities are a part of the leisure attractions.

Reconfiguration of sociabilities: technology as a cultural sign in contemporaneity

Digital technology became a potent cultural sign in contemporaneity, considering the possibility to generate sociabilities, to make visible places, experiences, and emotions once restricted to specific environments. Today, thanks due the technological resources, we share experiences, making them visible to the world, offering everyone knowledge about them. Hence, according to Aubert and Haroche (2013, p. 15), visibility becomes one of the principal contemporary devices, given there is a desire for an unlimited extension of the exterior and visible self, concomitant to the process of reducing the self, the inner self.

In this conception, it is also important to understand the meanings of material culture in people's lives. Anthropologists Daniel Miller and Heather Horst (2015) reflect on how things also compose human sociabilities, especially considering technological artifacts mixed among objects and subjects or how people relate to things and how such things constitute people. To them, societies can be better understood through the analysis of their material aspects and materialities.

When reflecting on this materiality and the use that people make of it, we selected Instagram as the social media for the analysis of the island of Combu, taking into consideration Muniz Sodré's perspective on this virtual world:

> It presents itself as a systemic connection or a global network of techno-cyber-neuronal nature, where effective experiences tend to be assimilated by information in real-time. Therefore, instead of individuation (where the idea of free individuality is impregnated), we can talk about 'individualization': the particular as a mere fulfillment of the systemic functionality; an individuality without singularity, that is, without the enigmatic dimension and irreducible to alterity […]. Here, the functional dimension of consciousness present in virtual reality is appropriate. (SODRÉ, 2002, p. 160)

Launched in 2010, Instagram emerged as a free-to-access social networking app in which users could share images from their cell phones and tablets, displaying not only photographs but online image narratives. On its website, one sentence, "We bring you closer to people and things you love," [21] summarizes the definition and goal of the app, which initially was only available for iPhones. The statement recalls the notion of "aesthetics of affectivity," highlighted by Souza and Silva (2014, p. 69) when defining as "telephotography" the image posts on the app. "Contemporary image production aims long-distance transmission within an unprecedented scale of social permeability," promoting an inevitable mixture of narratives that bring together different users and promote bonds resulting from this dynamic, remaining in a constant dialogue.

Turning the island of Combu into a scenery

We begin this section setting a temporal mark in the end of the 2000s as the period when the island transformed the most due to the substantial increase of bars – from 4 to 24 – at banks of the Combu river. With these new installations, the island acquires a scenery character and starts to be described by Trindade Júnior and Rodrigues (2020, p. 13) as the composition of "an ever more artificialized system of objects – swimming pools, soccer fields, artificial grass, spaces for parties and varied activities." On the island, the bricolage of the natural landscape with urban and sophisticated values contrasts with the local reality, as Image 2 and the data in Table 2 show.

21   Available at: https://about.instagram.com/about-us. Accessed in March 2020.

Table 2 – Profile of bars on the island of Combu

RESTAU-RANT	OWNER	ESTABLISH-MENT	EMPLOY-EES	CAPAC-ITY	DECOR/ATTRACTIONS
AÇAÍ DO COMBU	Edivaldo Silva do Espírito Santo	2017	05	100 people seated	Rustic, mechanical music, fiberglass pool, boat tour around the island.
CASA COMBU	Luis Sabóia de Oliveira	2017	10	120 people seated	Traditional rustic, view to Belém, track, accessibility ramps, children's toys.
CHALÉ DA ILHA	Wagner Roberto da Silva	2015	20	250 people seated	Bar on the river, cascade, pool, hammocks on the river, game area, children's toys
COMBU GRILL	Mônica Reis de Souza	2017	12	200 people seated	Children's pool, hammocks on the river and land, three photo settings
MALO-CA DO PUREZA	Raimundo Pureza da Costa	2017	7	120 people seated	Party venue, live and mechanical music, and bar.
MURURÉ[22]	Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto	2019	12	100 people seated	Floating and fixed pool, decor with colored fabrics
RESTAU-RANTE DO TATU	Jarina da Silva de Souza	2018	12	150 people seated	Children's pool, hammocks on the river, bar on the river, curtains, armchairs, and basketwork in the décor.
SALDOSA MALOCA	Prazeres Quaresma dos Santos	1982	29	190 people seated	Live and mechanical music, toys, *wi-fi*, bar, stage, ecologic track, handcraft store.

Source: Authors, 2020.

22 The owner closed the restaurant Sabor da Ilha (established in 1994) and opened a new one in 2020 after terminating the rental contract of the previous one.

The island heightens its scenery-like character by aestheticizing nature according to the demands of people who wish to reconcile nature with comfort and modernization and to the visibility of experiences in the place. Mônica Reis de Souza, responsible for Combu Grill[23], states, "social media are important because they promote us. And people don't come here without a cell phone, without showing others where they are. Because of this we create special spaces for photography."

The corpus of analysis for this research were two hashtags, #combu and #ilhadocombu, on Instagram. Hashtags are keywords preceded by the hash (#) symbol that, thus, become tags to indicate relevant words. This way, hashtags become indexable links for search mechanisms that allow users to research and visualize information, images, videos, and so forth related to the topics they represent. The expression became so relevant on the internet that the *Oxford Dictionary*[24] incorporated it in 2014.

The use of tags is a strategy of the digital environment for visibility and engagement, referencing people, places, and objects while, at the same time, serving as a territorial guide beyond the spatial sense as production and construction of narratives, which, in the present case, concern people's experiences in the island. Hence, a narrative emerges in the digital platform totally different from the island's everyday life. It is the island of the other of oneself. In the words of Trindade Júnior e Rodrigues (2020, p. 4), "the production of an everyday life that creates spaces focused on nature consumption, where the force of images and aesthetic reason prevails."

Methodologically, we cataloged the indexers through *Gramho*[25], a hashtag search engine, to list every use of #Combu (14,000) and #IlhaDoCombu (27,000). By applying filters, we selected the months of July and October of 2019, which presented the highest number of posts. To select the material (see Table 3), we discarded duplicated photos,

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23 Interview granted to researchers in May 2020.
24 Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/hashtag. Accessed March 2020.
25 Available at: https://gramho.com/. Accessed in September 2020.

photos that did not pertain to the island, and advertising photos about parties and festivals hosted in Combu.

Table 3 – Total of images with *hashtags* per month in 2019

HASHTAG	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
#COMBU	182	188	370
#ILHADOCOMBU	530	330	860
TOTAL			1.230

Source: Authors, 2020.

Through these filters, we selected four categories of images, given the scenery presents itself in images that make visible individuals, the collective (groups of people), objects, especially those related to the cuisine, and, finally, landscapes, as we show on Table 4. These choices were not random but taken as an effect on the ways of "being and living, under the structures of thought, of ideation, of modes of representing and expressing the self and the other, as well as on the modes of feeling and perceiving." (HAROCHE, 2015, p. 853).

Table 4 – Classification of *#ilhadocombu and #combu* images

#ILHADOCOMBU	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
INDIVIDUAL	187	120	307
COLLECTIVE	62	66	128
LANDSCAPE	107	83	190
CULINARY	15	12	27
#COMBU	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
INDIVIDUAL	81	50	131
COLLECTIVE	34	16	50
LANDSCAPE	58	33	91
CULINARY	09	14	23

Source: Authors, 2020.

Examined images show the place, geolocated by its own name, presents itself not as a land extension that has a history, routine,

economy, residents, and identity but as a scenery-like space in search of social media engagement. The Amazon remains polysemic (GONDIM, 1994), documented in the twenty-first century with the same exogenous eyes of the past colonizer, which renders the place's identity invisible.

However, differently from the past, today natives are protagonists in their stories, since they explore businesses related to the island. As a result, they resort to artificialism as a way of becoming competitive in a demanding market and under the influence of the digital environment, which determine aesthetic standards for visibility, as the local entrepreneurs themselves acknowledge. "All the investment comes from customers demand. There's a kind of standard, a level, which, once raised, everyone must keep up with, otherwise you don't stay in the market," says Jarina da Silva de Souza[26], owner of Restaurante do Tatu. Her statement is reinforced by Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto, owner of the island restaurant Mururé: "investing in innovations and in sophistication is a necessary attraction. Visitors leave if they find just a restaurant. We need to win customers over."

Bars end up offering not just the exotic but also a reflex of what visitors expect: autoreferential images, settings very close to everyday urban life, recalling Sodré's (2006, p. 92) understanding that "mediation is, thus, a complex semiotic operation that articulates relations of determination and representation."

The image narrative on the island translated Combu to the digital medium, re-signifying it as the other of oneself, as an appropriation of the place, which becomes the romanticized other; the other that has a predominance of nature, only domesticated with the pacification between rural and urban; the other that mixes a self and another whom I desire or in which I see myself, which I recreate from my imagination and my experience.

In the examined images, the island is always framed in comparison to the city. The forest is the opposite of the city, a retreat, a peaceful place, but that does not forego what the urban offers (see Image 3).

26 Interview granted to researchers in May 2020.

Image 3 – The contrast between the forest and the city

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #combu.

In the examined images, the island is always framed in comparison to the city. The forest is the opposite of the city, a retreat, a peaceful place, but that whithout giving up what the urban offers (see Image 3).

Prazeres dos Santos, the owner of the oldest restaurant on the island, the Saldosa Maloca, says she invests in local recognition as a market strategy, even if that means "going against the tide." The idea was to reinforce a tropical forest image:

> It's not a criticism, but it's a style. [We] invest so that visitors get to know, get in touch with the forest, with the island's interior. Hence the choice of offering a walk in the woods identifying species. This way, there're plenty of photos at the piers, in the middle of the forest, and at our samaumeira, which is 400 years old and has huge and beautiful roots. (Verbal information, 2020)[27]

27   Interview granted by Prazeres Quaresma dos Santos to researchers in May 2020.

Based on this statement, we understand that, even if not resorting to prefabricated sceneries, the production of images for Instagram is an indispensable strategy; that is, the exotic is relevant to the extent that it apparently connects me to nature. In images, it is perceptible that the self "reverences" the natural and makes others visible.

Photos that indicate the path to Combu are a similar kind of record in both tags. Usually, these photos present the boat's tip, showing the island in the backdrop, opposite the city, a repetitive framing that indicates the idealization of an escape to paradise. It is the moment of reuniting with nature. The exoticism of paradise (Gondim, 1994) re-signifies itself as an "ecological paradise" with a more attractive and seductive, appeal of modern inspiration. El Dorado is no longer just economic – the symbol of the Amazon during the military dictatorship – but an idealized oasis that distinguishes itself from the islanders' routine. It is an enchanted place "like a submerged Olympus where deities of the Amazonian theogony live." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 42).

Most individuals' photos highlight the insertion in the island through technological resources. Records show the search for an aesthetic dimension that instrumentalizes every natural object (the river, trees, riparian homes), which become components of a narrative that transcends the reality of riparian life but that repeats itself in a standardization.

The awakening of visitors' interest on the island of Combu occurs through the aestheticization of artistic capitalism, where "the real builds itself as an image that integrates an aesthetic-emotional dimension, which has become central for competition." (LIPOVETSKY and SERROY, 2014, p. 16).

Image 4 – The use of nature in aesthetic standardization

Source: Instagram, July 2019, #ilhadocombu.

The symbolism of tranquility is frequent in individual photos: still waters, canoes moored to the piers, and hammocks set up inside the river and among trees. However, this indigenous furniture so present in the records of visits to the island of Combu is just a setting that materializes the idealization of a riparian life far from the city's everyday life. An "utopian nativism" dominates image narratives of the Amazonian paradise, like what Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 43) describes: "The utopia of an ideal city, resulting from an idyllic combination with nature, populates the imaginary certitude of native men who love their land and desire it to become a happy place for men to live in equality with shared labor, a dream of harmony and peace."

The river also frames this utopian and poetic dimension that the author emphasizes. Its waters are part of the setting of individual and group photos. The river is in the journeys to and from the island (see Image 5), signaling the crossing, the migration to a mythicized dimension; it surrounds seductive poses when bodies emerge from the water and complements piers that give access to the island's bars. Photos register this

path toward amusement as an individual space. It is the accomplishment of the mythical space, delimiting the split between the lived space and the island. When these instruments are no longer enough for narratives that reconfigure the island, artificial spaces take over the sceneries (see Image 6), composing with elements offered by nature.

Image 5 – The river as a frame

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #ilhadocombu.

Image 6 – Groups of people in environments produced by bars

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #combu.

Images captured on the access pier, where boats bringing visitors moor, always show the river. There is no record of the bar's wood structure over the rivers. At the bars, photos capture smiley groups, usually toasting or having fun. And the third space is the prefabricated one, the so-called "Instagrammable" [28] settings (see Image 7), which bars have been investing in over the past years due to market competition: rugs, vases, curtains (that frame the river), armchairs, lounge chairs, rocking chairs, and even wooden borders that ornament the river like a swimming pool deck. However, these spaces that "artificialize" the island are the more frequent in the examined photos.

Image 7 – "Instagrammable" settings in Combu

Source: Instagram, July 2019, #ilhadocombu.

The cuisine appeals to an image category that highlights simplicity, naturality, and the colors of food. Photos of food are always produced, reinforcing the Amazonian imagination: the white and simple dish on a wooden table or in contrast with green banana leaves, recalling offerings to pagan gods or to the original peoples of the Amazon. These images exemplify Paes Loureiro's semiotic conversion with the qualitative and

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28 The expression derives from Instagram and refers to settings produced in environments specifically for photographs that will become popular on the feeds of app users, especially for their aesthetic appeal. Available at: https://www.mundodomarketing.com.br/artigos/felipe-morais/37971/ambientes-instagramaveis.html. Access in April 2020.

material revaluing of objects, re-signifying their comprehension and treatment based on market value. Images of regional dishes undergo a conversion chain to an appearance state that has the constitution of an essence. Therefore, the object transforms itself into what is received as a dominant function. In the case of food, it is an exaltation of the forest. Which one presents is which one intends to be.

Imagem 8 – Imagem da culinária exaltando o regional

Fonte: Instagram/julho de 2019/#combu.

In the months we researched, islanders only appear in six images among the twelve hundred and thirty selected. Three record the work with canoes, an açai picker, an elderly riparian at their doorstep, and children at their homes. There is no interaction with the islanders because these photos record an exotic landscape.

The island's symbolic configuration opens diverse narrative dimensions, though converging, in the digital environment, into an artificialized aesthetic representation that denies the riparian identity of Combu. Through the perspective of images on Instagram, we observed

this passage that rearranges the symbolic function, where one thing becomes and is received as another, as Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 75) summarizes: "man remakes the world and remakes itself in it."

The conversion of vision through technology: some final considerations

If, on the one hand, our interpretations intercepted comprehensions that lead us to think of how individuals relate to places through technologies, on the other, we noticed a standardization of images on the platform, a kind of inclusion "passport," which results from market demands conditioned by the other's view, since they recreate new sociabilities, emphasizing vision as a mainly element in the relationship.

W. Butler Yeats, cited by McLuhan (2007, p. 53), states that "The visible world is no longer a reality and the unseen world no longer a dream," for, to interpret it, it is necessary a movement of faculties that includes and transcends them. Therefore, a simplifying answer on individuals' sociabilities and technologies is not possible. This thought contributes to our understanding of Combu as a setting in which the image becomes the immateriality of the material. Or the representation of the absent or distant reality, which acquires meaning or a new sign according to images captured and posted by individuals on Instagram.

Individuals incorporate technology to biuld meanings about themselves to others and, at the same time, knowledge and understanding of reality just as they take it as extensions of their experiences, habits, and emotions. Aesthetic representations and re-significations in which individuals incorporate elements of nature to biuld narratives of themselves. Therefore, in the aestheticized experiences of subjects, places, whether natural or cultural, transform themselves into spectacles and landscapes valued for aesthetic perceptions or emotions, mixing contemplative pleasures, imaginative pleasures, and novelty pleasures.

From this perspective, the semiotic conversion of the island on Instagram renders invisible the Combu of extractivism, artisanal fishing,

the floodplain, and sociocultural processes that dynamize the diverse environment of the original peoples, given the protagonism of narratives is the artificialism dictated by the market present in decorative elements and standardizing frames that simplify the complexity of life in the Amazon.

For the bar owners, this artificialization is necessary to seduce and attract people, as there is a desire to experience things of nature, but according to the comfort offered by the capitalist world. I adapt and stage the natural or rural spaces with elements or symbols of the developed urban world. It is an image of involvement that seems natural; it is the other of oneself in which people are not attracted by the island but by the appeal of cultural categories as consumer goods, combined to the Amazonian mythical imagination.

Even when photos show residents, the image narratives they construct do not establish a communication link with the riparian dimension because the setting produced by the bars, in response to the dictates of the market, bears no knowledge of the web of relationships configured and separated from this setting, which must be considered in its multiple realities and needs. Social networks facilitate visibility, but, at the same time, they can make the web of relationships existing on the island invisible.

There is an ambiguity in digital narratives: on the one hand, there is the visibility of the island's front; on the other hand, there is a discontinuity when trying to go beyond the limits of entertainment spaces, as the interest of visitors is limited to recording what the bars offer. Images incorporate elements of riparian culture – the river, the canoe, the cuisine, the forest – not to talk about them but to compose narratives of their images aesthetically and superficially.

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ARTIGO

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