



# AMAZONIA

*in progress*

an interactive documentary project by  
Elizabeth Rocha Salgado & Vladimír Cháb

## Synopsis

The film will be composed of interviews with people in favor and against the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC), as well as with its victims. PAC is a major infrastructure development program of the Federal government of Brazil for the Amazon region that aims at building in total 130 hydropower plants in the rainforest by 2024. The film will expose different points of view on this governmental initiative that started with the construction of the infamous Belo Monte dam.

The Belo Monte Dam, the world's third biggest hydropower plant - located in the heart of Amazon region, is in its final stages of construction. The project is seen by its supporters as the guarantee of national energy security in the country where hydroelectric power plants produce over 77% of the electrical energy and where rapid economic growth over the last decade has provoked a huge demand for new and stable sources of energy. However the opponents argue that its construction decimated over 9 indigenous tribes, expelled more than 90,000 people from their homes, made use of slave work, caused the drying of over 100 km of the second largest river in the Amazon region and is responsible for direct deforestation of more than 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> of virgin rain forest. The plant has an impressive planned capacity of 11,200MW, but due to the river flow oscillation it will reach its potential production maximum only 4 months a year and will operate at in average 39% of its capacity in rest of the year. The international community tend to question its economic viability, generation efficiency and enormous environmental impacts.

Next in the PAC pipeline is a project of building of five hydropower plants with forty dams on the Tapajós River, the major tributary of the Amazon River. The project is currently in its advanced planning stages, waiting for the results of the process of its environmental license application. It seems to pretty much mirror the aspirations, mistakes and uncertainties of Belo Monte. However its ecologic impacts can hardly go unnoticed. Aside from flooding hundreds of square miles of pristine forest, the dams will lead to uncontrolled economic exploitation, massive deforestation and colonization of the wider Amazon basin with devastating ecological consequences. "There are other far less harmful ways to generate as much energy as the country needs, ways which can be brought into operation more quickly than hydropower. It is extremely doubtful whether hydropower is a reliable or cost-effective approach, making an energy future based on dams a potentially disastrous mistake," says the Greenpeace report on the project.

It is therefore a question why does the government insist so much on building these huge hydropower complexes at the heart of the Amazon? Why, against all the studies and expert opinions that show it makes no sense from financial point of view? Why are these constructions more important for the government then its international reputation, respect for human rights, environment and our federal constitution? Putting the pieces of puzzle together, the film will try to answer this question: What is the real motivation beyond the government's actions?

We will interview politicians and masterminds behind the PAC who think that the Amazon basin is ripe to be exploited, with the benefits far outweighing the "collateral damage" on the environment and native Indians populations. We will talk to environmentalists, scientists, prosecutors and indigenous people who try to preserve and protect it. We will carry all the interviews in the same, neutral settings. The uniform black background and the close up camera position will let us focus on the eyes of each speaker, enabling us to see a bit more behind their discourses.

In the end of the film we will show a compilation of images of Belo Monte construction, its environment and its people. Then we will show the Tapajós River as a contrast, with its peace of the Amazon where the PAC did not come yet.

### **Small history**

The PAC is seen by many Brazilians and their representatives as the only way of keeping the country the 8th world's economy. The program was launched on January 28, 2007, by the administration of the president Lula da Silva and consists of a set of economic policies and investment projects with the objective of accelerating economic growth in Brazil. This program is essential for the power-hungry metallurgical industry, as it opens the possibilities of industrial scale extraction of mineral resources in the Amazon. The contest for these resources has already begun with the Canadian mining company Belo Sun planning to install an industrial scale gold mine there, but there are others ready to come.

Brazil is proud of its hydroelectric power plants, because many people think there is nothing cleaner than to use the natural energy of a flowing river. It was in the 70's during the dictatorship that the Canadian engineer John Dennis Cadman saw the promising energy generating potential in the Xingu River. He then moved to Brazil and started to develop a project to exploit this rich and clean energy. Five years after his arrival and already an employee of Brazilian government, Cadman faced a political problem: it was not possible to inundate the land of the Indians.

The region of Xingu River, where is now the Belo Monte Dam is the habitat of nine indigenous peoples. The Indians around the Xingu River are considered the most politically organized of all Brazilian indigenous peoples and one of the least influenced by the civilizing process. For three decades, this helped them in their resistance, ensuring the support of some governmental institutions and of many worlds' celebrities, such as Sting, who joined them in their fight. They also managed to get all their major manifestations covered by the world's media.

But then, the conservative elders were nudged aside by the young who could speak Portuguese with the company officials who offered to each village a budget of up to 30,000 reais (10,000 euro) per month to buy their dreams. From September 2010, when construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant started,

they fulfilled this promise and the Indians further started to receive food rations consisting of non-perishable and processed foods from the government's "emergency program" to help the indigenous peoples affected by the construction of Belo Monte with their ethno-development and guarantee them food and economic sustainability. The Indians gave up on their farms, planting and stopped to produce their own food. Centuries of a subsistence lifestyle gave way to instant gratification in the form of food, laptops, new vehicles, freezers, and motorbikes. Two years later, when the construction got to the point where there was no way back, all these "benefits" were suddenly cut, the Indians were left without food supply as they no longer had any fields to harvest. Reversing the damage seems impossible. The tribes who have long been the staunchest forest guardians lost their land, culture and their will to resist.

"It's the price we pay to preserve the environment," said Jaimie Juraszek, the construction superintendent of Norte Energia. "We cannot save the forest and live in the dark without TV. There is a conflict of interest here. We need balance. I think Belo Monte is a compromise." And he completes: "Belo Monte does have an attribute, however, that weighed in the decision to build it: it can generate an abundance of energy during periods of the year in which hydroelectric plants in the Southeast and Center-West, the main electricity-producing regions, operate under the restriction that their reservoirs can't be left empty. In 2012, it was necessary to generate an average 14,300 MW per month by starting up more thermoelectric plants, at a cost to the country of R\$ 12 billion more than the cost of hydroelectric power."

Because of the project, ten thousand families were removed from their houses without any legal assistance and received very little or no financial compensation for it. The 90,000 people who got relocated certainly seems modest compared to the 1.5 million people that China's government moved for the Three Gorges dam. But, unlike China's crowded Sichuan province, the problem in sparsely populated Amazonia is not moving people out, but moving them in. The biggest impact of Belo Monte is from the influx of tens of thousands of construction workers, suppliers, security guards, prostitutes and other migrants who have been drawn to the area by the megaproject. Since work started in 2010, the population of the nearest city of Altamira has surged from about 100,000 to more than 200,000. The newcomers require homes, food, water, electricity, oil, roads and boats – all of which add to the pressure on a local environment.

And then there is corruption. On March of this year, Otávio Marques de Azevedo, the former president of the construction company Andrade Gutierrez, told investigators that the Workers party of Dilma Rousseff and its former coalition partner, the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party of the current president Michel Temer, were allegedly paid 75m reais each by three construction companies that initially lost the bid to build Belo Monte.

This is not the first claim that the government benefited illicitly from the Belo Monte project. Workers party senator Delcídio do Amaral previously testified that the graft scheme was set up during the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He claimed it had channelled 45m reais from overcharged dam contracts to the two parties for the 2010 and 2014 election campaigns. The government denies wrongdoing. Rousseff's office says donations were made lawfully. But for conservationists and human rights activists, the allegations explain why Belo Monte went ahead regardless of concerns about its environmental impact and economic viability.

Belo Monte exposes the set of social problems that Brazil currently suffers and lets us understand that corruption may easily result in an act of extermination. It exposes the modus operandi, a scheme of established power relations at the local, state and national levels, in which the main purpose of a particular construction is to divert public money into a few private pockets.

### **The film**

The film starts with images of the Xingu River before the construction of Belo Monte. Slowly we see the dam being build until its recent state: the dam almost done. In voice-over we hear why the director decided to make this film.

*"It's been almost ten years now that I follow the construction of this giant. I read, see, hear about the disastrous consequences involving the construction, but I do nothing. Ethnocide, murders, expulsions, forced labor, corruption... I sign petitions on the Internet, contribute to campaigns, discuss with friends, I get angry. Deep inside I know I'm not doing anything.*

*I decided to make this to try to answer many questions about the real reasons for the intensive exploitation of Amazon. Is it worse trouble? "*

A sequence of interviews will follow. Here we will combine the testimonies to create a discussion with an intent to reveal the forces that lie behind Brazil's dam building boom. The construction of hydropower plants in the Amazon implicates the involvement of many powerful companies and people. In our conversations we will want to know everything, every name and every detail and most likely the people who fight against the dams will be much more open. But in our controlled, close-up shooting environment, it shall not be easy for anyone to escape our spotting eye.

What makes this film even more interesting is the revelation that people who appear as clear 'villains' to European eyes are not necessarily seen as such by the eyes of Brazilian society.

In Brazil, many high ranking politicians and renowned businessmen who are in favor of Amazon exploitation do not care for indigenous human rights or global warming and they generally dismiss these issues as European whining. Their believe is that we have to civilize and industrialize the Amazon in order to economically compete with Europe and USA. They are very proud to "see through" the "gringos" who

invented these “problems” just to keep our hands from the Amazon and to steal it from us.

The film will end with images from the Amazon in progress.

### Some Interviewers

- **Dilma Rousseff** - former president of Brazil and former Minister of Mining and Energy during Lula’s administration when Belo Monte got its environmental license. She believes Belo Monte is the best project developing during her mandate and the PAC has to continue as Brazil can not leave its water potential without exploitation
- **Romero Jucá** - Federal Senator for the Amazon state of Roraima, Jucá is the most famous Brazilian politician known for fighting against protection of indigenous people and the Amazon forest
- **Francisco de Assis de Melo Sousa** - current president of the Belo Monte consortium and mayor of Anapu, city near Belo Monte, he is proud of the road that Belo Monte brought and dreams to turn the Amazon into São Paulo
- **Jaimie Juraszek** - the construction superintendent of Norte Energia, he believes hydropower plants are the only existing source of clean energy
- **Célio Berman** - former chief of staff of a group of governmental scientists who prepared a document showing that from the climate perspective the plant was a mistake. He will tell us about the negotiations of Belo Monte and how the government ignored the scientific reports
- **Alceu Luís Cartilho** - Investigative Journalist, works on Belo Monte case, he will make testimony about a sophisticated corruption scheme behind the Belo Monte construction. According to the plea bargain of the former governmental Senate leader Delcídio Amaral, now arrested for corruption, at least R\$ 150 million (50 million euro) of public funds were diverted from Belo Monte directly for the election campaigns of the PT and PMDB parties, in 2010 and then in 2014
- **Jean Pierre Dutiellux** - president of Foret Vierge Assossiation, he is fighting for the Amazon cause and knows all the companies and people in France and Europe who have business in the Amazon
- **Felicio Pontes Jr. and Thais Santi** - public prosecutors from Altamira, who already filed more than 15 cases with the Prosecutor’s Office against Belo Monte dam. They know about all crimes committed and still being committed to continue with the PAC at the Amazon

- **Antonia Melo** - coordinator of "Movimento Xingu Vivo para Sempre" (Xingu Live Forever Movement), a coalition of over 150 organizations and social movements fighting the Belo Monte dam, she works with the families that loosed their homes to Belo Monte and with them create a group called Belo Monte refugees to keep helping the 90.000 people to find a new life
- **Márcio Meira** - former president of FUNAI - Government agency for protection of native Indians. He will tell what happened with the FUNAI in the time of building Belo Monte and how the government deals with its own Indian department. There is evidence that many those who worked for FUNAI between the years 2010 and 2012 got corrupted or omitted to help the Indians. Also, during the period of building of Belo Monte, the FUNAI staff was substantially reduced: only in Altamira, the number of experts of the agency was reduced from 60 to 23 officials
- **Indian chief Raoni** - Raoni who's been fighting against the construction of Belo Monte for over 30 years now, can tell us from his point of view what actually happened during the negotiations between the Norte Energia S.A. and the indigenous peoples of Xingu
- **Otávio das Chagas** - a Riverine without a River. He and his wife Maria Chagas will tell us how they were removed from their houses, with violence and without any compesantion. Their whole family now lives in a rented house in one of the most violent neighborhoods on the outskirts of Altamira